

Enclosure 4a

November 5, 2014

**Office of the
Postsecondary Commissioner**

**Public Higher Education in
Rhode Island:**

**Creating a Common
Vision for Change**

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“Rhode Island faces a number of challenges to its economic health. Addressing the job and skills gap represents a vital, yet challenging, component in the state’s recovery. Given Rhode Island’s evolving workforce supply and demands, any solution must include a focus on the capacity of the human talent pipeline. By ensuring a pool of workers who are ready to meet the labor needs of today and tomorrow, the Ocean State can expand and attract the businesses and opportunities all Rhode Islanders need for a prosperous future”

Rhode to Work: A Legislative Action Plan, RI Senate Policy Office, January 2014

A demand for change...

Public higher education in Rhode Island needs not only a common vision, but also collective support to ensure it has the opportunity to play the critical role necessary to improve our economy and workforce. Other states are moving aggressively to expand college access, raise graduation rates, align degree and certificate programs to the needs of employers, and pursue research that drives economic development. Rhode Island can do no less if it is going to achieve a bright future for its citizens.

While the recent past has been turbulent for Rhode Island public higher education, the times are changing. Increasing state funding for our state colleges, establishing the Office of the Commissioner of Postsecondary Education, and creating the Council on Postsecondary Education of the Board of Education demonstrate the beginning of the state’s commitment to better align public higher education activities to the educational and economic needs of Rhode Island.

Make no mistake, however. Accomplishing this will require a long-term strategy and the courage to do things differently in higher education. How can we make the state’s colleges and university more adaptable and nimble in a constantly changing world? What actions will garner the biggest impact? Who will be a proactive player to achieve the changes needed? What resources will be available to advance an agenda that accomplishes a common vision for public higher education in Rhode Island?

The Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner is committed to engaging key stakeholders in a dialogue that ensures the expectations that are held for higher education in Rhode Island are aligned to the strategies necessary for accomplishing those goals creating a common agenda for change.

“States can build a strong foundation for economic success and shared prosperity by investing in education. Providing expanded access to high quality education will not only expand economic opportunity for residents, but also likely do more to strengthen the overall state economy than anything else a state government can do.”

Noah Berger and Peter Fisher, A Well-Educated Workforce is Key to State Prosperity,
Economic Policy Institute, August 22, 2013

Where we are now...

Much has been done to provide a framework for change that will drive the development of a statewide strategic plan for public higher education in the Ocean State. Article 20 of the Fiscal Year 2015 State Budget establishes the role and responsibilities for the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner and positions the public colleges and university to begin the critical work of transition. Nationally, Complete College America is promoting proven strategies, or “game-changes,” to increase the number of college graduates, especially for our historically under-represented populations. The Education Trust through its Access to Success initiative similarly offers guidance on closing the gap and increasing the graduation rates for these students. Effective approaches exist; a commitment to adapt them for Rhode Island must be next.

The following documents provide a context for changing public higher education in this state and ensuring that a common vision and strategic plan emerge.

Complete College Rhode Island identifies five game-changer strategies that have demonstrated success in other states across the nation, and proposes their implementation here in Rhode Island. These include:

1. Strategic Funding that rewards performance;
2. Remediation Redesign to improve the educational outcomes of students;
3. Accelerating Time to Degree so students can complete their academic programs on time;
4. Predictable Schedules by providing block schedules to help working students; and
5. Guided Pathways to Success through highly structured degree plans and built in early-warning systems alerting advisors when students need academic support.

Fiscal Support for Higher Education examines various metrics that offer historical data on funding levels and the critical need for targeted, strategic investments in higher education that include ensuring a college degree is attainable and affordable for all Rhode Islanders.

Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner's Roles & Responsibilities translates the duties enacted through Article 20 for the Council on Postsecondary Education and the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner to key objectives and related activities. Those core functions are:

- Systematically using data to analyze information on all aspects of postsecondary education in Rhode Island;
- Strategic planning including a five-year funding plan;
- Formulating broad policy to implement identified goals and objectives;
- Assisting in budget preparation and assuring efficient management of state property at our public colleges and university;
- Administering policies, rules and regulations; and
- Advocacy of public higher education.

“Launching a strategic plan begins with seeking input from Rhode Island leaders in the public, private, and philanthropic communities. It is about focusing our efforts on where we need to go for the benefit of the students, the state, and the institutions. It requires committed players that have the courage to change.”

Dr. Jim Purcell, Rhode Island Commissioner of
Postsecondary Education

Getting to Where We Need to Be...

It's time for game-changers in Rhode Island if we are to significantly increase the number of college graduates. This can only be accomplished with bold, decisive actions. And, it must begin with a shared understanding and support for change.

Rhode Island's strategic plan for public higher education must recognize the need to:

Align higher education with the state's needs for economic and workforce development that includes producing research that translates into new businesses and technologies and establishing degrees and certificates that meet the requirements of business and industry.

Increase the number of adults with a postsecondary degree to the national goal of 60% by 2025 by expanding the number of students taking college courses while in high school and earning degrees through reverse transfer—currently 43% of RI adults have a degree which, while above the national average, is the second lowest percentage in New England.

Assure affordability of a college degree and make information on degree completion, majors, and employment easily available to students and their families.

Improve effectiveness by insuring associate degrees don't exceed 60 credits and bachelor's degrees 120 and eliminating low-performing or duplicative programs.

Be accountable for results by adopting key metrics and measuring progress over time.

66% *By 2020, 66% of jobs will require a career certificate or college degree.*
- 43% *Forty-three percent of RI adults currently have an associate degree or higher.*
23% *RI SKILLS GAP*

Complete College America, 2011

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Complete College Rhode Island

How the smallest state can take big steps to transform the state and its economy through college completion...

Complete College America identifies 5 game changers that have been proven nationally to increase the number of college degrees produced thereby altering the economy and improving the quality of life of its citizens.

Complete College RI: FIVE GAME CHANGERS

- Strategic Funding
- Remediation Redesign
- Accelerating Time to Degree
- Predictable Schedules
- Guided Pathways to Success

A Pathway for Public Higher Education in Rhode Island

A Commitment to Change...

Rhode Islanders know the importance of postsecondary education to the state's economic success. The recent establishment of the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner demonstrated the desire by state leaders for a clear and focused effort by our state's postsecondary resources to address the needs of the state and its citizens. Strong guidance regarding the role of this office to advance new approaches was provided through Article 20 passed during the 2014 legislative session. Higher education now must step up and become a committed partner in helping to shape a new future for Rhode Island—one that contains a thriving and growing economy and available jobs for a skilled workforce.

