Vice President for Research and Economic Development
The University of Rhode Island
Kingston, Rhode Island

THE SEARCH

The University of Rhode Island (URI or the University)—the premier land- and sea-grant research institution of the state of Rhode Island and the engine of the state's economic and social vitality—seeks a visionary and results-driven leader to serve as its next Vice President for Research and Economic Development (VPRED). In 2025, URI achieved R1 designation in the latest Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, one of only two Rhode Island universities to hold this distinction. At a historic moment for URI, reflecting years of dedication by its faculty, students, research staff, and leadership, the University finds itself growing its research, its physical enterprise, and its impact across the state and region with an eye to the future. The next VPRED will step into a university and community committed to its continued success, anchored by its historic Kingston campus, its extraordinary waterfront Narragansett Bay Campus, and its location in Rhode Island's coastal research and innovation ecosystem.

Enrolling over 17,600 students, URI has been on an upward trajectory over recent years. A student-centered research institution, URI actively partners with other organizations, both locally and globally, to advance knowledge and develop informed residents and leaders. For the University, research is more than discovery; it is preparation, it is partnership, and it is progress. Research is the foundation upon which URI's impact has been built, as illustrated by the University's current strategic plan, FOCUS URI. The University's output contributes approximately $2 billion to the state of Rhode Island's economy and makes it an indispensable asset to the state, fostering strong connectivity with elected officials. In fiscal year 2025, URI secured $165.2 million in research awards and recorded $159 million in research expenditures, with research thrusts spanning health sciences, engineering, environmental and ocean sciences, quantum sciences, and a growing national security portfolio. The next VPRED will integrate the creative and entrepreneurial energies of URI's world-class faculty with the dynamism of Rhode Island's private and civic sectors to seed the transformative research and impact of tomorrow, defining actionable steps to bring strategic priorities to fruition, championing public scholarship, and positioning URI and the state of Rhode Island as a global innovator.

The successful candidate will drive a culture of discovery, interdisciplinary collaboration, commercialization, entrepreneurship, and economic development that aligns with URI's vision, mission, values, and strategic priorities. As URI leans into its new R1 identity, the VPRED will lead the university through a period of critical transition and growth, managing an operational and structural evolution to expand research operations, building the human architecture to support world-leading faculty, engaging with industry partners to define URI as a hub of innovation, and reorienting the university to balance its pedagogical roots with rising research expectations and ambitions.

The University of Rhode Island has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist a university search committee. All applications, inquiries, and nominations, which will remain confidential, should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

Founded in 1888, URI has grown and evolved throughout its nearly 140-year history, always seeking to serve the needs of the state, its students, faculty, and staff. Originally called the Rhode Island College of Agricultural and Mechanic Arts, the institution was renamed the University of Rhode Island by the Rhode Island state legislature in 1951.

Today, the University of Rhode Island is a diverse and dynamic community whose members are connected by a common quest for knowledge. As the state's flagship, public, R1 research university and Rhode Island's land- and sea-grant institution, the University is defined by innovation and big thinking. URI is the only public institution in Rhode Island that offers undergraduate, graduate, and professional students the distinctive educational opportunities of a major research university, designed to meet the global challenges of today and the rapidly evolving needs of tomorrow.

The University of Rhode Island currently enrolls over 17,600 students, including over 14,000 undergraduates, 2,700 graduate students, and 1,200 certificate or non-degree-seeking students. The University employs over 3,200 employees, including full- and part-time faculty. Overall, URI maintains a student-to-faculty ratio of 16:1.

The University of Rhode Island is comprised of nine degree-granting schools and colleges: the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business, the Feinstein College of Education, the College of Engineering, the College of Environmental and Life Sciences, the College of Health Sciences, the College of Nursing, the College of Pharmacy, and the Graduate School of Oceanography. As of June 2026, the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees formally authorized the next phase of planning for a proposed public medical school at the University, following the State of Rhode Island's historic investment of $5 million in startup funding for FY27 approved by Governor Dan McKee and the Rhode Island General Assembly.

The University offers over 90 undergraduate degree programs and more than 100 graduate programs. The most popular of URI's undergraduate majors include psychology, kinesiology, nursing, communication

studies, business, biological sciences, computer science, mechanical engineering, health studies, criminology and criminal justice, and human development and family studies.

