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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

Introduced By: Senator V. Susan Sosnowski

Date Introduced: February 27, 2026

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Sections 16-32-2, 16-32-9, 16-32-27 and 16-32-34 of the General Laws in  
2 Chapter 16-32 entitled "University of Rhode Island [See Title 16 Chapter 97 — The Rhode Island  
3 Board of Education Act]" are hereby amended to read as follows:

4           **16-32-2. Board of Trustees established.**

5           (a) There is hereby created a board of trustees for the university of Rhode Island, sometimes  
6 referred to as the "board" or "board of trustees," which shall be and is constituted a public  
7 corporation, empowered to sue and be sued in its own name; to borrow money; to compromise and  
8 settle claims; to have a seal; and to make and execute contracts and other instruments necessary or  
9 convenient to the exercise of its powers; and to exercise all the powers, in addition to those  
10 specifically enumerated in this chapter, usually appertaining to public corporations entrusted with  
11 control of postsecondary educational institutions and functions. Upon its organization, the board  
12 shall be vested with the legal title to all property, real and personal, now owned by and/or under  
13 the control or in the custody of the council on postsecondary education for the use of the university  
14 of Rhode Island, including all its departments, divisions, and branches, sometimes referred to as  
15 the property, and as such the provisions of chapter 6 of title 37 ("acquisition of land"), including  
16 the rules, regulations, and procedures of the committee promulgated thereunder, and the provisions  
17 of chapter 7 of title 37 ("management and disposal of property"), shall not apply to the board or the  
18 property except for approval of proposed actions to sell the property or to lease the property for a  
19 period greater than five (5) years.

1 (b) The board is empowered to hold and operate the property in trust for the state; to  
2 acquire, hold, and dispose of the property and other like property as deemed necessary for the  
3 execution of its corporate purposes, and the board may, in its discretion, adopt or promulgate its  
4 own rules and regulations with respect thereto. The board is made successor to all powers, rights,  
5 duties, and privileges for the university of Rhode Island formerly belonging to the council on  
6 postsecondary education pertaining to postsecondary education and the board of governors for  
7 higher education.

8 (c) The board shall be the employer of record for the university. It shall retain all authority  
9 formerly vested in the council on postsecondary education and the board of education regarding  
10 the employment of faculty and staff at the university of Rhode Island. The board shall appoint the  
11 president of the university and shall review their performance on an annual basis.

12 (1) The board is empowered to enter into contracts and agreements with the council on  
13 postsecondary education and/or the department of administration related to employee benefits,  
14 including but not limited to retirement benefits, health, dental, vision and life insurance, disability  
15 insurance, workers' compensation, and tuition waivers to maximize the state's and university's  
16 purchasing and investment portfolio and educational opportunities for the benefit of its employees.

17 (2) The board is empowered to enter into collective bargaining agreements as appropriate  
18 with its employees and all existing collective bargaining agreements in effect when the board is  
19 established pursuant to § 16-32-2.2 shall be transferred from the council on postsecondary  
20 education to the board.

21 (d) The board shall make rules and regulations for the control and use of all public  
22 properties and highways under its care, and for violations of those rules and regulations; penalties,  
23 up to one hundred dollars (\$100) and costs for any one offense, may be imposed by any district  
24 court or police court in the city or town where the violation occurs; and, in general, the board shall  
25 take all actions necessary for the proper execution of the powers and duties granted to, and imposed  
26 upon, the board by the terms of this chapter.

27 (e) The board shall make and maintain rules and regulations ~~pursuant to chapter 2 of title~~  
28 ~~37 to implement its responsibilities as a public agency~~ for procurement purposes ~~as defined in §~~  
29 ~~37-2-7(16)~~. The university's vice president of administration and finance is designated the chief  
30 purchasing officer for the university.

