



**Search for
Assistant Vice President, Financial Strategy & Planning
The University of Rhode Island
Kingston, Rhode Island**

THE SEARCH

The University of Rhode Island, a land, sea, and urban public research university, seeks nominations and applications for an experienced individual to serve as its Assistant Vice President, Financial Strategy & Planning (AVP). Reporting to the Vice President for Administration and Finance, the new AVP will serve as a key partner in strategic decision making by providing budget, financial analysis, projections, modeling, and data analytics services to University leadership. The AVP will lead, implement, and maintain a ten-year dynamic forecasting model for URI to enable leadership to test the likely effects of various strategic decisions on University financials and will provide the analytic support needed to optimize revenue, evaluate new programs, and maximize efficiencies. The AVP will oversee the development of the University's budget and present the budget to leadership, the URI Board of Trustees, and Rhode Island state government.

The Assistant Vice President will join URI at an exciting moment as newly appointed President Marc Parlange embarks on a bold strategy to extend and amplify the University's presence as a leading research institution. Working closely with University leadership, the AVP will provide the strategic thinking, change management skills, and analytical expertise needed to realize this vision by designing budget models that enable the University to incentivize increased enrollment, non-traditional revenue growth, and interdisciplinary cooperation among the colleges of the University. The AVP will be responsible for leading the University's financial planning, budgeting, forecasting, and modeling processes to enable URI to understand the impacts of proposed initiatives and to test the effects of potential strategic decisions on the University's financials. Strong communication skills will be vital for the AVP to translate complex financial information into clear presentations for a wide variety of individuals within the University as well as at the state level, while also leading a talented Budget and Financial Planning office to consistently provide a high level of service to units across the University.

The ideal candidate will be an experienced and analytically proficient budget and planning administrator with at least ten years of progressive experience in management and administration, with five of those years in financial management. The next AVP will be a strategic problem solver who has demonstrated experience developing and implementing complex and dynamic financial forecasting models. They will have demonstrated experience with change management and leadership, especially as it pertains to budgeting and institutional planning, with a preference given to candidates with direct experience implementing Responsibility Center Management budgeting (RCM) or other new budget models.

The candidate must be a strong communicator with political savvy to connect, engage, and serve as a proactive partner with others at all levels of the University. Additionally, they will uphold the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the work that they do, modeling and encouraging a culture of openness, equal access to resources, and transparency. This person will leverage their strategic thinking, expertise, and technical skills to enable the University to use data effectively to improve decision making and achieve URI's academic, research, and outreach goals.

The University of Rhode Island has retained the services of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in conducting this important search. All inquiries, applications, and nominations should be directed in confidence to the search firm, as indicated at the end of this document.

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

Since its founding in 1888, URI has evolved from one identity to another. After becoming Rhode Island State College at the turn of the 20th century, it grew significantly in scale and scope in the ensuing decades, leading the state legislature in 1951 to rename the institution the University of Rhode Island. It is the only public institution in Rhode Island offering undergraduate, graduate, and professional students the distinctive educational opportunities of a major research university.

From its inception as Rhode Island's Agricultural Experiment Station and agricultural school to the modern learner-centered research institution of today, URI has been motivated by a grand ambition to offer its undergraduate, graduate, and professional students distinctive educational opportunities designed to meet the global challenges of today's world and the rapidly evolving needs of tomorrow. The University has a strong and dedicated faculty, with 86% of fulltime faculty holding terminal degrees. Its nearly 18,000 students represent 48 states, districts, and territories, and 76 countries. Students enjoy a 16:1 student to faculty ratio.

The University is deeply committed to cultivating an academic, working, and living environment that promotes inclusive excellence, stemming from a belief that we have much to learn from one another. URI is dedicated to providing the means to help make this vision happen through policy-making, programming, critical conversations, thoughtful action, and collaboration between administration, faculty, staff, and students.

URI has been a responsible steward of its finances, driving tuition revenue amid a competitive enrollment landscape, responsibly using revenue bonds and philanthropic gifts to help finance capital projects, and building up its cash reserves. Between these sources and voter-approved general obligation bonds, URI has invested over \$900 million toward capital improvement and expansion, including a \$160-million new College of Engineering complex (Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering and Bliss Hall); a \$90-million apartment building (Brookside Apartments); a \$71-million pharmacy building (Avedisian Hall); a \$60-million Center for Biotechnology and Life Sciences; the \$77-million Beaupre Center for Chemical and Forensic Sciences; a \$16-million Ocean Science and Exploration Center; a new, freestanding Gender and Sexuality Center; and a new state-of-the-art Nursing Education Center in Providence. In 2018, the campus also inaugurated the 11,000-square-foot Higgins Welcome Center, which serves as the gateway to campus.