URI consists of several campuses, and since 2007, the University has invested more than $1 billion in campus capital projects and improvements. Its growth and ambition distinguish it among many other research universities of today: URI is executing on a 20-year comprehensive campus modernization plan across its campuses, recently breaking ground on new residential expansion projects, opening a new fine arts center, and establishing, in June 2026, plans for the creation of the state of Rhode Island's first public medical school following significant review, including a two-year Rhode Island Senate commission study. URI is undertaking a consequential expansion of its research capacities through the $87.5 million biomedical sciences facility, the multiphase $300 million revitalization of the Narragansett Bay Campus, and plans for a proposed $165 million Integrated Health Building.

The URI Ecosystem

The Kingston campus hosts URI's primary undergraduate and graduate programs across engineering, the sciences, business, education, health sciences, agriculture, social sciences, and the arts. These programs attract students from across the state, the region, and beyond, creating a steady pipeline of skilled talent that supports and meets employer demand statewide and across the United States. URI's strengths in engineering, environmental sciences, and data-driven fields reinforce regional capacity in applied research, infrastructure resilience, and technology-enabled services. At the same time, its land-grant mission translates research into practical solutions for agriculture, food systems, environmental stewardship, and community development.

Overlooking the West Passage of Narragansett Bay, URI's 165-acre waterfront Bay Campus offers an unparalleled setting for ocean discovery, marine technology, and interdisciplinary research. Home to the Graduate School of Oceanography, the Ocean Engineering Department, and the newly opened Ocean Robotics Laboratory, it connects researchers directly to the marine environment and has received more than $300 million in recent federal, state, and philanthropic support to expand its scope and impact on scholarship and the Blue Economy. The campus supports a concentration of federally funded research advancing fisheries science, climate resilience, offshore wind development, maritime technology, coastal infrastructure, and national security. The campus is also home to federal partners, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the United States Environmental Protection Agency, as well as the Rhode Island Nuclear Science Center, creating a unique ecosystem for collaboration between government, academia, and industry. The campus also plays a critical role in workforce development by training scientists, engineers, technicians, and policy professionals essential to Rhode Island's growing Blue Economy.

Located in a vibrant section of Providence, URI's primary educational presence is in the Rhode Island Nursing Education Center, which opened in August 2017, and offers 133,000 square feet of laboratory, classroom, and office space at 350 Eddy Street. The Center is the educational anchor of a regional hub for health care learning, practice, and biomedical research in Providence. Providence is also home to the

Rhode Island Life Science Hub, the state's coordinating organization for the life sciences sector, which accounts for nearly $500 million in government and private investment, and to Ocean State Labs, Rhode Island's first dedicated life-science startup incubator, opened in May 2026.

Finally, as of March 2026, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and the University of Rhode Island announced a transformative initiative to revitalize URI's W. Alton Jones (WAJ) Campus. This collaborative effort will reestablish the campus as a premier Natural Resource Center and Environmental Education Hub while significantly expanding public access and recreational opportunities for Rhode Islanders. The 2,300-acre campus, located in the western section of Rhode Island, offers an ideal setting for important research projects and fieldwork for classes in environmental sciences.

Leadership

Marc B. Parlange became the University of Rhode Island's 12th president on August 1, 2021. A distinguished researcher and global higher education leader, Parlange leads the state's public flagship research institution, with four campuses, over 17,000 students, more than 135,000 alumni, and an annual budget of more than $1.1 billion. Before his appointment as URI's president, Parlange served as provost and senior vice president at Monash University, Dean of Applied Science at the University of British Columbia, and Dean at EPFL, Switzerland. He was on the faculty at Johns Hopkins and UC Davis and is a member of the National Academy of Engineering.

Barbara E. Wolfe became Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs in January 2023. Wolfe, an internationally recognized expert on psychiatric and mental health nursing and eating disorders, had previously served as dean of the URI College of Nursing since 2016. Before coming to URI, she served as associate dean for research and professor at Boston College's William F. Connell School of Nursing. In addition to her work at Boston College, she served as a psychiatry lecturer at Harvard Medical School and president of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association.

