



**Council on Postsecondary Education Meeting  
Wednesday, February 17, 2021, 5:30 p.m.**

**PURSUANT TO  
GOVERNOR RAIMONDO'S EXECUTIVE ORDER 20-103,  
THIS MEETING WAS HELD REMOTELY.**

**MINUTES**

Chair Timothy DelGiudice called this remote meeting to order at 5:36 p.m. and acknowledged that a quorum was present via the Zoom webinar platform.

Council on Postsecondary Education members participating remotely:

Timothy DelGiudice, Chair, Council on Postsecondary Education  
Barbara Cottam, Chair, Board of Education  
Dennis Duffy  
Rachelle Green  
Thomas Izzo  
Michael Mello  
Marianne Monte  
Jeffery Williams

Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (RIOPC) staff participating remotely:

Shannon Gilkey, Commissioner  
Anne Marie Coleman, Director of Labor Relations  
Ronald Cavallaro, Esq., General Counsel  
Susan Mansolillo, Chief Financial Officer  
Tammy Warner, Ph.D., Assistant Commissioner, Academic and Student Affairs  
Lynn Owens, Assistant to the Commissioner

Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) participants:

Meghan Hughes, Ph.D., President  
Rosemary Costigan, Ph.D. Vice President, Academic Affairs  
Alix Ogden, Associate Vice President, Administration  
Kristen Albritton, Vice President, Finance and Strategy  
Greg LaPointe, Associate Vice President, Student Affairs  
Amy Kempe, Director, Marketing and Communications

Rhode Island College (RIC) participants:

Frank Sánchez, Ph.D., President  
Clark Greene, Executive Director for Strategic Initiatives, Chief of Staff  
Stephen Nedder, Vice President, Administration and Finance  
Robert Eaton, Director of Budget  
Helen Tate, Ph.D., Provost/Vice President, Academic Affairs

Chair DelGiudice noted that public access was provided to attendees of this Zoom webinar in compliance with the Open Meetings Act and the provisions of the Executive Order and provided contact information for those experiencing technical difficulties. He also noted that prior to the Council entering Executive Session, attendees would be placed on hold and the meeting would be locked. The Chair went on to share that at the conclusion of the Executive Session, the Council would return to Open Session and resume public access.

## **1. Acceptance of the Agenda**

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education accept the agenda for the meeting of February 17, 2021.

On a motion duly made by Marianne Monte and seconded by Barbara Cottam, it was:

VOTED:	THAT	The Council on Postsecondary Education accepts the agenda for the meeting of February 17, 2021.
	VOTE:	8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Dennis Duffy, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Michael Mello, Marianne Monte, and Jeffery Williams.
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

## **2. Approval of the Minutes**

- A. Minutes of the December 9, 2020 meeting.
- B. Minutes of January 6, 2021 meeting.
- C. Minutes of January 6, 2021 joint meeting.

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve the minutes of the meeting that took place on December 9, 2020, January 6, 2021 and the joint meeting with the Board of Education on January 6, 2021 as presented.

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Dennis Duffy, it was:

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approves the minutes of the meeting that took place on December 9, 2020, January 6, 2021, and the joint meeting with the Board of Education on January 6, 2021 as presented.

VOTE: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Dennis Duffy, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Michael Mello, Marianne Monte, and Jeffery Williams.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

### 3. Reports from the Chairs

- A. Council on Postsecondary Education – Updates and issues affecting local and national higher education.

Chairman DelGiudice opened by congratulating and thanking members Green, Monte, Mello, and Williams on their reappointment as council members. This was followed by a message delivered on behalf of Governor Raimondo expressing her gratitude for the important work that is conducted by the council and its members. It was expressed that a budget is likely to come in the following weeks and that delays were partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, along with the transition. The chair mentioned that outside consultants were engaged to look at potential opportunities for investment and reflection at Rhode Island College and would offer the ideas and findings to President Sanchez and his administration for the council. Chair DelGiudice looks forward to receiving these reports. The Chair closed his report with an acknowledgement and thanks for Acting Commissioner Cavallaro and the hard work and effort he put into his term as acting commissioner.

- B. Board of Education – Updates and issues affecting local and national PK-20 education.