Higher education recognizes that increasing the pool of workers with higher skills also signifies helping to ensure the success of students that have rarely been successful in the past. This will be challenging work requiring a profound commitment to change. The proven best practices identified by the national Complete College America (CCA) movement offer a pathway to achieving this goal and boosting college completions. The key strategies, or game-changers, include performance funding, co-requisite remediation, and speeding up time to degree through such approaches as block scheduling.

Complete College Rhode Island will also call for the commitment and further support of leadership in this state. Accepting the challenge is the first step; taking action using and adapting the CCA framework will require the state to come together if it is to achieve a strong, vibrant economy.

The Game Changers for Rhode Island...

Strategic Funding

Pay for performance, not just enrollment, using metrics that focus on campus initiatives increasing student progression and completion. CCA and the National Governors' Association identified metrics to tie state funding to student progression through programs and completion of degrees and certificates, including financial incentives to encourage the success of low-income students and the production of graduates in high-demand fields. Important to keeping performance funding relevant is to include it as part of the base funding of an institution.

Remediation Redesign

Recent research on developmental math and English instruction indicates that it is not successful in improving the educational outcomes of students. In fact, some studies show that the practice of front-loading developmental courses discourages student matriculation and is extremely costly in both time and money. CCA recommends enrolling most academically unprepared students in college-level gateway courses with mandatory, just-in-time instructional support or courses. They also recommend curricular redesign by combining reading and writing instruction and aligning mathematics to programs of study, including matching the curriculum to real-world career needs. For the most unprepared students, provide remedial help parallel to highly structured coursework, eliminating remediation as a barrier to entry into college-level study.

Accelerating Time to Degree

Establishing a student culture where full-time enrollment is at least 15 hours is essential to on-time (4-year) graduation. CCA recommends providing students' incentives for enrolling in at least 15 hours as well as restricting bachelor's degree programs to 120 hours and associate's degree programs to 60 hours, with few exceptions.

Predictable Schedules

Help working students balance jobs and school by utilizing block scheduling of classes to add predictability to their busy lives — doing so enables many more students to attend college full-time, shortening their time to completion. Admitting students into student cohorts in more academic programs is also suggested as a way for improving time-to-degree and a quality educational experience.

Guided Pathways to Success

Technology enables colleges to be more prescriptive in developing a student's path to a degree. CCA suggests enrolling all students in highly structured degree plans, not individual courses. Mapping out every semester of study for the entire program keeps a student focused and it also compels the institution to provide courses when they are needed. Building in early warning systems to alert advisors when students fall behind in their matriculation allows for more strategic intervention. A side benefit of this approach is also better utilization of classrooms, faculty and related facilities.

There is no time to waste. Rhode Island higher education must act to generate the graduates needed to fuel the economy. Starting now, for the future that we want for our state, we need to enact proven game changer strategies.

Although the smallest state in size, Rhode Island has a big history of innovation beginning with being the birthplace of the industrial revolution in America. Starting with Roger Williams, innovative thinkers have made this state their home. No wonder the statue on the State House is of the Independent Man. And while the "Ocean State" has more than 400 miles of scenic coastline and areas of pristine beauty, we need more than the Lighthouse at Castle Hill to get our state back on course.

It is time for Rhode Island to reclaim its reputation for innovative thought and action. The challenges of the present and the future can only be met and overcome by a well-trained and educated population.

A data report prepared with Complete College America reveals that while there are improvements in some areas, others need to get much better quickly. For Rhode Island to be competitive, we need to produce more bachelor's degrees, associate degrees and postsecondary certificates, which mean achieving higher retention and graduation rates.

By 2020, 66% of jobs will require a career certificate or college degree; currently, only 43% of Rhode Island adults have an associate degree or higher.

As many other states have come to realize, it requires more than tinkering with small improvements or "model" programs. This is a time for bold, strategic change. Thirty-three states have embraced the Complete College America Game Changers; now, Rhode Island needs to act rather than observe from the sidelines. Together with workforce development, business, and other Rhode Island offices and agencies, public higher education will work to adopt these strategies and fully execute them in our state. The only question remaining is if the winds of change will billow our sails on an exciting new venture or will we allow ourselves to miss this critical opportunity to move forward.

Strategic Funding

Students' Voice: *"I can't afford to go to college or finish my degree!"*

According to a recent article in the Providence Journal, "Rhode Island ranks 5th in the nation for the amount of debt students accumulated to earn a bachelor's degree." How can we make getting a degree attainable for more students?

Students' ability to complete their degree on time not only is impacted by available financial aid, it also is influenced by institutional policies or procedures. Complete College America recommends funding built into the institutions' base budget that also is based on such factors as credit accumulation and degree completion. Funding must give equal value to the important objectives of college access, academic progress, and success to degree.

Resources must be used to maximize an effective and efficient public higher education system that provides accessible, quality education for Rhode Island citizens and is an engine in driving the state's economy.

Recommendations

1. Review practices and policies that potentially slow down students completing their degrees including course offerings, class scheduling, number of evening and weekend courses, and online offerings.
2. Examine performance-funding models in other states such as Tennessee, Ohio, and Indiana.
3. Identify desired student success metrics and establish incentives in institutions' base funding to achieve the same.

Remediation Redesign

Students' Voice: *"I have taken numerous developmental courses, costing me time and money, and have no college credits to show."*

Current remedial education courses do not support students' pursuit of a college degree. The evidence is irrefutable—traditional remediation strategies do not work for most students.

How we support students that are not academically prepared for college-level work must change. Too many dollars and too much time are going into developmental courses that lead students nowhere. Students, discouraged by having to take courses that don't count toward their degree, drop out at high rates. Postsecondary education must be responsible for not only enrolling students, but supporting their success to degree as well.

Recommendations

Require use of multiple measures to determine students' ability and placement and establish placement ranges rather than one cut score.

Make college-level coursework the "default placement." For those students needing support, establish mandatory attendance in tutoring sessions or extend the course providing additional hours for time on task. Establish early warning systems to provide "on-time" interventions for students that need additional support.

Explore other options such as developing paired courses for delivery of remediating plus college-level content course.

