

Minding the Gap



INCREASING COLLEGE PERSISTENCE IN RHODE ISLAND

PRESENTED BY THE PROVIDENCE
CHILDREN AND YOUTH CABINET

MARCH 2015



ABOUT THE PROVIDENCE CHILDREN AND YOUTH CABINET

The Children and Youth Cabinet (CYC) is a coalition of approximately 70 organizations and 175 active individual members who are committed to using their collective resources to improve outcomes for all children and youth in Providence.

Formed in 2010, this consortium has grown to include members from education, state and local government, higher education, business, and community-based organizations. Together, these diverse players work across traditional boundaries to create positive change for Providence children and youth from “cradle to career.”

ABOUT LUMINA FOUNDATION

Lumina Foundation, who provided funding for this report, is an independent, private foundation committed to increasing the proportion of Americans with high-quality degrees, certificates and other credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina’s outcomes-based approach focuses on helping to design and build an accessible, responsive and accountable higher education system while fostering a national sense of urgency for action to achieve Goal 2025. For more information, log on to: www.luminafoundation.org

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prepared by Kathleen Dowcett



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 Overview
- 2 Post-Secondary Attainment: A National Commitment
- 4 Spotlight on Rhode Island
- 9 Summary of Promising Practices: Discrete Services and Elements of Systemic Success
- 15 Elements of Systemic Success in Action at Rhode Island's Institutions of Higher Education
- 29 Elements of Systemic Success in Action at Rhode Island Community-Based Organizations
- 34 Recommendations for Rhode Island Educators and Policy-Makers
- 35 Closing Remarks
- 36 Additional Resources
- 38 References

OVERVIEW

Rhode Island is embarking on an important initiative to increase post-secondary attainment¹ levels across the state. With support from Lumina Foundation, stakeholders in government, community-based organizations (CBOs), K–12 education, and higher education are working together, coordinating their efforts toward the shared goal of a well-educated, well-prepared citizenry. This report is designed to inform those efforts. The report begins with a national outlook on post-secondary attainment rates, followed by a discussion of graduation rates throughout Rhode Island. Subsequent sections include a summary of best practices at the national level, an Elements of Systemic Success logic model, and examples of promising practices at colleges, universities, and CBOs throughout the state. The report concludes with a set of recommendations for educators and policy-makers.



¹ Throughout this report, post-secondary attainment will be defined as possessing at least an associate's degree.

POST-SECONDARY ATTAINMENT: A NATIONAL COMMITMENT

Across the United States, educators and policy-makers are setting ambitious targets for post-secondary attainment. At the local level, Louisville, Kentucky, has pledged an increase of 55,000 post-secondary degrees by 2020 (55,000 Degrees n.d.), and San Antonio, Texas, is working toward college credentials for at least 50 percent of its adult population by the same year (SA2020 n.d.). Lumina Foundation is engaging stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels to advance its goal for 60 percent of adults in the United States to obtain a post-secondary degree and/or high-quality credential by 2025 (Lumina Foundation n.d.), and the White House has made a commitment to reclaiming the country's position as first in the world for college graduation rates by 2020 (The White House n.d.)

This national campaign has arisen in response to the growing realization that we are leaving too many of our citizens unprepared, lacking the skills and credentials necessary for success in the global job market. It is estimated that by 2020, 66 percent of all jobs will require a post-

secondary certificate or degree (Complete College America n.d.). The effects in the job market are already evident: between 2011 and 2013, the unemployment rate for adults with only a high school diploma was 10 percent, compared to 8 percent for those with associate's degrees or some college education, and only 4.2 percent for those who hold a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). Higher education also strengthens democracy through myriad social capital benefits. Adults with postsecondary degrees are more likely to volunteer



in their communities, vote, and have healthier lifestyles (Baum, Ma & Payea 2013). Yet, while countries across the globe have responded to this by working successfully to increase post-secondary attainment rates among young adults, rates in the United States have nearly stagnated, hovering at just below 40 percent (Lumina Foundation 2014).

A closer analysis of the data reveals some important nuances. For example, an average of 62.5 percent of U.S. high school graduates enroll in college right away, but only about 56 percent of those enrollees graduate within six years. The result is 36 million adults who have some college credits but are no longer enrolled and have no degree (Lumina Foundation 2014). Furthermore, the numbers vary dramatically by demographic group. Nationally, only 20 percent of Latinos have a post-secondary degree, compared to 44 percent of whites and 59 percent of Asians, and students in the bottom third of the income scale enroll in college at only 66 percent of the rate of those in the top third (Lumina Foundation 2014). As the data suggest, it is imperative that we focus our efforts not only on enrollment but on persisting through to graduation, and that these efforts be targeted to the needs of underserved and underrepresented groups in order to ensure that all Americans have access to the skills and knowledge they need for economic, professional, and personal success.



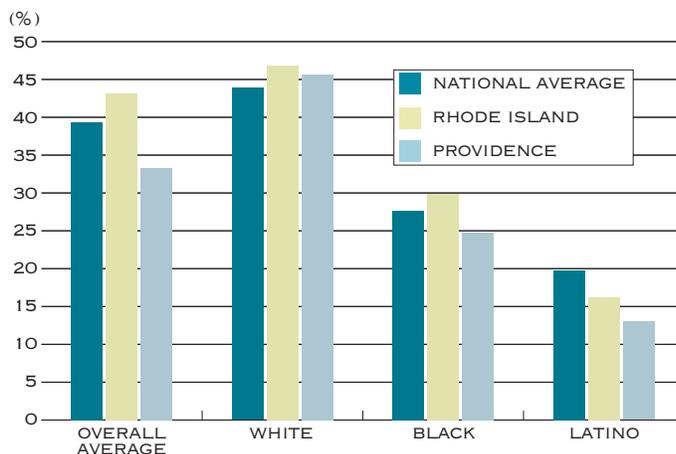
SPOTLIGHT ON RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island's college attainment rate is above the national average; 43.2 percent of the state's adults hold an associate's degree or higher, compared to 39.4 percent nationwide (see Figure 1). Despite this overall advantage, the attainment rate for Latinos in Rhode Island remains at 16.3 percent, lagging behind the national average of 19.8 percent (Lumina Foundation 2014). This is particularly concerning given that, as of 2010, the Latino population accounted for 12.4 percent of the state's total population – a 43.9 percent increase over the previous decade (Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training n.d.). In Providence, where Latinos comprise 62 percent of the student body in the city's public schools (City of Providence 2011), only 13 percent of Latinos over twenty-five years old hold an associate's degree or higher – compared with 46 percent of whites – gap-closing efforts focus on Latino youth and adults.



Providence is one of seventy-five cities supported by Lumina Foundation's Community Partnership for Attainment. The Providence Children and Youth Cabinet (CYC), in partnership with the Providence Public School District, institutions of higher education, and local community-based organizations are working to increase the percentage of local residents with high-quality certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees by plugging key "leaks in the pipeline" at strategic points from high school to higher education completion. Since Latinos comprise 62 percent of Providence Public School students, and only 13 percent of Providence Latinos over twenty-five years old hold an associate's degree or higher – compared with 46 percent of whites – gap-closing efforts focus on Latino youth and adults.