Chair Cottam opened with two updates on the elementary side of education and the announcement of the Learning Equity Accelerated Pathways (LEAP) Task Force. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a multitude of effects on children, both remote and in person, on the way that they learn in the classroom. Preliminary studies show a significant loss of learning in math and student of color and multi languages may be losing nine to eleven months base on these obstacles. The Task force will be

using past successes and conduct a deep dive on ways to accelerate learning for the students that are in need.

The second update presented was regarding the availability of a tutoring benefit. The opportunity is presented through School House that is a platform of Saul Khan, founder of the Khan Academy that provides students from around the globe with free tutors in small groups that targets key areas of development. Rhode Island is noted as one of the two state level partners for this program and Chair Cottam wanted to make the Postsecondary Council aware of the program and asks for help in spreading the word to student and educators on this remarkable opportunity that exists.

#### **4. Report from the Commissioner**

- A. Commissioner Shannon Gilkey opened his report with remarks of his first weeks in office and thanking the individuals and teams that he has had the chance to speak with and the unique opportunities, as well as, pain points and areas of focus. Commissioner Gilkey expressed concern for the Juniors and Seniors in the K 12 program and that nationwide undergraduate enrollment is down 16.1% and FAFSA completion is down 10.6%. Furthermore, an August 2020 U.S. census household poll survey shows that Postsecondary plans are down an astonishing 29.4%. He noted that College readiness rates are tightly coupled to preparedness and expressed appreciation and faith in the RIDE LEAP Task Force to help Rhode Island student remain an/or get back on track with their educational goals.

Commissioner Gilkey expressed his second concern for the current students in Higher Education and them to work with the experience they have had over the last year. He remarks, prior to the pandemic, national data has seen a steady increase in college student mental distress and an increase in demand on institutional counselors. With the effects of the pandemic these gaps will only be made to feel larger where students may feel as though they do not have regular access to the resources that would normally be afforded to students during normal times of development.

The final remark of concern, is for the dislocated adults from the local and national economies, specifically noted were hospitality and retail. The concern, he remarked, lies in the potential unawareness of available opportunities for adults to upscale their education and return to the workforce in a meaningful capacity.

Commissioner Gilkey expressed that he remains hopeful, as we all should, that the leadership teams of the institutions and the efforts of the council and educators will put in place programs and initiatives to allow Rhode Islanders and students of all ages to not be left behind. He then turned the floor over to the performance funding evaluations.

- i. From Rhode Island College:

FY2021 Performance Funding Evaluation and Report for Rhode Island College

The evaluation shows that Rhode Island College has increased four- and six-year rates of graduation for first time and full-time students has increased, along with the two-year completion rates for transfer students.

Areas of improvement that were noted were, the number of degree and certificates in high demand high wage fields. Another area of improvement mentioned was the graduation rates for students of color. Rhode Island College was reported as having focused initiatives to reduce achievement gaps and improve their completion metrics through various means. The full and complete report can be viewed at: [RIC FY2021 Performance Evaluation](#)

ii. From the Community College of Rhode Island:

FY2021 Performance Funding Evaluation and Report for The Community College of Rhode Island

The evaluation shows that the Community College of Rhode Island has met and exceeded the targeted metrics for two year and three-year graduation rates and for pass rates on gateway college level English. The College has also met performance metrics on gateway college level math and on the portion of students earning certificates and degrees before transferring away from CCRI.

Noted areas for improvement include the graduation rates of students of color, particularly African American students, first-time part-time students achieving at least 12 credits and the proportion of associate degrees awarded in high demand high wage areas. CCRI was noted to have intended guided pathways of education that are helping to increase these metrics that may be considered in need of improvement. The full and complete report can be viewed at: [CCRI FY2021 Performance Evaluation](#)

## 5. Reports from the Presidents

- i. Rhode Island College - Updates and issues affecting local and national higher education - Update on Covid19 impact and response. Update on Summer/Fall recruitment, admissions, and enrollment.

President Sanchez remarks on four priorities for the future of Rhode Island college in the changing educational and financial environment. First expressed was the need to expand and accelerated flexible online learning options for adults. He explained that data shows there are more than 120,000 Rhode Islanders with some credit and no pathway to a four-year college degree. With this information he plans to invest more training for faculty to produce high quality online learning. President Sanchez continues to his next priority, which to invest in academic excellence and student success. The focus being that the

academic quality and Financial viability of existing programs and how they can be realigned with academic advising and critical support services to improve retention and graduation rates.

