



Board of Governors for Higher Education
Government Relations Committee
Monday, February 13, 2012
11:00 a.m.
New England Institute of Technology, 3rd floor board room, East Greenwich

MEETING MINUTES

Committee members present: Joan Abrams, Antonio Barajas, Tessa Constant, Eva-Marie Mancuso, Jay Walsh

System staff members present: Kerrie Bennett (URI), Anne Marie Coleman (OHE), Deborah Grossman-Garber (OHE), Michael Trainor (OHE)

Chair Eva-Marie Mancuso called the fifth RIBGHE Government Relations Committee (GRC) meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

1. Approval of the January 9, 2012 Minutes

Chair Mancuso asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the January 9, 2012 GRC meeting.

On a motion duly made by Chair Mancuso, moved by Governor Antonio Barajas and seconded by Governor Jay Walsh, it was

VOTED: THAT The Government Relations Committee approves the minutes of the January 9, 2012 meeting.

Vote: 4 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Antonio Barajas, Tessa Constant, Eva-Marie Mancuso, Jay Walsh

NAYS: 0

2. Review of Legislative Tracker and Legislation of Interest to the RIBGHE

The legislative tracker is not yet complete, as we are still watching several bills yet to be filed. At this time, it appears that the bill to reverse the RIBGHE's decision to grant in-state tuition to undocumented Rhode Island students who meet certain conditions has been assigned to committee. Governor Walsh asked if any bills would codify the RIBGHE's decision to offer in-state tuition and learned that companion "Dream Act" bills sponsored by Rep. Grace Diaz and Senator Juan Picardo are being introduced again this year.

This Thursday at the Rise (approximately 4:00 p.m.), the House Finance Committee will hold a hearing regarding the consolidation of the Rhode Island Higher Education Assistance Authority and the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education. RIBGHE Chair Lorne Adrain and possibly GRC Chair Eva Mancuso will testify in favor of the consolidation. If this proposed consolidation passes, it would provide resources for a full-time public higher education commissioner and a streamlined process for the facets of higher education.

Chair Mancuso reported that both she and Governor Barajas spoke at the White House Hispanic Community Action Summit, where Eva handed out copies of the Board's policy changes and regulations that were passed in September and are currently being implemented at the institutions for the Fall 2012 semester. It was suggested at the summit that the Frequently Asked Questions on each institution's website be available in languages other than English to be more accessible to parents and help allay fears. (The applications and affidavits, however, will continue to be available only in English, as the students themselves would need to be fluent in English in order to enroll in college and sign the statements). Governor Barajas and others will help translate the FAQs into Spanish, and the International Institute will identify and explore other potential languages that could reach Rhode Island families. Governors Mancuso and Barajas also appeared on Latino Public Radio to help get the word out to the community about the RIBGHE's policy change, and Governor Lincoln Chafee and Mayor Angel Taveras were thanked for their support of the policy. Chair Mancuso also said that RIHEAA Director Charlie Kelly mentioned that school guidance counselors would be meeting together soon, stating that it would be great if the new tuition policy was part of that conversation.

Governor Constant asked what would happen if legislators vote to override the Board of Governors' tuition policy decision from September. Chair Mancuso responded that all the Board can do is watch and be prepared to testify as needed.

3. Comments from the URI, RIC and CCRI Legislative Liaisons on Legislation of Particular Interest to Them and Discussion regarding Coordination with OHE as Appropriate

CCRI Liaison Rich Coren had notified OHE that he would not be able to attend this committee meeting but that he had no legislation of particular interest to the Community College of Rhode Island to report. Michael Smith also could not attend today to report for

Rhode Island College but had not alerted OHE to any legislation of interest to RIC. Therefore, Chair Mancuso requested that URI Liaison Kerrie Bennett comment on legislation of interest to the University of Rhode Island.

Ms. Bennett stated that URI appears to be in good shape so far this legislative session. The combined URI/RIC nursing facility is in the budget, and Representative Donald J. Lally, Jr. plans to introduce a bill for naming the Anna Fascitelli Fitness and Wellness Center (the RIBGHE approved this name change on August 22, 2011 but it needs legislative approval as well). Ms. Bennett is waiting on Tom Coderre to contact her regarding any other bills that may be introduced and sent to legal counsel prior to Thursday's deadline. A land and sea grant bill is expected to be introduced, which URI would support, but everyone is cognizant that Governor Chafee does not want any bills with budgetary impacts introduced. The "Bachelor's in Three" bill is not expected to go forward this year, and purchasing authority is still up in the air. Ms. Bennett also reported that a hearing will be held on Wednesday for an animal welfare bill that would affect Brown University and URI research facilities. URI and Brown both plan to ask for an exemption for research purposes.

Chair Mancuso asked whether the Government Relations Committee could help regarding the nursing facility, and Ms. Bennett responded that the University is currently focused on the retirement incentive program but will soon turn its focus to support for the facility. She also plans to talk to Dan Egan from the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Rhode Island and Al Dahlberg from Brown University for a second set of eyes.