Accelerating Time to Degree

Students' Voice: *"I need a degree to get a good job and can't afford it to take five or six years to accomplish it."*

The goal is to insure that students make continued and steady progress toward earning a degree. Too many students begin college only to get discouraged and drop out. What are the obstacles and what can we do to help more students reach the finish line? How can we change the paradigm so that the time needed to earn a degree is decreased for Rhode Island students?

The more time it takes for students to complete their degrees, the more expensive it is for students, their families, and the taxpayers. And, the longer it takes to complete a degree, the more challenging it is for students that work and/or have families to focus on their education. What strategies can Rhode Island undertake to help insure that students are able to complete what they started?

Recommendations

Expand access to dual enrollment programs for students who, with appropriate advice from guidance counselors and college advisors, can jumpstart their college careers by earning college credits while in high school.

Degrees requiring extra credits result in additional time and have additional costs. Reduce the number of unnecessary, excess credits and maintain credit limits on Bachelor's degrees to 120 credits and associate degrees to 60 credits for most majors. Cap certificate programs at 18 to 22 credits.

Make transfer credit count by decreasing the number of excess credits that transfer students routinely have by the time they graduate by establishing a common core of general education and common prerequisites for majors. Develop common first-level courses for popular transfer

majors. By having a general education core and the common major prerequisites, the majority of transfer students will be able to transfer in as juniors.

Provide incentives for students to take 15 credit hours per semester. Students who take 15 hours a semester (or 30 over an academic year) are much more likely to graduate on time.

Predictable Schedules

Students' Voice: *"I work full-time and go to school as well as have family responsibilities at home. Course schedules don't account for this."*

To reach the goal of more college graduates we want to insure that students make continued and steady progress toward degree. Block schedules establish classes in set time periods so students can plan accordingly. For example, if a student knows that all of his/her classes will be from 8:00 AM to noon, they can schedule their work hours or family needs accordingly.

Block schedules infuse predictability into a college education, giving students the opportunity to plan for work and family obligations and decreasing the likelihood of missed classes and dropping out.

Recommendations

Pilot block schedules in selected programs and assess outcomes, requesting institutions to identify which certificate and degree programs are the best candidates for such scheduling.

Link block scheduling with whole programs of study, creating student cohorts. This allows the opportunity for working groups and learning communities to emerge providing student-to-student support.

Guided Pathways To Success

Students' Voice: *"I was glad that a road map through my first two years of college was basically handed to me through the JAA [Joint Admissions Agreement] program. College is a different setting compared to high school, and choosing gen eds [general education courses] that will count toward a degree and that will transfer is nerve-racking. More students need such guidance and support."*

With countless options in choosing majors and in selecting courses, it is understandable why too many students get off track and end up graduating with more credits than they need. There are too many choices and too little guidance. Additionally, students don't always take advantage of the advisors that are available, relying only on peer support. Every year for the

last five years, students participating in the Joint Admissions Agreement program rank the JAA Transition Plans as the first reason they would recommend the program and frequently comment that having a plan to follow makes it easy and decreases the anxiety felt around selecting courses.

Uncertainty about careers and majors also often leads to excess credits. Establishing highly structured degree programs with semester-by-semester course sequencing and milestone courses identified along the way offer guided pathways or “maps” to successful graduation.

Recommendations

Determine the status of academic mapping at each of Rhode Island’s public postsecondary institutions. Ensure clear academic maps are provided that list sequentially courses required for a specific major each semester and include milestone courses. Milestone courses are those that should be taken at a specific time in a student’s academic career, and gateway courses are the first-level math and English courses that are prerequisites for more advanced coursework.

Guide students unable to commit to a specific major to a meta-major in an area of interest (but not as specific as a major). Roadmaps for a meta-major allow students to take introductory courses in a widely defined discipline and would enable them to develop a specific major without having “wasted” excess credits on courses that are not related to degree requirements.

Promote the Joint Admissions Agreement (JAA) as an efficient transfer path for students transitioning to RIC and URI from CCRI. Students who transition through JAA graduate from CCRI with an associate degree and 60 credits applicable to the bachelor’s degree. Students are also eligible for a 10-30% tuition discount at RIC or URI.

Expand existing coordinated support services that include intrusive advising, academic tutoring, and career services such as those provided through the Access & Persistence Programs. This is particularly important if Rhode Island is to increase access to/through college for historically under-served students.

Moving Forward

The postsecondary community is excited about the full implementation of this new initiative that will advance higher education for Rhode Island. It will be in the fidelity of the implementation of Complete College America strategies tailored for Rhode Island that will make this initiative a success.

Works consulted

The Game Changers, Complete College America, October 2013.

Johnson, Nate. *Three Policies to Reduce Time to Degree*, Complete College America, February 2011.

Guided Pathways to Success: Boosting College Completion, Complete College America, Winter 2012.

**A Common Agenda for
Public Higher Education in
Rhode Island**

Article 20:

**Establishing the Roles & Responsibilities of the
Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner**

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Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (RIOPC)

Mission

The mission of the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner is to support the work of the Board of Education and the Council on Postsecondary Education in providing an excellent, accessible and affordable system of higher education designed to improve the overall educational attainment of the citizens of Rhode Island, support economic development, and enrich the civic, social and cultural life of all living in the state of Rhode Island.

Scope

The Office will serve as the definitive resource for information on and the interpretation of Council policy for public higher education and the postsecondary institutions in Rhode Island that are under the authority of the Council on Postsecondary Education. The Office will work collegially and look for shared opportunities to advance the objectives of postsecondary education with the public and independent institutions.

In fulfilling this role, the Commissioner for Postsecondary Education will work with the presidents of the state higher education institutions to determine the benefits or disadvantages of proposed new programs, departments, division, courses of study with the scope and role adopted by the Council on Postsecondary Education and in developing tables of organization. The presidents also will prepare and submit budgets to the Council on Postsecondary Education and the Board of Education for approval, and will be responsible for the general management of property.

To accomplish these and additional responsibilities called for in Article 20, the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner will rely on the collegial relations and civil discussions among the members of the postsecondary community and with important stakeholders from business, government, and K-12 education.

Roles & Responsibilities

Pursuant to Article 20 of the FY15 appropriation act (RIGL 16-59-1; RIGL 16-59-2; RIGL 16-59-6 as amended) relating to the Board of Education and the Council on Postsecondary Education the following are duties as outlined below. (Note that these align with the work of Complete College America and the Lumina Strategy Lab.)

