

APRIL 2010

Community College of Rhode Island

COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF RHODE ISLAND BUILDING A 21ST CENTURY WORKFORCE

CCRI 21st Century Workforce Commission *Report & Recommendations*

RIEDDC Rhode Island
Economic Development Corporation

CCri COMMUNITY COLLEGE
OF RHODE ISLAND

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Acknowledgments

The work of the CCRI Commission is a testament of commitment to the State of Rhode Island. We are especially indebted to the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Rhode Island Foundation, and United Way of Rhode Island for their generous financial support, guidance, and commitment to Rhode Island's education and workforce development initiatives.

We are likewise tremendously grateful to the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (RIEDC) for the leadership of Paul Harden and Fred Hashway, for the coordination and staff support of Peg Degnan, and for space provided to support the Commission's meetings. For his continued support, we are especially indebted to RIEDC Director Keith Stokes, whose foresight as a member of the RIEDC Board of Directors in 2008 led to the creation of the Commission.

We are grateful as well to the following individuals who helped to steer our work and without whose support this report would not be possible. We thank Beth Cotter, Rhode Island House of Representatives; Ray Di Pasquale, Community College of Rhode Island; Janet Durfee-Hidalgo, Office of the Governor; Marie Ganim, Rhode Island Senate; Steven Maurano, Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education; John O'Hare, Governor's Workforce Board Rhode Island; and Johan Uvin, U.S. Department of Education (formerly State Director of Adult Education in Rhode Island).

For assistance with research and coordination of focus groups, we thank Heidi Collins, Jill Holloway and Linda Katz, The Poverty Institute; William LeBlanc and Robin Smith, Community College of Rhode Island; Nancy Olson, Governor's Workforce Board Rhode Island; and David Tremblay, Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training.

Julian L. Alssid and Maureen Bozell of Workforce Strategy Center played an important role in guiding the Commission's deliberations, conducting research, and creating the report. We are also sincerely grateful to the nearly 100 employers, students, and leaders and representatives of education, workforce development, and community-based organizations who informed our recommendations through interviews, focus groups, and presentations to the Commission.

Finally, the Commission would like to thank Governor Donald L. Carcieri and members of the State Legislature for recognizing the tremendous value the Community College of Rhode Island holds for economic growth in our state, and for their leadership and commitment to realizing this potential.

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Executive Summary

NEARLY ONE-THIRD OF NEW JOBS IN RHODE ISLAND OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WILL REQUIRE AT LEAST AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE. More than half of these jobs will require additional on-the-job training. Rhode Island’s citizens are already struggling to keep up with the education, training and skills they need to be employed. With the state’s rapidly aging workforce, and the changing demands of existing and emerging industries driven by technology, the situation only stands to get worse. Never before has workforce development been so central to the future of the state’s economy. And the pressure has never been greater on the state’s postsecondary education institutions to prepare students to compete in this 21st century economy.

Recognizing the critical role that the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), in particular, plays in increasing the skills and experience of the state’s workforce, the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (RIEDC) recommended in its 2008 Economic Growth Plan that the state establish a CCRI 21st Century Workforce Commission. Later that year, the General Assembly and Governor Donald L. Carcieri approved the recommendation. The Commission was established and tasked with providing recommendations to strengthen CCRI’s position as a key institution in preparing the state’s workforce for high-wage job opportunities in a knowledge-based economy.

Nationwide, community colleges are viewed as the “workhorses” of the education and training world, playing critical roles in regional economies by supplying a skilled workforce to support and spur economic growth. By serving a wide spectrum of students and workers—including recent high school graduates, adults returning to school, individuals pursuing short-term certificates and those seeking transfers to four-year institutions—community colleges are an invaluable resource for individuals seeking education and employers seeking skilled workers. Versatile and accessible, community colleges are the institutions most capable of ushering regional workforces into the 21st century economy.

Like CCRI, community colleges across America are challenged with remaining agile in order to keep pace with the changing needs of their regional workforces. By connecting courses and training initiatives to the varying demands of today’s economy, colleges serve a critical function in preparing students for knowledge-based occupations.



CCRI's Current Position

In the 2008-2009 school year CCRI graduated 1,416 students with credentials in the following fields: 547 in healthcare, 409 in general programs, 195 in public administration and protective services, 175 in business management and administration services, 52 in engineering and technology, 34 in computer studies and information processing, and 4 in biology and biotechnology.

In the current 2009-2010 academic year, approximately 60 percent of CCRI's students are under the age of 25; nearly half are attending part-time. The majority of students over the age of 25 attend CCRI part-time. Many students transfer before completing a degree; many are incumbent workers seeking to gain specific skills, not degrees. More than 95 percent of students who enrolled in CCRI in fall 2009 were from Rhode Island, and an estimated 10 percent indicated that English is not their first language.

Seventy percent of CCRI students require at least one remedial course, and more than 50 percent need two or more. (The national remediation rate across public community colleges is 60 percent.)

CCRI's Center for Workforce and Community Education serves more than 30,000 students in non-credit workforce and continuing education programs, and another 5,000 students in offsite industry-based contract training, grant-funded training, and other programs.

In 2009, with an operating budget of approximately \$130 million, the college reported a \$7 million budget shortfall due to state cutbacks.

Key Commission Findings

The Commission found that Rhode Island's workforce development needs are widely varied, pulling the state's sole community college in too many directions. Employers, workforce development providers, and community-based organizations echo Governor Carcieri's call for a coordinated, strategic approach to align CCRI's workforce development efforts across the state.

CCRI is the largest supplier of healthcare workers in the state. The Commission's research indicates that CCRI is also well-positioned to address demand for workers in financial, accounting, information technology, engineering and technology fields, as well as supervisory positions across industries.

To meet these demands, CCRI must increase enrollments in new areas of study, graduate more students with certificates and degrees in areas of industry demand, and offer more opportunities for students to gain work experience. It must also address the repeated call from employers for entry-level workers with soft skills. These include communicating in a professional manner and providing customer service.

Finally, the Commission found that CCRI lacks the resources and flexibility demanded by employers competing in a global market—shortcomings that severely hamper the college's ability to expand its partnerships with employers, industry, and other state and educational institutions. In addition, there is a perceived lack of awareness of CCRI's workforce development and training programs.



Creating a State-led Strategic Approach to Workforce Development at CCRI

As a result of its findings, the Commission reached three overall conclusions.

- **First**, an organizing structure is needed to support an industry-focused, state-level systemic and strategic approach to career pathways, tapping the expertise of education, workforce development, and economic development partners. This will increase CCRI's effectiveness, target the use of its limited resources, and allow the college to educate and train a greater number of Rhode Island's citizens. It will also serve to raise students' knowledge and skill levels so they can meet employment requirements.
- **Second**, to realize true economic growth for the state and its citizens, CCRI must be funded to capacity.
- **Third**, to encourage proper use of scarce resources, Rhode Island must institute performance measures that are transparent to the public.

Commission Recommendations

The Commission is proposing four recommendations based on some of the best practices in the nation, in regions where community colleges have become drivers of workforce development.

1. Enact legislation to create a statewide career pathways system that is driven by industry needs.

- Charge the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB) with establishing and overseeing the state's career pathways system, building on its existing industry partnership system. Ensure that the principals of relevant education, workforce development, and economic development agencies lead this effort.
- Support the state's career pathways system with a balance of public, non-profit, and private sector funding to ensure commitment from all who have a vested interest in the state's future workforce, and to make certain those interests are maintained for the greater benefit of Rhode Island and its citizens.

- Establish an integrated performance measurement plan for the state career pathways system. The plan should align each agency's individual career pathways objectives and resources with goals set for the state system and identify milestones with budget, dates, measures, and resources. Performance results and progress should be made transparent to the public.