FIGURE 1
DEGREE ATTAINMENT BY RACE/ETHNICITY



DATA SOURCES

http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/A_stronger_nation_through_higher_education-2014.pdf

U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2012 American Community Survey

or higher – compared with 45.7 percent of whites and 24.7 percent of blacks (U.S. Census Bureau 2013). Furthermore, while the attainment rates between males and females vary by just one or two percentage points among whites, blacks, and the overall population in Providence, the rate of attainment among Latino women (14.5 percent) is more than five percentage points above that of their male counterparts (9.2 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau 2013). As communities across the country are striving to reach 50 and 60 percent attainment rates in the coming years,

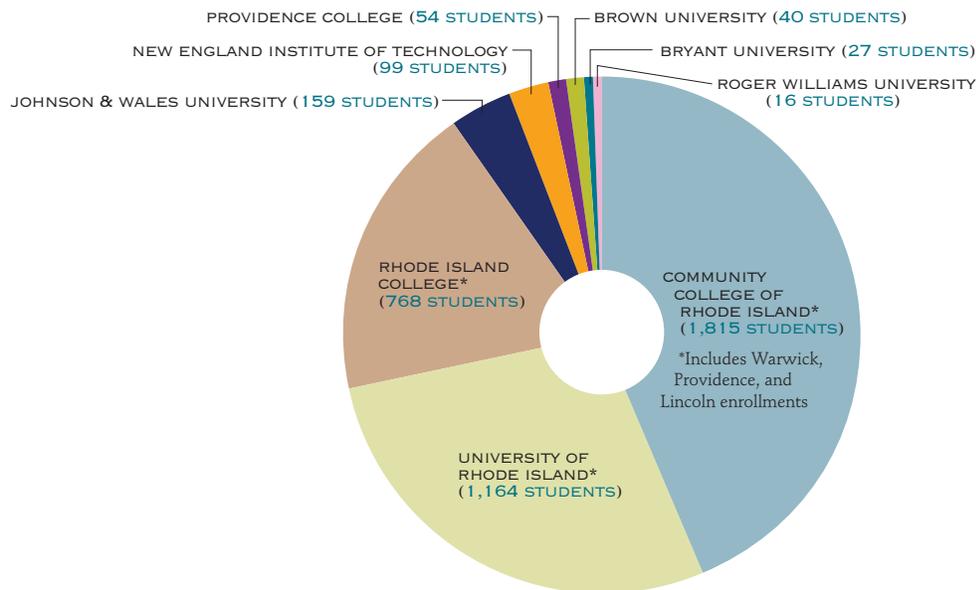
Rhode Island risks a backslide in its percentage of degree holders if it does not work to explicitly address the educational needs of its significant and growing Latino population.



College-going students from Providence Public Schools attend Rhode Island’s Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) in large numbers. In a 2012 National Student Clearinghouse report, nine of Rhode Island’s eleven IHEs were listed among the top twenty-five most common institutions for Providence students enrolling in college immediately after high school (see Figure 2) (National Student Clearinghouse 2012).

A look at the completion rates at Rhode Island’s colleges and universities reveals that Latinos graduate at rates lower than the average at all schools in the state. However, the rates at which

FIGURE 2
PROVIDENCE PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS ENROLLED IN RHODE ISLAND IHEs IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIGH SCHOOL (2012)²

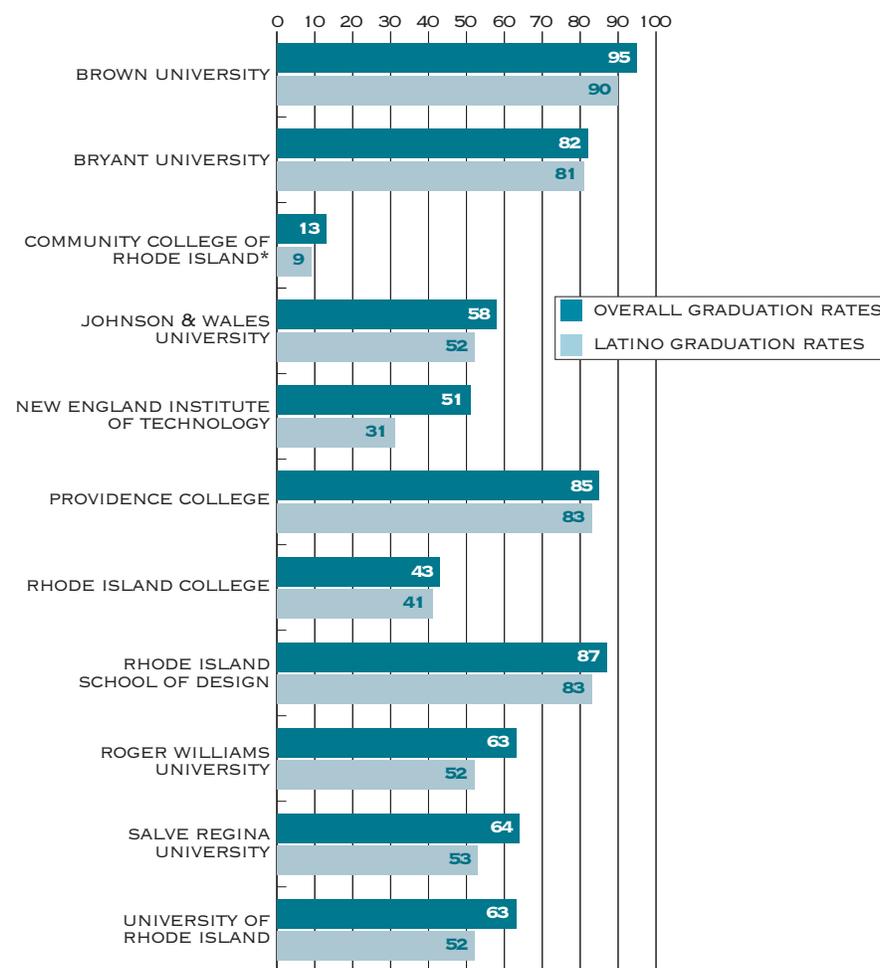


² These nine IHEs are among the top twenty-five IHEs where Providence Public School students enrolled from 2004–2011. Rhode Island School of Design and Salve Regina are not represented here, as they were not among the top twenty-five.

they graduate vary drastically from school to school, as do the gaps between Latinos and the overall student body (see Figure 3). For example, Latinos at Bryant University graduate at a rate just 1 percent below the university average, whereas those studying at the New England Institute of Technology attain their credential at a rate of 20 percent below the school's average.

³ Completion and graduation rates in IES data refer to percentage of full-time, first-time students who graduated or transferred out within 150% of "normal time" to completion for their program.

FIGURE 3
COMPLETION RATES³ AT RHODE ISLAND COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
(STUDENTS ENROLLING IN FALL 2007)