DATA ANALYSIS: Systematically gather, process, and analyze information on all aspects of postsecondary education in Rhode Island, including identifying current and future needs [16-59-6(1)]

Objectives	Activities	OPC Unit(s)
Develop internal capacity for collection and analysis of system data to drive policy development and monitor institutional effectiveness, and to report to internal and external stakeholders	Establish a robust RIOPC website that provides interactive data that is useful and user-friendly	Finance & Management Policy & Analysis,
	Identify key metrics for internal and external reporting purposes (e.g., transfers among state institutions, degree completions, excess credits, cost factors, etc.)	Policy & Analysis, Communications
	Coordinate submission of annual data sets including IPEDS and A2S; participate in annual IPEDS training, and maintain access to state IPEDS database	Policy & Analysis
	Use longitudinal data for tracking student success, in particular for nontraditional students	Policy & Analysis
	Develop funding stream to support data collection and analysis at the system level	Communications/ Government Relations
	Develop RIOPC unit for data analysis	Commissioner
	Collaborate with public and independent postsecondary institutions, business communities, and economic and workforce development stakeholders to develop and release periodic report on “The Economic Impact of Higher Education in RI”	Finance & Management
Determine economic impact of higher education in RI and further enhance its role	Identify existing collaborative research activities within postsecondary institutions contributing to economic development goals as well as new opportunities to expand these relationships	Policy & Analysis

STRATEGIC PLANNING: Develop a strategic plan encompassing the broad goals and objectives for the state’s higher education system aligned with those of the Board of Education and the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, and with the activities of the independent higher education sector, where feasible, including a 5-year strategic funding plan [16-59-6(2), [16-59-6(6)]

Objectives	Activities	OPC Unit(s)
Develop a five-year strategic plan to guide postsecondary education in Rhode Island over the next five years	Identify major responsibilities of the Office, the Council, and the Board	Commissioner
	Establish process for discussion and review of strategic plan document	Commissioner
	Prepare robust research base for comparing various academic and financial policies to assist the Commissioner and the Board with multi-year strategic plan	Finance & Management, Policy & Analysis
	Ensure sufficient staffing and data capacity to build and maintain cutting-edge review of evolving national and state policy	Commissioner
	Determine potential collaborations among the three institutions to reduce costs and/or improve student services and outcomes (e.g., personnel or facilities management, etc.)	Finance & Management, Policy & Analysis
	Identify and report system metrics pertaining to goals and mission of the Board and the Council	Policy & Analysis, Finance & Management
	Identify major responsibilities of the Office, the Council, and the Board	Commissioner
	Establish process for discussion/review of strategic plan document	Commissioner
	Review the operating budgets of the three public institutions focusing on efficient utilization and coordination of assets	Finance & Management
Coordinate development of a five-year strategic funding plan aligned to goals and objectives of Board	Research and analyze innovative funding mechanisms challenging the system to increase degree output and quality	Finance & Management
	Identify less productive usages of funding and recommend redistribution as appropriate	Finance & Management, Policy & Analysis
	Advise the Council on five-year capital improvement plans submitted by each college president for renovation and expansion of institutions’ physical plants and accommodations with the goal of eliminating redundancies or inefficiencies	Finance & Management

POLICY DEVELOPMENT: Formulate broad policy to implement the goals and objectives established and adopted by the Board of Education and Council on Postsecondary Education promoting coordination between public and independent higher education, PreK-12 education, and other stakeholders [16-59-6(3)], [16-59-6(4)]

Objectives	Activities	OPC Unit(s)
Maintain OPC as the primary source for the development and interpretation of Board policy for postsecondary education	Provide staff support to the Council and the Board in developing new policy and revising current policy	Commissioner
	Research international, national and regional initiatives to provide the Council with relevant information including effectiveness, efficiency, and outcomes (e.g., Complete College America, performance funding structures, student financing options, etc.)	Commissioner, Policy & Analysis, Finance & Management
	Identify & develop new academic and fiscal policies that promote better student access and completion rates, especially for nontraditional student populations; implement policy upon approval of the Board and the Council.	Policy & Analysis
	Provide staff support to the Council and the Board in developing new policy and revising current policy	Commissioner
	Invite independent institutions to participate more fully in RIOPC initiatives convening them to discuss and identify potential joint ventures	RIOPC
Promote coordination among public and independent higher education in RI	Develop coordinated programs & policies that improve career & college readiness, reduce need for remedial education, implement common core & other standards, ensure a quality system of adult education and certification programs	Policy & Analysis
Promote coordination in courses of study & programs to promote collaboration PK-20	Develop policies that ensure state education is aligned with opportunities in workforce development & economic development and that students are prepared for future workforce	Commissioner, Policy & Analysis, Finance & Management
	Support access to postsecondary certificates or degrees promoting a seamless transition from K-12 to/through college (e.g., college and career ready standards, dual enrollment policies, etc.)	Policy & Analysis

Objectives	Activities	OPC Unit(s)
Advance partnerships with K-12 education	Conduct longitudinal data studies determining strengths and weaknesses throughout the PK-20 system	Policy & Analysis
	Work with the state’s educator preparation programs and RIDE to ensure the needs of teachers, schools, and districts are met	Policy & Analysis
	Schedule quarterly meetings between senior administration from higher education and agencies such as the Governor’s Workforce Board, Adult Education in RIDE, and industry associations	Policy & Analysis
Improve alignment between state’s workforce needs and certificate/degree programs offered by RI colleges and universities	Encourage the appointment of current practitioners and workforce development representatives in advisory boards for undergraduate and graduate programs	Policy & Analysis
	Enable students to efficiently complete postsecondary credentials	Policy & Analysis
	Consider adult degree attainment in development of degrees and certificates and institutional policies.	Policy & Analysis
	Collaborate with public and independent higher education institutions as well as state agencies and others to explore common areas of interest	Policy & Analysis, Finance & Management
Initiate and coordinate special research projects	Provide public postsecondary system perspective in conducting such research (e.g., dual enrollment, competency-based education)	Policy & Analysis, Finance & Management

FISCAL: Assist in budget preparation for public higher education, prepare standard accounting procedures for all public colleges and universities, and, on direction of the Council, be responsible for appropriation allocations and the acquisition, holding, and disposition of property [16-59-6(4)], [16-59-6(12)]