2. Strengthen CCRI's capacity to raise knowledge and skill levels in a greater share of the state's population.

- Expand and enhance CCRI's Center for Workforce and Community Education to increase the workforce education and training services offered in response to occupational demand in strategic industries.
- Work closely with Rhode Island's Industry Partnerships to understand market demand in the state's strategic industries, as determined by the GWB.
- Respond to identified needs by establishing credit and non-credit bearing industry-recognized credentials, as required.
- Create career pathways that map CCRI's workforce development training courses to its postsecondary occupational degree programs. Align courses across the education continuum — from secondary to pre-college (Adult Basic Education/General Education Development/English as a Second Language/Remediation) to two- and four-year postsecondary education — with entry-level, mid-level and high-level occupations.
- Emphasize careers and career advancement at CCRI. Publicize CCRI's degree programs and workforce training courses through an ongoing career-focused marketing campaign targeting students, parents, business, and the general public. Focus on the career opportunities in Rhode Island's strategic industries.

- Strengthen Rhode Island’s Adult Education program so that it integrates academic, basic, and technical skills across the state and is tied to career pathways in critical, emerging and growth sectors. This initiative should tie together the efforts of the Rhode Island Department of Education, Governor’s Workforce Board, Department of Labor and Training, and Department of Human Services, and build on such work as the Newport Skills Alliance, Providence RISES, the Rhode Island Works Initiative, and the CCRI Transitions to College program.
- Institute performance and progress measures at CCRI to track the rates at which students complete credentials, advance from one education level to the next, and enter career-path employment.

3. Encourage a culture of innovation and responsiveness at CCRI to meet the workforce development needs of students and business.

- Establish guiding principles for operations and services.
- Streamline and standardize internal operations through uniform policies and procedures.
- Grant CCRI purchasing authority to enable the institution to respond competitively to market demand in accordance with state law.
- Increase flexible scheduling of high-growth industry programs and courses to accommodate the growing need of working students and business for offsite, evening, online, blended learning, and weekend offerings.

- Hire a grant writer to enable CCRI to respond to public and private workforce development funding opportunities and coordinate with the GWB’s efforts to monitor emerging regional, comprehensive, and joint funding opportunities.

4. Fund the recommendations of the CCRI Commission.

- Allocate \$500,000 from the state’s budget to support initial implementation of the above recommendations over the course of the next year. The Commission believes this sum will be necessary at a minimum and should be used to support the following recommendations:
 - ▶ Additional capacity for the CCRI Center for Workforce and Community Education
 - ▶ Development of a career-focused marketing campaign for CCRI
 - ▶ Development of career pathways at CCRI
 - ▶ Grant writing services
 - ▶ Consultant services to streamline CCRI operations
- Convene state, city, community-based and private funders, including employers, to identify additional sources of funding for CCRI to support the Commission’s recommendations. Have CCRI, the GWB, and RIEDC lead this effort.
- Develop sustainability plans to support and secure long-term funding for the Commission’s recommendations. Have CCRI, the GWB, and RIEDC lead this effort.

Next Steps

Leaders from Rhode Island state agencies, CCRI, the GWB, RIEDC and community-based organizations will work to address the majority of the Commission’s recommendations by April 2011.

Introduction

Alexander U. Ndimele:

“My first winter, 2002, I worked shoveling snow in the Burger King parking lot. The snow was beautiful, but I nearly froze to death. Someone referred me to Dorcas [Place] where I met Sharon who explained the Bridge [Bridge-to-College] Program to me. This was something I wanted to do. My goals are to go to college and become a nurse or accountant. Financial aid and college admissions were completed and I was on my way. I participated in Dorcas’ Summer College Prep Program and had the opportunity to visit colleges and cultural activities. What an outstanding program!

“This semester, I enrolled in the Bridge program. I work nights at the Providence Place Mall, and while my wife works as a CNA, I care for our baby son, George. It is extremely difficult managing my time, but I have perfect attendance in class and I’m passing! Without the Bridge Program, with all its supports, I would not be able to do it alone. Dorcas paid for my books and the class. My wife also wants to complete her GED and enroll in the Bridge Program.”¹

* * *

An online news service recently reported the plight of Cynthia Roderick, 57, an unemployed hospital clerk who has been looking for work for four months. In 2007, Cynthia was laid off from her job as an accounts receivable clerk at the hospital where she had worked for 16 years. She was able to find work at a psychiatric hospital in South Attleboro, Massachusetts, but the job was short-lived.

A widow with grown children, Cynthia has had to resort to living off her 401(k) retirement savings account and pawning jewelry. She has been volunteering for 20 hours a week at a local hospital, in hopes that a job will open up. Like others seeking jobs in Pawtucket, she is finding that jobs in industries that used to employ thousands of people in Rhode Island—hospital workers, heavy machine operators, back-office clerks for the costume jewelry industry—simply don’t exist anymore.²

* * *

RHODE ISLAND HAS A PROUD HISTORY AS A MANUFACTURING STATE. However, it is currently confronting fierce competition to attract new industries and new jobs in hopes of alleviating one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. With more than half of all jobs in the state considered low-skilled, and employers demanding greater percentages of new workers with two- and four-year college degrees—and far fewer with high school degrees or diplomas—Rhode Island faces a significant challenge.

¹ Dorcas Place, <http://www.dorcasplace.org/students/successstories.html>, website accessed on March 4, 2010.

² McClatchy Washington Bureau, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2010/02/19/85808/in-americas-smallest-state-big.html>, website accessed on March 4, 2010.

According to the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training:³

- Rhode Island ranks 32nd in the nation in the percentage of associate degrees and postsecondary vocational certificates earned in technological and technician areas.
- Nearly one-third of new job growth projected for the decade 2006-2016 is expected to occur among jobs requiring an associate degree or higher, and over half is expected to occur among jobs requiring on-the-job training.
- Within the next 25 years, Rhode Island will witness a 52 percent increase in its elderly (65+) population, while the under-65 population will increase by just one percent.

According to the Annenberg Institute for School Reform:⁴

- Young adults represent 31 percent of all learners enrolled in Rhode Island's Adult Basic Education program.
- Today, some 15,000 individuals between 18 and 24 years of age in Rhode Island lack a high school credential.
- In 2008, 75 percent of all GED graduates in the state were between the ages of 16 and 24.

How this plays out in the real lives of our citizens, young and old, is difficult for too many of us to imagine, no matter how familiar we are with the statistics. Countless Rhode Islanders, their jobs eliminated after years of service, have seen their hard-earned rewards disappear with the inability to pay for their children's college tuition, threatened home foreclosures, and a slender existence eked out of unemployment benefits. Faced with 21st century work requirements, their knowledge and skills more often than not fail them. Those who seek out publicly assisted job training are in fierce competition for too few jobs; employment usually results in harsh adjustments to drastically reduced wages.

With a projected mid-year budget gap in FY 2010 of \$400 million, or 13 percent of its FY 2010 general budget fund, our state is clearly compromised.⁵ But we know employers value the knowledge and skills of a workforce, and we even have a fairly good idea of what skills they need and what education they require. With our economy at stake, and job creation so urgent, the call by Governor Donald Carcieri and the General Assembly to strengthen the Community College of Rhode Island could not be more timely.



³ Governor's Workforce Board Rhode Island, *Strategic Workforce Plan for Rhode Island, 2009-2014*, 2009.

⁴ Annenberg Institute for School Reform, *Building Our Future: An Agenda for Quality Urban Education in Rhode Island*, 2009.

⁵ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=711>, website accessed on March 3, 2010.

CCRI 21st Century Workforce Commission

Throughout the United States, community colleges are the “workhorses” of the education and training world, playing a critical role in regional economies by supplying a skilled workforce to support and spur economic growth. Realizing this potential, President Obama has committed \$2 billion over the next four years to the recently funded Community College and Career Training Grant program.

Community colleges are poised to address emerging job market trends and be pillars for economic growth. Individuals who possess postsecondary credentials earn more money than those without, and the majority of the fastest growing occupations require some form of postsecondary credential. Workforce quality is one of the top factors consistently cited by employers in all sectors as essential to company success and critical in decisions regarding corporate relocation and expansion. Against this landscape, those regions and states that are adapting most successfully to the needs of the 21st century economy recognize that community colleges serve a critical role. Conversely, regions not able to marshal the resources to prepare individuals for work and support critical employers will be left behind.