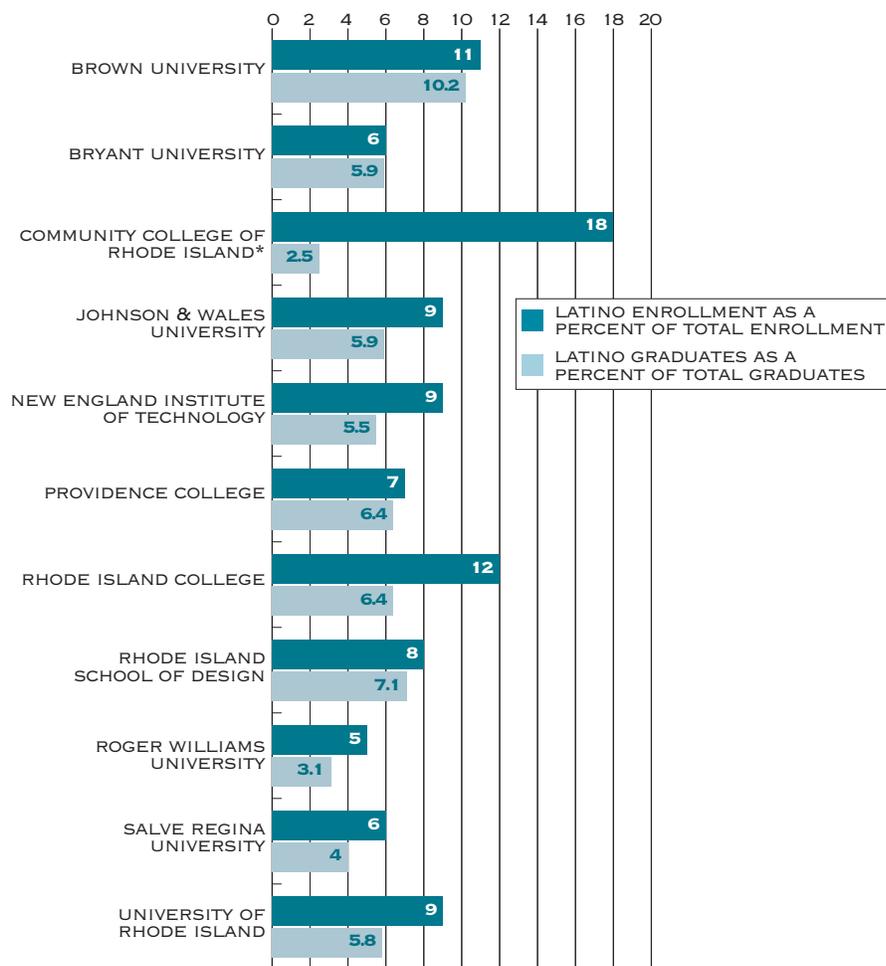
*Students at CCRI often transfer to a four-year institution prior to completing their associate's degree. This transfer rate can skew the completion data.

DATA SOURCES

College Navigator, IES National Center for Education Statistics

However, looking at completion rates outside of enrollment data gives only part of the picture, as Latinos are enrolled at varying rates from school to school (see Figure 4). While Latinos at Bryant may graduate at almost the same rate as the rest of the school, they represent only 6 percent of the total population there. Therefore, even at a completion rate of 80 percent, the

FIGURE 4
LATINO ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATES AT RHODE ISLAND COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (STUDENTS ENROLLING IN FALL 2007)



*Students at CCRI often transfer to a four-year institution prior to completing their associate's degree. This transfer rate can skew the completion data.

DATA SOURCES

Date Source: College Navigator, IES National Center for Education Statistics

number of Latinos graduating in a given year accounts for less than 6 percent of Bryant's total graduates.

While there is much work to be done, there are some encouraging trends. According to a report from *The Education Trust*, the overall six-year graduation rate at higher education institutions across the country was 60.4 percent in 2004 and 63.7 percent in 2010. For Latinos, the rate was 43.7 percent in 2004 and 47.2 percent in 2010 (Nguyen, Bibo & Engle 2012). Although we need to advance more quickly in the coming years, we are moving in the right direction. Two Rhode Island institutions were mentioned in the report as examples of where substantial gains are being made. Rhode Island College ranked twentieth in the nation among four-year public institutions for increasing Latino graduation rates between 2004 and 2010 (the rates jumped from 21.9 percent to 40.7 percent during that time period) and tenth in the nation for closing the gap between white and Latino graduation rates in the same time period (dropping from a 23.4 percent gap to a 6.9 percent one). Among private institutions, Johnson & Wales University placed eighteenth for closing the gap between whites and Latinos, dropping from a 12.4 percent gap in 2004 to a 5.7 percent one in 2010 (Nguyen, Bibo & Engle 2012).

These data suggest that as schools and communities work toward higher levels of degree attainment, school-level data can help them determine whether to focus on access and enrollment, overall persistence and completion rates, and/or gap closure. The data also demonstrate that significant progress is not only possible, it is already occurring in many places across the country and in Rhode Island. The next section of this report outlines the practices that are in place in communities that are seeing improvement in these areas. By using data to determine appropriate targets, and sharing and implementing best practices, Rhode Island will be well poised to join the national movement toward expanding post-secondary success, thus increasing overall graduation rates while ensuring that all segments of the population are achieving in equal measure.

SUMMARY OF PROMISING PRACTICES

In recent years, the influx of attention and resources on college persistence and completion has yielded some encouraging results, along with a growing body of literature highlighting promising practices. A summary of those practices is outlined in this section. They are broken into two broad categories: Discrete Services and Elements of Systemic Success.

Discrete Services

The services listed below and on the next page – academic services, financial services, college and career services, and social services – are frequently offered in schools and communities

ACADEMIC SERVICES offer a balance of high expectations and necessary supports to maximize opportunities for success.

- ◆ Fair, accurate assessment of academic skills and needs, with opportunities for students to review material prior to placement tests
- ◆ Fair, transparent policies regarding credit for previous course and work experience
- ◆ Clear graduation requirements, with an emphasis on the importance of carrying a full course load each semester
- ◆ Early warning systems that alert students and their advisors when they are at risk of falling off track
- ◆ Dual enrollment opportunities in partnership with local high schools
- ◆ Rigorous, relevant courses aligned with twenty-first-century workforce and industry needs
- ◆ Individual and group tutoring
- ◆ Academic advisors, or “success coaches,” who check in regularly with students, closely monitor student progress, and provide course selection guidance
- ◆ Online learning opportunities and supports
- ◆ Opportunities for supplemental coursework to reinforce the learning
- ◆ Opportunities for service learning
- ◆ Improved developmental programs, including self-paced modules, accelerated options, and developmental courses that are integrated into content-specific courses in students’ fields of study

FINANCIAL SERVICES offer skill development as well as financial assistance to minimize financial barriers to education.

- ◆ FAFSA completion support
- ◆ Financial aid planning, loan counseling, and money management guidance
- ◆ Tuition waivers beyond what is covered by financial aid
- ◆ Payment plans for tuition
- ◆ Transportation assistance (e.g., free or reduced-cost passes for public transit)
- ◆ Availability of affordable, convenient childcare
- ◆ Availability of affordable, convenient housing
- ◆ Free lending of textbooks
- ◆ Availability of emergency funds
- ◆ Assistance accessing public benefits (WIC, TANF, etc.)
- ◆ Tuition payment schedules aligned with employer tuition-reimbursement schedules

that have experienced some success in the areas of college persistence and completion. It is important to note that these services are most effective when they are offered not in isolation but as part of a coordinated, multi-faceted approach, as described in the Elements of Systemic Success section.

COLLEGE AND CAREER SERVICES help students acclimate to the culture of college and develop pathways to successful post-college careers.

- ◆ Summer Bridge courses, campus orientation, and “College 101” sessions offering strategies for successful transition to college
- ◆ Basic skill development in key “college-ready” areas such as problem-solving, personal communication, critical thinking, speaking, writing, listening, time management, study skills/test taking skills, use of information resources (library, finding and evaluating sources), basic technology skills
- ◆ Learning-style assessments
- ◆ Apprenticeships/internships (experiential learning)
- ◆ Goal-setting and goal-achievement support
- ◆ Career and job exploration
- ◆ Resume writing
- ◆ Mock interviews
- ◆ Job placement support
- ◆ Supported transitions from school to work
- ◆ Private sector partnerships

SOCIAL SERVICES support the emotional and psychological well-being of students while helping them develop strong connections to their school, faculty, and classmates.