Objectives	Activities	OPC Unit(s)
Assist in budget preparation for public higher education	Prepare the annual budget for the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner	Commissioner, Finance & Management
	Analyze each of the institutions' annual operation budgets with special focus on new programs, cost containments, etc.	Finance & Management
	Review operational budgets for institutions; advise the Council on compliance issues as well as responsiveness to the Board's and the Council's mission and goals including access, completion, affordability and alignment with workforce demands	Commissioner, Finance & Management
	Perform mid-year reviews and submissions to the State Budget Office of anticipated fiscal status at mid-year	Finance & Management
Evaluate risk exposures and effectiveness of controls relating to integrity of financial information, safeguarding of assets, and overall compliance	Maintain auditing function to provide value-added audit and advisory service to the system's three institutions; coordinate and support annual external audits of the three institutions of public higher education	Finance & Management
	Oversee annual financial statement audits as well as the A-133 audit to assure compliance with standards set by auditor general	Finance & Management
	Coordinate the system actuarial studies as required	Finance & Management
	Manage the fiscal officers' work group to address the system's approach to such issues as reporting of special items – RICAP, OPEB, GASB	Finance & Management
	Present draft financial statement audit results for review and approval	Finance & Management
On direction from the Council, insure accountability for appropriation allocations and the acquisition, holding and disposition of property	Provide guidance and assurances to the Council regarding all real and personal property now owned by and/or under control of the Board for use of public postsecondary institutions and in accordance with all laws/regulations of state	Finance & Management
	Acquire, hold and dispose of property as deemed necessary for the execution of the Council's corporate purposes	Finance & Management
	Prepare resolutions for Board review of capital projects as well as bond and debt service funding plans in coordination with issuing institutions and bond counsel	Finance & Management

Objectives	Activities	OPC Unit(s)
	Provide support to institutions identifying funding options and other compliance processes once Board approval is received	Finance & Management
	Produce the most marketable issuance possible working with bond counsel, financial advisors, investment banks, RIHEBC, and rating services	Finance & Management
	Report on account activity for all bond issuances to reconcile each account and assure compliance with bond covenants	Finance & Management

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REGULATORY & ADMINISTRATIVE: Administer policies, rules, and regulations of the Council on Postsecondary Education including those duties relating to independent higher education institutions in Rhode Island under the terms of Chapter 40 and any other relevant laws [16-59-6(10), [16-59-6(11)

Objectives	Activities	OPC Unit(s)
Insure compliance with Board regulations and RIOPC procedures by providing technical support to institutions on the interpretation and implementation of policy and regulations	Provide trainings as needed to insure an understanding and uniform response to Board policy	Commissioner
	Monitor and enforce compliance with RI law and act to enforce compliance or to end non-compliance as indicated	Commissioner
	<i>Revise Regulations Governing Institutions of Higher Education Operating in Rhode Island</i>	Commissioner
Ensure students receive protections afforded by law and due process is accorded in the resolution of conflicts	Respond to student complaints and monitor the resolution of issues	Policy & Analysis
	Evaluate requests for authority of out-of-state institutions to offer on-line instruction to RI residents	Commissioner, Policy & Analysis
	<i>Revise Regulations on Distance Learning</i>	Commissioner
Promote access to postsecondary education for RI veterans and/or their beneficiaries and other underserved adults	Plan and conduct system-wide promotional campaign encouraging enrollment of adults, veterans and other underserved populations	Policy & Analysis
	Review services and enrollment and completion metrics for these populations	Policy & Analysis
	Determine school and program eligibility for approval of veterans' education benefits and monitor and support all those eligible	Policy & Analysis
Regulate proprietary schools in the state	Review and approve academic programs and curricula of proprietary schools ensuring academic integrity and fair business practices	Policy & Analysis
	Evaluate program offerings against industry standards and market analyses	Policy & Analysis
	Determine financial stability and legal compliance with all pertinent laws and regulations	Finance & Management, Policy & Analysis
	Perform annual oversight visits and evaluations of all aspects of a proprietary school's operations (academic, legal, financial and structural)	Finance & Management, Policy & Analysis
	<i>Revise the Regulations Governing Proprietary Schools in Rhode Island</i>	Commissioner
Support the council with its mission as the employer of record for higher	Negotiate and monitor 14 collective bargaining units' contracts as well as state-based collective bargaining contracts	Commissioner

Objectives	Activities	OPC Unit(s)
education and the OPC (The Council retains all authority formerly vested in the Board regarding the employment of faculty and staff at the public institutions.)	Assure diversity in hiring and promotion programs.	Commissioner
Participate in the workgroup on insurance coverage for state employees as well as the system of public higher education	Study levels of coverage needed by the system as it does not have the sovereign immunity of the state	Finance & Management
	Annually review the risk management portfolio and renewal of all policies included	Finance & Management
Provide Council with proper and timely compilation of all compliance reporting for public higher education required by federal, state, and other authorities	Establish and maintain a database of standard reports containing an array of statistics and benchmarks for the system of public higher education	Commissioner, Policy & Analysis, Finance & Management
Coordinate the Business Continuity Plan for the system and verify each institution has its own BC policy in place	Lead work group in review of prior Business Continuity Plan (BCP) for the OPC in order to update and complete	Finance & Management
	Work with the institutions to ensure that their BCPs are in order and up-to-date	Commissioner
Support oversight of institutions as part of a system of public higher education	Provide the Council with updated system mission, role & scope statements	Commissioner
	Coordinate higher education functions to maximize efficiency and economy	Commissioner

ADVOCACY & IMPLEMENTATION: Make recommendations to the Council on Postsecondary Education regarding the mission of each public institution and their programmatic operations and carry out the Council’s policies and priorities [16-59-6(7)], [16-59-6(8)], [16-59-6(9)], [16-59-6(13)]

