

# Spring 2023 Rhode Island Promise Report to the Commissioner of Postsecondary Education

## Community College of Rhode Island – May 10, 2023

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

This report is delivered as the Community College of Rhode Island continues to respond and emerge from the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite ongoing pandemic impacts, the Rhode Island Promise program continues to generate significantly positive and meaningful enrollment growth in the first-time, full-time straight from high school population. In addition, the College maintained strong retention of the fall 2021 cohort of RI Promise students.

The sixth cohort of Rhode Island Promise students began in the Fall 2022 semester. As enrollment has begun to show modest and steady increases overall, 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, 2,127 students enrolled as part of the new Fall 2022 Rhode Island Promise cohort, which represents a 14% increase relative to last year's cohort and represents 93% growth relative to the pre-Promise Fall 2016 population. In the returning Fall 2021 Rhode Island Promise cohort, 1,167 have re-enrolled this academic year, representing a 62% fall-to-fall retention compared to last year's 55%, while 14 students graduated with an Associate Degree after just one year. The overall College enrollment and retention figures continue to recover largely due to the Promise program, and in several cases exceed community college enrollment and retention rates experienced in the New England region this fall. While fall 2021 to fall 2022 Massachusetts community colleges experienced a 6% decline, New Hampshire community colleges experienced an 8% decline and Connecticut community college enrollment increased 1.5%, CCRI overall Fall 2022 enrollment increased 2%.<sup>1</sup>

While this report provides a summary of enrollment figures and budget estimates for the Rhode Island Promise program, it is also worth noting the program outcomes. In its sixth 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 18%, which is more than four times CCRI's historic two-year graduation rate. In addition, 24% of students graduated in three years, as compared to the historical three-year 15% graduation rate at the College. These positive student outcomes have helped move the college from being significantly below national completion rates to exceeding them.

Looking ahead to FY25, it is important to note that a new financial aid eligibility formula will be rolled out nationally as part of FAFSA simplification. In a recent study completed by the Brookings Institution<sup>2</sup>, the overall number of Pell recipients could increase by 17.5% on an annual basis beginning in 2024-25. CCRI will be completing internal data modeling to determine the extent to which our own population is expected to potentially shift from state to federal funding.

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<sup>1</sup> National Clearinghouse Research Center, 2023

<sup>2</sup> [The Complication with FAFSA Simplification](#), Levine and Desjean, 2023

**Demographics:** Aligning with CCRI’s mission to serve a diverse student population, the Rhode Island Promise continues to attract a diverse group of students from across the state. There remains strong growth among low-income students and students of color. CCRI has been designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) by Excelencia in Education in spring 2023. These demographic changes are also reflected in our Promise population. Overall, the fall 2022 Rhode Island Promise cohort is 14% larger than the fall 2021 cohort, and as evident in Table 1 is diverse. With the institutional priority to foster an equity-minded culture that actively focuses on eliminating barriers for student readiness and success, CCRI is committed to ensuring that low-income students receive the necessary support to enroll and be successful. As the college continues this targeted outreach and support we expect to see more low-income Pell grant students return to college in fall 2023.

Table 1: RI Promise Cohort Demographics - Fall 2022				
<p><b>New Fall 2022 cohort = 2,127 students (14% increase vs. last year's cohort)</b>  <b>Returning Fall 2021 cohort = 1,167 students (62% retention of last year's cohort of 1,868)</b></p>				
High School vs. GED				
	New Cohort		Returning Cohort	
GED	21	<1%	14	1%
HS Grad	2,106	99%	1,153	99%
Gender				
	New Cohort		Returning Cohort	
Female	1002	47%	624	54%
Male	985	46%	518	44%
N	140	7%	25	2%
Unknown	0	0%	0	0%
Race/Ethnicity				
	New Cohort		Returning Cohort	
American Indian or Alaska Native	8	<1%	2	<1%
Asian	56	3%	29	2%
Black or African-American	165	8%	75	6%
Hispanic, of any race	599	28%	342	29%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	3	<1%	1	<1%
Two or more races	131	6%	76	7%
Unknown Race/Ethnicity	89	4%	37	3%
White	1,076	50%	605	52%

**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 2,127 students in the cohort that began in the Fall 2022 and Table 2B summarizes that information for the 1,167 returning students from the cohort that began in the Fall 2021.

In the new Rhode Island Promise cohort, 53% of students received federal Pell grant funding. In the returning cohort, 42% of returning students received federal Pell grants. In both cohorts, the percentage of students receiving Pell funding this year has increased relative to last year.

With just over a month remaining in the fiscal year, we have 38 students across the two cohorts remaining as “unresolved” cases, largely due to challenges with FAFSA verification. We will continue to work to resolve as many of those as possible before the end of the year.