- ◆ Cohort model or small, specialized learning communities
- ◆ Organized social and cultural events
- ◆ Student organizations that reflect students’ interests, concerns, and cultural backgrounds
- ◆ Non-academic advisors/counselors
- ◆ Mental health counseling
- ◆ Civic engagement/campus and community service training and opportunities
- ◆ Peer mentoring



Elements of Systemic Success

While each of the discrete services is valuable in its own right, students benefit most from an integrated approach where a multitude of services is made accessible through coordinated programming that blends transparency and rigor with the flexibility to meet individual student needs. Organizations and institutions are more likely to experience large-scale improvements in post-secondary achievement when adopting system-wide policies that incorporate the following elements of systemic success:

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES | **INTEGRATED SERVICES** | **TARGETED OUTREACH**
MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS | **STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS** | **INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT**

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES meet students where they are, allowing them to develop a trajectory from enrollment to job placement that is uniquely suited to their needs.

- ◆ Provide transparent expectations and timelines.
- ◆ Provide multiple pathways from enrollment to job placement to meet the needs of a diverse population.
- ◆ Offer flexible scheduling, including evening classes, weekend classes, and late-start classes for students registering after the start of the semester.
- ◆ Provide access to services outside regular working hours, in accessible places.
- ◆ Provide sustained supports that last the entire period of enrollment and change as student needs change.
- ◆ Assign dedicated advisors to whom students can turn with any questions, academic or otherwise.

INTEGRATED SERVICES ensure that students have access to a variety of supports to help them successfully navigate their post-secondary experience.

- ◆ Create a coordinated system of communication, data-sharing, and referrals among all key departments (admissions, financial aid, academic advising, counseling, CBOs, etc.) so that all are working toward a shared vision of success that is tailored for each student.
- ◆ Integrate services from all areas (academic, financial, social, college, and career) into program design so that key activities such as advising, career counseling, and financial aid assistance are required of all students.
- ◆ Create comprehensive Summer Bridge Programs and/or First Year Experience programs designed to help each cohort successfully transition into college.
- ◆ Hire and train success coaches who can offer comprehensive one-on-one support to students, connecting them to academic, personal, financial, and career resources on and off campus.

Together these elements contribute to a system in which students are supported and empowered to persist through to graduation. For a visual representation of this systemic model, see Figure 5 on page 14.

TARGETED OUTREACH allows institutions to better meet the needs of underserved and underrepresented populations. Below are considerations for working with Latino students, English language learners, and undocumented students. In some cases these practices can be adapted to serve the needs of various groups. In all cases, these practices should be used *in concert with* all other elements of systemic success. Most importantly, colleges must know whom they are serving, who is underrepresented, and what the specific needs, assets, and barriers are for each group.

- ◆ Hire bilingual staff.
- ◆ Offer materials and services in English and Spanish.
- ◆ Offer pathways to bilingual proficiency (this values both languages and begins to create a bilingual workforce).
- ◆ Reach out to organizations serving Latino youth.
- ◆ Reach out to students' families, involving them in the college experience so that they are better able to support the process.
- ◆ Collaborate with advocacy initiatives like DREAMers.
- ◆ Recruit Latino students as community ambassadors and role models.
- ◆ Hire/train staff to advise students about laws, opportunities, and resources for undocumented youth.
- ◆ Offer online resources for undocumented students, including scholarship opportunities and legal services.
- ◆ Offer scholarship-based internships and community service opportunities for undocumented students who are ineligible for federal aid.
- ◆ Help address the transportation needs of students who do not have (and cannot get) a driver's license.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS to faculty, staff, and peers provide students with a sense of belonging and community, creating a network of support that students can turn to and to whom students feel accountable.

- ◆ Offer faculty and peer advising.
- ◆ Create cohort models and intentional learning communities.
- ◆ Identify and promote the institution's core values.
- ◆ Develop inclusive traditions and celebrations focused on campus-wide community-building.
- ◆ Offer a broad range of social and cultural student groups.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS to learning are created when students have the opportunity to engage in educational experiences that are relevant, challenging, and transformational. When learning has immediate implications for personal and community development, students can more easily identify a *purpose* for their education. This can help keep students motivated, even in the face of challenge.

- ◆ Offer service-learning and community service opportunities.
- ◆ Connect course material to real-world scenarios.
- ◆ Integrate academic and professional learning.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS with businesses and community-based organizations allow higher education institutions to maximize opportunities for student success while minimizing the strain on already-stretched resources.

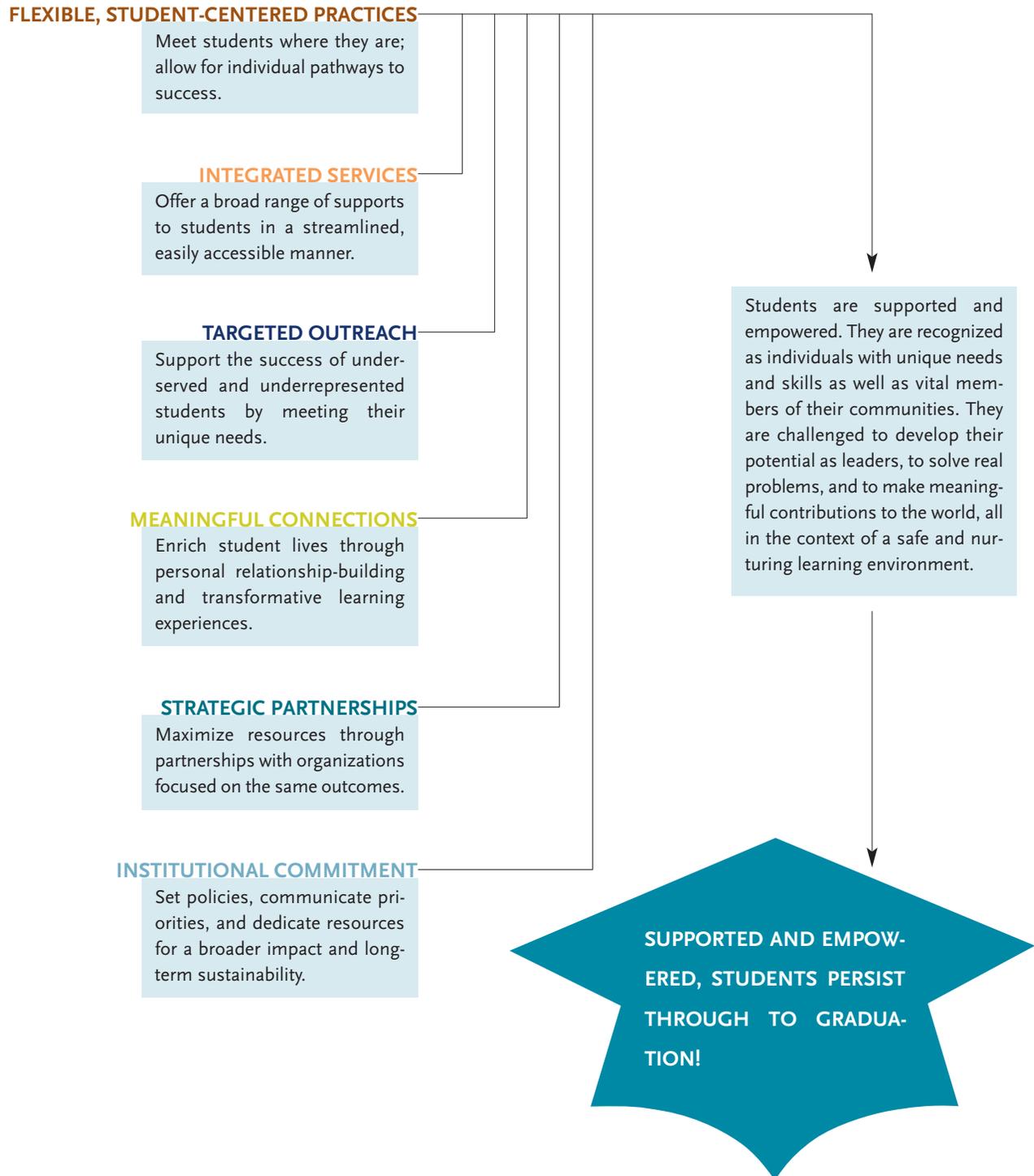
- ◆ Work to identify shared goals with CBOs who are doing college-readiness and college persistence work.
- ◆ Offer dedicated space on campus to key CBOs for ease of student access and institutional collaborations.
- ◆ Look for opportunities to share resources and raise funds collaboratively.
- ◆ Coordinate with Adult Basic Education providers, creating clear, accelerated pathways for students from Adult Ed to college credential.
- ◆ Partner with local businesses and nonprofits who can provide internships, job placement, and service-learning opportunities.



INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT and capacity building ensures the long-term viability of persistence efforts by investing resources and communicating institution-wide priorities.

- ◆ Institutionalize successful persistence practices by integrating them into school policy.
- ◆ Provide professional development for college faculty and staff to understand the needs of nontraditional students and specific groups of students.
- ◆ Create staff positions focused on diversity and equity, with a goal of understanding the needs of, and providing services for, specific target groups (returning students, Latino students, single parents, etc.).
- ◆ Set institutional goals and priorities and communicate them publicly.
- ◆ Collect data and regularly evaluate services and programs.
- ◆ Disaggregate data by race, ethnicity, and other relevant groups, and create action plans based on data.
- ◆ Conduct broad public outreach as well as targeted outreach to key groups regarding the importance and accessibility of a post-secondary degree.
- ◆ Profile successful degree completers in local media.

FIGURE 5
ELEMENTS OF SYSTEMIC SUCCESS FOR INCREASED POST-SECONDARY ATTAINMENT



ELEMENTS OF SYSTEMIC SUCCESS IN ACTION AT RHODE ISLAND'S INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Across the state, Rhode Island's colleges and universities are engaged in a wide variety of initiatives designed to increase student engagement, persistence, and completion. Among them are the programs below, each of which incorporates one or more of the Elements of Success. In order to increase their impact on post-secondary attainment statewide, these efforts should be celebrated and expanded upon. For each university initiative (and for each community-based organization initiative in the following section), we have noted which elements of systemic success it exemplifies.

Brown University

Advising: Brown offers extensive advising services, including assigning each first-year student a faculty advisor and a peer advisor to help with the transition to college. Through the *First Readings* program, students begin building relationships prior to the start of the year by sending a letter to their advisor that expresses their thoughts on the summer reading selection as well as their academic interests and expectations of college. Significant advising continues through sophomore year and beyond.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

INTEGRATED SERVICES

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

College Advising Corps: CAC Advisers work with Rhode Island public high schools to provide college application, financial aid, and enrollment support to low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students. Advisers are full-time AmeriCorps positions, and their work is supported by Brown undergraduates, called Access Scholars, who work with aspiring college students on SAT preparation, essay writing, and financial aid.

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Community Partnerships: More than 500 Brown students participate in the Community Partnerships program each year, volunteering with Providence-based organizations to promote social justice in the local community. Students' learning and work are supported on

RHODE ISLAND ACCESS & PERSISTENCE PROGRAM Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner

In early 2012, the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education (now the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner) launched the Student Access & Persistence Program (APP) to support college enrollment and persistence to degree for low-income, underrepresented, and/or at-risk Rhode Island students attending the state's three public higher education institutions. Using federal College Access Challenge Grant funds, the Office gathered input from many stakeholders in the state as well as examining national work in this area to design the core components of APP. These elements include:

1. Ensuring successful transitions to college through **strategic partnerships** with college access organizations serving nontraditional students.
2. Implementing a plan within the institution to **coordinate services** on enrollment that deliver blended, comprehensive, **student-centered services** including academic assistance, counseling, and financial planning and support.
3. Linking program impact to students making satisfactory progress toward degree completion and maintaining good academic standing.

Three programs – C2C, L4L, and RELAAY (described in detail under Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and University of Rhode Island, respectively) – are carrying this work forward in each of their respective institutions, demonstrating promising results. On review of the demographics and preliminary outcomes across the three programs during their first two years of implementation, a student in APP is likely to be a low-income, minority female, between the ages of eighteen to twenty-four and have persisted to a second year of post-secondary education with an average GPA of 2.6. More than 1,000 students in these programs received comprehensive, coordinated support services in the 2013-2014 academic year as compared to 400 during 2012-2013.

CCRI, RIC, and URI, as well as two of the partnering college access organizations (College Crusade of Rhode Island and College Visions) and The Providence Plan, have developed a longitudinal data story about the programs (see <http://ridatahub.org/datastories/ris-college-access-and-persistence-programs/1/>). Aggregate data on prior College Crusade and College Visions high school students that then have participated in APP at the post-secondary level was examined to inform both systems on how they might better serve these students.

campus in the form of trainings and discussions about the causes of inequality and the myriad roles students can play in combatting it.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS **STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**

RUE: Brown's Resumed Undergraduate Education program admits a small number of students each year who have been out of high school for six years or more but have not completed a bachelor's degree. Part-time study and limited scholarships are available.

TARGETED OUTREACH

UCAAP: The University-Community Academic Advising Program is for students interested in joining a cohort of classmates committed to community service and social change. The program offers opportunities to make a difference in the community while building a network of service-oriented peers.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Bryant University

First-Year Gateway Program: Bryant offers a dynamic thirteen-credit core curriculum for first-year students that is experiential and interdisciplinary. It includes such courses as *Global Foundations of Character and Leadership* and *Innovation Design Experience for All*. The program aims to help students develop fundamental academic skills in a holistic way, applying their learning to real-world problems and working in teams to offer solutions.

INTEGRATED SERVICES

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Internships: Juniors and seniors at Bryant have the opportunity to get course credit for combining on-the-job training with academic study, allowing them to develop professional skills and networks while completing their degree.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

MyPath@Bryant: A partnership between the Amica Center for Career Education and the Undergraduate Advising Office, this program combines academic and career advising to help students select a concentration and career path uniquely suited to their skills and interests. The Amica Center boasts that 98 percent of Bryant graduates are employed or in graduate school within six months after graduating.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

INTEGRATED SERVICES

Service-Learning: All students are required to take Management 200, a course in which they put their management skills to use in a semester-long project with a local nonprofit. Additionally, many courses across the curriculum have a service-learning component.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI)

ACCESS: This federally funded program helps first-generation, low-income students with a documented disability earn an associate's degree within four years. Program components include one-on-one advisory meetings, financial literacy and student success courses, and twenty hours of community service.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Accuplacer Prep: CCRI offers preparation and review for students prior to taking their placement exams so that they can increase their chances of testing out of developmental courses and enrolling directly in credit-bearing courses.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

Center for Workforce and Community Education (CWCE): CWCE is one of six adult education programs participating in the Rhode Island Department of Education's *Transition to College and Careers Initiative*, which aims to ensure that all Rhode Island adults have the skills and credentials they need for upward mobility, engaged citizenship, and family and community leadership. In partnership with Aquidneck Island Learning Center, Dorcas Place, Education Exchange, Rhode Island Regional Adult Learning (RIRAL), and Westbay Community Action Program, CWCE provides services to help nontraditional adult students return to academic life with the ability to transition smoothly from adult education to a college degree program. Services include tutoring, mentoring, college knowledge development, and assistance with the financial aid and college application processes.