31 (1) Notwithstanding ~~the provisions of § 37-2-22, small procurements made by the board~~  
32 ~~and the university shall not exceed an aggregate amount of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) for~~  
33 ~~construction and ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) for all other purchases, regardless of the source of~~  
34 ~~funding, and shall be made in accordance with small purchase regulations promulgated by the~~

1 ~~board. These thresholds may be increased annually through an amendment to the small purchase~~  
2 ~~regulations promulgated by the board of trustees, to reflect the annual increase in the federal~~  
3 ~~Consumer Price Index published by the United States Department of Labor from the date of any~~  
4 ~~prior adjustment~~ any rule, regulation, or provision of the public laws or general laws to the contrary,  
5 and except for procurements directly related to projects funded by the State of Rhode Island general  
6 obligation bonds, the board and the university shall not be required to comply with chapter 2 of  
7 title 37 ("state purchases"); and, in general, the board and the university shall contract on their own  
8 behalf and pursuant to the rules and regulations promulgated by the board as described in this  
9 subsection (e) of this section for all other purchases.

10 (f) The board shall evaluate data on which to base performance of the university as  
11 described in subsection (g) of this section which shall be defined by the president of the university.  
12 These measures may include and incorporate outcomes or goals from multiple, previous years. The  
13 lack of information from previous years, however, will not affect the use of performance-based  
14 measures.

15 (g) The university of Rhode Island shall have unique measures consistent with its purpose,  
16 role, scope, and mission. The board shall provide faculty and students an opportunity to provide  
17 input on the development of performance measures.

18 (1) The performance-based measures shall include, but not be limited to, the following  
19 metrics:

20 (i) The number and percentage, including growth in relation to enrollment and prior years  
21 of bachelor's degrees awarded to first-time, full-time students within four (4) years and six (6)  
22 years, including summer graduates;

23 (ii) The number of degrees awarded that are tied to Rhode Island's high demand, high-  
24 wage employment opportunities consistent with the institution's mission;

25 (iii) One metric that applies only to the university, in consultation with the president, which  
26 shall consider faculty, staff, and student input; and

27 (iv) Any other metrics that are deemed appropriate by the board.

28 (2) Weight may be assigned to any of the aforementioned metrics to reinforce the mission  
29 of the university, the economic needs of the state, and the socio-economic status of the students.

30 (h) The board shall hold the university accountable for developing and implementing  
31 transfer pathways for students from the community college of Rhode Island and Rhode Island  
32 college.

33 (i) The board shall adopt a process requiring every academic program at the university to  
34 accept for credit the advanced placement subject test scores of students who obtain a three (3) or

1 better in any advanced placement course.

2 (j) The board shall supervise, coordinate, and/or authorize audits, civil and administrative  
3 investigations, and inspections or oversight reviews, when necessary, relating to expenditure of  
4 state or federal funds, or to any and all university programs and operations, as well as the  
5 procurement of any supplies, services, or construction, by the university. In the course of an audit  
6 or investigation, the board authorized auditor(s) shall review statutes and regulations of the  
7 university and shall determine if the university is in compliance and shall make recommendations  
8 concerning the efficiency of operations, and the effect of such statutes or regulations on internal  
9 controls and the prevention and detection of fraud, waste, and abuse. The board authorized  
10 auditor(s) may recommend policies or procedures that may strengthen internal controls, or assist in  
11 the prevention or detection of fraud, waste, and abuse or mismanagement. Any audits conducted  
12 shall be transmitted to the office of internal audit and program integrity established in chapter 7.1  
13 of title 35.

14 **16-32-9. Annual appropriations.**

15 (a) The general assembly shall annually appropriate any sum as it may deem sufficient for  
16 the purpose of defraying the expenses of the university, the appropriation to be expended under the  
17 direction of the trustees and officers of the university. The state controller is authorized and directed  
18 to draw his or her orders upon the general treasurer for the payment of the appropriations or so  
19 much of the sums that are necessary for the purposes appropriated, upon the receipt by him or her  
20 of proper vouchers as the board of trustees may by rule provide. The board shall receive, review,  
21 and adjust the budget for the university and present the budget under the requirements of § 35-3-4.

22 (b) Any tuition or fee increase schedules in effect for the university shall be received by  
23 the board of trustees for allocation for the fiscal year for which state appropriations are made to the  
24 board by the general assembly; provided that no further increases may be made by the board for  
25 the year for which appropriations are made.

26 (c) All housing, dining, and other auxiliary facilities at the university shall be self-  
27 supporting and no funds shall be appropriated by the general assembly to pay operating expenses,  
28 including principal and interest on debt services, and overhead expenses for the facilities. Any debt  
29 service costs on general obligation bonds presented to the voters in November 2000 and November  
30 2004 or appropriated funds from the Rhode Island capital plan fund or the housing auxiliaries at  
31 the university of Rhode Island shall not be subject to this self-supporting requirement in order to  
32 provide funds for the building construction and rehabilitation program.