Objectives	Activities	OPC Unit(s)
Organize and sustain a robust OPC to fulfill duties and responsibilities established in law and by Board and Council	Identify skills necessary for RIOPC to successfully fulfill its responsibilities	Commissioner
	Acquire sufficient FTEs and hire staff to carry out its mission	Commissioner
Pursue and administer public and private financing to advance the mission of the Council and the Office	Identify and submit grant proposals applicable to the system level and responsive to mission	Policy & Analysis
	Comply with all requirements and specifications of the granting agency	Policy & Analysis
	Serve as liaison for special federal, regional or private grants to assure compliance with fiscal requirements (ARRA)	Finance & Management
	Account for all fiscal activity of OPC including variance analysis	Commissioner
Proactively represent public postsecondary in RI and nationally	Actively participate in relevant state and federal initiatives (e.g., Governor’s Workforce Board, Complete College America, PARCC, etc.)	RIOPC
	Ensure all oral and written communications are presented in a unified and professional manner	RIOPC
	Serve as primary resource for local, state and national queries	Commissioner
Enhance postsecondary education on behalf of RI students	Establish a statewide completion agenda	Commissioner
	Advance proposals to the Board and the Council submitted by the presidents	Commissioner
	Develop coherent plans for elimination of unnecessary duplication and address future needs of state in most efficient & economical manner	Policy & Analysis
	Revise <i>Regulations Governing Academic Changes in RI Public Institutions</i>	Policy & Analysis
	Convene academic administrators and others to reform remedial programs	Policy & Analysis

Objectives	Activities	OPC Unit(s)
	Provide a seamless transition for students transferring among public higher education institutions revising current transfer policies and procedures and reporting annually	Policy & Analysis
	Ensure regular assessment of learning outcomes is conducted and consider institutional plans for the same	Policy & Analysis
Encourage the development and improvement of virtual learning options	Review current course offerings and degrees available through distance learning	Policy & Analysis

DRAFT

**Office of the
Postsecondary Commissioner**

**Public Higher Education in
Rhode Island:**

**A Vital & Strategic
Investment**

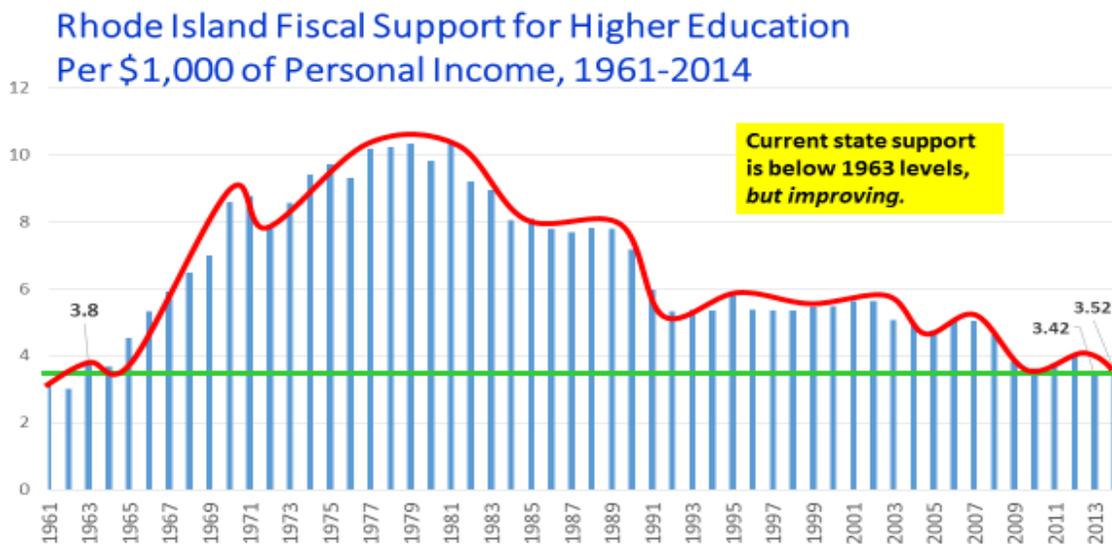
“I am excited about the prospects for Rhode Island and the state’s colleges and universities, however much needs to be done over the next decade to fully engage our campuses into addressing the needs of the state. This work must be built upon an awareness of our current social and economic circumstances, but not bound by them. Any investment must be aligned with the state’s priorities and students’ needs, requiring a consensus on the human and financial resources necessary to achieve those goals.”

Dr. Jim Purcell
RI Commissioner of Postsecondary Education

Intentional investment as a prerequisite...

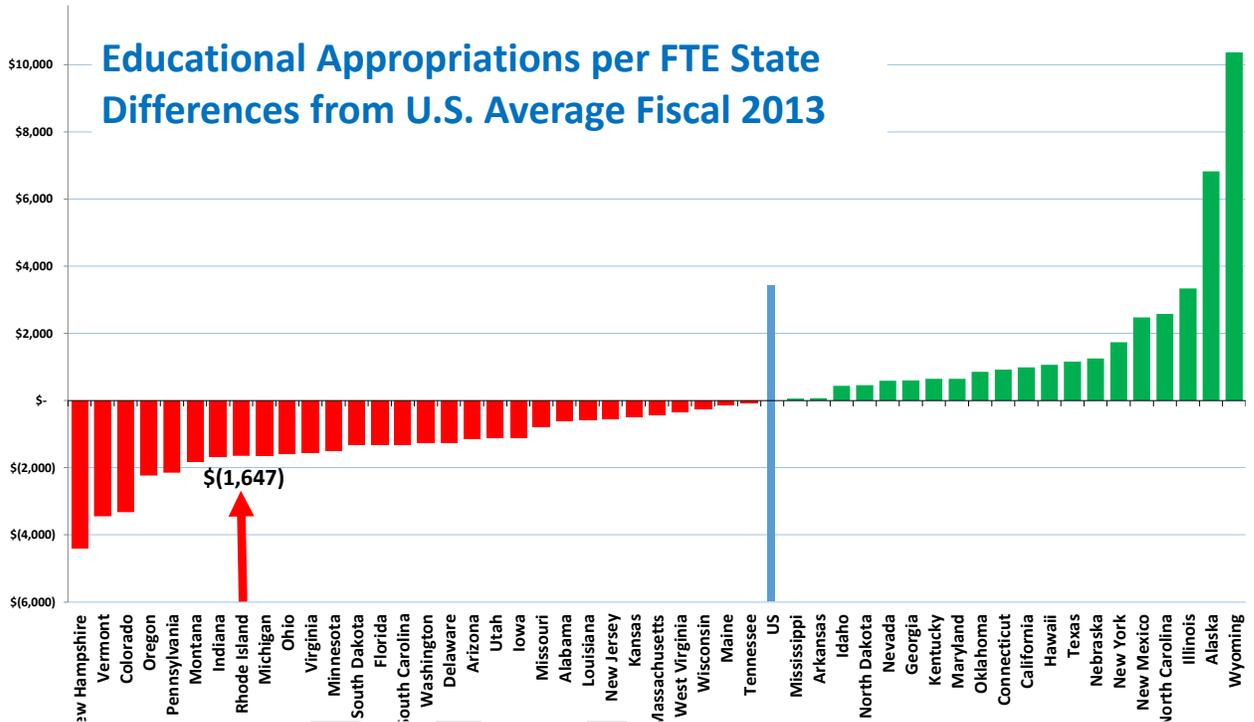
Rhode Island needs a coordinated, comprehensive public higher education delivery system that is responsive to the state’s economic and demographic changes and provides a clear pathway forward to meet the needs of the current era. Budget instability as a result of the recent recession and rising student debt has significantly impacted public higher education in states across the nation, including Rhode Island. Historical data on funding levels highlight the critical need for calculated, deliberate investments in higher education that assure a college degree is attainable and affordable for all Rhode Islanders.

