Chat update Read the transcript from our December chat with Hasbro President and CEO Al Verrecchia '67, MBA '72, who answered questions about the toy industry and hot trends in toys this holiday season. Transcripts for all past chats are available online.

Let it snow Our annual Alumni Ski Weekend at Mount Snow, Vermont, will be held January 11-13, 2008. Enjoy two nights’ slope-side lodging at the Grand Summit Hotel and Conference Center and purchase a one- or two-day lift ticket at a discounted rate. This spectacular weekend is selling out fast, so register now.

A gala celebration Our 17th annual Winter Gala will be held on February 9, 2008, at the newly renovated Hyatt Regency Newport. The Winter Gala, sponsored by the URI Alumni Association, is an elegant, festive evening of dining, dancing, and silent auction held each year to benefit URI Alumni Association scholarships and programs.

Calling all young alumni You won’t want to miss our 2008 Young Alumni Weekend, which will be held February 22-24, 2008. Sponsored by the University of Rhode Island Alumni Association, Young Alumni Weekend is a special weekend of great events for graduates of the past decade. Further details and online registration will be available soon.

URI appoints Vermont dean, scholar to top academic post Donald H. DeHayes, dean of the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources at the University of Vermont, has been appointed the new provost and vice president for academic affairs, effective on or before April 7. DeHayes will serve as the chief academic officer of the University with overall supervisory responsibility for its teaching and scholarly missions. He succeeds M. Beverly Swan, who served in the position for 17 years and asked to return to the faculty. She has been appointed the Justin Smith Morrill University Professor.

Real estate executive donates $1 million to help create Student Wellness Center Michael Fascitelli ’78 has donated $1 million to help create a Student Wellness Center on campus, a facility that will foster personal health and promote community among URI students. The former two-story Roger Williams Dining Hall, located in the heart of the residential life community, will undergo a $5.5 million renovation and conversion into the wellness center. The gift was made to URI’s Making A Difference campaign in honor of Fascitelli’s mother, Anna Fascitelli.

URI oceanographer awarded $850,000 grant Single-celled diatoms, responsible for about 40 percent of all of the photosynthesis occurring in the world’s oceans, have a major impact on climate. To answer the question of how these diatoms respond as their environment changes, Assistant Professor of Oceanography Tatiana Rynearson has been awarded an $852,000 grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to study the biogeography of plankton, which has implications for understanding the impact of global warming. In a related story, senior Melissa Mercier traveled to Alaska last summer as part of a recent NSF-funded study of the diversity and distribution of diatoms.

Anonymous donor pledges $1 Million to URI Athletics The University of Rhode Island’s baseball facilities will undergo major upgrades thanks to the first-ever $1 million pledge to the Department of Athletics as part of the Making a Difference campaign. A portion of the gift, which comes to the University from an anonymous donor, will go toward the Student-Athlete Development Center. The gift is the largest-ever donation made in University athletics history.

Nursing student rallies support at URI for Darfur Bethany Larkin, a nursing student at the University, is learning how to help people heal. She is also trying to help heal the wounded African nation of Darfur. Her advocacy began after she attended an emerging infectious disease colloquium with Professors Roger LeBrun and Howard Ginsberg. As she learned about the human rights violations and genocide in Darfur, Larkin knew she had to get involved.
Will your employer match your gift?

This time of year many of us make gifts to our favorite charitable institutions. If you are considering making a gift to the Fund for URI or the Rhode Island Rams Athletic Association by the end of 2007, you could double or even triple your gift if you or your spouse work for a company that matches employee gifts to higher education. In addition, any gift made to The Fund for URI by December 31 will benefit from an incentive offered by the Feinstein Foundation.

At the chapters

On January 17, Missouri alumni are hosting a reception prior to the URI-Saint Louis University men’s basketball game, and on January 25, Los Angeles alumni are holding a gathering at the Derby. Find out more and see what your chapter has planned.

University offers new graduate certificate in women's studies

The Women's Studies Program is now offering a graduate certificate, which will allow students to pursue interdisciplinary study in this flourishing field, thereby enhancing their educational background and career opportunities. The URI Women's Studies Program, which has offered an undergraduate degree for more than 25 years, has developed an interdisciplinary curriculum for the certificate, based on the most advanced scholarship and feminist pedagogical principles. More...

On the calendar

"A Night for New Orleans," an evening of Louisiana-style food and entertainment, sponsored by URI students and dedicated to raising awareness and funds for victims of Hurricane Katrina, will be held on December 11 at the Narragansett Towers. The China Rising program on December 11 will feature Chinese film director Peng Xiaolian's presentation, "The Changing Role of Women in Contemporary China." A multicultural mixed media exhibit, Vision Creativa!, continues at the URI Feinstein Providence Campus gallery through December 27. At the Ryan Center: Kidz Bop World Tour on December 11, and on February 10, it's John McEnroe vs. Jim Courier. More...

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