33 (d) The additional costs to achieve self-supporting status shall be by the implementation of  
34 a fee schedule of all housing, dining, and other auxiliary facilities, including but not limited to,

1 operating expenses, principal, and interest on debt services, and overhead expenses.

2 (e) Notwithstanding subsections (a) and (c) of this section or any provisions of this title, to  
3 the extent necessary to comply with the provisions of any outstanding bonds issued by the Rhode  
4 Island health and educational building corporation or outstanding lease certificates of participation,  
5 in either case, issued for the benefit of the university of Rhode Island, the community college of  
6 Rhode Island, and/or Rhode Island college, to the extent necessary to comply with the provisions  
7 of any such bonds or certificates of participation, the general assembly shall annually appropriate  
8 any such sums it deems necessary from educational and general revenues (including, but not limited  
9 to tuition) and auxiliary enterprise revenues derived from the university of Rhode Island, the  
10 community college of Rhode Island and Rhode Island college, to be allocated by the council on  
11 postsecondary education or by the board of trustees, as appropriate, in accordance with the terms  
12 of the contracts with such bondholders or certificate holders.

13 [\(f\) Effective retroactively to July 1, 2025, the University of Rhode Island shall be exempt](#)  
14 [from any limitations imposed on full-time equivalent \(FTE\) positions.](#)

15 **16-32-27. Establishment of landscaping fund.**

16 All money received pursuant to the provisions of § 16-52-2(b) shall be deemed to be trust  
17 funds for the benefit of the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the Community  
18 College of Rhode Island to be held by the general treasurer in a separate rotary fund for each  
19 institution which shall be made available to the presidents of the University of Rhode Island, Rhode  
20 Island College, or the Community College of Rhode Island to be applied solely for the purpose of  
21 improving landscaping, [safety and security](#), and/or parking facilities at the respective colleges as  
22 determined by the presidents of these colleges.

23 **16-32-34. Fiscal accounts — Receipts — Petty cash funds.**

24 (a) The treasurer of the university of Rhode Island, as appointed by the board of trustees,  
25 shall:

26 (1) Keep an accurate account of his or her receipts and expenditures, which shall be audited  
27 by the state controller; and

28 (2) Turn over to the general treasurer at monthly intervals all sums of money received by  
29 him or her during the preceding month which shall be credited to the proper accounts and funds by  
30 the general treasurer.

31 (b) The state controller shall establish an imprest fund or petty cash fund for the use of the  
32 treasurer of the university for expenditures of any nature as may be approved by the state controller.

33 [\(c\) Nothing contained in this section or chapter shall prohibit the university from](#)  
34 [establishing its own internal audit functions and controls, including to conduct post audits, as](#)

1 [consistent with the provisions of §16-32-2\(j\).](#)

2 SECTION 2. Section 37-2-7 of the General Laws in Chapter 37-2 entitled "State  
3 Purchases" is hereby amended to read as follows:

4 **37-2-7. Definitions.**

5 The words defined in this section have the meanings set forth below whenever they appear  
6 in this chapter, unless the context in which they are used clearly requires a different meaning or a  
7 different definition is prescribed for a particular section, group of sections, or provision:

8 (1) "Business" means any corporation, partnership, individual, sole proprietorship, joint  
9 stock company, joint venture, or any other legal entity through which business is conducted.

10 (2) "Change order" means a written authorization signed by the purchasing agent directing  
11 or allowing the contractor to proceed with changes, alterations, or modifications to the terms,  
12 conditions, or scope of work on a previously awarded contract.

13 (3) "Chief purchasing officer" shall mean: (i) For a state agency, the director of the  
14 department of administration, and (ii) For a public agency, the executive director or the chief  
15 operational officer of the agency.

16 (4) "Construction" means the process of building, altering, repairing, improving, or  
17 demolishing any public structures or building, or other public improvements of any kind to any  
18 public real property. It does not include the routine maintenance or repair of existing structures,  
19 buildings, or real property performed by salaried employees of the state of Rhode Island in the  
20 usual course of their jobs.

