

URI/PART-TIME FACULTY UNITED (PTFU)

2012 NEGOTIATION STATEMENT

September 6, 2012

For decades the part-time faculty of the University of Rhode Island have provided students with high quality teaching services. We have never been in a position to take our opportunity to teach for granted. Without the security tenured professors enjoy, we come each semester with the commitment, energy, knowledge, and experience that ensures our courses are of real value to students. Our primary focus is always our students, and it is from our students that we have received our principal rewards.

However, despite the consistency and quality of our teaching, we remain, in many ways, outside of the University of Rhode Island's embrace. Despite the fact that in 2011 part-time faculty taught more than 1600 sections of the overall number of sections offered to URI's undergraduates, the crucial role we play in the functioning of URI is largely unrecognized. In fact, without part-timers to teach these undergraduate course sections, the University of Rhode Island would be unable to operate, either academically or financially.

Compensation to part-timers must be corrected. Compensation to URI's part-timers is not only unfair, it is an embarrassment to the University. Whereas URI's tenured faculty salary averages about ninety thousand dollars (\$90,000) per year for teaching approximately two-three courses each semester, and receives thousands of dollars more in benefits, part-time faculty receive an average of a mere seven to ten thousand dollars (\$7,000-\$10,000) per year, with no retirement plan, no medical or dental coverage, no insurance, no tuition remission, and no job security beyond what our Union can provide.

Without ignoring variables, an example of a typical general education four-credit of thirty-five (35) students (62% in-state) creates a revenue for the university of upwards of one hundred and four thousand (\$104,000). The cost of having a tenured faculty member teach this course would be an average of eighteen thousand five-hundred dollars (\$18,500) exclusive of the additional cost of benefits. The part-timer, on the other hand, will be paid between three and five thousand dollars (\$3,500-\$5,000) for teaching the same course. Income from one course is barely enough to pay for a root canal or a simple surgical procedure. Such an expense always creates a real hardship for many part-timers.

URI's graduate teaching assistants recently signed a collective bargaining contract which cumulatively raises their yearly stipend at each stipend level by: \$400 (Fall 2011); \$450 (Spring 2012); \$600 (2012-2013); and \$500 (2013-2014) for teaching two to three courses a year. In addition, URI's graduate assistants also enjoy full medical coverage and free tuition. We do not ask to be considered as full-time faculty nor as teaching assistants. URI's part-time faculty stands on its own, as an indispensable part of the University. What we ask is that we be considered on an equitable basis with others who teach at URI—full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty, lecturers, and graduate teaching assistants. Part-time faculty are members of the professional staff of URI and we insist that we be treated as such. Our needs for medical and dental coverage, insurance, just and fair compensation, as well as URI's respect, are identical to the needs of all others who teach at the University.

In his recent comprehensive analysis of the financial condition of the University of Rhode Island, Rudy Fichtenbaum concluded:

“While it may be the case that the State of Rhode Island is in a fiscal crisis, there is no financial crisis at the University of Rhode Island. While the overall financial condition of the University is not as strong as one would like, the financial condition has improved over the last seven years, as illustrated by the general upward trend in the composite index. When considering the potential impact of the state fiscal crisis, it is important to remember that the University gets only 13% of its revenue from the State of Rhode Island. Moreover, the University has improved its financial condition, despite a 32% cut in state appropriations since 2007.”

“The biggest negative factor affecting the University's financial condition is its high level of debt. Controlling the growth of debt would add strength to the University's balance sheet and improve its financial condition over time. Although a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the state budgets and the economy in general remains, as long as there is no substantial decline in enrollment, the University of Rhode Island remains in good financial condition and is certainly in a position to offer competitive salaries and benefits to its faculty.”

Source: An Update Analysis of the Financial Statements of the University of Rhode Island: Academic Years 2004-2010, Rudy Fichtenbaum, Wright State University, Dayton: OH, p. 41.

President Dooley, when announcing in August 2012 the hiring of Naomi R. Thompson to the position of associate vice president for Community, Equity and Diversity, remarked: “As we've outlined in our Transformational Goals, building a community in which every member is welcomed, supported, and valued is essential to our identity and mission.”

Other universities have long appreciated their part-time faculty. It is the expectation of the URI PTFU that the part-time faculty group at URI will be included in the inclusive community here at the University of Rhode Island. It is the expectation of the URI PTFU that the part-time faculty group at URI will no longer be invisible; to the contrary, that they will, along with everyone else, be at the core of the University's commitment to community, equity, and diversity.

Two years ago, when the long and grueling process of framing, constructing, and instituting our union and first collective bargaining agreement, finally bore fruit, and we were granted improved compensation and consideration, we celebrated, but not because we felt we had been treated equitably, but because we had finally been seen and acknowledged. To us, it was regarded as a hard-won place to start.

We can be perfectly frank in stating our purpose here: we are educated, motivated, experienced professionals who have loyally served URI and its students for years. We want to be, finally, justly rewarded, commensurate with our significant and substantial contribution and value to URI.

Prepared by URI PTFU Negotiation Committee 2012

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Statement presented to URI/BOG by URI PTFU at 1st 2012 Negotiation Session on September 6, 2012.