Presidents Sanchez is passionate about delivering on his commitment For RIC to continue to be an affordable four-year college. He remarks on the fluidity of the yearly fluctuation in tuition costs and in an effort to help the students and families of students, RIC proposes a rational and predictable tuition policy that will help to standardization and regulate the change in tuition on a annual basis. This in turn he believes will assist the institution in preparing an accurate budget for future longevity.

The final priority is the advocacy for RIC's future. President Sanchez stated that the institution needs to improve the way that they advocate for themselves. He plans on accomplishing this through networking and expanding and reinvesting in external relationships to spread awareness of what Rhode Island College has to offer to the citizens of Rhode Island.

President Sanchez closed his report remarking on the allocations that Rhode Island College has earned. Among a few mentions were, 2020 Washington Monthly recognizing the institution as the number one in masters granting public institutions and number two for best performance in social mobility for colleges in New England.

- ii. Community College of Rhode Island - Updates and issues affecting local and national higher education - Update on Covid19 impact and response. Update on Summer/Fall recruitment, admissions, and enrollment.

President Hughes begins her updates by naming the four target areas she wished to discuss. The topics include, where they landed with spring enrollment, where they are headed for summer enrollment, the March 2 special election bond campaign and the institution's ongoing VOVID-19 operations. Before addressing these topics, a clear scope and context was provided for the numbers over the past five years rather than specifically what resulted from the FY2021 performance evaluations.

- Five years ago, the number of students of color regarding graduation have increased five times from 2% overall. This number currently sits at 11%.
- The three-year graduation rate increased from 11% to 19%.

It was remarked that the spring enrollment for CCRI is finalized at 11,452 students which is a decline of 12.4% or 1,600 students from where the college was this time last year. President Hughes explains that this was expected and has become a reality due to the specific nature of the adult part time students that attend the Community college. These

individuals are affected the most by the pandemic and their ability to return to education due to family and work obligations. CCRI will be hosting virtual open houses and active recruitment sessions in the coming weeks to spread awareness of the programs and options available to Rhode Island Students to regain some of the lost numbers.

President Hughes's second update is regarding the plans for the summer semester. Through their efforts with the COVID-19 guidelines on social distancing and the collaboration with the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), CCRI estimates and anticipates that 25%-30% of the summer courses will be on campus. They plan on achieving this by offering smaller class sizes with extended time between classes for proper disinfection of learning spaces. For the remaining percentage, efforts are in place to improve their use of technology to offer more hybrid class options.

The third update remarked upon was the March 2 special election on a bond for Higher Education that would provide \$107M of funding to the three public Higher Ed institutions in Rhode Island. The Community College would claim 10% or \$12M which would provide life changing experiences for the students and faculty of CCRI. CCRI is aggressively campaigning to voters of the nature of this bond and the lasting benefits it will have for members of the public education community.

President Hughes remarks on the COVID-19 operations and where the college falls on that spectrum. Due to the nature of CCRI being a commuter college there have not been any on campus testing sites established. It was explained that much of the health and sciences students and faculty received test at the beginning of the semester and a substantial number of them came back as being COVID positive. This led to a reform where the Health Sciences Faculty members are being offered the vaccination along with first responders as it is evident, they are at higher risk of encountering the virus. President Hughes reported that all campus police, across all campuses have been vaccinated and that the Newport Campus is being set up as a testing site to service residents of Newport and Middletown that are 75 and older.

President Hughes and President Sanchez responded to Council inquiry, confirming that the bond is solely focused on capital improvements at CCRI and RIC. President Sanchez added that the RIC portion of the bond was \$30M. for the Clark Science Building.

Council Member Thomas Izzo remarks on President Sanchez's presentation of updates and urges the council to have a strategy that assists both CCRI and RIC regarding their campaign for enrollment increases. Specifically concerning the group of adult students that have some college credits, but are lacking a degree, the strategy should be

creative and specific to target his demographic. Consideration was expressed to regular reviews of the academics of Rhode Island College to gain understanding and provide reassurance to the students and faculty that they have a respect to the liberal arts as well as a focus on employment readiness. He also mentioned that OPC along with the state has the responsibility of presenting types of policies that will help the annual tuition to become more predictable.