The Community College of Rhode Island has served as an accessible and largely affordable resource for the state’s residents and businesses since 1964. It is Rhode Island’s postsecondary education and training workhorse. At the urging of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, the Rhode Island General Assembly created the CCRI 21st Century Workforce Commission to recommend ways to strengthen the college’s ability to provide knowledge workers for the state.

The Commission comprises 13 leaders from CCRI, the State Legislature, postsecondary education, business, economic development, workforce development, and unions. Our work was supported by a national expert on making education and workforce development more responsive to the economy. Our goal was to produce a set of recommendations that are realistic, feasible, actionable, and able to be implemented over the next two years.



This report is the product of a series of research activities we undertook to investigate the demand for workforce development education and training services in Rhode Island, and the capacity of the Community College of Rhode Island to meet these needs. It is informed by a review of relevant state and national literature and labor market data, and current workforce-related policies and activities in Rhode Island.

In order to understand workforce development needs, issues and challenges, we held seven public meetings and carried out more than 20 interviews with leaders in the General Assembly, business and industry, CCRI and other postsecondary institutions, education and training programs, and education and workforce agencies and organizations. Finally, we conducted nine focus groups with close to 80 large and small employers; CCRI administration, faculty, and students; and key training, education, and economic development and workforce development constituents.

As detailed in this report, the Commission investigated the significant efforts being made at the state level to improve public educational and workforce development systems, as well as the steps CCRI is taking to address the increasingly sophisticated requirements of the present knowledge economy. Based on information gathered from public and private CCRI constituents, we also explored the perceived challenges to realizing the college's full potential as a state workforce supplier.

Our report concludes with recommendations and action steps for strengthening the college's capacity to prepare Rhode Island's 21st century workforce. We have focused on four recommendations that, if suitably funded and implemented in the next two years, we believe will attract business and industry to the institution and to Rhode Island, generate much needed revenue for the state, and create career track employment opportunities for our citizens.



Preparing for the 21st Century World of Work

AS NOTED RECENTLY BY RHODE ISLAND’S URBAN EDUCATION TASK FORCE, EDUCATING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY MEANS, AMONG OTHER THINGS, CONFRONTING A DIGITAL AGE AND RESPONDING TO THE NEW WORLD OF WORK.⁶ This new world of work is one in which employers

anticipate hiring greater percentages of new entrants with two- and four-year college degrees.⁷ Forty-seven percent of all job openings projected for the state by 2016 are “middle-skill” — jobs that require more than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year degree — according to a recent report by The Workforce Alliance (now the National Skills Coalition) and the Skills2Compete-Rhode Island campaign.⁸

Over the past year the Commission has had the opportunity to learn a great deal about the significant inroads the Community College of Rhode Island has made into strengthening the state’s workforce. Our research has revealed many programs, initiatives, and collaborations within Rhode Island’s education system, and across and among various key players in the workforce development system. Too numerous to name in this report, all are aimed at improving the employment prospects of Rhode Island’s citizens.

Some regions attract their knowledge workers by virtue of their natural assets. Others “grow” them. We discovered that Rhode Island is forging ahead on all fronts. The Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce is capitalizing on the city’s natural assets to launch new products and services and promoting innovation with its new Knowledge Economy Initiative. The State of Rhode Island is taking bold steps to improve the educational outcomes and skill levels of both youth and adults by aligning and coordinating the efforts of its education and workforce development agencies, and secondary and postsecondary institutions. Local foundations and other non-profit and community-based organizations are also making significant contributions, both financially and by providing training and support services to the state’s disadvantaged populations. Many of these endeavors involve CCRI.

Aligning Educational Systems

With Rhode Island’s Race to the Top application to the federal government, Education Commissioner Deborah Gist has set the course for the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) to close the achievement gap so that all students graduate from high school well prepared for college and challenging careers.⁹ To improve college enrollment and completion rates, RIDE is currently working with the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education (RIBGHE) to align education standards and assessments using the Common Core State Standards Initiative. Led by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers, this initiative is a multi-state endeavor to develop a common core of state standards in English-language arts and mathematics for grades K-12 that identify and benchmark course content and skills against college, work, and international standards. Once established, the Common Core college- and career-ready standards will serve to guide decisions about how to improve student transition rates from high school to postsecondary education.

⁶ Urban Education Task Force, *Building Our Future: An Agenda for Quality Urban Education in Rhode Island*, 2009.

⁷ The Conference Board, *Corporate Voices for Working Families, Partnership for 21st Century Skills*, Society for Human Resource Management, *Are They Really Ready to Work? Employers’ Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century Workforce*, 2006.

⁸ National Skills Coalition, *Skills2Compete, Rhode Island’s Forgotten Middle Skills Jobs*, 2009.

⁹ From Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website, *Rhode Island Race to The Top Application for Initial Funding*, <http://www.ride.ri.gov/commissioner/RaceToTheTop/docs/RhodeIsland-RTTApplicationnarrative.pdf>, accessed on February 7, 2010.

We found that Commissioner Gist and RIBGHE are also in the process of investigating data on students who need to take college remediation courses prior to entering college. Additionally, they are building a longitudinal data system that will align the state's P-16 systems of education with Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT) workforce data to better inform decisions about improving student readiness for college and careers.

The importance of this work cannot be overstated if CCRI is to assume a greater role in the state's workforce development efforts. While several of these efforts will take a number of years to complete, their sum effect on CCRI should be to decrease its need to remediate students significantly, and to improve student transition into college and family-sustaining careers. This will allow the college to redirect precious resources to core academic and workforce development courses.

Coordinating Workforce Development

To provide strategic direction and set policy for Rhode Island's public workforce system, in 2005 Governor Donald L. Carcieri combined the federally mandated State Workforce Investment Board and the state-mandated Human Resource Investment Council to create the Governor's Workforce Board Rhode Island (GWB).



As part of its mission to connect workforce policy with industry, the GWB has created and supports nine Industry Partnerships around eight targeted industry sectors. The partnerships are charged with identifying skills gaps in the state's high-growth, high-wage sectors and taking measures to eliminate those gaps. They do this by connecting industry to appropriate training opportunities and by building actionable career pathways for workforce advancement.

Charged with developing a comprehensive state plan with a unified vision along with statewide goals and objectives, the GWB released a strategic plan in 2009.¹⁰ The plan seeks to align the workforce development system in order to (among other things) deliver demand-driven training, offer individuals the transferable skills required in the marketplace, and increase the system's efficiency, effectiveness, and capacity.

The product of a monumental collaborative effort by the key constituents in Rhode Island's workforce development system, the GWB plan presents an extremely thorough and extensive menu of more than 90 strategies and tactics. As part of this effort, last year the GWB awarded more than \$12 million in grants for workforce development, including a \$4.6 million grant to support Adult Education and Literacy that leveraged an additional \$6.7 million in public and private funding.¹¹

We believe that as a whole this plan represents the best and most current thinking in the nation on what actions need to take place in workforce development to prepare Rhode Island to meet the challenges of the new economy. It provides an excellent framework for future efforts.

¹⁰ Governor's Workforce Board Rhode Island, *Strategic Workforce Plan for Rhode Island, 2009-2014*, 2009.

¹¹ Governor's Workforce Board Rhode Island, *Strategy in Action: Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2009*, accessed at http://www.rihric.com/pdfs/2009AnnRpt_GWBRI.pdf on March 3, 2010.

Community College of Rhode Island Mission

The Community College of Rhode Island is the state's only public comprehensive associate degree-granting institution. We provide affordable open access to higher education at locations throughout the state. Our primary mission is to offer recent high school graduates and returning adults the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for intellectual, professional and personal growth through an array of academic, career and lifelong learning programs. We meet the wide-ranging educational needs of our diverse student population, building on our rich tradition of excellence in teaching and our dedication to all students with the ability and motivation to succeed. We set high academic standards necessary for transfer and career success, champion diversity, respond to community needs, and contribute to our state's economic development and the region's workforce.