21 (5) "Contract" means all types of agreements, including grants and orders, for the purchase  
22 or disposal of supplies, services, construction, or any other item. It includes awards; contracts of a  
23 fixed-price, cost, cost-plus-a-fixed-fee, or incentive type; contracts providing for the issuance of  
24 job or task orders; leases; letter contracts; purchase orders; and construction management contracts.  
25 It also includes supplemental agreements with respect to any of the foregoing. "Contract" does not  
26 include labor contracts with employees of state agencies.

27 (6) "Contract amendment" means any written alteration in the specifications, delivery  
28 point, rate of delivery, contract period, price, quantity, or other contract provisions of any existing  
29 contract, whether accomplished by unilateral action in accordance with a contract provision, or by  
30 mutual action of the parties to the contract. It includes bilateral actions, such as supplemental  
31 agreements, and unilateral actions, such as change orders, administrative changes, notices of  
32 termination, and notices of the exercise of a contract option.

33 (7) "Contractor" means any person having a contract with a governmental body.

34 (8) "Data" means recorded information, regardless of form or characteristic.

1 (9) "Designee" means a duly authorized representative of a person holding a superior  
2 position.

3 (10) "Employee" means an individual drawing a salary from a state governmental entity.

4 (11) "State governmental entity" means any entity created as a legislative body or a public  
5 or state agency by the general assembly or constitution of this state, except for municipal, regional,  
6 or county governmental entities.

7 (12) "May" means permissive.

8 (13) "Negotiation" means contracting by either the method set forth in § 37-2-19, 37-2-20,  
9 or 37-2-21.

10 (14) "Person" means any business, individual, organization, or group of individuals.

11 (15) "Procurement" means the purchasing, buying, renting, leasing, or otherwise obtaining  
12 of any supplies, services, or construction. It also includes all functions that pertain to the obtaining  
13 of any supply, service, or construction item, including a description of requirements, selection and  
14 solicitation of sources, preparation, and award of contract, and all phases of contract administration.

15 (16) "Public agency" shall mean the Rhode Island industrial recreational building  
16 authority, the Rhode Island commerce corporation, the Rhode Island industrial facilities  
17 corporation, the Rhode Island refunding bond authority, the Rhode Island housing and mortgage  
18 finance corporation, the Rhode Island resource recovery corporation, the Rhode Island public  
19 transit authority, the Rhode Island student loan authority, the Howard development corporation,  
20 the water resources board corporate, the Rhode Island health and education building corporation,  
21 the Rhode Island turnpike and bridge authority, the Blackstone Valley district commission, the  
22 Narragansett Bay water quality management district commission, the Rhode Island  
23 telecommunications authority, the convention center authority, the Channel 36 foundation, the  
24 Rhode Island lottery commission their successors and assigns, any other body corporate and politic  
25 which has been or will be created or established within this state excepting cities and towns, ~~the~~  
26 ~~university of Rhode Island board of trustees for all purchases that are funded by restricted,~~  
27 ~~sponsored, or auxiliary monies,~~ and the council on postsecondary education for all purchases that  
28 are funded by restricted, sponsored, or auxiliary monies.

29 (17) "Purchase request" or "purchase requisition" means that document whereby a using  
30 agency requests that a contract be entered into to obtain goods and/or services for a specified need,  
31 and may include, but is not limited to, the technical description of the requested item, delivery  
32 requirements, transportation mode request, criteria for evaluation of proposals, and/or preparation  
33 of suggested sources of supply, and information supplied for the making of any written  
34 determination and finding required by § 37-2-6.

1 (18) “Purchasing agency” means any state governmental entity which is authorized by this  
2 chapter, its implementing regulations, or by way of delegation from the chief purchasing officer to  
3 contract on its own behalf rather than through the central contracting authority of the chief  
4 purchasing officer.

5 (19) “Purchasing agent” means any person authorized by a governmental entity in  
6 accordance with procedures prescribed by regulations, to enter into and administer contracts and  
7 make written determinations and findings with respect to contracts. The term also includes an  
8 authorized representative acting within the limits of authority. “Purchasing agent” also means the  
9 person appointed in accordance with § 37-2-1.