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Connect to College (C2C): The (C2C) project at CCRI is centralizing the critical services necessary for student readiness and success in post-secondary education. It is partnering with the College Crusade, YouthBuild, and the Rhode Island Transitions to College and Careers Initiative to provide tailored transitional services for traditionally underserved students entering CCRI. By integrating academic, social, and motivational interventions – and providing wrap-around services within a student-centered design – C2C is working to ensure its students persist. With support from C2C Coordinators, C2C Scholars are obtaining academic advising, targeted modular remediation, financial literacy, and career assessments that link directly to college majors and programming. (See the sidebar on The Rhode

Island Access & Persistence Program on page 16 for additional information.)

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Prior Learning Assessment: CCRI recognizes that learning often happens outside of the classroom. The school provides an opportunity to earn credit for this learning through their Prior Learning Assessment Portfolio program.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

REACH: Participants of REACH (Realizing Education and Career Hopes) are referred through the Rhode Island Department of Human Services cash assistance program, RI Works. Each participant is assigned a REACH Coordinator who provides case management, mentoring, and support in accessing a wide range of resources including academic, financial, and career services, housing and childcare options, and heating and food assistance.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Second Chance: Through this program, students who have not been enrolled at CCRI in at least five years and who have a past-due financial obligation to the institution are provided with a second chance to obtain a certificate or degree with CCRI. Students who are granted Second Chance will have their outstanding balance deferred until graduation from CCRI at which time they will be awarded a waiver of 100 percent of tuition and fees of the past-due balance.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Success Centers: Student Success Centers are designed to help students develop the academic skills and college knowledge they need to succeed. Services include tutoring and a referral system for faculty to recommend students for support, as well as a College Success course that introduces students to all campus resources, focuses on attitude, study skills, time and stress management, and requires students to create a Personal Success Plan to guide them through their college career.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

INTEGRATED SERVICES

Johnson & Wales University

Experiential Learning: Johnson & Wales emphasizes learning by doing. They have a variety of labs across the curriculum (e.g., Culinary Arts Lab, Criminal Justice Lab, and The Coop Teaching Garden) where students can apply their learning in practical, real-world settings. They also offer a wide range of internship placements, a robust service-learning program, and opportunities to join professional teams working on real projects with industry partners. The **Feinstein Community Service Center** supports students and faculty in their efforts to identify local and national social issues, create effective service projects in response to those issues, and connect academic learning with community service work. During the 2012-2013 school year, Johnson & Wales students performed more than 155,000 hours of community service.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

School of Online and Continuing Education: Johnson & Wales offers a number of programs online, including a liberal arts degree program that requires a minor in either business or technology and incorporates experiential learning and mandatory advising.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

New England Institute of Technology

Feinstein Enriching America Program: Fulltime students receive a free college credit for enrolling in a service-learning course designed to connect students with volunteer activities in Rhode Island that best complement their own individual interests, abilities, and career goals. Students are also eligible for a Feinstein Leadership Scholarship of \$1,250 and a Feinstein America Award, further enhancing and supporting their educational experience.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

SAMI: The Shipbuilding/Marine and Advanced Manufacturing Institute is a brand new free certificate program for unemployed Rhode Islanders. In partnership with employers looking to hire qualified shipbuilders, pipe fitters, machinists, and welders, SAMI offers skills training, case management, and support toward either finding a job or continuing on to a degree program.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Providence College

EXPLORE!: The mission of the EXPLORE! program is to promote awareness of, access to, and readiness for college and career among first-generation local urban high school students while simultaneously supporting and enhancing the educational experiences of Providence College students.

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

Feinstein Institute for Public Service: The Feinstein Institute brings together students, faculty, staff, and community partners to work toward the shared goal of strengthening local communities. The Institute supports the development of community service and service-learning opportunities; offers professional development and reflection-based seminars to community leaders, students, and alumni; and works to offer effective responses to community partner needs in the form of student/faculty research and consultation, direct-service, work-study, and in-kind donations.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Friar Foundations: This five-week summer bridge program, launched in 2014 with funding from The Angell Foundation, provides students an early orientation to college life. With the support of faculty and peer mentors, students develop academic skills, familiarity with campus resources, and a strong social network, all while earning credits toward their degree.

INTEGRATED SERVICES

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Office of Institutional Diversity: This office is tasked with carrying out the university's commitment to attracting and supporting a diverse community of students, faculty, and staff. To that end, the office recently commissioned a Campus Climate Assessment, which consisted of a number of focus groups designed to identify successful initiatives, gain an understanding of the challenges faced by community members, and create a strategic plan in response to the findings.

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

School of Continuing Education: The School of Continuing Education offers small classes, personal advising, and financial assistance. The school allows students to transfer up to seventy-five credits and offers opportunities to earn credits for prior knowledge gained outside the classroom.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

Rhode Island College (RIC)

Bridges Learning Community: This program supports students in the first year of college, assisting in the transition by offering personalized academic support and guidance, individual Bridge advisors, and enrollment in the College Learning Strategies course.

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

Finish Strong: The Finish Strong program supports intended August graduates and former RIC students who did not complete their degrees. The Finish Strong Resource Team works with students to help them determine what they need to complete their degree and supports them through the process.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

Freshman Advantage Program: This is a free six-week summer writing program for entering freshman. A placement test determines whether students can take the four-credit Writing 100 course to satisfy the college's writing requirement, or a three-credit developmental course to get students ready for Writing 100 in the fall.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

Innovation Lab: RIC is involved in an innovative partnership with the Central Falls School District. The partnership brings together leaders from the district, college, and community to develop, pilot, and research new models of teaching, learning, and service. The Innovation Lab's vision is to foster an increasingly prosperous and sustainable community by learning how to better meet the diverse needs of the Central Falls residents while also advancing the practice of teaching, learning, and research at RIC.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Learning for Life: Learning for Life (L4L) is a collaborative effort at RIC supported with three community partners – Goodwill Industries of Rhode Island, College Visions, and The College Crusade. At the heart of L4L are student peer mentors called Navigators. Navigators provide information and hands-on support for students to link to resources on- and off-campus, including academic skills support and tutoring. Functioning as an innovative catalyst and common denominator for student success across campus, L4L partners with multiple offices to build a cohesive network as well as to identify and create new opportu-

nities to expand the college's web of support for nontraditional students. (See the sidebar on The Rhode Island Access & Persistence Program on page 16 for additional information.)

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Outreach Programs: RIC offers a number of certificate programs in areas such as medical assisting, community health worker, and bookkeeping and accounting clerk. Programs provide skills training, English as a second language courses, and job placement support.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

Performance-Based Admission Program (PBA): PBA admits students with little-to-no college experience and a lack of traditional admission credentials, such as SAT scores and a college preparatory course load in high school. Students in the PBA program are considered degree candidates and are expected to meet the standard university requirements as well as check in regularly with their PBA advisor and complete the school's College Learning Strategies course.

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

Preparatory Enrollment Program: PEP supports low-income, first-generation aspiring college students in their transition from high school to college. The program includes orientation, placement, and a pre-seminar series during the spring of students' senior year in high school, a six-week residential summer bridge program, and individual advising and group meetings throughout freshman year.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Project Excel (Excellence in College for English Learners): This program admits academically accomplished bilingual students who may not have taken the requisite English courses in high school. The program recognizes that many talented bilingual students are often denied college access because their English acquisition and development classes prohibited them from being able to take a full college prep course load in high school.

