



Enclosure 2a
May 15, 2024

Minutes of the December 7, 2023, Meeting

RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Rhode Island Board of Education met on Thursday, December 7, 2023, at the Community College of Rhode Island, Warwick. Chair Grey welcomed everyone to the quarterly meeting of the R.I. Board of Education and called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m. He turned the meeting to Christine Kechejian to conduct a roll call.

Present: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, David Caprio, Patricia DiCenso, Dennis Duffy, Jo Eva Gaines, Rachelle Green, Michal Grey, Thomas Izzo, *Lisa Leaheey, Robert Mitchell, *Ana Duarte Spencer, Jeffrey Williams

Absent: Amy Beretta, *Margo Cook, Karen Davis, Marta Martinez, Michael Mello, Lawrence Purtill, *Christian Ramos, Marcy Reyes,

*Ex-officio, non-voting member

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

Chair Grey asked for a motion to accept the agenda of the December 7, 2023, meeting.

On a motion duly made by Rachelle Green and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

VOTED: That, the Rhode Island Board of Education accepts the agenda for the meeting of December 7, 2023

Vote: 11 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, David Caprio, Patricia DiCenso, Dennis Duffy, Jo Eva Gaines, Rachelle Green, Michael Grey, Thomas Izzo, Robert Mitchell, Jeffrey Williams

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Minutes of the May 24, 2023, Meeting

Chair Grey asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the May 24, meeting and noted that Members, Beretta, Martinez, Mello, Mitchell, and Reyes must recuse themselves.

On a motion duly made by Thomas Izzo and seconded by Rachelle Green, it was

VOTED: That, the Rhode Island Board of Education approves the minutes of the May 24, 2023, meeting

Vote: 10 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, David Caprio, Patricia DiCenso, Dennis Duffy, Jo Eva Gaines, Rachelle Green, Michael Grey, Thomas Izzo, Jeffrey Williams

NAYS: 0

RECUSE: Robert Mitchell

3. OPEN FORUM

No individuals registered to offer public comments or submit written statements to the Board.

4. REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS

- Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Commissioner Infante-Green initiated her report by expressing her appreciation for the opportunity to provide an update on the work and priorities of RIDE. She noted that since the Board's previous meeting, RIDE had initiated a campaign emphasizing the significance of daily attendance and highlighting the repercussions of chronic absenteeism. RIDE collaborated with Governor McKee, municipal leaders, school administrators, and both private and public sector partners to introduce the Attendance Matters RI campaign. She further remarked that attendance poses a challenge that school communities nationwide are contending with in the aftermath of the pandemic. Last year, approximately 28% of Rhode Island students were chronically absent, indicating they missed around

10% of school days, or two days per month. Children who are chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade are less likely to be reading on their grade level by the third grade. Of all students who dropped out of high school, 85% were chronically absent. She encouraged everyone to unite in spreading the concise and straightforward message, "Attendance matters. Kids cannot learn if they are not in school."

Next, Commissioner Infante-Green discussed the 2023 assessments. Statewide data from RICAS revealed that in 2023, compared to 2022, there was a rise in participation rates for both math and ELA, marking a second consecutive year of substantial growth in math proficiency and an increase in ELA. She pointed out that when comparing Rhode Island to Massachusetts, RIDE observed a more notable improvement in scores for both content areas overall. The gaps have decreased in ELA and math, and although this is encouraging the work is far from over. She noted that chronically absent students, on average, performed lower than they're not chronically absent peers by 19.9% - 26% on the 2023 assessments.

Commissioner Infante-Green continued her report adding that RIDE is also focused on ensuring high quality teachers support our students in the classroom. She noted that states across the nation are facing teacher workforce challenges and to help address this locally, RIDE launched Educate401.org, an online recruitment and resource hub for current and prospective educators. She added that the website highlights the best of Rhode Island and offers a clear and user-friendly certification roadmap that guides aspiring teachers through the process of becoming a certified educator. This follows the launch of the free, comprehensive preparation program to help teacher candidates pass Praxis tests. The program, developed in partnership with university instructors, supports participants with Praxis preparation offerings worth an estimated \$1,000 and aims to ease the financial burden on educators.