Leadership

On August 1, 2021, Marc Parlange became the 12th President of the University of Rhode Island. Recognized internationally for his expertise in environmental fluid mechanics, Parlange's wide-ranging research in hydrology and climate change addresses several important issues, such as heat transfer in cities, energy dynamics in hurricanes, and water resource challenges in remote communities, particularly West Africa. Born in Rhode Island and with leadership experience on the international level, President Parlange will continue the transformation of URI into a leading teaching and research institution.

Abigail Rider was named the Vice President for Administration and Finance at University of Rhode Island in 2017. With extensive experience in banking and real estate, she serves in a leadership role in the establishment of fiscal policy for the University and integrates business affairs functions to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in support of the overall mission and goals of the University. Vice President Rider also directly oversees the Controller's Office, Enterprise Risk Management, Public Safety, Human Resources, Facilities, Public Safety, Purchasing, and the W. Alton Jones Campus, Ryan Center, and Boss Arena. The AVP of Financial Strategy & Planning will report directly to the Vice President for Administration and Finance.

Campuses

The University of Rhode Island's main campus, the core of which is on the National Register of Historic Places, is located in the historic village of Kingston, RI. This idyllic location is close to the ocean and major beaches, and conveniently situated 30 miles south of Providence and within a few hours of Boston and New York. The 1,200-acre main campus features a mix of historically significant buildings and contemporary architecture, including 27 residence halls. For ten consecutive years, URI has been named to the [Princeton Review's list](#) of Green Colleges.

The Narragansett Bay Campus sits six miles east of Kingston, comprising 165 acres overlooking Narragansett Bay's West Passage. It is home to URI's highly acclaimed Graduate School of Oceanography – one of the top five oceanographic institutions in the world – and the University's Coastal Institute on Narragansett Bay, which features an interactive coastal environment exhibit and conference center. The Narragansett Bay Campus hosts the Environmental Protection Agency's Atlantic Coastal Environmental Science Division Laboratory and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Lab. The Narragansett Bay Campus is also the home port for the R/V *Endeavor*, a 185-foot research vessel that supports research within the U.S. Academic Research Fleet. URI was recently awarded one of the three Regional Class Research Vessels currently under construction. This new \$125-million asset will replace the R/V *Endeavor* and is scheduled to be delivered to the campus in 2022.

The Providence Campus has served students for more than 50 years, offering a wide variety of degree and certificate programs and caters to adult and other non-traditional students. The Alan Shawn Feinstein College of Education and Professional Studies and several other departments are housed at the historic Shepard Building in the heart of downtown Providence. Nearby, in the city's revitalized and vibrant Jewelry District, lies the Rhode Island Nursing Education Center, repurposed from a vacant turn-of-the-century power station and opened in August 2017. It offers 133,000 square feet of laboratory, classroom, and office space shared with Brown University and Rhode Island College. The Center is the educational anchor of a regional hub for health care learning, practice, and biomedical research in the city. It houses the upper-division and graduate components of URI's nursing program.

The W. Alton Jones Campus lies in the western section of Rhode Island in the town of West Greenwich. Thirty minutes from Providence, the Alton Jones Campus features 2,300 acres of pristine forests, streams, ponds, and a 75-acre lake of significant ecological value.

THE ROLE

The AVP for Financial Strategy & Planning is a critical leader within URI's Division of Administration and Finance, responsible for providing university-wide leadership and bringing a broad strategic and forward-thinking approach to budgeting, financial analysis, projections, modeling, and data analytics. The AVP will leverage strategic, creative, and analytical skills while working closely and collaboratively with executive leadership, the Controller, and budget and financial managers across the institution to design and implement new budget models, create and maintain ten-year forecasting models, foster a culture of data-informed decision making, and guide highly complex annual budgeting to guide University strategy, resource allocation, and financial operational planning. In this role, the AVP will need the political know-how to navigate a large, complex public institution as well as the communication skills to present financial analyses and data to external stakeholders including the URI Board of Trustees and branches of the state government.