Associate Commissioner Deborah Grossman-Garber suggested that Ms. Bennett reach out to the *Narragansett Times*, whose writers have been in touch with the Office of Higher Education with questions for an article on the facility.

4. Status of Planning for the February 28, February 29 and March 1 Legislation Information Sessions

Michael Trainor updated the Committee on the status of three one-hour informational sessions for legislators, which will be held:

February 28th at 9:00 a.m.

February 29th at 12:00 p.m.

March 1st at 5:30 p.m.

Invitations were mailed and emailed and OHE staff will follow up with invitees. These dates and times were chosen with input from General Assembly leaders (the morning time will most likely attract their staff, while the noon and evening times will work best for legislators), and the sessions will be a chance to educate legislators on what the public higher education system does and the mandates the Board and OHE fulfill. Board members and their OHE partner staff will provide overviews of academic affairs, facilities and finance, and other areas of oversight. At each session, legislators will enjoy a brief presentation and an opportunity for questions and answers in a conversational atmosphere as well as informal mingling. Refreshments will be served, and we have a bid in to the caterer. The

State Room has been reserved for all three dates. It will be a good chance to discuss how we work to avoid duplication in programs at the public higher education institutions and how a metric has been developed to evaluate the system going forward. Board members are encouraged to attend, as this is the RIBGHE's chance to come full-circle and show that they have been listening and are prepared to address legislators' questions and concerns. Chair Mancuso will be the emcee at each event and will ask RIBGHE Chair Adrain to speak as well.

Associate Commissioner Grossman-Garber noted that an outcomes/impact statement for VA students has been completed and wondered if that would be beneficial to legislators. Chair Mancuso suggested bulleting such items that aren't extensive to the overall presentations. Mike will help coordinate with senior staff in the next couple of weeks to determine details.

5. Other Business

Associate Commissioner Grossman-Garber alerted Committee members that the quasi-public Rhode Island Higher Education Assistance Authority (RIHEAA) and the Rhode Island Student Loan Authority (RISLA), a loan agency authorized by the state, recently held a joint board meeting to make recommendations to Governor Chafee regarding RIHEAA/the program's fate. Both boards are essentially the same board but for different organization, and they discussed the fate of WaytoGoRI, the online K-20 portal that helps Rhode Island students think about career goals, track their academic progress, apply to college, and utilize adult education. RISLA (whose executive director, Charlie Kelly, is also the interim director of RIHEAA) recommended that its board defund and dismantle WaytoGoRI and find another portal. This would be a problem to other agencies, including OHE, because both public and private institutions are already using WaytoGoRI to educate students on college preparation and career plans. The portal also collects and provides crucial K-20 data we can legally access in order to ensure that interventions help students. Federal government grants emphasize data-driven decision making, and we have merged K-12 RIDE data with OHE's Data Warehouse and will soon add Adult Education data as well so that we can view and track trends at all ages. (It was asked whether Providence Plan is affiliated with this portal, but they are more of a general repository for data on health and education.) OHE and RIDE are now very concerned about the fate of WaytoGoRI because losing the portal puts federal funding to Rhode Island in peril. It's historical to have funds to assist students and RIDE, OHE and Adult Education are already invested in the current portal. RIHEAA Director Kelly has held up the portal for months citing investigations into XAP, the corporation that developed WaytoGoRI.

It was suggested that the RIBGHE state its interest in WaytoGoRI and support the preservation of the current portal. Governor Walsh, chair of the RIBGHE Academic and Student Affairs Committee, said he plans on discussing this at an ASAC meeting, as the data has been an academic issue. It was also noted that Governor Chafee appears aware of the situation because RIHEAA has already annexed \$2 million, and it's likely the General Assembly is aware as well and monitoring other funds under RIHEAA's/RISLA's control. It

was also noted that former RIBGHE member Bob Flanders was hired last fall as a lobbyist for RISLA, and Attorney Flanders will be advocating for RISLA's interests and opposing a merger of RIHEAA and OHE.

At the prior GRC meeting, Chair Mancuso suggested that the committee begin meeting every three weeks while the General Assembly is in session, and Committee members agreed to the new schedule. Committee members compared calendars and worked around conflicts to determine dates for the next several committee meetings:

Monday, March 12th
Monday, April 9th
Monday, April 30th
Monday, May 21st

All meetings will be held at 10:00 a.m. at the Community College of Rhode Island.

6. Adjournment

Chair Mancuso asked for a motion to be entertained for adjournment. Governor Walsh motioned to adjourn and Governor Barajas seconded the motion.

VOTED:	THAT	The Government Relations Committee adjourns.
	Vote:	5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:
	YEAS:	Joan Abrams, Antonio Barajas, Tessa Constant, Eva-Marie Mancuso, Jay Walsh
	NAYS:	0

The committee meeting adjourned at 11:58 a.m.