

# Spring 2022 Rhode Island Promise Report to the Commissioner of Postsecondary Education

## Community College of Rhode Island – May 10, 2022

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**Executive Summary:** The following report is provided in accordance with RIGL 16-107-7a.

This report comes as the Community College of Rhode Island continues to respond to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 landscape, now more than two years into the pandemic. Despite these challenges, the RI Promise program continues to generate significantly positive impacts on the College and the State of Rhode Island by serving the state's high school graduates as a high-value postsecondary option.

The fifth cohort of Rhode Island Promise students began in the Fall 2021 semester. While enrollment continued to decline this academic year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Rhode Island Promise enrollments continue to be significantly greater than the size of the first-time, full-time straight from high school population before the program existed. In total, 1,853 students enrolled as part of the new Fall 2021 Rhode Island Promise cohort, which represents an 18% decline relative to last year's cohort but represents 68% growth relative to the pre-Promise Fall 2016 population. In the returning Fall 2020 Rhode Island Promise cohort, 1,287 (57%) re-enrolled this academic year, while 19 students (1%) graduated with an Associate Degree after just one year. These enrollment and retention figures remain lower than usual, but are in line with the enrollment and retention rates that many other community college across the country have been experiencing since the onset of the pandemic in 2020. Nationally, community college enrollment has decreased 15% since 2019, and enrollment has continued to decrease in all racial and ethnic groups at community colleges.<sup>1</sup> Low-income communities and communities of color have experienced disproportionate health and economic impacts of the pandemic, making prioritizing college attainment extremely challenging. Recruiting and re-enrolling low-income students and students of color will continue to be a high priority focus at CCRI in the coming months.

While this report is designed to provide a summary of enrollment figures and budget estimates for the Rhode Island Promise program, it is also worth noting the program outcomes. In its fifth year of the program, Rhode Island Promise continues to sustain significantly increased graduation rates. Historically, only 4% of first-time, full-time students have graduated from CCRI in two years, and 15% have graduated in three years. Even amidst the COVID-19 pandemic challenges, CCRI students have maintained completion rate gains, largely due to the impact of the Promise program. The most recent CCRI two-year graduation rate is 16%, which is four times the College's historic two-year graduation rate. In addition, this year 26% of students graduated in three years, as compared to the historical three-year 15% graduation rate at the College. These positive student outcomes have resulted in many more Rhode

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Sedmak, T. (2021, November 18). *Undergraduate Enrollment Declines Nearly 8% and Community Colleges Drop 15% Since Fall 2019*. Retrieved from National Student Clearinghouse Research Center: <https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/blog/undergraduate-enrollment-drops-nearly-8-and-community-colleges-decline-15-since-fall-2019/>

Islanders earning college degrees in 2020 and 2021, and have helped move the college from being significantly below national completion rates to exceeding them. The team at the Community College of Rhode Island remains committed to facilitating the Rhode Island Promise program in a way that supports the success of our students and our state, and are grateful for the continued support of this program.

**Demographics:** The Rhode Island Promise continues to attract a diverse group of students from across the state. There continues to be growth among students of color, as reflected in Table 1. CCRI is again focusing on reaching out to low-income students who did not attend this fall or spring in an effort to support their future enrollment. As the college continues this targeted outreach and as the impacts of the pandemic subside, we expect to see more low-income Pell grant students return to college in fall 2022.

Table 1: RI Promise Cohort Demographics - Fall 2021				
<b>New Fall 2021 cohort</b> = 1,853 students (18% decline vs. last year's cohort)				
<b>Returning Fall 2020 cohort</b> = 1,287 students (57% retention of last year's cohort of 2,271)				
High School vs. GED				
	New Cohort		Returning Cohort	
GED	19	<1%	7	<1%
HS Grad	1,834	99%	1,280	99%
Gender				
	New Cohort		Returning Cohort	
Female	906	49%	666	51%
Male	899	49%	610	47%
N	48	2%	11	2%
Unknown	0	0%	0	0%
Race/Ethnicity				
	New Cohort		Returning Cohort	
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	<1%	7	<1%
Asian	50	3%	33	3%
Black or African-American	133	7%	87	7%
Hispanic, of any race	553	30%	260	20%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	<1%	0	0%
Non-resident Alien	0	0%	1	<1%
Two or more races	127	7%	98	8%
Unknown Race/Ethnicity	60	3%	39	3%
White	926	50%	762	59%

**Current Academic Year Tuition and Fee Funding Sources:** The financial aid awards and/or payment mechanisms for the two current Rhode Island Promise cohorts are outlined in Tables 2A and 2B below. Table 2A summarizes financial aid and payment for the 1,853 students in the cohort that began in the Fall 2021 and Table 2B summarizes that information for the 1,287 returning students from the cohort that began in the Fall 2020.

In the new Rhode Island Promise cohort, 48% of students received federal Pell grant funding. In the returning cohort, 36% of returning students received federal Pell grants. In both cohorts, the percentage of students receiving Pell students has remained similar to last year.

With just over a month remaining in the fiscal year, we have 46 students across the two cohorts remaining as “unresolved” cases, largely due to challenges with FAFSA verification.