Focus URI

As part of URI's 10-year strategic plan, FOCUS URI, President Parlange has identified four strategic priorities: articulating URI's aspirations to broaden its impact, enhancing student achievement, fostering an inclusive culture, and powering the university of the future. Since its inception, URI has remained a learner-centric institution, and the University works to provide students with a distinctive educational experience designed to meet the challenges of an increasingly connected global community. The University's foundational values include:

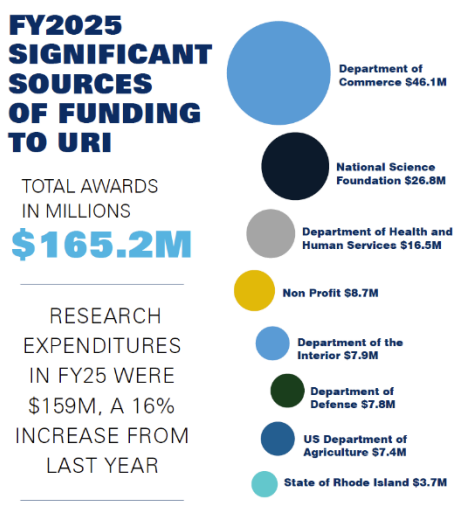
- Freedom to learn, teach, create, and conduct research with integrity in the pursuit and dissemination of new knowledge aimed at contributing to the public good.
- An inclusive, accessible, equitable, and diverse community whereby we respect the rights and dignity of all.

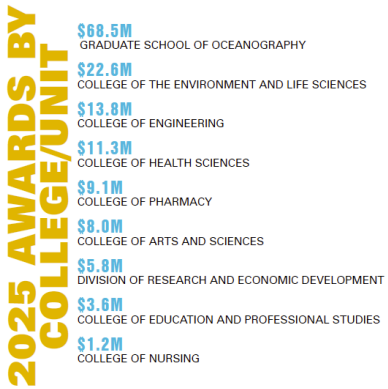
- Intellectual curiosity, lifelong learning, leadership, and scholarship in creating a thriving URI community in service to Rhode Island and the world.
- Sustainability and care of our environment are conducive to the physical and mental health of our community.
- Self- and institutional reflection of our values in our work, scholarship, and interactions, holding ourselves, each other, and the institution accountable to uphold them to a high standard.

ABOUT RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AT URI

Research

In 2025, URI achieved R1 designation in the latest Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education and a record $165.2 million in research awards and $159 million in research expenditures in FY25. The designation places URI among the 187 institutions that have achieved R1 classification—the top 4.8% of degree-granting postsecondary institutions nationally. Across diverse disciplines, faculty have driven a 25% increase in research expenditures over the past five years, solidifying URI's position as a leading research institution. URI's faculty are dedicated, talented, ambitious, collaborative, research-active, and committed to the University's R1 growth trajectory. This is a pivotal moment for the research enterprise at URI as it continues to do so in the face of a rapidly changing federal funding landscape, where peers and aspirant institutions have been on the defensive.





The university has nationally recognized strengths in the blue economy, oceanography and marine sciences, engineering, environmental and life sciences, cybersecurity, advanced materials, health sciences, and data-driven innovation. URI is also home to multiple federally supported research centers and institutes that attract external funding and advance applied research, including a recent, landmark fisheries-focused NSF Regional Innovation Engines award as well as the Office of Naval Research (ONR)-funded National Institute for Undersea Vehicle Technology (NIUVT), which conducts applied research on submarines and undersea systems in collaboration with the University of Connecticut and in support of external partners like General Dynamics Electric Boat Division and the Naval Undersea Warfare Center. Conveniently located in the center of the Northeast's I-95 innovation

corridor, the University of Rhode Island maintains strong collaborative and consultative relationships with research leaders of institutions across the Northeast.

URI's research magazine, Momentum, highlights the great work of student and faculty researchers and details the economic impact of research at URI on the state.