Reporting to the Vice President for Administration and Finance, the AVP leads an organization of 10 staff, which includes two direct reports.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

In this dynamic and exciting environment, the next AVP for Financial Strategy & Planning will be expected to address the following opportunities and challenges:

Serve as a university change agent and strategic thought partner to the Vice President for Administration and Finance

The University of Rhode Island is in an exciting moment, striving to expand research efforts and grow academic programs. The AVP will be essential to realizing these goals by providing the financial strategy to support a growing research portfolio at an evolving university. The AVP will be responsible for developing a ten-year multivariate dynamic forecasting model and creating a culture of What-If Scenario Analysis (WISA) to enable senior leadership to identify and articulate major internal and external risk factors, document potential consequences, consider and assess alternatives, estimate risk, and ultimately make data-informed decisions that help the University achieve evolving academic, research, and outreach missions. Working with leadership, the AVP will harness strategic thinking, creativity, and change management skills to design and implement budget models that precipitate nontraditional revenue growth, incentivize interdisciplinary cooperation across colleges, and maximize efficiency and effectiveness across the financial and administrative functions of the institution.

Lead annual financial planning, budgeting, and forecasting processes

The next AVP will be responsible for guiding the highly complex annual budgeting process. As the leader of the annual budget planning process, the AVP will lead a highly competent staff to ensure the accuracy, completeness, quality, and timeliness of all financial plans, budgets, projections, and related information for the successful submission of the annual budget to the state legislature for review and approval. The successful candidate will bring technical acumen, modeling expertise, and creative thinking to build financial projections and models that enable the University to ascertain the impacts of proposed initiatives and achieve high-level institutional goals.

Communicate effectively with internal and external partners and navigate a complex public university system

The AVP will have the demonstrated ability to effectively communicate with a wide range of individuals and audiences, both internal and external, in a clear, concise, and easy to understand manner. Of particular importance is the capacity of the AVP to communicate clearly upward to senior leadership, explaining projections and the effects of various initiatives on the budget. URI is a complex, decentralized, and matrixed organization, yet the work of the AVP touches every department across the University. As such, the AVP needs to be a nuanced and proactive relationship builder who works easily with a variety of stakeholders.

Similarly, given that URI is a public entity, the next AVP will need the political know-how to navigate the environment, opportunities, and constraints of a public institution. The AVP will be expected to communicate with and make presentations to executive and legislative branches of the Rhode Island state government, providing data, reports, studies, and financial analysis as needed.

Lead and develop the Office of Budget and Financial Planning staff

As the University of Rhode Island strives to develop proactive, innovative, and efficient budgeting and financial planning strategies, it is critical that the office maximizes its talented and dedicated staff. The AVP will be expected to mentor and cultivate the existing team, utilizing the expertise of seasoned staff, while also growing new areas of skill and specialization. The AVP will lead with integrity and will embrace diversity, inclusion, and equity through individual and team efforts. Finally, the next AVP will work to build collaborative relationships and open lines of communication between the Office of Budget and Financial Planning staff and stakeholders across the university to continue to provide a high level of service as a trusted member of the URI community.

KEY ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

URI seeks a highly qualified, analytical, and strategically minded individual with deep experience working and managing change within highly complex environments. The next AVP for Financial Strategy & Planning will serve as a key partner in strategic decision making at URI by providing budget, financial analysis, projections, modeling, and data analytics services to the Vice President for Administration and Finance. The incumbent will implement and maintain a ten-year forecasting model for the University to enable leadership to test the likely effects of various strategic decisions. They will prepare the University's budget for presentation to leadership, the Board of Trustees, and the executive and legislative branches of state government. Additionally, this individual will develop the in-house allocation of the annual budget to each division, college, and department in accordance with leadership directives, and monitor revenues and expenditures and provide periodic projections of year-end financial status to leadership. The next AVP will be expected to provide analytic support to leadership with regard to optimizing revenue, managing costs, evaluating new programs, and maximizing efficiencies.