10 (20) “Services” means the rendering, by a contractor, of its time and effort rather than the  
11 furnishing of a specific end product, other than reports that are merely incidental to the required  
12 performance of services. “Services” does not include labor contracts with employees of state  
13 agencies.

14 (21) “Shall” means imperative.

15 (22) “State” means the state of Rhode Island and any of its departments or agencies and  
16 public agencies.

17 (23) “Supplemental agreement” means any contract modification which is accomplished  
18 by the mutual action of the parties.

19 (24) “Supplies” means all property, including, but not limited to, leases of real property,  
20 printing, and insurance, except land or permanent interest in land.

21 (25) “Using agency” means any state governmental entity which utilizes any supplies,  
22 services, or construction purchased under this chapter.

23 (26) As used in § 37-2-59, “architect” or “engineer” services means those professional  
24 services within the scope of practice of architecture, professional engineering, or registered land  
25 surveying pertaining to construction, as defined by the laws of this state. “Consultant” means any  
26 person with whom the state and/or a public agency has a contract which contract provides for the  
27 person to give direction or information as regards a particular area of knowledge in which the  
28 person is a specialist and/or has expertise.

29 (27) For purposes of §§ 37-2-62 — 37-2-70, “directors” means those members of a public  
30 agency appointed pursuant to a statute who comprise the governing authority of the board,  
31 commission, authority, and/or corporation.

32 (28) “State agency” means any department, commission, council, board, bureau,  
33 committee, institution, or other governmental entity of the executive or judicial branch of this state  
34 not otherwise established as a body corporate and politic, and includes, without limitation, the

1 council on postsecondary education except for purchases which are funded by restricted, sponsored,  
2 or auxiliary moneys, the university of Rhode Island board of trustees ~~except~~ for all purchases which  
3 are funded by ~~restricted, sponsored, or auxiliary monies~~ proceeds of general obligation bonds, and  
4 the council on elementary and secondary education.

5 (29) “Governmental entity” means any department, commission, council, board, bureau,  
6 committee, institution, legislative body, agency, or government corporation of the executive,  
7 legislative, or judicial branches of state, federal, and/or local governments.

8 (30) “Construction management at-risk” or “construction management at-risk services” or  
9 “construction management at-risk delivery method” is a construction method wherein a  
10 construction manager at-risk provides a range of preconstruction services and construction  
11 management services which may include cost estimation and consultation regarding the design of  
12 the building project, the preparation and coordination of bid packages, scheduling, cost control, and  
13 value engineering, acting as the general contractor during the construction, detailing the trade  
14 contractor scope of work, holding the trade contracts and other contracts, evaluating trade  
15 contractors and subcontractors, and providing management and construction services, all at a  
16 guaranteed maximum price, which shall represent the maximum amount to be paid by the using  
17 agency for the building project, including the cost of work, the general conditions, and the fee  
18 payable to the construction management at-risk firm.

19 (31) “Construction manager at-risk” or “construction management at-risk firm” is a person  
20 or business experienced in construction that has the ability to evaluate and to implement drawings  
21 and specifications as they affect time, cost and quality of construction and the ability to coordinate  
22 and deliver the construction of the project within a guaranteed maximum price, which shall  
23 represent the maximum amount to be paid by the using agency for the building project, including  
24 the cost of the work, the general conditions, and the fee payable to the construction management  
25 at-risk firm. The construction manager at-risk provides consultation services during the  
26 preconstruction and construction phases of the project. The project engineer, architect, or owner’s  
27 program manager may not serve as the construction manager at-risk.

28 (32) “Owner’s program manager” shall be an entity engaged to provide project  
29 management services on behalf of a state agency for the construction and supervision of the  
30 construction of a building project. The owner’s program manager acts as the owner’s agent in all  
31 aspects of the construction project, including, but not limited to, architectural programming,  
32 planning, design, construction, and the selection and procurement of an appropriate construction  
33 delivery method. The owner’s program manager shall have at least seven (7) years’ experience in  
34 the construction and supervision of construction of buildings of similar size and complexity. The

1 owner's program manager shall not have been employed during the preceding year by the design  
2 firm, the construction firm, and/or the subcontractors associated with the project.

3 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

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1           This act would enhance and further define the role of the board of trustees of the University  
2 of Rhode Island. This act would also provide a more efficient procurement process for the  
3 university.

4           This act would take effect upon passage.

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