One of the national metrics used to measure support for postsecondary education is state support per \$1,000 of personal income. *Using this metric, the state of Rhode Island is currently funding the public colleges and university at levels below its support for them in 1963.* As the chart below illustrates, state support for our public higher education institutions has declined steadily and precipitously since 1980. If the state’s colleges and universities are to meet the needs of the state, there must be additional targeted investments in higher education.



Source: Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY Feb, 2014

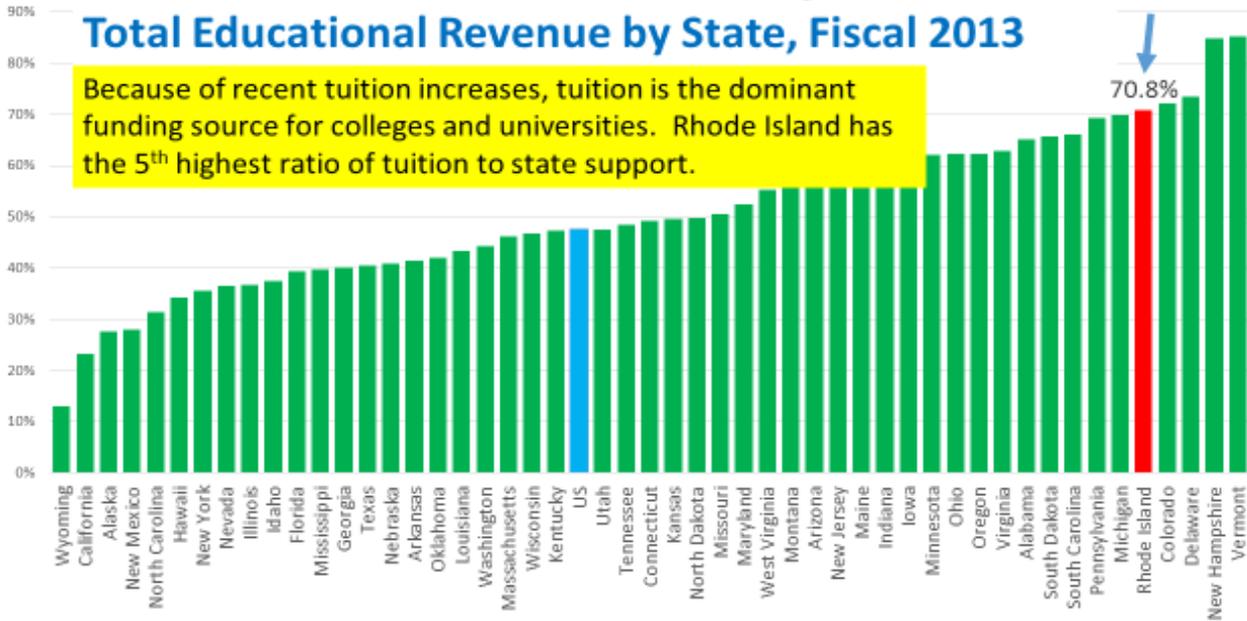
In addition, Rhode Island currently ranks 42nd nationally in its financial support for higher education. *The state's public colleges and university are operating currently with \$1,647 less per student than the national average.*



While the causes for the loss of state resources for higher education and other state services are understandable, it also must be understood that this insufficient support for human capital development and university research has contributed to the current inability of the state to transform itself from a primarily low-skilled, industrial based economy to a more sustainable diversified modern economy. To ensure a system that is more responsive to the needs of the state there must be additional resources for public higher education, while also ensuring appropriate accountability for results.

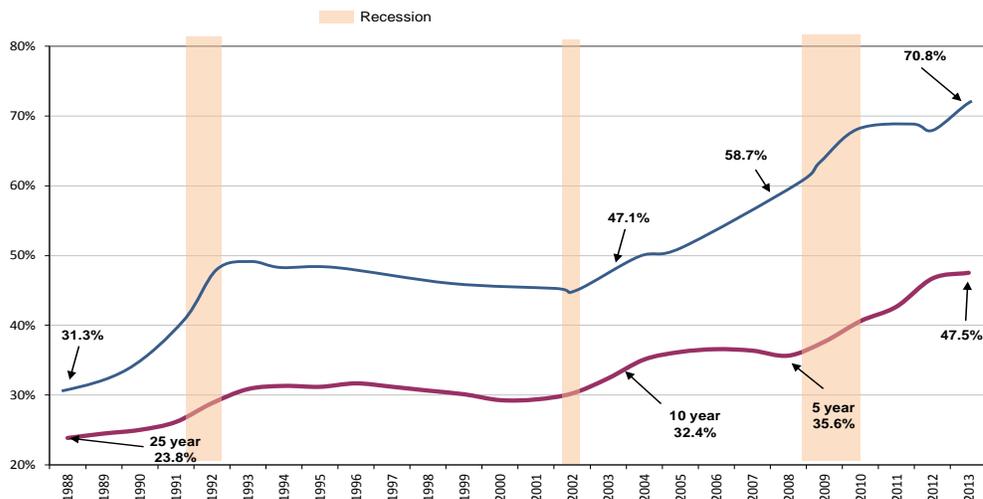
Insufficient state funding also has impacted access to higher education in the Ocean State. Ease of access is especially important for first-generation, low income, minority and adult students. These groups' ability to enroll and persist to degree is greatly impacted by cost. As the following charts illustrate, *Rhode Island students pay a much larger share of the cost of the higher education budget than do students in most states and have been paying more for decades.* The disinvestment has placed the financial burden of obtaining a postsecondary degree primarily on students and their families.

