

MEETING OF
THE URI COMMISSION ON RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
PUBLIC SESSION

June 16, 2008

The University of Rhode Island Commission on Research and Innovation (the Commission) met on Monday, June 16, 2008 in Public Session at the offices of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, Providence, Rhode Island pursuant to notice of the meeting to all Members and public notice of meeting, a copy of which is attached hereto, as required by applicable Rhode Island Law.

The following Members were present and participated throughout the meeting as indicated: Peter Alfonso, James Coleman, Robert Flanders (Chair), Carol Grant, David Hibbitt, Constance Howes, Saul Kaplan and Margaret Leinen. Lord Alec Broers participated by telephone for a portion of the meeting.

Also present were Commission consultant Christine Heenan of Clarendon Group, members of the general public and Clarendon Group and RIEDC staff. Robert Flanders presided over the meeting.

Welcome

Justice Flanders called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. and outlined the agenda for the day. He noted that to continue working toward the mandated goal of producing a report by September 2008, at this meeting Commissioners would discuss and vote on the data portion of the report. The remainder of the meeting would be dedicated to further discussion and consensus building on a vision section and how this vision translates into specific recommendations.

Justice Flanders reported that he and Christine Heenan have continued to hold conversations with a number of key constituents including the Governor, the Chair of the Board of Higher Education and various legislative leaders to share the Commission's initial findings, collect comments and build support for the final set of recommendations. He noted he has received encouragement for the work of the Commission and the important contribution the Commission's findings will make toward strengthening and building the Rhode Island economy.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the April 2008 Commission meeting were presented for comment and discussion. Citing no changes, upon a motion duly made by Ms. Howes and seconded by

Ms. Grant, the minutes were accepted. Justice Flanders then turned the program to Christine Heenan.

Review of Draft Report Sections

The Commissioners reviewed the draft sections on “Indicators” and “Preconditions” for University Excellence. In the Indicator section, Commissioners agreed that the data on Federal R&D Expenditures was so compelling that it should be moved to a more prominent place in the section. Commissioners also requested additional text that emphasized just how big a federal funding gap RI has vis a vis peers and peer aspirants, how RI missed many opportunities to win funding in recent years when federal funding levels were high, how difficult it will be to overcome this handicap and win additional funding in the coming years when funding levels are much lower and how even self-selected peer regional peer aspirants (UNH, UVM) are achieving more. Additional information was also requested on start-up activity. On a motion made by James Coleman and seconded by Constance Howes, the language and content of the section was adopted as modified.

In the section on “Preconditions”, Commissioners requested more text be added to highlight how scholarship is the energy that drives everything in the university culture. Undergraduate research plays an important role in embedding a culture of scholarship. Research and teaching are not mutually exclusive; universities do not need to choose between the two. Commissioners also requested that the preconditions be regrouped to reflect the same headings that will be used for the recommendations and that a brief summary section be added that includes the structure of the report and focus of the recommendations. They also requested that the appendix section be expanded to include information on the “scope and methodology used and that all published resource materials be cited. On a motion by Margaret Leinen and seconded by James Coleman the section was adopted as modified.

Review of Vision

Commissioners discussed how leadership must include a reference to culture (one cannot be addressed without the other), how the next leader must be a change agent and how leadership responsibilities extend beyond the URI campus to others such as the Board of Governors. Commissioners also discussed the importance of adding a reference to the capacity building section to re-emphasize that URI is starting the race late. Regarding specific goals, Commissioners requested a reference to industry and how goals will support the growth of RI’s high wage economy (workforce, new company creation, increased collaborations). They also agreed to the need to identify specific markers that refer to measurable, external benchmarks for increasing the amount of research talent and funding at URI such as doubling the research enterprise in five years.

Review of Recommendation Focus Areas

Commissioners agreed that the report will include a set of actionable recommendations based on long and short term tactics that focus on a small set of big ideas to address areas of organizational inefficiency and administrative protocol carefully yet separately and that state leadership must adopt these bold and decisive steps. Commissioners requested

recommendations be formatted to include a brief paragraph outlining the rationale for each followed by a declarative statement summarizing the recommendation. Proofreading edits were noted as were suggestions that recommendations be specific (not something merely encouraged), duplicate and confusing references to \$100 million be changed, and justifications be included to demonstrate what can be accomplished by adopting recommendations. Clarendon was asked to rework the recommendations and also include a draft executive summary format.

Wrap-up and Next Steps

It was agreed that Clarendon Group would incorporate the accepted language changes into the text and would work over the next month to prepare the remaining draft sections for discussion and consensus building at the next meeting.

Adjournment

There being no further business in Public Session, the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m. Next meeting will be scheduled for mid to late July.

Christine M.B. Smith
Secretary