

COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF RHODE ISLAND BUILDING A 21ST CENTURY WORKFORCE

CCRI 21st Century Workforce Commission

Executive Summary of Report & Recommendations

NEARLY ONE-THIRD OF NEW JOBS IN RHODE ISLAND OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WILL REQUIRE AT LEAST AN ASSOCIATE'S 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 development of knowledge-based employees.

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.

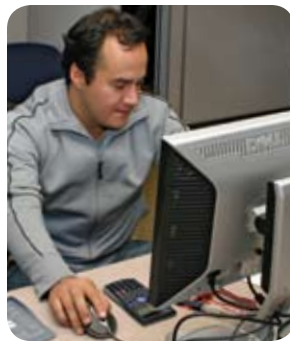
Key Commission Findings

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 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.