President Hughes offers a correction of a previous data point for the meeting record.

- Correction-Graduation rate for students of color was tripled however, the starting percentage was 8% not 11% and that number is now at 21% as opposed to 19%.

Presidents Hughes respond to Council inquiry, clarifying drop in student enrollment for specific cohorts by deferring to Sara Enright for response:

- 4.3% drop in full-time student enrollment
- 9.6% drop in part-time student enrollment
- 7.4% drop in total enrollment for Fall 2020
- 13% drop in enrollment of Pell Grant students for Fall 2020
- 11% drop in enrollment for students of color and low income for Fall 2020
- The most significant decrease in enrollment is from the part-time students.

Sara Enright responds to Council inquiry, confirming that there is a direct correlation between the Promise Program and the graduation rates for students of color.

## **6. Discussion Items**

- A. Chairman DelGiudice introduced Amy Grzybowski for an update on the Northern Rhode Island Higher Education Center. She explains that The Northern Higher Education Center will be replicating the Western Education Center but focus on employer needs for workforce development in Northern Rhode Island. The center will be a product of the collaboration between OPC, RIC, CCRI as well as outside agencies such as, CVS and AAA.

The requested change of address has been approved for 117 Main Street and the lease was included in the FY2021 skinny budget where it was approved by the State properties committee on December 22, 2020 and executed on January 4, 2021.

The Center will be supported by \$2M in RICAP funding for capital purchases. The Center has received \$725,000 in donation along with additional grants that will provide for the early operations. An advisory group has also been established made

up of individuals from CCRI, RIC, Northern Rhode Island Chamber, AAA, Fidelity and CVS to provide guidance and assistance through the process.

The Northern Rhode Island Higher Education Center is also working on the MOU with CVS to allow for a dedicated space for a mock retail store within the facility. They are continuing to engage with all the prior partners to determine the needs and provide a solution.

B. Presentation of the audited financial statements for Rhode Island College, Community College of Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner for the Fiscal year ending June 30, 2020

Michael Cosgrove, Audit Principal, from O'Connor & Drew presented a PowerPoint on financial statements for Rhode Island College, Community College of Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner for the Fiscal year ending June 30, 2020.

He explained that the audits are required to be done under government auditing standards as, they are a component unit of the state. As such the audits have a slightly higher thresholds than the U.S. generally accepted auditing standards. Below are the findings:

- Unmodified opinions on the financial statements of RIC, CCRI and RIDHEA were issued.
- No material weaknesses or significant deficiencies were noted on internal controls over financial reporting and compliance for RIC, CCRI or RIDHEA

The accounting for CARES Act HEERF funds were displayed:

- RIC awarded \$7.4M of which \$6.5M was recognized in the 2020 fiscal year
- CCRI awarded \$10M of which \$4.3M was recognized in the 2020 fiscal year

Required Communications findings:

- No disagreements with management
- No consultations with other accountants/auditors
- No major issues discussed with management prior to retention
- No difficulties encountered in performing the audit

Entity Specific Risks:

- Related party transactions, CARES Act HEERF funds, and general economic factors including COVID-19 and potential enrollment decreases
- RIDHEA change in management

Mr. Cosgrove shared the upcoming GASB Pronouncement with the council, specifically GASB Statement 87 which is centered around leases. This will be effective for periods beginning after June 15, 2021 (fiscal year 2022). This statement require lessees to recognize on their statement of net position the rights and obligations resulting from leases categorized as operating leases as assets, liabilities, or deferred inflows/outflows of resources.

Chairman DelGiudice inquired to Mr. Cosgrove on the how well know this change is, among the financial professionals around the state and specifically within the institutions. This was answered in the affirmative. It was clarified that the results of the audit place all parties in good standing and should not run into unexpected occurrences.

## 7. Action Items

### A. Approval of Non-SARA application for William Jessup University

Chairman DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve Non-SARA application for William Jessup University. [[Enclosure 7A](#)]

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Dennis Duffy, it was

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approves the Non-SARA application for William Jessup .