TARGETED OUTREACH

Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)

Continuing Education: RISD offers part-time and full-time certificate programs for adults in areas such as animation and video, children’s book illustration, and graphic design. Credit-bearing summer courses are available as well.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

Pre-Orientation Service Experience (POSE): POSE helps first-year students “break the RISD bubble” by encouraging meaningful engagement with the broader Providence community. It is a five-day experience prior to the official start of the school year during which students explore long-term volunteer opportunities off campus.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

RISD 360°: This program for first-year students offers weekly college-knowledge events facilitated by peer mentors. The events, which also feature dinner and a raffle, are designed to help students transition successfully into life at RISD while forming relationships and expanding their peer networks.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

RISDiversity: This Community Narratives project celebrates diversity on campus by giving students, faculty, and staff an opportunity to share their unique stories and visions in an exhibit that combines portrait with original text and artwork.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

RISD Leads: This program offers a weekly workshop and speaker series centered around the theme of leadership and social change. Workshops are facilitated by leaders in the non-profit sector, and all events include dinner and networking opportunities. Students may attend on a drop-in basis or enroll in the RISD Leads certificate program.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Roger Williams University

Community Partnerships Center (CPC): The CPC matches students and faculty with non-profit organizations, municipalities, government agencies, and low- and moderate-income communities who are in need of services. Students and faculty draw on their skills and academic interests, enhancing their learning while providing much needed assistance to resource-strapped local communities.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Feinstein Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement: The Feinstein Center supports students and faculty in the development of service-learning opportunities and community service initiatives. The center organizes the annual Community Connections Day, during which more than 1,500 students, faculty, and staff participate in community service projects through the region.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Intercultural Center: Roger Williams has a number of groups and initiatives on campus committed to supporting and celebrating diversity. Key among them is the Intercultural Center, which offers support for immigrants and international students, sponsors programs around diversity and social justice, and hosts a number of social and cultural events.

TARGETED OUTREACH

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

School of Continuing Studies (SCS): SCS offers certificate, associate's degree, and bachelors's degree programs online and in person. Up to 90 credits can be transferred from other institutions and/or from Prior Learning Assessments. SCS also offers programs for working adults through its many partnerships, including NeighborWorks, Taco, U.S. Navy, and Housing Network RI.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Salve Regina

Community Service: Salve Regina students are required to complete ten hours of community service prior to graduation as part of the Feinstein Enriching America Program. The university offers multiple service opportunities, including the annual Exploratory Day of Service for incoming students, alternative spring break opportunities, and Service Plunge, a year-long service commitment for a select group of first-year students.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Continuing Education: Certificate, associate's degree, and bachelor's degree programs are available in the traditional classroom setting, online, in compressed seven-week sessions, and in hybrid online/in-person formats to meet the needs and accommodate the schedules of diverse adult learners.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

First Year Experience: To support the transition to college life, all freshman participate in the First Year Experience, including an orientation, a one-credit New Student Seminar, and two other required classes taken together with other members of the same small learning community. First-year students are also paired up with student mentors who serve as a further resource throughout the year.

INTEGRATED SERVICES

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

University of Rhode Island (URI)

Early Alert Services: This is a referral service for faculty, staff, peers, and family members to alert the university if a student is struggling academically, socially, emotionally, or otherwise. Early Alert staff will direct students to the appropriate resources and support them through recovery and on to success.

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

Feinstein Civic Engagement Program: This program's mission is to create an engaged campus community through service and community engagement that fosters student leadership; support for faculty scholarship in service learning; and direct service and advocacy work that meets local, state, national, and global community needs. Through the Feinstein experience, all students complete a common service experience with their peers.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Finish What You Started: This program is designed to help students who have some college credit to return to school and finish their degree. The program offers individual advising, peer mentoring, credit for prior learning in and out of the classroom, and scholarship opportunities.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Latin American Student Association (LASA): This student organization is dedicated to spreading awareness of Latin American diversity and culture throughout the university, as well as voicing the issues of the Latin American Community on campus and beyond.

TARGETED OUTREACH

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Living Learning Communities: Students can choose to live in residence halls with classmates who share their academic interests, providing opportunities to build strong social networks through shared classes, study groups, and common pursuits.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Project Relaaay: Project Relaaay (Recruit and Educate Local At-Risk Adults and Youth) builds on the success of existing programs at URI including Talent Development (TD) and the Academic Enhancement Center (AEC). It not only serves entering freshmen from Rhode Island's high schools, but also adults seeking to return to college after having left without successfully obtaining their degree. Partner organizations include College Crusade, College Visions, SMILE, and Educational Talent Search. (See the sidebar on The Rhode Island Access & Persistence Program on page 16 for additional information.)

TARGETED OUTREACH

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Talent Development: Serving Rhode Island high school graduates whose academic standing is below the minimum requirement for admission, Talent Development offers an intensive, residential summer bridge program. Students who successfully complete the summer program enroll in the fall and continue to receive academic and financial support via their personal advisor.

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Uhuru Sasa: This student organization offers opportunities for cultural enrichment via historical, literary, and artistic events that are open to the entire university as well as the neighboring community.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

URI 101: This is a required seminar for first year students to help them successfully transition to URI.

INTEGRATED SERVICES

ELEMENTS OF SYSTEMIC SUCCESS IN ACTION AT RHODE ISLAND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to college- and university-based services, Rhode Island benefits from a number of community-based organizations (CBOs) committed to improving post-secondary attainment. Many of these CBOs are reporting encouraging evidence of success, with students in their programs earning credentials at higher rates than their peers. Educators and policy-makers would do well to build upon these successes by committing additional resources and expanding existing partnerships between colleges and CBOs.

CASO (Coalition of Advocates for Student Opportunities)

CASO provides resources and advocacy for undocumented students pursuing higher education. Their website offers information on financial aid and scholarship opportunities, college application support, and additional resources for immigrants and undocumented students.

TARGETED OUTREACH

The College Crusade

The College Crusade is committed to ensuring post-secondary success for Rhode Island's low-income, urban youth. The College Crusade's comprehensive, long-term social and academic support begins in middle school. With guidance from a network of caring adults, Crusaders participate in academic enrichment, social and personal development, and college and career exploration. The experience continues through college, where Crusaders are supported from enrollment to completion. The College Crusade also offers financial support; the organization has awarded more than \$27.8 million in scholarships since 2001.

College Access Challenge Grant Partnerships: Through this federally funded program designed to prepare more low-income students for post-secondary success, The College Crusade has partnered with the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

From 2008 to 2011, the average first-year persistence rates for Rhode Island's three public colleges was 73.3 percent. For Crusaders at those schools, the rate was 84.2 percent (College Crusade 2014).

College, and Community College of Rhode Island. Crusaders at these schools work closely with advisors to navigate their college careers successfully, selecting courses in line with their graduation goals, monitoring their own progress, and benefiting from the guidance of their advisors as individual challenges arise. (See the sidebar on The Rhode Island Access & Persistence Program on page 16 for additional information.)

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Transition Counseling: The College Crusade supports recent high school graduates as well as older adults returning to school. They help students transition successfully to college, offering assistance with financial aid, admissions, and transfers and connecting students to a variety of services on campus.

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

College Unbound (CU)

College Unbound offers a highly personalized approach to helping working adults complete their bachelor degrees. Working with a team of peers, an academic advisor, a professional mentor, and experts in their field of study, students combine real-world learning with academic pursuits, working full time while earning up to fifteen credits per semester. Learning is assessed through demonstration of relevant competencies as students design projects focused on solving real problems related to the workplace.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Completion yoU Gateway Course: In the winter, spring, and summer of 2014, College Unbound offered a three-credit, ten-to-fifteen-week Gateway course designed to help adult learners transition to college successfully. With support from Gateway instructors, students were required to create and maintain a personal learning plan that outlined their academic and career goals and mapped out a pathway to success.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

INTEGRATED SERVICES

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

85 percent of CU students complete their degrees, and 60 percent do so in less than two years. 87 percent of CU alumni are employed full time (College Unbound n.d.).

