

***REPORT: URI PART-TIME FACULTY UNITED***

***NOVEMBER***

***2011***

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**TO: URI PART-TIME FACULTY  
FROM: YOUR UNION LEADERSHIP TEAM  
SUBJ: Items of Importance**

First, before we begin our report we want to apologize for not being able to get this information to you sooner. Rather than put together a hastily drafted report we thought it best to delay writing to you so that our report would be more complete and, in turn, give you more information. We thank you for your patience.

**COMMUNICATIONS FROM PTFU**

We have given great effort to keep the URI part-time/adjunct faculty (PTF) informed of the work of the URI PTFU Executive Committee, the on-going work of the Grievance Committee on behalf of PTF who have been harmed by the Administration's repeated violations of provisions of the new URI PTFU/URI Board of Governors Agreement, as well as many other important activities in support of PTF and in our continuing efforts to enforce (with the assistance of URI PTFU legal counsel) the PTFU contract. It both disappoints and surprises us to hear some PTF say they have never even heard of the Union's existence. We ask: How is that possible since the e-mail list we use to communicate with our PTFU colleagues is the official part-time faculty e-mail list given to us each semester by the URI Administration. (See "Your E-Mail Address" section below.)

***YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS***

The PTFU union does **not** create the PTFU e-mail address list. That list is provided to us (as required by RI State Law) by the URI Administration. It is your responsibility to ensure that the University and, in turn, the PTFU union, has your correct and current e-mail address. Although several PTF say they have not received correspondence from the PTFU it is a fact that when we send out messages to the entire group very few messages

## **Your E-mail Address (Con't)**

bounce back as undeliverable. The few that do return as undeliverable are corrected, if possible, and resent to the intended recipient. If you know of anyone not receiving communications from PTFU please ask them to contact the PTFU office to have their e-mail address corrected. Thanks in advance for your assistance on this.

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## **URI PTFU ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE**

We don't expect all PTF to know how faculty unions (part-time and full-time) in higher education are administered, but we do think that those PTF who claim to know about such unions should at least know how they are managed—that is, following both local and national models, the officers and other EC members of our union are all URI PTF who **volunteer their time** out of a personal commitment to working on behalf of the best interests of the URI part-time faculty. Contrary to the opinion expressed by one [others said essentially the same thing, some even worse] of the sidebar discussants (see below, “Sidebar Group E-Mails Go Viral”) who said with regard to the service fee: “It seems as if the PTFU is rewarding itself rather than the instructors it claims to support and protect” (name intentionally withheld).

The truth is that no one—not the President, not the Vice President, not the Treasurer, not the Secretary, none of the at-large members, nor the URI PTFU Consultant, gets paid for their hard work in contributing their time in service of your union. And again, following both national and local (e.g., URI AAUP full-time faculty union) models, the salaried personnel in an academic union office would be either an Executive Director or an Executive Assistant (some large academic unions have both). These individuals manage their union's office and administer the union's policies and protocols. They also provide assistance to the President and other members of the EC in carrying out their duties and responsibilities on behalf of their union. The salary of an Executive Director is about three (3) times higher (\$150,000+) than that of an Executive Assistant. We obviously chose to hire an extremely qualified person to serve as URI PTFU's Executive Assistant.

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## ***SIDEBAR GROUP E-MAILS GO VIRAL***

How could it possibly be in the best interest of URI's part-time/adjunct faculty for a small group of PTF bargaining unit members to include in their e-mail stream all of the following: the URI Administration (the President's office, the Provost's office, the Deans), several key individuals in the

## **Sidebar Group E-Mails Go Viral (Cont'd)**

national AAUP office, individual faculty members at a number of regional and national universities, and a wide range of people outside of higher education institutions. These are the ones we know about; there may be many others.

Included in its expansive e-mail CC stream is the complete text of the e-mail message sent by each individual along with the full name of the person who wrote the e-mail. Unfortunately, most of these e-mails, in our opinion, can only be collectively described as a vitriolic and hostile dialogue being carried on by a small group of PTF, a dialogue initiated by a PTF member EC communicated with months ago in good faith and with an attempt to reach a cordial resolution to the individual's concerns about the URI PTFU agency/service fee. As part of our discussion we assured him that a review of the fees would be, as previously scheduled, conducted in Spring 2012 and that all views regarding the fee issue would be taken into consideration.