Economic Development

The University of Rhode Island stands as a beacon of public impact and innovation for the state of Rhode Island and serves as the cornerstone of the state's education, research, workforce development, and public service systems. Guided by this mission, URI integrates teaching, research, and outreach to address Rhode Island's most pressing economic, environmental, and health challenges. A recent study shows that URI's research enterprise generated an estimated $520.4 million in statewide economic impact and supports 6,350 jobs. The funding signals that URI's work addresses urgent challenges and advances solutions that matter—locally, nationally, and globally. At URI, research thrives in laboratories, in field settings, on farms, in coastal communities, in cities and towns, and in partnerships with not only industry and government but with the people of Rhode Island. These efforts bridge theory and application—an embodiment of URI's land-grant and sea-grant missions.

As Rhode Island's only public R1 university, URI holds a distinctive responsibility. The Morrill Act established a model of higher education rooted in accessibility, practical impact, and service. Today, that legacy endures through URI's land-grant extension programs in all 39 municipalities, through connecting science with URI's community partners, and through agricultural and environmental research that safeguards both livelihoods and landscapes.

Through strong partnerships with industry, government, healthcare organizations, and nonprofits, URI plays a central role in developing Rhode Island's workforce. Its graduates supply high-demand talent to employers statewide, while its research enterprise supports technology transfer, startup formation, and the growth of Rhode Island-based firms. URI's applied research and outreach activities strengthen key economic sectors, including advanced manufacturing, marine and coastal industries, defense, healthcare, and environmental resilience.

Beyond research and education, URI significantly contributes to Washington County's cultural, civic, and economic life. Athletics, arts and cultural programming, academic conferences, and community events draw visitors to Kingston, Narragansett, and surrounding communities, generating ongoing demand for local hospitality, retail, and service businesses. URI's students, faculty, and staff are deeply engaged locally through volunteerism, nonprofit partnerships, environmental stewardship, and collaboration with municipalities on planning and resilience initiatives, reinforcing Rhode Island's quality of life and community well-being.

Providence, Rhode Island

Providence, known as The Creative Capital, combines the accessibility and friendliness of a small town with the culture and sophistication of a big city. With a thriving arts community, vibrant and diverse neighborhoods, a renowned restaurant scene, and as the home of the state capital, Providence is a major outpost for URI to build connections and further its impact in the Ocean State.

30 miles north of the main campuses, URI's presence in Providence supports healthcare workforce development and innovation. The Nursing Education Center at South Street Landing expands clinical education and simulation capacity in the state's capital, strengthening Rhode Island's healthcare workforce pipeline. URI also participates in the state's Innovation Campus initiative through the iHub project in Providence's Innovation & Design District, in partnership with Brown University and industry collaborators. Focused on translating research into new ventures, this presence supports startup formation and reinforces Providence's role as a center for innovation and life sciences growth. In addition, URI's College of Health Sciences maintains limited programming in the Shepard Building in downtown Providence, including a Child Development Center.

ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The next Vice President for Research and Economic Development will be singularly aimed at strengthening the University's position as a leading, impact-focused research destination. This is an incredible opportunity for the VPRED to drive major impact through research and economic development, innovation, entrepreneurship, commercialization, startups, public-private partnerships, and industry engagement within an intimate, accessible, and dynamic environment. The VPRED will report directly to the President, serve on the President's Cabinet, and partner closely with the Provost and other senior leaders to set and advance URI's research and economic development strategy in their capacity as chief research officer.

As such, the Vice President is responsible for leading all functions of the University's Division of Research and Economic Development, strengthening the systems infrastructure and human architecture that undergird the enterprise, establishing and reinforcing programs and operations, partnering across the institution to bolster research activity, and strengthening external relationships for the benefit of research, translation, and supporting the economy of the Ocean State. Both at the University and beyond, the VPRED will be the chief ambassador for research across all disciplines, galvanizing faculty, staff, students, federal and state elected officials and agencies, corporate sponsors, and other external partners toward a bold and exciting vision for research as laid out in FOCUS URI.