<b>Table 2A: RI Promise Financial Aid Awards - New Cohort (2022-23 academic year) n=2127</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)		\$4,602	\$4,629,461	1006	47%
Full Pell grants + SEOG (federal funding)		\$6,026	\$4,308,595	715	34%
Partial Pell	Pell portion (federal funding)	\$2,839	\$1,127,239	397	19%
	State grant portion (former RIHEAA funds)	\$2,198	\$872,767		
	Combined award	\$5,037	\$2,000,006		
Other (other scholarship, waiver, etc)		\$0	\$0	0	0%
Self-pay/loans		N/A	N/A	0	0%
Unresolved: FAFSA, Federal Verification, etc.		TBD	TBD	9	<1%
<b>Balance of tuition and fee revenue vs. refunds to students for Pell recipients</b>					
<b>Full Pell</b>	Avg. Tuition & Fees		\$4,918		
	Avg. Award		\$6,026		
	Refund for books and other expenses		\$1,108		
<b>Partial Pell</b>	Avg. Tuition & Fees		\$4,749		
	Avg. Award		\$5,032		
	Refund for books and other expenses		\$283		

**Table 2B: RI Promise Financial Aid Awards – Returning Cohort  
(2022-23 academic year) n=1167**

Award category		Average Award	Total Amount	Number of Students	Percentage of Returners
Rhode Island Promise (state funding)		\$4,733	\$1,869,686	395	34%
Full Pell grants +SEOG (federal funding)		\$5,588	\$1,531,127	274	23%
Partial Pell	Pell portion (federal funding)	\$2,595	\$563,173	217	19%
	State grant portion (former RIHEAA funds)	\$1,798	\$390,245		
	Combined award	\$4,393	\$953,418		
Other scholarship award or waiver		\$2,307	\$80,758	35	8%
Self-pay/loans		N/A	N/A	201	21%
Unresolved: FAFSA, Federal Verification, etc.		TBD	TBD	29	2%
Graduated before Fall 2022 semester		N/A	N/A	16	N/A
<b>Balance of tuition and fee revenue vs. refunds to students for Pell grant recipients</b>					
<b>Full Pell</b>	Avg. Tuition & Fees	\$4,549			
	Avg. Award	\$5,588			
	Avg. Refund for books and other expenses	\$1,039			
<b>Partial Pell</b>	Avg. Tuition & Fees	\$4,379			
	Avg. Award	\$4,393			
	Avg. Refund for books and other expenses	\$14			

**Budget Estimates for FY 2023 and FY2024:** CCRI’s RI Promise budget estimates are below in Table 3. While the FY23 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 FY23 expenditure is provided in the table below. For FY24, CCRI is not expecting substantial growth in the number of state-funded students. While the overall cohort should grow in size, the majority of that growth should come from low-income, Pell-grant funded students, as we have continued to enroll more students who demonstrate financial need. The FY24 budget projections allow for modest (3%) growth in the state-funded students. As of today, we have received 2,865 Promise applications for the fall 2023 semester and expect to receive at least 785 more. Traditionally, we achieve a 60% yield rate which would result in 2,190 Promise students enrolled.

<b>Table 3: CCRI FY 2023 and FY 2024 Estimates for RI Promise Budget</b>						
<b>FY 2023</b>	<b>Fall 2022</b>		<b>Spring 2023</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	1,001	388	803	349	30	2,571
Required funding	\$ 2,572,555	\$ 990,938	\$ 2,056,906	\$ 878,748	\$ 68,395	\$ 6,567,542
Budgeted Dollars						\$ 7,900,543
Variance to Budget						\$ 1,333,001
<b>FY 2024</b>	<b>Fall 2023</b>		<b>Spring 2024</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	1,049	610	944	549	45	3,198
Required funding	\$ 2,811,320	\$ 1,635,550	\$ 2,530,188	\$ 1,471,995	\$ 119,590	\$ 8,568,644
					FY24 Increase	\$ 668,101
<b>Note, the above budget assumes the following:</b>						
Pell students not included here, as this projects state funds for the RI Promise scholarship						
New RI Promise student enrollment projected at 2,190 with 48% being state funded						
An average award per semester of \$2,680 in FY24, representing a 5% tuition increase (FY23 was \$2,563)						
A fall-to-spring retention rate of 90% for both cohorts in FY24						
A 3% increase in students in the new Fall 2023 cohort vs. the Fall 2022 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 76% rate of students earning the second-year RI Promise scholarship in FY24						

**Institutional impacts of this program:**

The Rhode Island Promise program continues to positively impact the College and the state of Rhode Island by driving increases in the enrollment of full-time students and advancing access for low-income students and students of color. In the program's sixth year, the results of this program in increasing college access, equity, and completion remain clear. The College has experienced meaningful gains in increasing college attainment rates for Rhode Island's recent high school graduates, significantly improved graduation rates, and increased the number of young adults who are prepared for transfer opportunities or to enter the state's workforce. The Community College of Rhode Island remains committed to delivering strong educational outcomes for Rhode Island through this program.