The Community College of Rhode Island

The largest community college in New England, CCRI enrolls more than 17,000 students per year in degree and certificate programs and more than 35,000 in non-credit workforce and continuing education programs. The institution has four main campuses in Warwick, Lincoln, Providence, and Newport, a secondary campus in Providence, and a satellite location in Westerly. Forty percent of CCRI's students reside near the Warwick and Providence campuses; nearly 60 percent of students need to drive significant distances (over 30 miles) to reach a campus. CCRI is governed by the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education (RIBGHE).

We found that in 2009, with an operating budget of approximately \$130 million, the college reported a \$7 million budget shortfall due to state cutbacks. As a result, CCRI is operating with 723 full-time employees instead of the 835 it is authorized to employ. Seventy percent of CCRI students require at least one remedial course, and more than 50 percent need two or more. CCRI has a graduation rate of

10 percent against a 15 percent national average. The college reports that it is full to capacity with hundreds of students waiting to enter several of its most popular healthcare programs. CCRI has launched a capital campaign that at the time of this report had raised more than \$3.4 million.

In May 2009, CCRI released a strategic plan for 2009-2012.¹² Developed over the course of 18 months, and informed by hundreds of CCRI employees, the plan has four stated goals:

- Position the college for the fiscal, political and demographic shifts of the 21st century
- Strengthen the culture of academic excellence and inquiry to prepare students for transfer, employment and career advancement
- Maximize organizational efficiency and resource utilization
- Develop measurement standards and performance indicators to assess institutional effectiveness of the college

¹² Community College of Rhode Island, *Strategic Plan: 2009-2012*, 2009.

CCRI's Division of Academic Affairs delivers degrees and certificates for individuals seeking employment in high-demand industries. Of the 1,416 students who graduated with credentials in the 2008-2009 school year, 547 graduated with degrees or completed certificates preparing them for health-care employment; some 350 of these graduates received Nursing ADN (Associate Degree of Nursing) or Licensed and Vocational Practical Nursing awards. Approximately 50 received credentials in Engineering and Technology fields, including Computer Networking, Waste Water Management, and Construction Management. CCRI is the largest supplier of healthcare workers in the state. It is also uniquely positioned to serve as a workforce provider for Rhode Island in as much as its students enroll not only to prepare for entry into the workforce, but also to upgrade their skills as they pursue career advancement opportunities.

CCRI offers some 18 technical degrees and certificates and more than 100 courses in various technologies and technical skill areas such as computer, mechanical, electrical, and manufacturing technologies. Last year the college introduced four new credit-bearing courses in renewable energy, and increased the number of online courses available to students by 39 percent. More than 1,200 students take one or more of their courses online. The Division for Academic Affairs uses external advisory panels that include employers to review and refine new and revised curricula.

The college also offers students career counseling and placement services, as well as cooperative education and internship opportunities that allow more than 1,000 students each year to gain work experience and explore career choices while pursuing their education at CCRI.



Community College of Rhode Island Demographics

In the fall 2009-2010 academic year, total number of students enrolled:

17,760

Students:

- 38 percent full-time
- 62 percent part-time
- 60 percent are female
- 23.5 percent are from an ethnic minority group
- 61 percent are under 25 years of age; the majority are full-time students
- 38 percent are 25 years of age or older; the majority are part-time students
- The average age is approximately 26 years
- Full-time students over age 25 increased by approximately 26 percent since the previous year
- Over 95 percent are Rhode Island residents

First-time freshmen characteristics (based on a survey completed by 3,331 students):

- Approximately 10 percent indicated that English is not their first language
- Roughly 39 percent work 20 hours or less per week, and about 35 percent work 20 hours or more per week
- Approximately 64 percent indicated that they were planning a career
- 47 percent of first-time freshmen report that their goal is to obtain a certificate or degree and then transfer

Majors with the highest enrollment:

- General Studies
- Law Enforcement
- General Business
- Nursing Level 1

Completion of Awards, Student Retention and Transfer (in the 2008-2009 school year):

- 1,416 Associate Degrees and Certificates awarded (1,254 Associate Degrees and 162 Certificates)
- 2005 completion rate (students enrolled full-time in 2005 who graduate or transfer in 3 years): approximately 32 percent
- In 2008, 607 students transferred to Rhode Island College and 233 transferred to the University of Rhode Island
- In a survey of 2008 graduates (with approximately 82 percent responding), 83 percent reported being employed and approximately 36 reported continuing their education

In a study of the three-year outcomes from the 2004 academic year enrollment class, there was a:

- Transfer out rate of 20.6 percent
- Graduation rate of 9.6 percent

Faculty and Staff:

- There are 407 staff members; just over 11 percent are Administration (the president, vice presidents, directors, deans and associate and assistant deans and directors)
- There are 330 full-time faculty members at the college and nearly 570 part-time adjunct faculty

Funding and Tuition Fees:

- For the 2008-2009 school year, State aid decreased by 26 percent while Federal aid increased by approximately 26 percent
- Beginning in 2000-2001 through 2008-2009, tuition and fees climbed nearly 66 percent. In 2008-2009 fees were raised just over 5 percent to \$1,497

Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning, *Community College of Rhode Island, Facts and Figures, 2008-2009*, 2009

CCRI's Center for Workforce and Community Education

The Center for Workforce and Community Education (CWCE), a division of CCRI, is the college's principal workforce development arm. With dominion over offsite training and approximately 50 staff employees, CWCE serves more than 30,000 students in non-credit workforce and continuing education programs, and another 5,000 students in offsite industry-based contract training, grant-funded training, and other programs.

CWCE also delivers credit and non-credit contract training programs for employers and grant-funded training programs in partnership with community-based organizations. In the 2007-2008 academic year, the college engaged in 2,732 non-credit and 922 credit-bearing contracts with external clients, totaling nearly \$750,000 in tuition and fees. Among its major business clients are CVS, Deepwater Wind, and Lifespan. Additionally, it partners with the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the Holmes Corp. in offering the SHRM Learning System to provide students the opportunity to prepare for human resources national certification exams.

The programs delivered by CWCE include Adult Education and GED (General Education Development) courses; Career and Technical Education courses, such as Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Teacher Assistant programs; transportation-related programs, such as Commercial Driver's License, School Bus Certification, and Driver's Education; a variety of personal enrichment courses; and distance learning courses. In 2007-2008, CWCE awarded more than 1,100 CNA certifications.

CWCE works with the GWB's Industry Partnerships to provide workforce training through a number of different projects and training courses. The Newport Skills Alliance, a pilot project launched in December 2008, is the product of collaboration between the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), CCRI, the GWB, the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT), the Department of Human Services (DHS), and local employers. The project incorporates basic skills training into its training curriculum to prepare unemployed and underemployed individuals for jobs in the healthcare and hospitality and tourism industries on Aquidneck Island. CCRI regularly hosts meetings for employer groups within the long-term healthcare industry as part of the Newport Skills Alliance. CCRI also supports Stepping Up, a career ladders program with United Nurses & Allied Professionals that provides training, education, career coaching, and support services for entry-level workers at Rhode Island Hospital and Women & Infants Hospital and for low-income Providence residents.

The college works closely with community-based organizations and government agencies to offer workforce development services to individuals. For example, CCRI partners with RIDE, as well as community-based organizations such as Dorcas Place and the Rhode Island Regional Adult Learning Center (RIRAL). Together they have developed an initiative called Transitions to College, which offers basic skills, workplace literacy, and GED preparation training to low-skilled individuals. The program seeks to improve advancement into postsecondary education for the target population. The college also partners with Trudeau Center, Genesis Center, and Progreso Latino, among other organizations, to serve low-income individuals.

Additionally, CCRI partners with local Workforce Investment Boards to deliver education and training utilizing federal Workforce Investment Act funds.

Potential Challenges

WHILE IT IS APPARENT THAT CCRI IS ENGAGED IN MANY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES, THE COMMISSION’S RESEARCH REVEALED A NUMBER OF CHALLENGES WE BELIEVE NEED TO BE ADDRESSED IN ORDER TO IMPROVE ITS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY. The issues relate to CCRI’s role within the larger context of workforce development efforts in Rhode Island, as well as to CCRI itself. The research for this section is largely based on information the Commission gathered from business and industry representatives, training organizations, CCRI students, faculty, and staff, and leaders in education and workforce development.