Essential duties and responsibilities of the AVP for Financial Strategy & Planning include:

- Serving as project owner and manager working closely with leadership to design and implement budget models for the University that incentivize increased enrollment, non-traditional revenue growth, and interdisciplinary cooperation among the colleges of the University.
- Implementing and maintaining a ten-year multivariate dynamic forecasting model for the University to enable leadership to test the likely effects of potential strategic decisions on the financials of the University and to provide essential input into the allocation of resources.
- Leading the creation of a culture of WISA (What If Scenario Analysis) modeling throughout the University.
- Advising leadership on the financial effects of strategic decisions under consideration.
- Providing support to leadership in the preparation of testimony and presentations concerning the financial standing and budget proposals of the University to the Board of Trustees, the executive and legislative branches of state government, and rating agencies.
- Organizing and executing the University's annual budgeting cycle in accordance with leadership directives and emphases.

- Guiding the development of highly complex annual budget(s), including specialized financial analysis and modeling, and present to leadership for review and approval.
- Analyzing college and departmental expenditures and revenues for cost-effectiveness and presenting findings to leadership and to the respective college and department heads.
- Providing studies, financial analysis, and data to leadership, the Board of Trustees, the executive and legislative branches of state government, and to others as directed by leadership.
- Providing financial analyses such as analysis of long-range operating projections and capital plans, contribution margin analysis, and unit/activity benchmarking studies as required.
- Identifying and providing closure on technical financial issues, accounting/budget system issues, budget department or college issues, and University budget issues.
- Overseeing the professional staff who partner with colleges and divisions to serve as a key resource in strategic financial operational planning at the departmental, college, and division level, noting significant trends, changes, or variations and their effect on current and proposed work programs and projects; compiling and preparing data for use by leadership.
- Providing effective staff management, including hiring and orientation, training and development, workflow and performance management, and the promotion of an inclusive and innovative work environment.
- Ensuring financial compliance with University policies and procedures and applicable legal rules and regulations.
- Collaborating with University finance leadership to develop financial processes, policies, and procedures.
- Producing output in response to both internal and external, as well as competing, deadlines.

Additional duties and responsibilities include:

- Assisting in the formulation phase of the institutional budget in such areas as the assessment of validity assumptions, appraisal of work plan projections, evaluation of the adequacy of justification and forecasting of requirements.
- Overseeing budget systems and identification of budget modifications. Maintaining financial control over budgetary allotments of divisions, colleges, and departments within the University.
- Preparing and making budget presentations to leadership. Presenting recommendations concerning the budget to leadership.
- Performing other duties as required.

QUALIFICATIONS

Required:

- Master's Degree in a relevant field;
- Minimum of ten years of progressive experience in management and administration, with five of those years in financial management that includes budgeting, financial modeling, and control techniques;
- Demonstrated experience with complex financial modeling;
- Demonstrated experience in change management as it pertains to budgeting and institutional financial planning;
- Demonstrated ability to identify and solve customer service problems;
- Demonstrated supervisory experience;
- Demonstrated strong interpersonal and verbal communication skills;
- Demonstrated proficiency in written communication skills; and,
- Demonstrated ability to work with diverse groups/populations.

Preferred Qualifications:

- Demonstrated ability in complex automated financial systems;
- Demonstrated experience in higher education financial management; and,
- Direct experience with Responsibility Center Management budgeting, including implementation.

TO APPLY

Review of applications, nominations, and expressions of interest will begin immediately and continue on a confidential basis until an appointment is made. All inquiries, nominations/referrals, and applications (including resume and letters of interest responding to the requirements outlined in the position profile) should be submitted via Isaacson, Miller's website:

*Daniel Rodas, Partner
Gail Gregory, Managing Associate
Katy Ryan, Senior Associate
Isaacson, Miller*
<https://www.imsearch.com/search-detail/S8-355>

Electronic submission is required.

It is the policy of the University of Rhode Island not to discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, age, color, creed, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, citizenship status, genetic information, marital status, AIDS/HIV and domestic abuse victim, homelessness or discriminate against disabled and Vietnam era veterans in the recruitment, admission or treatment of students, the recruitment, hiring or treatment of faculty and staff, and in the operation of its activities and programs, as specified by State and Federal Laws, including the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments to the Higher Education Act, Executive Order 11246, as amended, New Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as Amended, Section 402 of the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and all other laws which pertain to access and equity.

The University of Rhode Island is committed to the principles of Affirmative Action and the attainment of Equal Employment and Equal Educational opportunities for all qualified individuals. The Director of Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity and Diversity has been designated by the President as the person who shall have overall responsibility for the implementation and maintenance of such programs. For further information, please contact the Affirmative Action Office at (401) 874-2442.