



Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee Meeting

Wednesday, April 1, 2026

**Rhode Island Nursing Education Center
350 Eddy St., Providence, RI 02903 | Room 329
Meeting Minutes**

Chair Michael Mello called this meeting to order at 4:30 pm and acknowledged that a quorum was present.

Council on Postsecondary Education present:

Michael Mello, Chair
Lawrence Purtill (Arrived at 4:50 PM)
Jeffery Williams

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

Jailene Colón, Coordinator
Greg Ebner, Assistant Commissioner, Academic Affairs and Student Success
Rebecca Ryan, Director of Compliance & Student Protection
Jaime Wager, Program Specialist

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
Greg LaPointe, Vice President for Student Affairs and Chief Outcomes Officer
Amy Kacerik, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
Marianne Raimondo, Vice President for Academic Affairs

Additional participants:

RI School of Medical Massage participants:

Courtney McDonald, President, Owner, and Instructor

William James College participants:

Joseph Toomey, Ph.D., Associate Chair, Clinical Department
Daniel Tierney, JD, Vice President for Business Development & Strategy

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 April 1, 2026.

On a motion made by Chair Mello and seconded by Jeffery Williams it was:

VOTED:	THAT	The Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee accept the agenda for the meeting on April 1, 2026.
	VOTE:	2 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Michael Mello, 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 March 18, 2026.

On a motion duly made by Chair Mello and seconded by Jeffery Williams it was:

VOTED:	THAT	The Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee approve the minutes that took place on March 18, 2026.
	VOTE:	2 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Michael Mello, Jeffery Williams
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

3. Discussion Items

a. Update on Retention and Graduation Rates and Support Programs (RIC)
Cindy Kozil, Vice President for Student Success, and Manyul Im, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Rhode Island College, provided an update on retention, graduation rates, and student support programs.

Vice President Kozil and Provost Im reviewed institutional retention trends, including fall-to-fall and fall-to-spring rates, as well as graduation rates over four- and six-year periods. They also highlighted strategies to support student success, including advising, affordability initiatives, and career development pathways.

Council Member Purtill arrived toward the end of the presentation and asked about systems in place to ensure students remain on track for their intended career paths. VP Kozil explained that this is supported through internship opportunities and programming within the Career and Life Design department. She also noted that alumni remain engaged with the institution by accessing resources and contributing through mentoring, advising, and other forms of support.

VP Kozil noted that limited access to internships at the high school level can impact workforce readiness. She explained that Rhode Island College leverages work-study and campus employment opportunities to help students build relevant skills prior to entering the workforce.

b. CCRI Notification of Program Suspension, Physical Education, Personal Trainer – Certificate

c. CCRI Notification of Program Suspension, Public Safety – Certificate
Elizabeth Del Sesto, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs at the Community College of Rhode Island, presented notifications of two program suspensions: Physical Education, Personal Trainer certificate and Public Safety certificate program.

Assistant Dean Del Sesto explained that the Physical Education, Personal Trainer certificate has experienced consistently low enrollment, with fewer than three graduates in recent years, and will be suspended effective Fall 2026. She noted that the program will be reviewed to assess future viability based on industry needs and workforce demand. Students currently enrolled will be supported through a teach-out plan based on their progress toward completion.

Assistant Dean Del Sesto also explained that the Public Safety certificate program will be suspended effective Fall 2026 due to consistently low enrollment. She noted that the program will be evaluated and potentially redesigned to better align with student interest and workforce needs, including a focus on strengthening relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

d. CCRI Notification of New JAA Program, Psychology Transfer, Behavioral Health Science BA – Associate in Arts (RIC)

Elizabeth Del Sesto, Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs at the Community College of Rhode Island, introduced a new Joint Admissions Agreement (JAA) with Rhode Island College for a Psychology Transfer program leading to a Bachelor of Arts in Behavioral Health Science.

4. Action Items:

- a. Initial Application for Approval of Rhode Island School of Medical Massage
Rebecca Ryan, Director of Compliance and Student Protections, presented the initial application for approval of the Rhode Island School of Medical Massage, a proposed proprietary school to be located at 1155 Westminster Street in Providence. Director Ryan noted that the school has submitted all required documentation and completed the compliance review process, and that approval of the application is recommended.

Director Ryan introduced Courtney McDonald, owner of the Rhode Island School of Medical Massage, who spoke about her professional experience and the development of her practice, which led to the establishment of the school.

Chair Mello called for a motion that the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee approve the application from the Rhode Island School of Medical Massage.

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

VOTED:	THAT	The Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee Recommend to the Council that it approve the Rhode Island School of Medical Massage to operate as a proprietary school within the state.
	VOTE:	3 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Michael Mello, Jeffery Williams, Lawrence Purtill
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

- b. Initial Approval of William James College (WJC) to Operate as an IHE in Rhode Island

Assistant Commissioner Ebner introduced representatives from William James College: Joseph Toomey, Ph.D., Associate Chair, Clinical Department, and Daniel Tierney, J.D., Vice President for Business Development & Strategy.

Assistant Commissioner Ebner stated that the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC) conducted a full review of William James College's application to operate an institution of higher education in Rhode Island in accordance with Council Policy A-5. He noted that WJC proposes to establish a

graduate program leading to a Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) in Clinical Psychology.

The program will be delivered in Rhode Island at Roger Williams University's Providence campus at One Empire Plaza, 150 Empire Street, under memoranda of agreement between the institutions providing for appropriate student support.

Mr. Tierney and Dr. Toomey stated that increased applicant demand for the PsyD program prompted the proposed expansion.

The Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner recommended that the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee recommend to the Council on Postsecondary Education approval of William James College's application for initial authorization to operate a program leading to the Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) in Clinical Psychology.

Chair Mello called for a motion that the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee recommend to the full Council that it grant initial approval to William James College to operate as an institution of higher education within the state.

On a motion duly made by Mr. Williams and seconded by Mr. Purtill it was:

VOTED: THAT The Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee
 recommend to the full Council that it grant initial approval
 to William James College to operate as an institution of higher
 education within the state of Rhode Island.

VOTE: 3 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted
 in the negative.

YEAS: Michael Mello, Jeffery Williams, Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

5. Next Meeting

Chair Mello announced that the next Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee meeting will be on June 3, 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:

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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.