The VPRED leads a division of approximately 50 people and manages a total budget of approximately $10 million across all sources of funding. Reporting directly to the VPRED are the Associate Vice President for Research Administration, the Associate Vice President for Research Initiatives and Development, the Associate Vice President for Economic Development, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship, the Chief Business Officer, the Executive Director for Research Information Systems, and an executive assistant.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The University of Rhode Island community will look to the next VPRED to address the following opportunities and challenges:

Articulate and execute a strategic vision for growing the research enterprise

The University of Rhode Island's undeniable momentum is catalyzed by the energies of its leadership and Board, a dynamic cadre of new and existing scholars, pathbreaking programmatic offerings—including the development of the state's first public medical school, and the dedicated support of elected and private-sector leaders who see the University as a true asset and force multiplier for the vitality of the state. In this incredibly supportive environment, the next Vice President for Research and Economic Development has the potential to leave a significant imprint on the University's future on campus, across the state, nationally, and beyond. The VPRED will be a strategic and creative scholar-leader, able to identify and prioritize institutional strengths, deploy resources effectively, and take appropriate risks to secure highly competitive research funding. Working in close partnerships with key senior leaders, faculty, and staff, the VPRED will articulate and catalyze a comprehensive vision for research and innovation at the University. This vision will be cohesive and comprehensive, harnessing the established excellence of the URI's research portfolio, including oceanography and marine science, robotics, biomedical research, healthcare, engineering, education, and others, while also leveraging external partners to their full extent. The VPRED will think creatively about how best to strategically resource URI's growing research portfolio through grants, fundraising, philanthropic engagement, and the monetization of intellectual property. This is an opportunity for a leader with grand ambitions to galvanize a University on the rise and fulfill its highest aspirations.

Build, develop, and strengthen research infrastructure and systems at URI

While URI has officially transitioned to R1 status, its broader research infrastructure, including systems, policies, human resources, security protocols, and processes, offers an opportunity to evaluate and strengthen research systems, policies, staffing, and processes to ensure the research office meets the moment. The VPRED will inherit a team of dedicated staff and division leaders who have adapted to the increasing demands of a fast-changing research ecosystem. With that change and growth comes the need for organizational adaptation and realignment to align with URI's strategic aims. The VPRED must understand the value, importance, and challenges of supporting world-class researchers, and have the acumen, drive, and emotional intelligence to reconcile necessary changes to bolster pre- and post-award support, research development, compliance, contracting, safety, research security and facility security clearance, and other critical functions of the division. The VPRED will be a bridge-builder and connector, empowering teams and addressing human capacity constraints through role clarity and strategic resource allocation, building trust and advancing the value of the Division of Research and Economic Development to the broader URI campus. In partnership with the Provost, Graduate School, and academic deans, the VPRED will also play a critical role in sustaining URI's R1 designation by aligning growth in research

expenditures with the doctoral education, research training, and institutional investments necessary to maintain its standing as a leading research university.

URI operates under a decentralized budget model, with various research support activities housed within individual academic units. Consequently, the VPRED must ensure cohesion, consistency, and alignment across the entire campus community through established SOPs to alleviate fragmented operational systems, workflow redundancies, and isolated communication pathways and decision-making.

Publicly champion research and innovation at URI internally and externally

The VPRED will champion the story of URI's research and impact internally, across Rhode Island, and beyond. As an ambassador for research at URI, the VPRED will leverage the University's central location in the Northeast's I-95 innovation corridor to further relationships with high-powered research institutions such as the University of Connecticut, Brown University, Boston's research and innovation ecosystem, and further advance URI's position as a ready, nimble, and responsive partner for future growth. The geographic intimacy of the state of Rhode Island is a clear advantage to the VPRED. Just 30 miles north of the Kingston Campus, Providence, Rhode Island, serves as the state capital, offering countless opportunities to liaise, advocate, and partner with state agencies, industry leaders, and elected officials.

As institutions of higher education navigate uncertainty with federal research funding, the University of Rhode Island continues to see success partnering with agencies such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Defense, to name a few. Still, there remain many areas of untapped potential for the University of Rhode Island and federal funding agencies. The VPRED will play a leading role in expanding URI's federal research partnerships and funding opportunities, maintaining an active presence in Washington, D.C., and cultivating relationships with federal agencies, policymakers, and other key stakeholders. With a sophisticated understanding of the evolving federal research and policy landscape, the VPRED will anticipate emerging priorities, identify new funding opportunities, and strategically position URI's faculty and research to compete for major federal investments.