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### ***URI PTFU FEES***

The URI PTFU will reach its 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary on 23 December 2011, although the gains achieved in the contract were retroactive to 1 July 2011 as awarded by the Arbitrator who ruled in our favor on many of the gains awarded to the URI PTFU in its first contract.

The PTFU EC decided at the time service fees (aka agency fees) were initially set and ratified that a review of union fees would be undertaken annually in the Spring semester of each academic year when course assignments and other essential data are available for that year.

A great deal of misinformation is contained in the sidebar discussion currently taking place among a group of URI's PTF, misinformation that needs to be corrected since it is central to that dialogue. There are, as we are sure you realize, many factors to be taken into account in determining academic union fees. For example, in arriving at the current union fee for URI PTFU we compared ourselves with like kind institutions, that is, we compared ourselves with part-time faculty who teach at PhD degree granting research institutions; we did not compare ourselves with community colleges. We also compared ourselves with institutions that pay part-time faculty in the range of \$3,000 - \$5,000 per course, not with community colleges that pay their part-time faculty much less, between \$2,000 - \$2,800 per course; and we carefully studied actual entire part-time faculty union contracts with similar higher education institutions, institutions providing substantial monetary increments on a seniority/performance basis.

### ***URI PTFU FEES (Cont'd)***

One PTF participating in the recent sidebar conversation asked: "Are the schools listed ... outliers in the low direction and most other PTFU dues are more in line with (or higher than) ours." The answer is yes to both questions. Since all of the percent figures in that initial e-mail are taken completely out of context the information cited is inevitably misleading and not all that useful in a discussion of the appropriate fees that might apply to URI's part-time faculty.

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### ***CONTRACT GAINS***

The URI Part-Time Faculty United (URI PTFU) / URI Board of Governors for Higher Education (BOG) contract includes numerous provisions **that represent significant and substantial gains** for URI's part-time faculty in its first collective bargaining Agreement.

**These gains include:** a **seniority system** that begins with the 1996 fall semester to the present and is designed to eliminate favoritism and arbitrariness in part-time faculty course assignments, on the one hand, and to provide for job security and advancement in salary on the other; a **grievance procedure** that includes appeal to the Commissioner of Higher Education and external arbitration, if needed; a **salary structure that provides for three pay levels—PTF I to PTF II to PTF III**—with movement through the pay levels based upon seniority and performance; an **Academic Freedom** article that uses the same language found in the full-time faculty union contract as derived, in turn, from the universally accepted National AAUP Statement on Academic Freedom; a **salary plan** whereby all courses taught by part-time faculty on all URI campuses (Kingston, Bay Campus, Providence Campus) are paid the same salary minimum per course; a **salary structure based upon per credit rate rather than per course rate** which ensures that courses carrying 4 or more credits will pay a higher salary than that paid for a 3 credit course; **job security** through the inclusion of a "just cause" stipulation for termination of employment; and a statement that there is an **expectation of continuing employment** based on the availability of courses for part-time faculty who have taught satisfactorily. Although it isn't like the salary proposal PTFU put on the table, there is nonetheless some **salary increase** in the Agreement, as follows: **Level I** \$3,549 (1-19 courses); **Level II** \$3705 (20-29) courses; **Level III** \$3861 (30 or more courses). (Note: this finally brings the Kingston pay rate in line with the amount that has long been offered at the Providence campus). **Further**, the contract also includes a list of **Work-Related Entitlements** (Article XV). FYI, the full contract is available on our WebSite: [www.uri.edu/ptfu](http://www.uri.edu/ptfu)

### ***Contract Gains (con't)***

**The end date of the Contract is June 30, 2012.** This one and a half year time-frame is the result of our fight for a two-year contract with an initial date of July 1, 2010 and which we won during the PTFU contract negotiations. Hence, we have the opportunity within a relatively short period of time to put forth again our proposals for a substantial salary increase, the introduction of a health benefits package, and a proposal for tuition waiver provisions.

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### ***REVIEW OF PTFU FEES***

As mentioned earlier, the PTFU EC voted at the time the original fee structure was established that a complete review of fees paid by URI PTF to their union would be conducted annually in the Spring semester, a time when PTF course assignments are completed for that academic year and other essential data are available to be included in the overall fee structure. The first review of PTFU fees is scheduled for and will be undertaken next semester, Spring 2012 at which point we will have the essential information we need to fully examine the dues structure.