<b>Table 2A: Final RI Promise Financial Aid Awards - New Cohort (2021-2022 academic year)</b>					
<b>n=1853</b>					
<b>Award category</b>		<b>Average Award</b>	<b>Total Amount</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage of cohort</b>
Rhode Island Promise (state funding)		\$4,499	\$4,040,303	898	48%
Full Pell grants + SEOG (federal funding)		\$5,700	\$3,311,724	581	31%
Partial Pell	Pell portion (federal funding)	\$2,734	\$1,796,980	348	19%
	State grant portion (former RIHEAA funds)	\$2,174	\$858,272		
	Combined award	\$4,908	\$2,655,252		
Other (other scholarship, waiver, etc)		\$2,516	\$10,064	4	<1%
Self-pay/loans		N/A	\$97,974	10	<1%
Unresolved: FAFSA, Federal Verification, etc.		N/A	\$56,843	12	<1%
<b>Balance of tuition and fee revenue vs. refunds to students for Pell recipients</b>					
<b>Full Pell</b>	Avg. Tuition & Fees	\$4,765			
	Avg. Award	\$5,700			
	Refund for books and other expenses	\$935			
<b>Partial Pell</b>	Avg. Tuition & Fees	\$4,559			
	Avg. Award	\$4,908			
	Refund for books and other expenses	\$349			

**Table 2B: Final RI Promise Financial Aid Awards - Returning Cohort (2021-22 academic year)**

**n=1287**

Award category		Average Award	Total Amount	Number of Students	Percentage of returners
Rhode Island Promise (state funding)		\$4,606	\$ 1,975,781	429	33%
Full Pell grants +SEOG (federal funding)		\$5,419	\$ 1,544,434	285	22%
Partial Pell	Pell portion (federal funding)	\$2,512	\$ 452,337	180	14%
	State grant portion (former RIHEAA funds)	\$1,961	\$ 353,023		
	Combined award	\$4,473	\$ 805,360		
Other scholarship award or waiver		\$2,123	\$ 203,885	96	8%
Self-pay/loans		N/A	N/A	263	21%
Unresolved: FAFSA, Federal Verification, etc.		TBD	TBD	34	2%
Graduated before Fall 2021 semester		N/A	N/A	19	N/A

**Balance of tuition and fee revenue vs. refunds to students for Pell grant recipients**

<b>Full Pell</b>	Avg. Tuition & Fees	\$4,419
	Avg. Award	\$5,419
	Avg. Refund for books and other expense	\$1,000
<b>Partial Pell</b>	Avg. Tuition & Fees	\$4,386
	Avg. Award	\$4,473
	Avg. Refund for books and other expense	\$87

**Budget Estimates for FY 2021 and FY2022:** CCRI’s RI Promise budget estimates are below in Table 3. While the FY22 figures are close to final, the total expenditure is expected to rise slightly as unresolved financial aid cases are finalized in the last two months of the year. With this in mind, a best estimate figure for FY22 expenditure is provided in the table below. For FY23, CCRI is projecting a 25% increase in new Promise students as we are rebounding from the impacts of the pandemic. With 3 more months until the beginning of the fall semester, we have 2859 Promise applications, and expect 874 more. Traditionally, we achieve a 60% yield which will result in 2240 Promise students enrolled, with an estimated 50% state funded.

<b>Table 3: CCRI FY 2022 and FY 2023 Estimates for RI Promise Budget</b>						
<b>FY 2022</b>	<b>Fall 2021</b>		<b>Spring 2022</b>		<b>DSS</b>	<b>FY2022 Total</b>
	<b>New Cohort</b>	<b>Returning Cohort</b>	<b>New Cohort</b>	<b>Returning Cohort</b>		
Student Count	896	415	707	377	19	1,330
Required funding	\$ 2,252,816	\$ 1,043,667	\$ 1,792,503	\$ 937,130	\$ 92,776	\$ 6,118,892
Budgeted Dollars						\$ 7,680,838
Variance to Budget						\$ 1,561,946
<b>FY 2023</b>	<b>Fall 2022</b>		<b>Spring 2023</b>		<b>DSS</b>	<b>FY2023 Total</b>
	<b>New Cohort</b>	<b>Returning Cohort</b>	<b>New Cohort</b>	<b>Returning Cohort</b>		
Student Count	1,120	424	997	378	50	1,760
Required funding	\$ 2,870,560	\$ 1,087,225	\$ 2,554,798	\$ 967,630	\$ 190,330	\$ 7,670,543
Budgeted Dollars						\$ 7,670,543
Variance to Budget						\$ 0

**Note, the above budget assumes the following:**

- Pell students not included here, as this projects state funds for the RI Promise scholarship
- New RI Promise student enrollment projected at 2240 with 50% being state funded
- An average award per semester of \$2,508 in FY22 and \$2,563 in FY23, represents a 2.2% tuition increase
- A fall-to-spring retention rate of 89% for both cohorts in FY23
- A 25% increase in students in the new Fall 2022 cohort vs. the Fall 2021 new cohort
- Effective Spring 2021, DSS students may receive Promise for up to 60 attempted credits instead of 2 academic years, resulting in students from more than 2 cohorts requiring financial support
- A 60% rate of students earning the second-year RI Promise scholarship in FY23

**Institutional impacts of this program:** The Rhode Island Promise program continues to positively impact CCRI, our students and our state despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. During the past five years since the program was initiated, it has sustained meaningful positive momentum of the enrollment of full-time students, is enabling CCRI to achieve significant gains in advancing access for low-income students and students of color, and is graduating more Rhode Islanders in preparation for transfer opportunities and the workforce. Rhode Island Promise also continues to be a catalyst for broader change within the college, and will continue to bring resources and students into the institution, sustaining the momentum that has helped make CCRI an even stronger contributor to Rhode Island's economic strength and competitiveness.