Subsequently, Commissioner Infante-Green spoke on school construction. She shared that later in the month, RIDE will release a report detailing the many school construction projects that are completed or underway across Rhode Island with the support of RIDE. She noted that there are historic investments happening in school facilities across the state reflecting a collective commitment to improving learning and instruction. She mentioned that this Fall alone, voters in seven communities approved nearly \$900 million in local bonds to invest in new and like-new schools. She invited the Board to join RIDE at Spaziano Elementary school for the ribbon cutting, noting that this is one of the three schools in Providence this year. She also added that RIDE was awarded a federal grant of over \$875,000 as part of the Supporting America's School Infrastructure Grant Program which will help the School Building Authority provide greater assistance to our communities.

Next, Commissioner Infante-Green shared that in the Spring, Rhode Island kicked off the Rhode Island Launch Years Working Group as part of the Launch Years Initiative out of the Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin. She added that Rhode Island is one of the 22 states that is participating in this initiative dedicated to reimagining mathematics education and supporting the scaling of mathematics pathways from high school through postsecondary education and into the workplace. She noted that the team is made up of 24 education professionals from K-12 and higher education in Rhode Island. The working group's charge is to develop recommendations for

improvement alignment of math content, courses, and related policies to ensure equitable access and smooth transition from high school to post-secondary. She expressed gratitude for the continued collaboration with the postsecondary partners from URI, RIC, and CCRI, and looks forward to sharing more updates. Lastly, she thanked everyone and turned the meeting over to Chair Grey.

- **Commissioner of Postsecondary Education**

Commissioner Gilkey was unable to attend the meeting in person and instead joined remotely to present his report. He started by expressing appreciation for the leadership of the institutions amidst ongoing transitions, highlighting that they are not just progressing, but progressing positively. He shared details of the FY 24 budget and emphasized several aspects of the state budget for which he is extremely grateful. He underscored their advocacy for the state to begin replenishing a fund that supports part-time dual enrollment through the Governor's budget, which has now occurred for the first time. He added that OPC is now beginning to witness the restoration of those resources. Additionally, there was a notable investment in postsecondary education across all public institutions and programs. He shared some key highlights that include a \$2.4 million award to establish cyber security and emerging technologies at Rhode Island College (RIC). Furthermore, a new adult scholarship program named Freshstart, with a budget of \$5 million, was introduced for adults that stepped away from CCRI. Additionally, the establishment of the Hope Scholarship at RIC which is aimed at aiding juniors and seniors in completing their degree credentials was initiated.

Commissioner Gilkey shared that he witnessed a substantial investment in the State Longitudinal Data System and the establishment of a new governance board comprising the Department of Education, the Office of Postsecondary Commission, and the Department of Labor and Training. He noted that this aims to ensure that there is support and guidance for the Longitudinal Data System in a manner that truly facilitates data-driven decisions. The support from federal and state investments is immensely beneficial. He added that this transition from the University of Rhode Island (URI) to the Office of Postsecondary Commission which was in response to statute has been successful.

Next, Commissioner Gilkey shared details about the annual postsecondary retreat where the Council of Postsecondary Education, under Chair Caprio's leadership, dedicated a day to delve into two significant themes for this year's action agenda. These themes include enrollment management, as well as retention and graduation through student success initiatives. Given the decline in student enrollment in higher education institutions after high school, there's a need to devise innovative approaches to expand upon best practices. Another point Commissioner Gilkey wished to convey is the ongoing presidential search for RIC, which involves a nationwide hunt for candidates. The Council aims to finalize a decision early in 2024, after which they will shift their focus to the CCRI.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. FY 25 PK-12 Operating & Capital Budget

RIDE's Deputy Commissioner Odom-Villella gave a concise summary of the PK-12 operating and capital budget for FY 2025, and then introduced Chief Financial Officer Mark Dunham to provide the details. Chief Dunham initiated the presentation by outlining the RIDE budget according to its various funding sources. He disclosed that the 2024 Enacted budget amounted to \$2,022,346,822, while the 2025 proposed budget, inclusive of new initiatives, totaled \$2,050,601,683, reflecting a variance of \$28,254,861. These figures encompass funding from general revenue, federal allocations, restricted receipts, capital funds, and permanent school funds. He pointed out that the RIDE departments included within the funding sources comprise of ACES, Davies CTE, RI School for the Deaf, Metropolitan CTE, Central Falls, Education Aid, School Housing Aid, and Teacher's Retirement.

