



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
Council on Postsecondary Education
OFFICE OF THE POSTSECONDARY COMMISSIONER

Enclosure 5b3.
February 24, 2016

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TO: Members of the Council on Postsecondary Education

FROM: Jim Purcell, Ed.D, Commissioner for Postsecondary Education

DATE: February 17, 2016

RE: Proposal to Offer a Certificate in Gerontology at the Community
College of Rhode Island

Background

The Community College of Rhode Island is proposing to offer a 24-credit certificate in gerontology. The certificate will be housed in the Human Services Department which offers social services major with concentrations in social work, gerontology, mental health, and substance abuse.

Rationale

The certificate in gerontology is being proposed in response to the growing concerns about meeting the needs of the aging Rhode Island population coupled with the recognition that human services professionals must educate and prepare those who will be assisting seniors. According to the demographic data presented in the Rhode Island *State Plan on Aging*¹:

- In 2013, RI residents over the age of 65 represented 15.5% of the total RI population compared to 14.1% nationally.
- Rhode Island had the third highest percent of population in New England over 65 with only Maine and Vermont having higher percentages.
- Between 2000 and 2010, the population of RI residents between the ages of 60 and 69 increased 37% and those aged 85 and older increased 28%. No state has a higher percentage of residents aged 85 and older.
- Between 2010 and 2040, the elderly population of RI is expected to increase by 75%.

¹ State of Rhode Island, *State Plan on Aging*: October 1, 2015-September 30, 2019, <http://www.dea.ri.gov/documents/RIDEA%20State%20Plan%20on%20Aging%20October%201%202015%20to%20September%2030%202019.pdf>

Interinstitutional Considerations

CCRI met to discuss transfer options for the certificate into gerontology majors and minors at RIC and URI; one outcome of this meeting is that courses from the certificate will be applied toward the requirements for a minor in gerontology at URI. Gerontology courses are offered in several different departments at RIC and with one exception, taught at the 300-level (junior); discussion will continue to determine the possibility of course transfer agreements for the major, minor or as meeting general education requirements. Roger Williams University offers an undergraduate five-course certificate in gerontology.

Program

The following are required courses:

HMNS 1010	Introduction to Helping and Human Services	3 credits
HMNS 1090	Foundations of Gerontology and Elder Care	3 credits
HMNS 2200	Assessment Interviewing for Treatment Planning	3 credits
HMNS 2515*	Major Health Issues for the Elderly: Implications for Human Services	3 credits
HMNS 2520*	Social and Psychosocial Characteristics of Aging	3 credits
HMNS 2560*	Healthy and Successful Aging	3 credits
HMNS 2590*	Service Learning Practicum in Gerontology	3 credits

Students will choose one of the two following courses as an elective:

HMNS 2530*	Legal and Financial Literacy: Human Service Resource	3 credits
HMNS 2540*	Human Services Advocacy for Aging and Elderly	3 credits

Courses with asterisks are new courses.

The course will be taught in a combination of on-campus, distance learning and hybrid courses. Four of the courses will transfer into the associate degree in Human Services with a concentration in Social Work. In addition, depending on the interest generated in response to the certificate and the interest in further education, the department may propose an associate degree in Human Services with a concentration in gerontology and all of the courses in the certificate would transfer into the degree.

Faculty and Staff

Existing Human Services faculty can teach all other courses in the certificate with the exception of the course in legal and financial literacy. The intent is to hire an adjunct to teach this course.

Students

It is anticipated that interested students may come from related fields such as the Human Services concentration in social work, nursing or an allied health career program, psychology or business. In addition, it is expected that students already in the workforce who are employed by hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, adult daycare programs, senior centers, health advocacy organizations, and non-profit organizations as well as family caregivers may be interested in expanding their skills by taking the certificate.

Evaluation

The program will participate in the college's Academic Program Review process. The college will consider applying for external accreditation if recommended within the field of gerontology education.

Financial Viability

The department anticipates a cohort of 15-20 students which would make the program financially viable.

RIOPC review

The University of Rhode Island commented that the proposal was well-conceived and the certificate included interesting courses. Further, URI stated that the gerontology certificate at CCRI could increase students' interest in continuing their studies in the Human Development and Family Studies degree with a gerontology focus. Rhode Island College noted that there is discussion on accrediting gerontology programs which might have an impact on the curriculum and articulation agreements. RIC also suggested that the certificate would have greater value as a workplace credential if it were in addition to an undergraduate degree in a related field.

RIOPC staff reviewed the proposal for the certificate, additional information supplied by the Community College of Rhode Island, and comments received from the University of Rhode Island and Rhode Island College. We believe the certificate is academically sound. Further, by gaining additional skills the students would increase their opportunities for career advancement and contribute to the improved quality of services for the aging. The academic changes presented are within the mission, role and scope of the Community College of Rhode Island and do not require Council approval.