Contribute to and grow economic development

The University of Rhode Island is a critical engine of Rhode Island's economy. Through employment, student and visitor spending, research operations, workforce development, and industry engagement, the university generates substantial economic impact across the state. In total, URI generates approximately $2 billion in statewide economic impact. The next VPRED will be positioned to build on this impact and identify new areas of research and innovation to drive economic engagement and growth.

The Narragansett Bay Campus anchors URI's role as a global hub for ocean and coastal science, positioning the University as a leading voice and contributor to the blue economy. The research activity on the Narragansett Bay Campus attracts competitive federal funding, supports high-wage scientific and

technical jobs, and sustains a network of private firms, contractors, and suppliers across the region. The campus also plays a critical role in workforce development by training scientists, engineers, technicians, and policy professionals essential to Rhode Island's growing blue economy. The VPRED will be a politically skilled and diplomatic bridge-builder, evangelizing URI's successes to deepen relationships with local and national businesses and further fuel Rhode Island's economy.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will be a distinguished scholar and visionary leader who embodies the University of Rhode Island's foundational values and commitment to research and economic development excellence, innovation, and growth. This person will bring a proven track record of advancing research and a documented ability to build dynamic partnerships across academia, government, industry, and the broader community. The VPRED must have an earned doctoral or equivalent terminal degree with an outstanding record in research and education commensurate with the appointment of full professor with tenure at the University of Rhode Island and must be clearable by the U.S. Government at the Secret level.

While no individual candidate is likely to embody all the desired qualifications, skills, and experience, the successful candidate will possess many of the following:

- A commitment to the scholarly, educational, service, and land- and sea-grant missions of the University of Rhode Island;
- A collegial, accessible, transparent, and consultative leader with absolute integrity and ethics; experience with data-informed decision-making at a complex institution;
- A record of leading organizational and cultural change in a complex research environment, and the empathy and presence to support an organization through such transformation;
- Demonstrated ability to strengthen research infrastructure and lead the development of organizational processes and policies that support a high-performing research organization;
- A global and interdisciplinary thinker able to harness and facilitate the potential for collaborative activities across schools, campuses, and disciplinary boundaries;
- Deep ties to leadership in business, government, and industry; record of capitalizing on and aligning research with regional and national economic development priorities and issues;
- An astute understanding of university finances, the ability to allocate resources strategically;
- A demonstrated record of success in securing major research funding from multiple sources, including federal, state, and private sources;
- Experience supporting technology transfer, commercialization, and industry partnerships;
- Successful experience in an academic administrative and leadership role with demonstrated skills to manage the scope, scale, and complexity similar to the University of Rhode Island;
- A strategic mindset combined with the ability to work effectively with senior leadership, along with faculty and staff, in executing ambitious goals;
- An effective, collaborative communicator with strong listening, relationship-building, and advocacy skills;
- The ability to provide intellectual leadership to the University's full research community; a champion for disciplines outside of their own expertise; an interest in the full breadth of disciplines at the University of Rhode Island;

- Experience leading and managing in a unionized environment and collective bargaining agreements preferred.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

URI is anticipating a salary range of $330,000 - 400,000 annually.

The University of Rhode Island's main campus is located in historic Kingston, in the heart of Rhode Island's scenic South County region. Just minutes from the Atlantic Ocean and Narragansett Bay, the University offers a distinctive coastal setting, with access to beaches, historic villages, vibrant communities, and exceptional outdoor recreation. Its location also provides convenient connections to Providence, Boston, and New York City. URI's waterfront Narragansett Bay Campus further distinguishes the University, offering an unmatched setting for ocean research, innovation, and discovery.

University of Rhode Island Land Acknowledgment

The University of Rhode Island occupies the traditional stomping ground of the Narragansett Nation and the Niantic People. We honor and respect the enduring and continuing relationship between the Indigenous people and this land by teaching and learning more about their history and present-day communities, and by becoming stewards of the land we, too, inhabit.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/university-rhode-island/vice-president-research-and-economic-development.

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The University of Rhode Island is an equal opportunity employer committed to community, equity, and diversity.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by The University of Rhode Island. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by The University of Rhode Island would supersede any conflicting information in this document.