

RISE UP

May Newsletter - Welcome Back!

Email Preview

Funded by the U.S. Office of Naval Research (ONR), RISE-UP (Regional Innovation by Scaling Entrepreneurship via University Partnerships) connects the “Ocean States” – the University of Alaska, University of Hawaii, and University of Rhode Island – through 401 Tech Bridge to address national security and maritime economy challenges.

This initiative fosters student exchanges, mentorship networks, and real-world problem-solving, aiming to develop talent, expand businesses, and launch innovative ventures. Read on for updates and the remarkable individuals leading these efforts.

RISE-UP States Strengthen Collaboration at Rhode Island

Two of the three states selected by the Office of Naval Research (ONR) for the RISE-UP initiative —Alaska (University of Alaska Fairbanks) and Rhode Island (University of Rhode Island) — gathered in Rhode Island from May 19–21 for a dynamic and forward-looking meeting focused on collaboration and innovation.

The event spotlighted two core RISE-UP programs: Faculty Fellows and Patents to Products, providing an opportunity for the institutions to exchange best practices and explore collaborative opportunities. Participants were introduced to the University of Rhode Island (URI) campuses and colleges, as well as the broader Rhode Island innovation ecosystem, laying the groundwork for long-term partnerships.

A key highlight of the gathering was a full day dedicated to identifying synergies across all three RISE-UP states. Although Hawai‘i was unable to attend, discussions successfully revealed strong potential for research collaboration between faculty and students from both present institutions. Clear, actionable plans were developed to propel RISE-UP’s goals forward over the next 18 months.

As momentum builds, all three RISE-UP states will reconvene in Cordova, Alaska this August, continuing their shared commitment to innovation, academic excellence, and expanding the impact of the RISE-UP initiative.

Ideation Studio

This spring semester brought us a great group of Ideation Studio participants who worked hard all semester to hone their innovation development. As you know, the culmination of each Ideation Studio is Pitch Night and we are thrilled to announce the winners of the RISE-UP Ideation Studio Spring 2025 Pitch Night!

After weeks of refining their ideas and engaging in customer discovery, these teams pitched their innovations to a panel of judges and four walked away with implementation grants to help further the development of their products.

Congratulations to our winners:

1. SWPT – Andrew Sheerin
2. Easy Parking – Abel Frias & Diego Romero
3. Stoa – Matthew Moretta & Kui Kim / Closet Revival – Andzelika Cetera

A huge thank you to all the Spring 2025 participants for your passion, creativity, and commitment to innovation. Your hard work and bold thinking continue to inspire the RISE-UP community!



It's hard to believe the first part of our Summer 2025 Ideation Studio is already finished- it ended on Thursday, May 22. There are 12 participants who will wrap up the program in September with one more class and the the RISE-UP Ideation Studio Summer 2025 Pitch Night on September 17, 2025 from 6-8 pm - location TBD, so stay tuned for more details! We hope to see you then!



Innovation & Entrepreneurship Challenges

We are excited to share the results of the Annual Innovation Challenges Pitch Night, where teams presented their innovative and groundbreaking ideas developed through this competition.

Congratulations to the winners:

1st place: EmpowermedAI - Julia Clough, Ivy Howe, Chelsea Mohammed

2nd place: Pathway to Participation - Julia Ford, Riley Ferguson

3rd place: Civically - Caroline Bosco, Jaclyn Vincent, Angel Garcia-Filpo, Logan Cote

Congratulations to all participants for their creativity, dedication, and hard work in bringing bold ideas to life.





2025 Innovation & Entrepreneurship Fair Recap

Thank you to all who participated in or attended the 2025 Innovation & Entrepreneurship Fair. Your engagement helped make the fair a success! The event showcased a wide range of student-led ventures and innovative ideas, highlighting the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit across campus. It also provided our student entrepreneurs an opportunity to build on their customer discovery and pitch delivery by describing their ventures to interested audiences.



Innovation Faculty Fellows

Welcome to the Fall 2025 Innovation Faculty Fellows Cohort!

We are thrilled to announce the incoming Fall 2025 cohort of the RISE-UP Innovation & Entrepreneurship Faculty Fellows: Dr. Donna Gamache-Griffiths (Global Business), Dr. Christy Ashley (Marketing), Dr. Kunal Mankodiya (College of Engineering), and Dr. Desirae Heys (College of Nursing).