Disconnected Systems

The existing systems in the U.S. that prepare youth and adults for employment are generally characterized by numerous disconnects among programs at different levels and between programs and the labor market. Here are just a few examples:

- **Secondary and postsecondary curricula** typically are not aligned and few high school students are exposed to postsecondary education and careers in knowledge fields. The result is that too many students leave high school both unprepared and lacking clear direction for careers and postsecondary learning.
- **Neither adult basic skills programs**, which prepare adults to improve their basic skills and earn a GED, nor college remedial or “developmental” programs, which are intended to help students place into college-level math and English, adequately prepare students to succeed in postsecondary technical education.
- **The traditional “seat time” model** for awarding academic credit and inflexible academic calendars make it difficult to respond flexibly to the learning needs and schedules of working adults and their employers. Colleges generally find it difficult to use non-credit programs to complement and connect with degree-credit programs.

- **Funding formulae based on enrollments** make it difficult to sustain high-cost technical programs, particularly in a time of limited budgets and diminishing public support — even when such programs are essential for helping students achieve their career goals, meeting employers’ hiring and training needs, and promoting local economic development goals.
- **Postsecondary occupational degree programs** often lack strong mechanisms for building ongoing relationships with employers, which are essential for ensuring that programs are effective in preparing students for employment or job advancement.
- **Few educational institutions have the capacity to track the labor market** and further education outcomes of their students, and many of those that do so fail to use this information to improve outcomes for students.

These disconnects create barriers to educational and career advancement for students and others, and they lower the return on the public’s investment in education and other services.

Source: Davis Jenkins, *Career Pathways: Aligning Public Resources to Support Individual and Regional Economic Development in the Knowledge Economy*, 2006

It is important to put the challenges facing CCRI into context. Like CCRI, community colleges across the country are facing severe budget reductions at a time of record enrollments. Sixty percent of community college students in the United States require remediation. Additionally, the current recession has further exacerbated existing space, resource, and faculty constraints as students seek community college credentials more than ever before.

In the United States today most effective workforce development systems include community colleges as part of an industry-focused regional collaborative involving education, industry, community-based organizations, unions, and the workforce development system. To address current workforce requirements and respond to labor market demand, employers in these collaboratives serve as the critical link between education and the economy. The findings that follow are best understood within this broader national context.

A Coordinated Response

As with most states, we discovered that Rhode Island's workforce development needs are hugely varied, and exist at multiple levels and across all of the state's targeted industries. It is not surprising then to find that employers, workforce development providers, and community-based organizations echoed Governor Carcieri's call for a strategic approach to, and greater coordination and alignment of, workforce development efforts across the state. They thought that CCRI should attempt to focus and expand its role as a workforce development training provider, and align its services with those of others both leading to and from the college. They spoke to the need to establish roles and divisions of labor based on the strengths of all training providers in order to complement rather than compete with one another, avoid duplication of effort, and help potential training customers to understand who they should turn to for what service.

There are a plethora of organizations attempting to address the state's workforce development needs—both within and outside Rhode Island. These include community-based organizations such as Dorcas Place, RIRAL, Progreso Latino, Building Futures, and the Genesis and Trudeau centers; Department of Labor and Training, netWORKri, the Governor's Workforce Board and the RIEDC; organizations such as Workforce Solutions of Providence / Cranston and Workforce Partnership of Greater RI; and educational institutions such as New England Tech, the University of Rhode Island, and Rhode Island College, as well as a host of education and training institutions in neighboring Connecticut and Massachusetts. Several of the GWB's Industry Partnerships also provide training.

Streamlining Operations and Increasing Capacity

Across the board, CCRI's stakeholders believe that the college lacks the capacity to expand its role as a key provider of workforce development services in the state. In addition to its budget shortfalls, stakeholders see the tremendous allocation of resources required to address students' remediation needs as a primary contributing factor.

That said, most if not all of those interviewed for this report equated improving services to prepare a 21st century workforce with a need for flexibility, the ability to respond quickly and innovatively, customer service skills, the use of technology, a strong connection to employers, a focus on labor market needs, and an established reputation and track record for quality service.

On the question of how to establish CCRI as a key provider of workforce services in the state's knowledge economy, the majority of interviewees and focus group participants identified the following as top priorities: streamlining operations and the procurement process, establishing accountability measures, and improving customer service and communications—within the college, with clients and partners, to the education system, and to the public.

The consensus was that improved policies, processes, and procedures would allow CCRI to further develop its programs, partner with industry on programs giving students access to up-to-date equipment and facilities, and attract much needed funding. The majority of those interviewed spoke of a lack of awareness of CCRI's workforce development education and training programs among the general public.

CCRI students and community-based organizations in particular called for improving the college's organization, staff training, and communications. They cited the need for increased uniformity and consistency of communication, policies, and procedures across all of the college campuses; making orientation both a requirement and applicable to all campuses; and more timely and better access to information. Working students said they would benefit from additional weekend, evening, offsite, and online courses.

Most of the CCRI and workforce stakeholders said the college should be transformed into a 21st century institution. They suggested increasing the use of technology to support course curricula, address the shortage of space, increase course offerings from other postsecondary institutions, and improve communications.

A significant finding in the Commission's research was the degree to which employers, industry representatives, and workforce development providers perceive CCRI to be lacking presence within the business community as a whole. While the college has many contractual arrangements with individual employers focusing on immediate needs, it is generally considered to be disconnected from the larger landscape of current workforce industry needs.

Economic and workforce development representatives said that CCRI needs to strengthen existing business partnerships and create new ones, as well as embrace a proactive, prioritized, and strategic approach to workforce development targeted to industry needs. According to the small employers, industry and workforce representatives surveyed, CCRI's academic programs and training services should be communicated and marketed with a career focus targeted to specific audiences and industries.

Most of the education stakeholders interviewed considered meeting the needs of today's knowledge economy primarily a function of increasing the enrollment of college-ready students, setting students on a career path, expanding career counseling and advising services, and aligning curriculum across educational systems. Ranked in the lowest quartile for the number of high school graduating students who enrolled in college in 2006 (54.7%),¹³ Rhode Island has set a goal to reach 80 percent by 2015. The state's Adult Basic Education (ABE) program, like many ABE programs in the nation, is also having marginal success with transitioning students to postsecondary education. ABE administrators called for expanding efforts such as the Newport Skills Alliance project; community-based organizations agreed, adding that additional support services, such as transportation and child care, are also needed.



¹³ From Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website, *Rhode Island Race to The Top Application for Initial Funding*, <http://www.ride.ri.gov/commissioner/RaceToTheTop/docs/RhodeIsland-RTTApplicationnarrative.pdf>, accessed on February 7, 2010.

Snapshots: Skills Gaps in Three Rhode Island Industry Sectors

Industry Partnerships funded by the Governor's Workforce Board Rhode Island have released reports on the skills gaps in their high-growth industries. The findings of the following three partnerships are representative of the skills gaps identified across the reports and serve to illustrate the challenge faced by Rhode Island's business community. They also suggest ways CCRI could serve the state's workforce development needs.

Healthcare

Quality Partners of Rhode Island, one of the state's Industry Partnership providers for the healthcare industry, focused its report on the nursing home industry sector. Among its findings, the study reported:

- The lack of educational programs that can graduate new students in a timely and efficient manner, particularly at the community college and vocational level
- The absence of master's level nurses to teach educational programs at a salary commensurate with their training
- Nurse education programs that continue to teach historically and philosophically antiquated concepts with an absence of management and leadership training
- Inadequate career counseling
- The lack of advancement opportunity, with no evidence of adequate career ladders
- Declining numbers of nursing home administrators entering the field

Among the five top challenges identified by the study were staff turnover, an absence of visible career paths and opportunity, and minimal training and education standards.