College Visions

College Visions offers individual advising and resources for low-income, first-generation college-bound youth in Rhode Island, supporting the journey from enrollment through persistence and onto graduation.

College Access Challenge Grant Partnerships: College Visions is a key partner in the Rhode Island Access & Persistence Program, supporting Learning for Life at Rhode Island College as well as the Relaaay program at the University of Rhode Island. (See the sidebar on The Rhode Island Access & Persistence Program on page 16 for additional information.)

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

College Access Program (CAP): The College Visions experience begins in the eleventh grade, as students and a cohort of their college-bound peers are supported through the application, selection, financial aid, and enrollment process.

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

College Success Program: Once CAP graduates enroll in college, they are eligible to join CSP, where the one-on-one support continues in the form of individualized coaching, connections to on-campus resources, financial aid support, peer-to-peer support and leadership opportunities.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

INTEGRATED SERVICES

TARGETED OUTREACH

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Partnerships: College Visions partners with a number of local youth-serving organizations whose staff assist College Visions with student recruitment and college recommendations.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

95 percent of CAP students enroll in college; 89 percent of those students persist on to their second year; 67 percent graduate within five years (College Visions n.d.).

Institute for Labor Studies and Research (ILSR)

With a focus on empowering Rhode Island workers, ILSR offers certificate and degree programs online and in person. They also offer career assessments and courses in union leadership and workplace rights.

FLEXIBLE, STUDENT-CENTERED PRACTICES

Latino Dollars for Scholars (LADO)

LADO provides scholarships of up to \$1,000 to Latino residents of Rhode Island who are enrolled in, or have been accepted to, college. The organization strives to increase representation of Latinos at the post-secondary level. Scholarship recipients join the LADO community of more than 800 alumni, creating a growing network of Latino scholars and professional role models throughout the state.

TARGETED OUTREACH

Rhode Island Campus Compact (RICC)

RICC focuses on community service and civic engagement as a strategy for enhancing the quality of life in Rhode Island while simultaneously improving college retention and post-secondary success.

In order to increase civic engagement on college campuses throughout Rhode Island, RICC is engaged in a number of professional development initiatives, including the **Civic Engagement Network**, which provides opportunities for Rhode Island colleges to share resources and best practices, and the **Engaged Scholars Statewide Presidential Faculty Fellowship**, which admits a select group of Rhode Island faculty annually and supports the cohort in meaningfully integrating service and community engagement into their teaching.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

In 2012-2013, 98 percent of Scholarships for Service Fellows completed their 300-hour requirement. 86 percent either graduated (13 percent) or enrolled the following year (73 percent) (Rhode Island Campus Compact 2014).

Scholarships for Service: This AmeriCorps program offers an education stipend to approximately 100 Rhode Island college students annually. As part of a cohort of Student Civic Fellows, participants join a network of community-minded peers, each performing 150 hours of service at local nonprofits and committing an additional 150 hours to trainings, meetings, and events.

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

VISTA: Members of RICC's AmeriCorps*VISTA program perform their year of service at one of Rhode Island's institutions of higher education, helping the school develop its capacity to meet the needs of underrepresented populations.

TARGETED OUTREACH

MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RHODE ISLAND EDUCATORS AND POLICY-MAKERS

Our world is changing. Dramatic demographic shifts and a rapidly transforming workplace necessitate a profound transformation in how we educate and prepare our citizens. While there are certainly promising practices in place in Rhode Island, as well as evidence of some successes, more needs to be done. The following recommendations are designed to help Rhode Island educators and policy-makers take a more strategic, proactive approach to increasing post-secondary attainment levels, ensuring that more of the state's working adults are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed for success in this new world.

1. **Perform Self-Assessments:** At the city, state, and institution level, it is important to know where one stands. Take stock of current enrollment, retention, and graduation rates overall and disaggregated by demographic group. Know who your students are and what their needs are. Use the Elements of Systemic Success to assess your current programs.
2. **Set Targets:** Once you know your data, you can use it to set meaningful targets. These could be based on improving enrollment for certain groups, improving retention and completion rates overall, and/or closing graduation gaps among groups. Consider aligning your targets with one of the national goals and/or connecting to a campaign at the city or state level.
3. **Form and Expand Upon Strategic Partnerships:** Resources can be maximized when organizations collaborate toward shared goals. Often, CBOs can work with colleges to offer more targeted, individual supports; nonprofits can provide rich service-learning experiences; and partnerships with businesses create opportunities for internships, on-the-job learning, and professional networking to increase post-graduation job prospects.
4. **Build Upon Successes:** Look at the work already being done in the state and build on it! Convene stakeholders to celebrate successes and foster a collaborative learning environment, with all parties working together toward a shared vision of success.

CLOSING REMARKS

Our institutions of higher learning need to undergo a profound transformation if we are to meet the demands of the changing world as well as the educational needs of a larger, more diverse college-going population. It is no longer enough for schools to be purveyors of knowledge. They need to provide a safe and nurturing learning environment where students are recognized as individuals, offered a relevant and personally meaningful curriculum, challenged to develop their unique potential, and supported along the way. This is no easy task. It requires a culture shift that can only be accomplished when there is a commitment to change at the institutional level. When schools and communities commit to giving students opportunities to take the lead in their own learning, to contribute to their communities, and to shape their own future, those students, supported and empowered, are more likely to persist through to graduation and beyond.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A Stronger Nation Through Higher Education: An Annual Report from Lumina Foundation
www.luminafoundation.org/newsroom/news_releases/2014-04-22-stronger_nation_2014.html

Advancing to Completion: Increasing Degree Attainment by Improving Graduation Rates and Closing Gaps for Hispanic Students. By Mary Nguyen, Erin Ward Bibo, and Jennifer Engle.
www.csusb.edu/documents/Ed_Trust-Advancing_To_Completion.pdf

Crossing the Finish Line: Overcoming Barriers to Community College Degree and Credential Attainment in Kentucky
www.alicelaw.org/uploads/asset/asset_file/1375/Crossing_the_Finish_Line.pdf

Promoting Persistence Through Comprehensive Student Supports
www.jff.org/sites/default/files/publications/materials/Promoting-Persistence-Through-Comprehensive-Student-Supports%20_031814.pdf

Low Income Single Mothers at Community College
<http://womenemployed.org/sites/default/files/resources/LowIncomeSingleMothersatCommunityCollege2012.pdf>

A Matter of Degrees: Promising Practices for Community College Student Success
www.ccsse.org/docs/Matter_of_Degrees.pdf

Going the Distance in Adult College Completion: Lessons from the Non-Traditional No More Project
www.wiche.edu/info/publications/ntnmStateCaseStudies.pdf

Creating New Pathways to Post-Secondary: Evaluation of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Post-Secondary Success Initiative
<http://cyc.brandeis.edu/pdfs/reports/PSSReport.pdf>

Improving College Access and Completion in Rhode Island
www.rikidscount.org/matriarch/documents/Improving%20College%20Access%20and%20Completion%20in%20RI_FINAL2.pdf

Dreaming Big: What Community Colleges Can Do To Help Undocumented Immigrant Youth Achieve Their Potential

http://unitedwedream.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/DREAMING_BIG_CCCIE_Report_9-2012_final_version.pdf

More Graduates: Two-Year Results from an Evaluation of Accelerated Study in Associate Programs for Developmental Students

www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/More_Graduates.pdf

Men of Color: Ensuring the Academic Success of Latino Males in Higher Education

[www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/m-r/\(Brief\)_Men_of_Color_Latinos.pdf](http://www.ihep.org/assets/files/publications/m-r/(Brief)_Men_of_Color_Latinos.pdf)

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