Chief Dunham reiterated the Education Accountability Act of 2019, emphasizing RIDE's obligation to gather and assess LEA strategic plans and school improvement plans, as well as to aid schools and districts in their improvement endeavors. Moreover, RIDE is mandated to conduct educational reviews in at least five school districts annually. One of the new initiatives in the proposed budget entails a request for \$1,140,000 to employ three full-time staff members to replace three fellows currently financed through COVID-19 relief funds, along with hiring a vendor to aid in on-site reviews and reports. Additional new initiatives include a Pre-K expansion, \$7,150,000 is being requested to add 35 classrooms, 700 seats, and 2 full-time positions. This initiative is being proposed in response to the 2023 State budget mandate, which tasked RIDE, the Department of Human Services, and the Children's Cabinet with developing a plan to expand Rhode Island's Pre-K program to accommodate 5,000 seats. He shared that \$1,000,000 in the CTE categorical fund to allow RIDE and its partners to expand the CTE program to ensure continued focus on improvement of student outcomes, alignment with labor market demands, strong corporate partnerships, and expansion and modernization of programs. An additional \$160,000 is being requested for a full-time position to provide program support and evaluation. Chief Dunham explained the last new initiative, which is in response to performance metrics identified by Governor McKee to improve student outcomes by 2030. He shared that \$40M is requested to provide math and ELA support such as professional learning for teachers or coaches in public schools throughout the state. He also mentioned that funding for multilingual learner support was incorporated into the budget. The identified needs comprise additional teachers, counselors, social workers, and school psychologists holding Multilingual Learner teaching certificates, as well as increased outreach to parents and families, including translations and interpreters. Needs also include before and after-school programs which include transportation, professional development, content supplies and materials, and the establishment of a newcomer school for students with interrupted schooling. He conveyed that there is a proposal for a new multilingual learner weight, wherein all multilingual students are included in the weight allocation, even those who might fall into other formula categories such as the student success factor and special education.

Chief Dunham delivered an overview of the Capital Budget, outlining the timeframe spanning FY 2025 to 2029, with a total allocation of \$616M. This sum includes projected expenditures as well as pre-2024 expenditures for ongoing projects. Among these are 16 projects in total, comprising thirteen previously approved ventures and three new endeavors. New projects include statewide facility equity initiative, also included are projects for the Rhode Island School for the Deaf for a roof replacement and the purchase of two new vehicles. After the presentation, there was questions raised, all of which were addressed and answered.

b. Postsecondary Unrestricted & Restricted Budget Requests, Tuition, Fee Rates, & Tables of Organization for FY 25 & the Unrestricted & Restricted Budget Allocations for FY 24

Chief Financial Officer from the Office of Postsecondary Commission Zachary Saul began the presentation by providing an overview of the FY 2025 unrestricted and FY 2024 revised budgets. He shared that the system's unrestricted budget request for FY 2025 totals \$313.4 million, an increase of \$18.0 million compared to the FY 2024 revised budget. He further noted that the Council had approved a state appropriations request amounting to \$180.9 million, which includes \$8.8 million for general obligation debt service, \$118.3 million in tuition revenues, and \$14.2 million from other revenue sources. Additionally, the restricted budgets for the system, covering the RI Capital fund, auxiliaries, sponsored research, and federal and financial aid, totaling \$141.1 million.

Chief Saul presented details on the comparative State General Revenue appropriation. He shared that that state allocation which includes debt service, constitutes roughly 58% of the fiscal year 2025 budget proposal for the system. He highlighted that the allocation for FY 2024 was \$164.2 million, whereas for FY 2025, it amounts to \$180.9 million, indicating a \$16.7 million increase. He added that for FY 2024 GA Enacted budget, higher education received \$304.8 million in state general revenue appropriations, with \$166.0 million allocated for the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) and \$138.8 million for the University of Rhode Island (URI). This allocation represents 5.6% of the state's general revenue, amounting to \$5.4 billion. He also shared that \$304.8 million is for Higher Education, 16.8% of \$1.8 billion appropriated in the general revenue to education.

Chief Saul discussed in-state and out-of-state tuition and fees explaining that it is the second largest revenue driver for Institutions of Higher Education. He observed that the total revenue for FY 2025 amounted to \$118.2 million. Additionally, he mentioned that Rhode Island College (RIC) experienced a 2.9% rise in tuition and fees, while CCRI saw a 4.2% increase. He also disclosed the FY 2025 unrestricted operating request from RIC. Furthermore, he indicated that there was a 2.9% increase in tuition for FY 2025. He pointed out that the higher education price index for the previous year stood at 5.2%. Additionally, he mentioned that the current forecast for the inflation index for higher education is 4.5%, marking the first rise in tuition and fees since FY 2023. He added that significant increases in tuition in the current economic climate may have a significant impact on enrollment. The requested increase is an effort to minimize the impact on retention and enrollment

rates to meet operating needs. He explained that for FY 2025, RIC's in-state tuition will keep them in the bottom third compared to the regional peer group. Additionally, RIC is also requesting an increase in the State Appropriation, \$3.6 million over the FY 2024 revised budget. This will cover the increases for the collective bargaining units, fringe and healthcare benefit cost increases, and operating expenses. This increase will minimize the increase of tuition and fees. He added that RIC's FY 2025 Unrestricted Budget with the increased State Appropriation will allow the College to support its current service level and allow for growth opportunities in high-priority areas. The goal of this request is to allow RIC to maintain the resources to continue to provide a high quality and affordable education.