Source: Quality Partners of Rhode Island, *Industry Partnership for Workforce Development Skills Gap Study*, 2007

Information Technology

Among the findings reported:

- In a survey of 70 employers, 54 percent reported being understaffed
- Among the problems Information Technology (IT) employers face are finding skilled workers, worker retention, and determining the proper balance of IT skills needed
- Employers were looking for more mid-level (with work experience) than entry-level workers; also more senior level than entry level
- There was a need in the field for both "business skills" (communication, project management, teamwork, learning to learn) and "technical skills"
- Rapidly changing skill standards and market competition make setting aside training budgets difficult for companies
- Lack of experiential learning opportunities for students
- Persistent soft skill challenges
- There are untapped opportunities to transition workers from declining occupations into IT
- Lack of awareness about IT careers among youth

Source: Tech Collective, *Report of the Rhode Island Information Technology Skills Gap Task Force*, 2008

Hospitality and Tourism

Among the findings reported:

- It is difficult to find and retain capable, customer-friendly individuals. Employees need to be properly prepared and have the right attitude. With these in place, the industry can train them to do specific tasks.
- The growing pool of non-native English speakers in entry-level positions face challenges including English language skills, customer service/patron experience, and soft skills
- Advancement of entry-level workers to first-line supervisor positions is impeded by key skill gaps in management and leadership
- It is difficult to engage workers in industry career tracks
- Industries rely much less on formal education and much more on experiential learning: mentoring is an important, underutilized vehicle for advancement
- A lack of soft skills is a barrier to advancement

Source: Rhode Island Hospitality and Tourism Association, *Education Foundation, Skills Gap Study – Report to The Governor's Workforce Board*, 2008

Training Requirements

The majority of employers and industry representatives noted the need for workers with basic workforce readiness skills, specific technical skills, and work experience. In addition, small employers were especially vocal about the importance of teaching soft skills, sometimes called people skills, which largely deal with communication, professionalism, personal habits, and the ability to work as part of a team and solve problems.

Employers suggested that CCRI expand its efforts to offer students more exposure to the world of work, hands-on experience, and additional opportunities to take part in internships, apprenticeships, and job shadowing activities. Employers and training providers also stressed the importance of incorporating technology into course curricula and providing contextualized curricula in order to integrate workforce readiness skills into core academic courses.

In light of rapidly changing industry needs and today's more technical work requirements, employers and GWB's Industry Partnership representatives underscored the necessity for industry-driven credentials directly correlated to current, forecasted, and emerging labor market demand. They recommended that the college offer more industry-recognized certificates and credit-bearing courses. They also called for a wider variety of technical programs. While acknowledging the nation's critical shortage of nursing faculty, industry representatives pointed to an increasing demand for Licensed Practical Nurses.



Establishing CCRI as a Key Workforce Development Institution for the State of Rhode Island

THE COMMISSION'S CREATION BY THE GOVERNOR AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IS INDICATIVE OF HOW CRITICAL THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF RHODE ISLAND'S POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND TRAINING SERVICES ARE TO THE ECONOMIC GROWTH OF RHODE ISLAND.

The efforts on the part of RIDE and the GWB to align educational and workforce development systems and encourage collaboration among education and workforce leaders appear certain to raise student skill levels and improve their opportunities for employment and career advancement in the years to come. However, our research reveals that CCRI currently lacks the capacity to play a more significant role in workforce development than it does at the present time. This is exacerbated by the clear need for a strategic and prioritized approach to CCRI workforce development efforts, and an organizing mechanism around which to deliver, communicate, and market targeted industry services.

As a result of our findings, the Commission has reached three key conclusions.

First, we believe an enhanced organizing structure around career pathways is needed to coordinate the delivery and communication of Rhode Island's education and training services in the state's strategic industries. It is our view that a systemic and strategic approach to career pathways in which education, workforce development and economic development partners contribute from a position of strength will serve to increase CCRI's effectiveness, target the use of its limited resources, and allow the college to both educate and train a greater number of Rhode Island's citizens and raise knowledge and skill levels in response to demand in the state's strategic industries.

For example, CCRI has many discernible strengths, not least of which is its healthcare program. Yet where CCRI graduates are clearly serving to meet the state's demand for registered nurses, some have argued the institution is not alleviating the persistent and forecasted shortage of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs). In fact, training for LPNs is more commonly handled by vocational institutions and training providers. Were the demand for LPNs to be viewed

from a state-level systemic and strategic perspective, CCRI might be able to redirect its resources to other nursing needs. The Commission believes that focusing the expansion of CCRI's education and training efforts on its strengths and the state's strategic industries is the most efficient way to determine where CCRI should be concentrating its efforts.

Second, we have come to understand that it is simply unrealistic to expect CCRI to become an effective workforce provider absent a strategic focus, increased capacity, and additional funding. State budget allocations to CCRI continue to decline and budget shortfalls are rectified in large part through tuition increases and fees borne by students. There are severe staffing shortages due to the inability to allocate budgets for salaries and a state-mandated hiring freeze. Salaries paid to faculty and staff fall below standard industry wages in many fields. While the Commission appreciates our state's current economic situation, we also believe that through coordination of services, as well as strategically informed allocation of workforce development funds, Rhode Island stands to realize not only much needed efficiencies but also true economic growth for the state and our citizens.

And third, we believe it is imperative that we hold ourselves more accountable as a state for the proper use of our increasingly scarce public resources. CCRI could do more to serve industries in need with time, additional funding and flexibility, careful planning informed by industry, and a state-level determination about which industries Rhode Island should target to spur its knowledge-based economy. These actions must be made visible to the public and they should be measured for their effectiveness at every step along the way.

Recommendations and Action Steps

The Commission is proposing four recommendations based on some of the best practices in the nation (see Appendix). By adopting similar strategies other states have made great strides in establishing their community colleges as drivers of workforce development. If Rhode Island adopts the practices of these national models, we expect CCRI will be able to substantially increase its contribution to our state's economic growth.

1. Enact legislation to create a statewide career pathways system that is driven by industry needs.

- Charge the Governor's Workforce Board with establishing and overseeing the state's career pathways system, built upon its existing Industry Partnership system. Ensure that the principals of relevant education, workforce development, and economic development agencies lead this effort. The GWB should:
 - ▶ Be responsible for recommending policy; setting guidelines; providing cross-agency planning, technical assistance and communications; and defining the roles and responsibilities of each career pathways system partner.
 - ▶ Identify opportunities for alignment of resources to support the career pathways system at the state level.

Over the past decade, several states have elected to organize their education, economic development, employers, social services, and workforce development services around a "career pathways" framework. "Career pathways" is a term used for a particular framework or approach by which regions can better align publicly supported systems and programs to build a knowledge economy workforce customized to the needs of local labor markets. A career pathway is a series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector, and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in that sector. Community colleges very often play a linchpin role in career pathways.

- Support the State's career pathways system with a balance of public, foundation, and private sector funding to ensure commitment from all who have a vested interest in the state's future workforce, and to make certain those interests are maintained for the greater benefit of Rhode Island and its citizens.
- Establish an integrated state career pathways system performance measurement plan that aligns each agency's individual career pathways objectives and resources with goals set for the state system. The plan should identify milestones with budget, dates, measures, and resources. Performance results and progress should be made transparent to the public.

The career pathways system should seek to encompass PK-16 education, postsecondary occupational degree program offerings at Rhode Island's public postsecondary institutions, and workforce development training programs and services provided outside of these institutions. It should be guided by industry and large and small business representatives to ensure the system addresses labor market demand. It should be informed by labor market information as provided and developed by the Department of Labor and Training and the GWB's Industry Partnerships.

The GWB strategic plan has set the stage for what the Commission believes needs to take place to reinforce CCRI's workforce development efforts. While some industry-specific career pathways initiatives currently exist in Rhode Island—and more are in various stages of development by the GWB's Industry Partnerships and others across the state—the state's education and training programs are largely disconnected, lacking a visible structure for career advancement.

As a result of the GWB's good work, Rhode Island's workforce development system today is guided by a common vision and a plan in the process of being implemented through the collaborative efforts of business, government agencies, labor organizations, public and private elementary schools, secondary and higher educational institutions, and community and faith-based organizations. The Commission believes an effective statewide career pathways system stands to improve the capacity of, and strengthen cooperation among, these organizations and institutions to meet the needs of Rhode Island's residents and employers.