If you wish to have your views on the URI PTFU union fees considered as part of this review, please call or email the PTFU office and share your thoughts with us. The results of the Spring 2012 review will be announced to the full membership and placed on the agenda for the Spring 2012 General Membership meeting to be held mid-April 2012 for discussion and vote.

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### ***ACCESS TO UNION BUDGET***

The Executive Committee has voted to make the PTFU budget open for examination for all PTF in the bargaining unit during the period 29 November 2011 - 23 December 2011 to provide all PTF in the bargaining unit access to the PTFU budget. If you wish to examine the budget all you need to do is call or email the URI PTFU office to ask for an appointment, for this purpose. You may also examine the bargaining unit roster at the same time, if you wish. (Time for each appointment will be limited to 15 minutes to accommodate as many PTF as possible. The office is very small.)

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### ***Access to Budget (Cont'd)***

NOTE: You will note in reviewing the budget that the largest expense paid out by PTFU has been for legal costs involved in setting up the union and the 4 year struggle to achieve that goal and, more recently to fighting back against the Administrations repeated violations of the rights PTF have under our new contract.

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#### ***A Personal Statement from the Chair, URI PTFU Grievance Committee***

To whom it may concern:

I am the Chair of the URI/PTFU Grievance Committee, and I fervently support the union's efforts to improve the lot of URI's part-time faculty. Prior to becoming involved in the union's activities, I had never been a union supporter. Indeed, my background had always put me on the management part of the management-union spectrum. For those of you who oppose unionization, my conversion might be a useful lesson.

At the end of 1999, I retired from the practice of law and became a graduate student in English at URI. Prior to that time, I had always been, to say the least, suspicious of unions. In the 39 years I practiced law, I occasionally engaged in management-labor matters – always on the management side. My father had been general counsel to two corporations, and his legal efforts were always on the management side. The household in which I was raised was a politically conservative place.

I became a part-time teacher at URI in the fall of 2004; I taught a course offered by the Department of Writing and Rhetoric. I teach in that department now, and I must candidly state that I have always been treated fairly there. Nevertheless, when the effort to unionize part-time faculty arose I supported it because of the abysmally low stipends set by the university for part-time faculty. It seemed to me that unionization would be the only way of correcting the situation. As the unionization effort proceeded, I gradually became aware that other part-time faculty members felt abused by the system. When it came time to vote on the proposed collective bargaining contract, I was present at a polling place at CCE. Part-time faculty, most of whom I had never met, came to that polling place, and I vividly recall that many of them expressed, sometimes emotionally, their appreciation for the efforts of those who had devoted the time and work necessary to bring the contract to a vote. As the union has taken shape and has begun to fight for higher pay and greater employment rights for all of us, I have come to the inescapable conclusion that despite my background, I must stand behind it. I do so because I believe firmly in what the union is trying to do for all of us. For me, the union's work is important now. For those of us who expect to be part-time faculty at URI for more years than I can look to, the union's importance will become even greater.

Very truly yours,  
Thomas D. Gidley

## ***NEW CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS***

URI PTFU will be entering new contract negotiations in the Spring 2012 semester. Obviously, it weakens our strength at the negotiating table to be viewed as at arm's length from each other. Our goal, as we know it is yours also, is to have a strong and unified URI PTFU union that will make it possible for us to not only keep the gains of our first contract but also obtain those we still want to achieve—increased salaries, health benefits, and tuition waiver rights. Your union needs your support to secure these goals.

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### **IN CLOSING**

Again, we regret we were not able to get this report to you earlier. We were, truth be told, and most assuredly naively, totally taken aback by the situation that developed with regard to the sidebar discussion. URI PTFU is a new union, not even a year in existence yet, but we're learning fast about the enormous complexities of providing leadership for a collective bargaining union and, at the same time, we are proud of what we've been able to achieve for URI's PTF. The Executive Committee is working hard on behalf of all URI PTF and we are listening to your concerns not only about the current agency/service fee but many other important work-related issues faced by many PTF colleagues.

In solidarity and with best regards,

Your PTFU Leadership Team

Executive Committee:

Timothy Tierney, President; Alexia Kosmider, Treasurer; Olga de Ruiz Panciera, Secretary; Thomas Gidley, Chair, Grievance Committee; Roy Panciera, At -Large; Patricia Maguire, Executive Assistant; Dr. Dorothy F. Donnelly, PhD, Consultant