Next, Chief Saul delved into the FY 2024 Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) Unrestricted Operating Budget request, explaining that the FY 2025 budget requests an increase in tuition and fees of 4.2%, which is below the HEPI increase forecast of 4.5%. He shared that CCRI remains the third lowest tuition in New England and includes a potential Pell Grant. He noted that the decrease in tuition revenue of \$1.4 million is the net of the \$2.3 million generated from the increase in tuition and fees and the lost revenue of \$3.6 million from the implementation of the CCRI Advantage program that will assist in absorbing the increased cost of operations and instruction. He also shared that CCRI is requesting an increase in the State Appropriation of \$9.9 million over the FY 2024 Revised Budget. The increase is for investments that include redesigning developmental education-CCRI Advantage, the Early College and College Readiness enhancement and opportunities. It also includes technology upgrades and the cost-of-living adjustments and inflationary or market conditions. CCRI's FY 2025 Unrestricted Budget with the increased State Appropriation will allow the Community College to support its current service level and allow for expansion opportunities for their strategic priorities.

Chief Saul later discussed the FY 2024 OPC Unrestricted Operating request which includes the general revenue request is \$34.1 million. The FY 2025 Operating Budget request for OPC is designed to make a continued investment in the Office to meet the strategic goals of the Council and the State. The request will fund the anticipated salaries and fringe/healthcare benefit cost increases. Additionally, funding will focus on expanding strategic initiatives and policy, higher education finance and efficiency and administrative operations. He added that a portion of the request is pass-through comprised of the CCRI tuition program, Needs-Based Scholarship, Hope Scholarship, Dual and Concurrent enrollment and RINEC Operations. Non-Operating expenditure increased by approximately \$3.6 million. The increase is the result of \$1.3 million for the Need-Based Grants and \$2.3 million for the Dual and Concurrent Enrollment Program.

c. Postsecondary Capital Improvement Plan for FY 2025 - 2029

Chief Finance Officer Saul initiated the presentation providing a summary of the proposed Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the FY 2025 Public Postsecondary Education System which includes the projected capital cost for FY 2024- FY 2029 of \$620.7 million and includes eighteen projects of which \$602.6 million is for continuing projects, including \$367.0 million for GO Bond Requests and \$18.1 million for new projects. He added that capital projects will be financed by a variety of debt

instruments and funding sources including General Obligation Funds, RI Capital Funds, Federal Funds, Asset Protection Funds, and private donations. Afterward, he presented the suggested CIP for RIC, comprising of six projects with an estimated capital expenditure spanning from FY 2024-FY 2029, totaling \$350.0 million of which \$133.0 million is for continuing projects, \$202.0 million for GO Bond request and \$15.0 million for new projects. Next, he shared the summary of the proposed CIP for CCRI which has a projected capital cost of \$266.8 million for period FY 2024- FY 2029 and includes \$101.8 million for continuing projects, \$165.0 million for the GO Bond request for seven projects. Lastly, he shared the summary of proposed CIP for the Postsecondary Commission. The projected capital cost for the postsecondary commissioner totals \$3.9 million for the period FY 2024-FY 2029 and includes five projects of which \$0.8 million are continuing projects and \$3.1 million are for new projects. Questions and comments were exchanged, and responded to accordingly, addressing each inquiry and remark.

d. FY 2024 – 2025 Concurrent Enrollment List

Deputy Commissioner Odom-Villella initiated the conversation about the FY 2024-2025 concurrent enrollment list, provided a concise summary and introduced State Strategy and Opportunity Officer Stephen Osborn to deliver the information. Mr. Osborn began the discussion by informing everyone that instead of a presentation, there was a memo provided, which was enclosed in the members' packets. He mentioned that this memo was collaboratively prepared by himself and working closely with a team that consisted of Cindy Nolan from CCRI, Holly Shadoian from RIC and Christine Dolan from URI. He conveyed that the memo's objective is to ensure that every year, statewide, there is a compiled list of courses available for high school students to earn college-level credits on their campus. This aim is to establish clear and transparent guidelines for schools to research and offer these courses on their premises.