A career pathways system aligns policies and programs across a region or state and functions as a platform for integration and coordination. It is the foundation that supports the implementation of career pathways regionally and the execution of these arrangements across a state. The system facilitates regional efforts to identify and respond to market demand in a comprehensive and systemic fashion.¹⁴ A systemic approach to the alignment process will expand and connect education and workforce development initiatives in Rhode Island, promoting use of all available resources and programs to their greatest effect and eliminating duplication of effort.

2. Strengthen CCRI's capacity to raise the knowledge and skill levels in a greater share of the state's population.

- Expand and enhance CCRI's Center for Workforce and Community Education to increase the workforce education and training services offered in response to occupational demand in strategic industries.
 - ▶ Expanded capacity should enable CCRI to reach out to the business community and economic and workforce development stakeholders in order to increase education and training offerings in strategically targeted industries. It should also allow CCRI to oversee the development and implementation of career pathways by working with college academic and workforce development faculty and staff, and the business community. The functions should be coordinated with the college's existing industry advisory boards. Begin by hiring three individuals.
- Work closely with Rhode Island's Industry Partnerships to understand market demand in the state's strategic industries, as determined by GWB.
- Respond to needs identified by establishing credit- and non-credit-bearing industry-recognized credentials, as required.
- Create career pathways that map CCRI's workforce development training courses to its postsecondary occupational degree programs. Align courses across the education continuum—from secondary to pre-college (Adult Basic Education/General Education Development/English as a Second Language/Remediation) to two- and four-year postsecondary education—with entry-level, mid-level and high-level occupations.

¹⁴ D. Jenkins & C. Spence, *The Career Pathways How-To Guide*, 2006.

- Emphasize careers and career advancement at CCRI. Publicize CCRI's degree programs and workforce training courses through an ongoing career-focused marketing campaign targeting students, parents, business, and the general public. Focus on the career opportunities in Rhode Island's strategic industries.
 - ▶ Use the popular WaytogoRI.org website administered by the Rhode Island Higher Education Authority as a resource.
- Strengthen Rhode Island's Adult Education program so that it integrates academic, basic, and technical skills across the state and is tied to career pathways in critical and emerging sectors. This initiative should tie together the efforts of RIDE, GWB, DLT, and DHS, and build on such work as the Newport Skills Alliance, Providence RISES, the Rhode Island Works Initiative, and the CCRI Transitions to College program.
 - ▶ This effort should be guided by the recent *Report to Governor Carcieri and the Rhode Island PK-16 Council on Adult Education Reforms*.¹⁵ As such, it should seek to expand the capacity of the state's Adult Education program, provide the necessary social supports for students and credentials for practitioners, explore new ways of funding to expand the program's funding base, and establish a proficiency-based system of stackable pre-college certificates for Adult Education students (e.g., basic/elementary certificate).
- Institute performance and progress measures at CCRI to track the rates at which students complete credentials, advance from one education level to the next, and enter career-path employment.
 - ▶ Performance and progress measures reporting should be transparent.
 - ▶ Key progressions data points should include:
 - » Transition of basic skills students to college-level courses
 - » Incremental outcomes (completion of credit, licenses, certificates, etc.)
 - Apprenticeship training
 - Associate degrees (technical and transfer)
 - Further postsecondary outcomes
 - ▶ Data should be tracked according to rates of achievement as well as, at a minimum, student:
 - » Race
 - » Gender
 - » Age
 - » Part-time status
 - » Full-time status
 - ▶ CCRI should model its measures on the work of the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges' Student Achievement Initiative and similar efforts in states involved in the Achieving the Dream initiative.^{16, 17}

¹⁵ Johan Uvin, *Report to Governor Carcieri and the PK-16 Council on Adult Education Reforms* (Presentation made to the PK-16 Council), January 29, 2010.

¹⁶ To learn more about the Achieving the Dream initiative, see the presentation, *Values That Guide Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count*, at http://www.achievingthedream.org/_images/_index03/Values_that_Guide_AtD.pdf.

¹⁷ Achieving the Dream Cross-State Data Working Group, *Benchmarks of Student Success*.

CCRI, like many community colleges, has a broad mission to support many constituencies in Rhode Island: traditional students transitioning from high school, adults seeking to improve their skills and employment opportunities with additional credentials, and individuals who require remediation in order to undertake college-level work. At the same time, the college seeks to address the needs of the business community by preparing a pipeline of qualified workers to meet employer needs.

Today's economy puts CCRI in the position of needing to expand capacity in the state's strategic industries, raise the knowledge and skill levels of all current and future workers, and serve a greater share of the state's population, especially disadvantaged populations and working adults—all as quickly and with as few leaks in the pipeline as possible.

3. Encourage a culture of innovation and responsiveness at CCRI to meet the workforce development needs of students and business.

- Establish guiding principles for operations and services.
- Streamline and standardize internal operations through uniform policies and procedures.
Hire a consultant to create a plan to streamline operations at CCRI.
- Grant CCRI purchasing authority to enable the institution to respond competitively to market demand in accordance with state law.
- Increase flexible scheduling of high-growth industry programs and courses to accommodate the growing need of working students and business for offsite, evening, online, blended learning, and weekend offerings.
- Hire a grant writer to enable CCRI to respond to public and private workforce development funding opportunities and coordinate with the GWB efforts to monitor emerging regional, comprehensive, and joint funding opportunities.

The Urban Education Task Force faults Rhode Island's "collective failure" to redesign its educational institutions to respond to the new world of learning and work as the reason many companies have outsourced high-skill jobs overseas. It goes on to state:

From the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 to, more recently, *Tough Choices or Tough Times* (National Center on Education and the Economy 2008), our nation's leading economists, educators, and business, political, and civic leaders have predicted that the U.S. educational system's failure to produce students equipped to participate in the new global economy would have dire economic and social consequences.¹⁸

The Commission agrees, and our research confirms that this is a significant barrier for CCRI. There is a need for fundamental change to make the institution more responsive to its students, business, and the economy. These changes involve setting priorities, streamlining governance and operations to improve the pace of decision-making, diversifying funding, providing more options for learning and training, assuring the relevance of programs, applying new technology to teaching and learning, and measuring outcomes.¹⁹

4. Fund the recommendations of the CCRI Commission.

- Allocate \$500,000 from the state's budget to support initial implementation of the above recommendations over the course of the next year. The Commission believes this sum will be necessary at a minimum and should be used to support the following recommendations:
 - ▶ Additional capacity for the CCRI Center for Workforce and Community Education
 - ▶ Development of a career-focused marketing campaign for CCRI
 - ▶ Development of career pathways at CCRI
 - ▶ Grant writing services
 - ▶ Consultant services to streamline CCRI operations

¹⁸ Urban Education Task Force, *Building Our Future: An Agenda for Quality Urban Education in Rhode Island*, 2009.

¹⁹ Albert L. Lorenzo, Nancy Ames, *A Framework for Fundamental Change in the Community College: Creating a Culture of Responsiveness*, 1994.

- Convene state, city, community-based and private funders, including employers, to identify additional sources of funding for CCRI to support the Commission’s recommendations. Have CCRI, the GWB, and RIEDC lead this effort.
 - ▶ Potential funding sources include:
 - » The State of Rhode Island
 - » Private/public partnerships with employers and non-profit organizations
 - » The federal government
 - » Local and/or national workforce development grants
 - » Legislative grants
- Develop sustainability plans to support and secure long-term funding for the Commission’s recommendations. Have CCRI, the GWB, and RIEDC lead this effort.

