



Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee Meeting

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

**Rhode Island Nursing Education Center
350 Eddy St., Providence, RI 02903 | Room 331
Meeting Minutes**

Chair Michael Mello called this meeting to order at 4:35 pm and acknowledged that a quorum was present.

Council on Postsecondary Education present:

Michael Mello, Chair
Lawrence Purtill
Jeffery Williams

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

Jailene Colón, Coordinator
Greg Ebner, Assistant Commissioner, Academic Affairs and Student Success
Christine Grele, Director of P20 Readiness and Transitions

Rhode Island College (RIC) participants:

Manyul Im, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Cindy Kozil, Vice President for Student Success

Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) participants:

Elizabeth Del Sesto, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs
Amy Kacerik, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
Marianne Raimondo, Vice President for Academic Affairs

1. Acceptance of the Agenda

Chair Mello called for a motion that the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee accept the agenda for the meeting of March 18, 2026.

On a motion made by Lawrence Purtill and seconded by Jeffery Williams it was:

VOTED: THAT The Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee
accept the agenda for the meeting on March 18, 2026.

VOTE: 3 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
YEAS: Michael Mello, Lawrence Purtill, and Jeffery Williams
NAYS: 0
ABSTAINS: 0

2. **Approval of the Minutes**

Chair Mello called for a motion that the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee approve the minutes of the meeting that took place on February 4, 2026.

On a motion duly made by Lawrence Purtill and seconded by Jeffery Williams it was:

VOTED: THAT The Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee approve the minutes that took place on February 4, 2026.
VOTE: 3 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
YEAS: Michael Mello, Lawrence Purtill, Jeffery Williams
NAYS: 0
ABSTAINS: 0

3. **Discussion Items**

a. Overview of Early College Programs (OPC)

Christine Grele, Director of P20 Readiness and Transitions at the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, provided an overview of early college programs, including dual and concurrent enrollment. Director Grele explained that these programs allow high school students to earn college credit and support college readiness and affordability.

Director Grele reviewed program structure, noting that course delivery varies between college faculty and qualified high school instructors, and that student eligibility is determined through collaboration between high schools and postsecondary institutions. She also highlighted that the Community College of Rhode Island provides most dual enrollment opportunities.

Director Grele reported continued growth in participation since the establishment of the Dual Enrollment Fund, along with high rates of credit attainment. She noted that while participation has increased overall, certain student populations remain underrepresented. Director Grele also discussed increasing program demand and associated cost pressures.

Council Member Williams asked for clarification on P-TECH programs. Director Grele explained that these programs provide access to technology-focused coursework aligned with career pathways.

Council Member Williams also asked about the types of courses offered. Director Grele indicated that offerings vary but generally include introductory courses in core academic subject areas.

Cindy Kozil, Vice President for Student Success at Rhode Island College, noted that access to concurrent enrollment opportunities may be limited by the availability of qualified high school instructors.

The Committee discussed affordability and in-state postsecondary enrollment trends.

b. Update on Retention and Graduation Rates and Support Programs (CCRI):

Amy Kacerik, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs at the Community College of Rhode Island, provided an update on student retention, graduation rates, and support programs. Associate Vice President Kacerik reported improvements in fall-to-fall retention and noted that CCRI's graduation rates compare favorably to national and regional benchmarks. She also highlighted CCRI's role in workforce development through short-term credential programs aligned with key industry sectors.

Council Member Williams asked whether data is available on factors contributing to student withdrawal or academic difficulty. Associate Vice President Kacerik confirmed that such data is tracked and that interventions include academic probation and enhanced advising.

Marianne Raimondo, Vice President for Academic Affairs at CCRI, noted that external factors, including mental health and basic needs insecurity, can impact student success.

Council Member Purtill asked about Mental Health First Aid. Vice President Raimondo explained that the program trains individuals to recognize signs of mental health challenges and connect individuals to appropriate resources.

Chair Mello asked how workforce partnerships, including Electric Boat, align with CCRI programming. Elizabeth Del Sesto, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs at CCRI, explained that these partnerships are reflected in technical studies and short-term workforce training programs.

Manyul Im, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Rhode Island College, asked about total enrollment figures. Associate Vice President Kacerik indicated that CCRI enrolls approximately 17,000 students and noted that additional details could be provided.

Chair Mello raised questions regarding financial metrics related to student outcomes. Provost Im noted that such analyses are conducted across institutions of higher education. Associate Vice President Kacerik concluded by highlighting efforts to improve the student experience, including strengthening first-year supports, advising, and student engagement.

Due to time constraints, the Committee did not reach Discussion Item 3c – Update on Retention and Graduation Rates and Support Programs from Rhode Island College.

Chair Mello called for a motion to table Discussion Item 3c.

On a motion duly made by Lawrence Purtill and seconded by Jeffery Williams it was:

VOTED:	THAT	The Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee table Discussion Item 3c - Update on Retention and Graduation Rates and Support Programs from Rhode Island College.
	VOTE:	3 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Michael Mello, Lawrence Purtill, Jeffery Williams
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

c. Update on Retention and Graduation Rates and Support Programs (RIC):
This item was tabled for a future meeting.

4. Action Items: None

5. Next Meeting

Chair Mello announced that the next Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee meeting will be on April 1, 2026, at 4:30 PM.

6. Adjourn

Chair Mello called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

On a motion duly made by Lawrence Purtill and seconded by Jeffery Williams, it was:

VOTED:	THAT	The Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee of the Council on Postsecondary Education adjourn the meeting of March 18, 2026
	VOTE:	3 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Michael Mello, Lawrence Purtill and Jeffery Williams
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

The meeting adjourned at 5:28 PM.