He continued explaining that this year, a few courses have been added while a handful have been removed. Mr. Osborn pointed out that at CCRI, one course in human anatomy and physiology has been added, with no course being removed. Conversely, at RIC, seven classes have been removed, as they are no longer available on the college campus, hence eliminating the opportunity for high school students to take them. Additionally, URI removed Physics 109/110, and introduced Physics 111 and 185 as replacements. URI also added six more courses that will be accessible at the high school campuses. He expressed enthusiasm about the ongoing expansion of the concurrent enrollment course catalog, highlighting its role as a vital pipeline connecting high schools and colleges. Members posed questions, to which Mr. Osborn provided responses accordingly.

6. ACTION ITEMS

a. Approval of the FY 25 PK-12 Operating & Capital Budget

On a motion duly made by Mary Barden and seconded by Rachelle Green, it was

VOTED: That, the Rhode Island Board of Education approves and transmits the FY 25 Capital Budget request to the RI State Budget Office.

Vote: 11 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, David Caprio, Patricia DiCenso, Dennis Duffy, Jo Eva Gaines, Rachelle Green, Michael Grey, Thomas Izzo, Robert Mitchell, Jeffrey Williams

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

b. Approval of the Postsecondary Unrestricted & Restricted Budget Requests, Tuition, Fees, and Table of Organization for FY 2025 & the Unrestricted & Restricted Budget Allocations for FY 2024

On a motion duly made by Rachelle Green and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

VOTED: That, the Rhode Island Board of Education approves the Council on Postsecondary Education’s recommendation regarding the public postsecondary education system’s operating budget request for the Fiscal Year 2025, as presented, and further;

That, the Rhode Island Board of Education approves the Council on Postsecondary Education’s recommendation regarding the public postsecondary education system’s tuition, mandatory fees, and auxiliary enterprise fees for the Fiscal Year 2025, as presented, reserving the right to readjust tuition and fees as needed upon notification of the Governor’s recommendation and, later upon action of the legislature, and further;

That, the Rhode Island Board of Education approves the Council on Postsecondary Education’s recommendation regarding the

public postsecondary education system’s Tables of Organization for the Fiscal Year 2025, as presented, and further;

That, the Rhode Island Board of Education approves the Council on Postsecondary Education’s recommendation regarding the public postsecondary education system’s budget allocation for the Fiscal Year 2024, as presented.”

Vote: 11 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, David Caprio, Patricia DiCenso, Dennis Duffy, Jo Eva Gaines, Rachelle Green, Michael Grey, Thomas Izzo, Robert Mitchell, Jeffrey Williams

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

c. Approval of the Postsecondary Capital Improvement Plan for FY 2025-FY 2029

On a motion duly made by Jo Eva Gaines and seconded by Rachelle Green, it was

VOTED: That, the Rhode Island Board of Education approves the recommendation of the Council on Postsecondary Education regarding the public postsecondary education system’s Capital Improvement Plan for FY 2025 - FY 2029.

Vote: 11 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, David Caprio, Patricia DiCenso, Dennis Duffy, Jo Eva Gaines, Rachelle Green, Michael Grey, Thomas Izzo, Robert Mitchell, Jeffrey Williams

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

d. Approval of the FY 2024- 2025 Concurrent Enrollment List

On a motion duly made by Colleen Callahan and seconded by Jo Eva Gaines, it was

VOTED: That, the Rhode Island Board of Education approves the concurrent enrollment list of course offerings for the 2024-2025 academic school year

Vote: 11 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, David Caprio, Patricia DiCenso, Dennis Duffy, Jo Eva Gaines, Rachelle Green, Michael Grey, Thomas Izzo, Robert Mitchell, Jeffrey Williams

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

7. UPCOMING MEETINGS

Chair Grey stated that the next meeting of the RI Board of Education is scheduled for Wednesday, August 7, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Grey called for a motion to adjourn tonight’s meeting.

On a motion duly made by Rachelle Green and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

VOTED: That, the Rhode Island Board of Education adjourns.

Vote: 11 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative, as follows:

YEAS: Mary Barden, Colleen Callahan, David Caprio, Patricia DiCenso, Dennis Duffy, Jo Eva Gaines, Rachelle Green, Michael Grey, Thomas Izzo, Robert Mitchell, Jeffrey Williams

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The meeting adjourned at 6:36 p.m.