Net Tuition as a Percent of Public Higher Education Total Educational Revenue by State, Fiscal 2013



The strong reliance on tuition revenue to support state colleges and universities is atypical. Students across the country paid about 25% of the actual cost of a college education 25 years ago; Rhode Island students paid nearly 33% of the cost. **Currently, Rhode Island students pay 70.8% of the cost compared to the national figure of 47.5%.** The recognition of the impact of tuition increases on access compelled Governor Chafee and the legislature to freeze tuition for the last two years at our public institutions.

Net Tuition as a Percent of Public Higher Education Total Educational Revenue, U.S., Fiscal 1988-2013

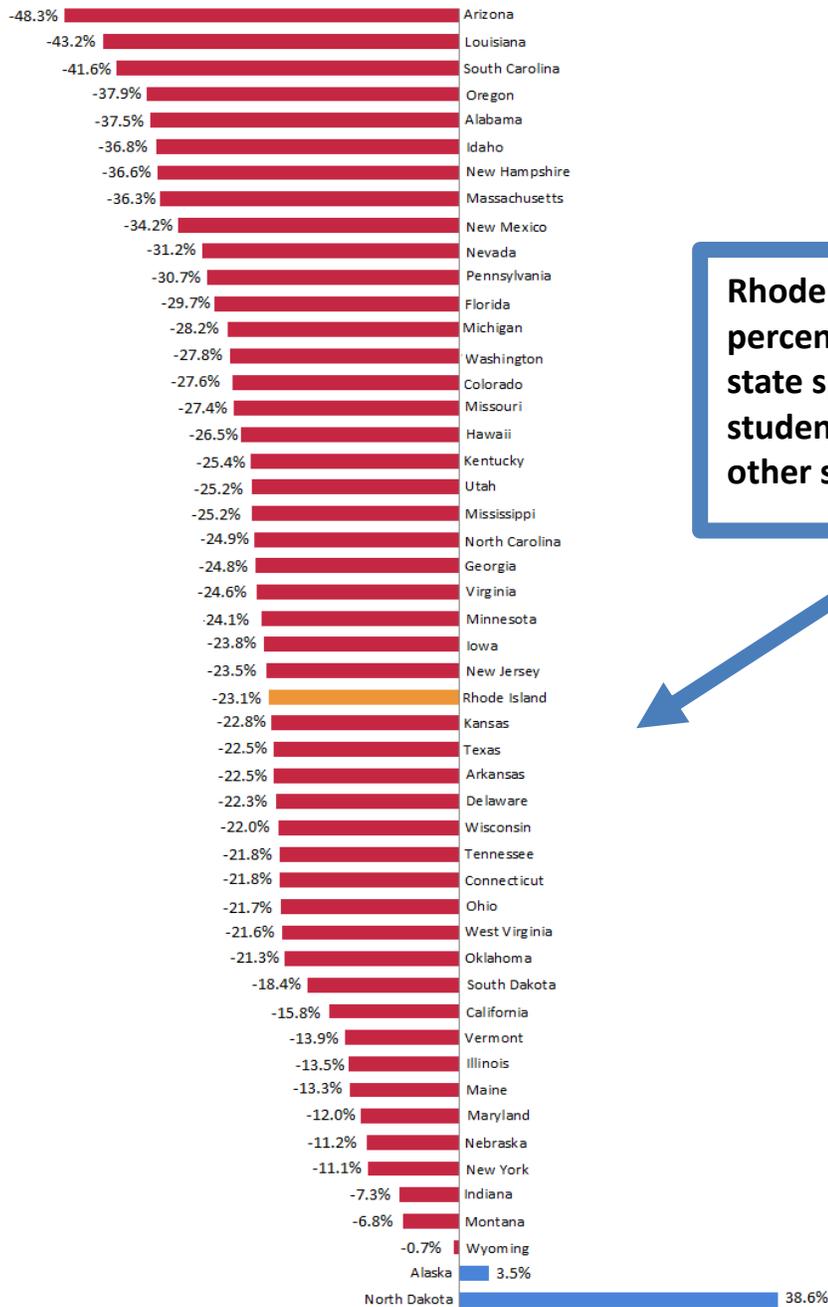


Note: Net tuition revenue used for capital debt service is included in net tuition revenue, but excluded from total educational revenue in calculating the above figures.

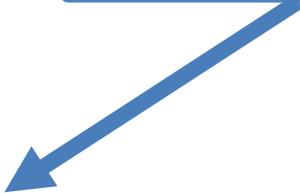
Source: State Higher Education Executive Officers

More is needed, but it is also notable that Rhode Island was able to provide greater stability in state support for its public institutions through the 2008-2012 recession than most states. While a 23% reduction in state support is significant, it pales in comparison to reductions of 30+% experienced in ten other states.

Percent Change in State Spending per Student, Inflation Adjusted, FY08-FY14



Rhode Island had less of a percentage reduction in state spending per student since 2008 than other states: **-23.1%**



The Imperative for Change...

The national and Rhode Island economy has changed significantly over the last generation as a result of technological advances and the globalization of markets and the workforce. Alignment of Rhode Island's economic resources, especially its human capital, to the needs of a changed world will determine the state's future successes. Without a focus on an educated and work-ready citizenry, Rhode Island will not flourish in this new economy. Alignment of the state's postsecondary resources and research capabilities must become a cornerstone to achieving a revitalized state economy.

Rhode Island's community and business leaders have expressed concern that the state's colleges and universities have not been adequately engaged in addressing the challenges related to the recent economic recession nor the long-term economic decline from the loss of the manufacturing base of the state's economy.

While additional investments in postsecondary education are essential, the state's colleges and universities also need to become more adaptable and nimble in delivering postsecondary education in a world that is constantly changing.

The state's support for the purchasing and repurposing of the vacant South Street Power Station complex as a state-of-the-art educational center for nursing among a collaborative of universities—public and private—is symbolic of the forward thinking change that is needed. This facility will be located near the dominant employment center for the Rhode Island health care industry and the proposed program offerings range from the baccalaureate to the doctorate. Such cross-institutional collaboration is designed to maximize the use of these facilities and resources to strengthen the state's economy in this industry sector.

However, in order to regain the support and respect of the citizenry, our postsecondary institutions must do even more and actively be a part of developing the state's economy and aligning their activities to the needs of its citizens.