VOTE: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Dennis Duffy, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Michael Mello, Marianne Monte, and Jeffery Williams.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

### B. Approval of the RI-SARA application for Providence College.

Chairman DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve RI-SARA application for Providence College. [[Enclosure 7B](#)]

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Marianne Monte, it was

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approves the Recommendation of the Postsecondary Commissioner that Providence College become an RI-SARA institution having submitted an application and supporting documentation which meets the requirements and standards set forth by the OPC and NC-SARA.

VOTE: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members  
voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Dennis Duffy,  
Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Michael Mello, Marianne  
Monte, and Jeffery Williams.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

- C. Approval of the audited financial statement for the Rhode Island College, Community College of Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner's Division of Higher Educational Assistance for Fiscal year ending June 30, 2020. [[Enclosure 7C](#)]

Chairman DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approves the audited financial statement for the Rhode Island College, Community College of Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner's Division of Higher Educational Assistance for Fiscal year ending June 30, 2020.

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Dennis Duffy, it was

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approves the Audited financial statements for Rhode Island College, Community College of Rhode Island and the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner's Division of Higher Educational Assistance for Fiscal year ending Jun 30,2020..

VOTE: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members  
voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Dennis Duffy,  
Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Michael Mello, Marianne  
Monte, and Jeffery Williams.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

- D. Approval of extension of current contract, and timeline and selection process for external auditors.

Chairman DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve the extension of current contract, and timeline and selection process for external auditors. [\[Enclosure 7D\]](#)

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Marianne Monte, it was

VOTED: THAT            The Council on Postsecondary Education approve the extension of the contract for audit services with O'Connor & Drew for one additional year, and the extended timeline and selection process for external auditors for Rhode Island College, Community College of Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner for FY 2022 audit, as presented.  
public postsecondary education system's operating budget request for the FY 2022, as presented.

VOTE:                    8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS:                   Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Dennis Duffy, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Michael Mello, Marianne Monte, and Jeffery Williams.

NAYS:                    0

ABSTAINS:            0

## 8. Executive Session

Chair DelGiudice advised attendees that they would be placed on hold for the duration of the Executive Session; the hold will be released once the Council is back in Open Session.

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education enter into executive session for the following items:

- A. Discussion regarding potential litigation, pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-5(a)(2).
- B. Discussion regarding collective bargaining – all bargaining units, pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-5(a)(2).

On a motion duly made by Jeffery Williams and seconded by Rachelle Green, it was

VOTED: THAT            The Council on Postsecondary Education enter into

Executive Session for the following items:

- a. Discussion regarding potential litigation, pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-5(a)(2).
- b. Discussion regarding collective bargaining – all bargaining units, pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-5(a)(2).

VOTE: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Dennis Duffy, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Michael Mello, Marianne Monte, and Jeffery Williams.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The Council entered Executive Session at 7:10 p.m. Virtual public access was paused.

The Council reconvened in Open Session at 8:13 p.m. Virtual public access resumed.

Chair DelGiudice thanked attendees for their patience while on hold during the Council's Executive Session. He confirmed that the Council was back in Open Session.

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education seal the minutes of the Executive Session held on February 17, 2021.

On a motion duly made by Rachelle Green and seconded by Marianne Monte, it was

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education seal the minutes of the Executive Session held on February 17, 2021.

VOTE: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Dennis Duffy, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Michael Mello, Marianne Monte.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0 (Jeffery Williams was present for the entirety of the executive session, however, need to leave the minute it was adjourned)

## 9. Upcoming Meetings

- A. Chairman DelGiudice announced that the Board of Education will meet on **Wednesday, March 17, 2021, at 9:00 a.m.- 3:00 p.m., Location TBD**, which will serve as the Council's Spring 2021 retreat.

## 10. Adjourn

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion to adjourn tonight's meeting.

On a motion duly made by Marianne Monte and seconded by Rachelle Green, it was

VOTED: THAT            The Council on Postsecondary Education adjourn the meeting of February 17, 2021.

VOTE:                    7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS:                   Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Dennis Duffy, Thomas Izzo, Rachelle Green, Michael Mello, and Marianne Monte.

NAYS:                    0

ABSTAINS: 0 (Jefferey Williams absent from vote)

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.