Implementation Timeline

While several of our recommendations may take two or more years to be realized, the Commission thinks it is critical that they be accomplished as soon as possible. To that end, we have outlined steps we believe should be taken by April 2011. We urge the Governor and the General Assembly to support this timeline for the implementation of the following recommendations:

- Enact legislation to create a statewide career pathways system that is driven by industry needs.
- Expand and enhance CCRI’s Center for Workforce and Community Education to increase the workforce education and training services offered in response to occupational demand in strategic industries. Begin by hiring three individuals.
- Create career pathways that map CCRI’s workforce development training courses to its postsecondary occupational degree programs. Align courses across the education continuum—from secondary to pre-college (ABE/GED/ESL/Remediation) to two- and four-year postsecondary education—with entry-level, mid-level and high-level occupations.
- Establish guiding principles for operations and services.
- Hire a consultant to create a plan to streamline operations at CCRI.
- Develop a career-focused marketing campaign for CCRI.
- Grant CCRI purchasing authority to enable the institution to respond competitively to market demand in accordance with state law.
- Hire a grant writer to enable CCRI to respond to public and private workforce development funding opportunities and coordinate with the GWB efforts to monitor emerging regional, comprehensive, and joint funding opportunities.
- Allocate \$500,000 from the state’s budget to support initial implementation of the recommendations over the course of the next year.
- Convene CCRI stakeholders to identify additional sources of funding for the Commission’s recommendations.
- Develop a sustainability plan to support and secure long-term funding for the Commission’s recommendations.

Conclusion

THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE LIVING IN RHODE ISLAND WELCOMED A NEW DECADE WITH THE REALIZATION THAT THE HIGHEST UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN NEARLY 30 YEARS IS GOING TO PERSIST FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. And yet employers are having difficulty finding qualified workers. In fact, based on retirement, dropout, skill, and demographic figures, the U.S. Department of Labor is predicting a labor shortage of more than 35 million skilled and educated workers over the next 30 years. With Rhode Island’s aging population, our own demographic figures paint an even more dire scenario.

As our research indicates, this is the reality Rhode Island must come to terms with if we hope to build a 21st century knowledge-economy workforce. The national models for effective workforce development systems in community colleges and states have taken and are taking years to develop. Washington State’s pioneering performance measurement system was initiated in 2006 and implemented just last year. It is clear that workforce development is a priority for the State of Rhode Island, those seeking employment, and for workers and employers throughout the state. But it appears less evident that those most likely to benefit from its long-term potential realize how critical it is that a substantial investment be made early — now — if we are truly committed to turning the tide.

Throughout this past year, the Commission has witnessed a tremendous collaborative effort among the leaders in the state’s education, workforce and economic development entities, community-based and non-profit organizations, and employers. With the added support of a formal structure, a fortified, strategic and unencumbered connection to business and industry, and increased capacity, CCRI will be able to provide more effective and efficient workforce development services. Continuous tracking and transparent accountability measures across the education and workforce development systems — all set on the goals of student achievement and successful transition into careers — will ensure it.



Appendix: National Examples

STATEWIDE CAREER PATHWAYS SYSTEMS

Washington

In Washington State, the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) established a mission in 2006 to “build strong communities, individuals and families, and achieve greater global competitiveness and prosperity for the state and its economy by raising the knowledge and skills of the state’s residents.”²⁰ Career pathways is the framework the state is using to support the Washington community college system, which has three strategic goals:

1. Economic Demand: Strengthen state and local economies by meeting the demands for a well-educated and skilled workforce
2. Student Success: Achieve increased educational attainment for all residents across the state
3. Innovation: Use technology, collaboration and innovation to meet the demands of the economy and improve student success

Wisconsin

Born out of a partnership between Wisconsin’s Technical College System and the Department of Workforce Development, Wisconsin’s career pathways system is called the Regional Industry Skills Education (RISE) initiative. RISE represents the culmination of an effort to build an extensive network of partnerships—with state and local governments and community-based organizations—and a service delivery system based upon the core strengths of each partner. For example, the workforce board is especially good at recruiting and assessing students and creating employer relationships. The technical college is offering high-quality training which meets the needs of both area employers and students. The college has leveraged over \$12 million in federal, state and private resources. The partners have built out their services to accommodate secondary, Adult Basic Education and English Language Learner students, and upgrade the skills of current workers through incumbent worker training.²¹

Virginia

In 2006, Governor Tim Kaine of the Commonwealth of Virginia set as a goal “the development of a world-class workforce system that is both responsive to employer and worker needs and focused on regional markets.”²² In December 2008, the Governor released the strategic plan for Virginia’s career pathways system. The product of a multiple agency task force and extensive research conducted with key businesses, policymakers, and practitioners, *Bridging Business and Education for the 21st Century Workforce* lays out a blueprint for serving the full spectrum of workers in the commonwealth, from K through grey, to prepare them to participate in Virginia’s 21st century economy. The plan represents the best thinking of, among others, the Virginia Community College System, public colleges and universities, K-12 system, adult education, the Governor’s workforce board, and the state’s workforce and economic development agencies.

²⁰ Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, *System Direction: Creating Opportunities for Washington’s Future*, 2006.

²¹ “The ABC’s of RISE Webinar” accessed at www.risepartnership.org on February 6, 2010.

²² The Governor’s Task Force on Career Pathways System Development, *Bridging Business and Education for the 21st Century Workforce: A Strategic Plan for Virginia’s Career Pathways System*, 2008.

STRENGTHENED CAPACITY TO RAISE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL LEVELS

Cuyahoga Community College

As a professional development division of Cuyahoga Community College, Cuyahoga Corporate College was established in 2003 to accelerate economic growth in Northeast Ohio. Designed to address the business community's need for an advanced training delivery system, Corporate College fulfills the region's economic development goal to leverage the strengths of Northeast Ohio, which include a history of product innovation and internationally recognized healthcare and research institutions.²³

Macomb Community College

In Michigan, Macomb Community College has a comprehensive Workforce Development Institute. It is located in the Michigan Technical Education Center (M-TECSM), which is equipped with advanced training technologies and robotic training cells. The Institute is focused on maintaining Michigan's competitive edge in the global economy by helping business and industry to sustain a highly skilled workforce and supporting employment opportunities. The college's workforce development and training programs are developed in conjunction with the business and labor community.²⁴

CULTURE OF INNOVATION AND RESPONSIVENESS

The League for Innovation in the Community College recently surveyed the winners of their annual Innovations Awards to investigate the nature of innovation in community colleges today. The most important motivating factor for creating innovation for 59 percent of the respondents was to "Improve student learning"; 55 percent sought to "Improve an existing system, process, practice, procedure." Between 75 and 93 percent of respondents rated the impact of their innovation on institutional outcomes as having the strongest effect on "more creative use of resources," "more efficient educational practices," and "improving student learning." Authors of the study noted that innovation depends in great part on the culture and climate created by community college leaders.²⁵

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Washington

The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges has adopted a performance measurement system that seeks to increase the number of students who attain a set of defined "achievement points."²⁶ Where other states measure degree completion and other end-point outcomes, the achievement points stipulated in the Washington State Student Achievement Initiative (SAI) include completion of both credentials and training programs and intermediate milestones (such as passing a college-level math course). This approach is associated with a higher probability of program completion (Leinbach & Jenkins, 2008; Moore, Shulock, & Offenstein, 2009). The achievement points encompass the full range of Washington State community and technical college mission areas, including adult basic skills and developmental education, as well as baccalaureate transfer and career-technical education.

Begun in 2006, the SAI is designed to provide colleges with data on where along the spectrum of education students do and do not make progress so that the colleges can target their resources more effectively.

²³ From the website of Corporate College, A Division of Cuyahoga Community College, http://www.corporatecollege.com/p.aspx?PHIE_ID=12&PHIE_LEVEL=3, accessed on February 6, 2010.

²⁴ From the website of Macomb Community College, <http://www.macomb.edu/Businesses+And+Municipalities/Economic+Development+And+Workforce+Training/Workforce+Development+Institute>, accessed on February 6, 2010.

²⁵ T. O'Banion & L. Weidner, "The Nature of Innovation in the Community College," League for Innovation in the Community College website, <http://www.league.org/blog/post.cfm/the-nature-of-innovation>, accessed in December 2009.

²⁶ For more information about the Washington State Student Achievement Initiative, see http://www.sbctc.ctc.edu/college/e_studentachievement.aspx.

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