These faculty members join a dynamic community from URI and our partner institutions in Alaska and Hawai'i, committed to expanding innovation and entrepreneurship in the classroom and beyond.

More details to come this fall as the program kicks off. We can't wait to see what this new cohort accomplishes!



Congratulations to Innovation Faculty Fellow Izabela Ciesielska-Wrobel!

We're proud to share that Dr. Izabela Ciesielska-Wrobel has been awarded the 2024–25 Dean's Excellence Award for Research by the College of Business. This award recognizes her outstanding contributions to research and scholarship, and we're thrilled to see her work honored in this way. Congratulations, Izabela!



Celebrating Excellence in Research & Innovation at University of Rhode Island

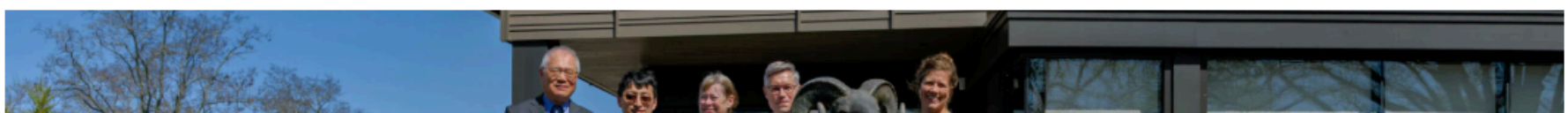
Please join us in congratulating Innovation Faculty Fellows Wenchao Ge and Brennan Phillips on their outstanding achievements as part of this year's Research, Scholarship, and Intellectual Property Excellence Awards!

Dr. Wenchao Ge (Department of Physics) received the Early Career Faculty Research and Scholarship Excellence Award for his work in the life sciences, physical sciences, and engineering.

Dr. Brennan Phillips (Department of Ocean Engineering and Graduate School of Oceanography) was honored with the Intellectual Property Excellence Award for a U.S. patent developed in collaboration with Jim Owens of Nautilus Defense, LLC.

Their accomplishments exemplify the University of Rhode Island's continued impact as an R1 institution and a national leader in research and innovation. We are proud to have them in the Innovation Faculty Fellows community!

Full list of awardees: <https://web.uri.edu/research-admin/externalrelations/excellence/excellence-award-recipients/2025-research-scholarship-and-intellectual-property-excellence-awards-recipients/>





We're proud to see Innovation Faculty Fellow Luis A. Viquez featured in The Westerly Sun! As Director of Orchestral Studies at the University of Rhode Island and an accomplished conductor, Luis brings leadership, creativity, and passion to the world of music and education.

Read the full article to learn more about his journey and impact:

https://www.thewesterlysun.com/lifestyle/in-the-easy-chair/in-the-easy-chair-with-luis-viquez/article_cfce14b3-183f-4604-9cd6-a1ac7348c10f.html



Patents2Products

Congratulations to Andrew Sheerin, Ph.D., who graduated on May 18th! We wish him the best and look forward to continued collaboration as he takes SWPT commercial.



PIE-D

Pie-D (Pathways to Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Defense) is a 3 credit course offered to URI students of all majors being offered in the Fall 2025 semester. If you or someone you know might be interested, you can register for the course directly (EGR 425/525 or INE 349) or contact riseupri@urirf.org for more information.

RISE-UP is Hiring a Videographer!

The RISE-UP program is looking for a talented and creative student videographer to help capture and share the impact of our innovative programs. This flexible, project-based role offers hands-on experience in filming, editing, and producing video content for faculty features, events, and research initiatives.

The ideal candidate is a URI student with videography and editing experience, proficiency in software like Adobe Premiere or Final Cut Pro, and access to personal video equipment. This is a great opportunity to build your portfolio while contributing to impactful storytelling.

For more details or to apply, visit [Handshake](#) or contact riseupri@urirf.org.

Support the Rebuilding of Matunuck Oyster Bar

The Matunuck Oyster Bar (MOB), a Rhode Island staple since 2009, and a long-standing partner with URI and RISE-UP, was tragically damaged in a fire this morning. Known not only for its award-winning food but also for its unwavering community support—from pandemic meal distribution to local environmental cleanups—MOB has always gone above and beyond for others.

Now, it's our turn to return the favor. A GoFundMe has been launched to help rebuild the restaurant and support its employees during this time. Let's come together to restore this cherished institution and honor the spirit of generosity it has shown us all.

Donate here: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/matunuck-oyster-bar-fire-recovery-fund>





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