



**Council on Postsecondary Education
HYBRID MEETING
Wednesday, September 16, 2020 5:30 p.m.
Room 4090, CCRI Knight Campus, 400 East Avenue, Warwick, Rhode Island
and Zoom Webinar**

**Pursuant to Governor Raimondo's Executive Order 20-75,
this was a hybrid meeting.**

MINUTES

Chair Timothy DelGiudice called this hybrid meeting to order at 5:36 p.m. and acknowledged that a quorum was present. Due to social distancing restrictions, this meeting was held in person for Council members and essential personnel only, including:

Participating in person: Timothy DelGiudice, Chair, Council on Postsecondary Education, Barbara Cottam, Chair, Board of Education, Council members Dennis Duffy, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, and Michael Mello.

Meghan Hughes, President, Community College of Rhode Island
Frank Sánchez, President, Rhode Island College

Ronald A. Cavallaro, Acting Commissioner and General Counsel
Lynn Owens, Assistant to the Commissioner
John Vota, CCRI senior information technician

Remote Participation: Council members Marianne Monte and Jeffery Williams

Community College of Rhode Island remote participants included Kristen Albritton, Sara Enright, Rosemary Costigan, Bobby Gondola, and Amy Kempe.

Rhode Island College remote participants included Clark Greene, Stephen Nedder, Helen Tate, Maggie Sullivan, Ducha Hung, Robert Eaton, Jen Giroux, and Sue Pearlmutter.

RI Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (RIOPC) remote participants included Anne Marie Coleman, Susan Mansolillo, Dr. Tammy Warner, and Beth Bailey.

Guests included Dennis Littky, President, College Unbound and Adam Bush, Vice President/Provost, College Unbound

Public access was provided to attendees of this Zoom webinar in compliance with the Open Meetings Act and the provisions of the Executive Order; contact information was provided for those experiencing technical difficulties.

1. Acceptance of the Agenda

Chair DelGiudice noted that there is no need for an executive session this evening. He called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education accept the agenda for the meeting of September 16, 2020.

Jeffery Williams made the motion, which was seconded by Michael Mello.

Chair DelGiudice asked for a motion to amend the agenda to remove the executive session.

On a motion duly made by Dennis Duffy and seconded by Thomas Izzo, it was

VOTED:	THAT	The Council on Postsecondary Education amends the agenda to remove the executive session.
	VOTE:	8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Dennis Duffy, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Michael Mello, Marianne Monte, and Jeffery Williams.
	NAYS:	0
	ABSTAINS:	0

Chair DelGiudice asked for a motion to accept the amended agenda for the meeting of September 16, 2020.

On a motion duly made by Dennis Duffy and seconded by Thomas Izzo, it was

VOTED:	THAT	The Council on Postsecondary Education accepts the amended agenda for the meeting of September 16, 2020.
	VOTE:	8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.
	YEAS:	Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Dennis Duffy, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Michael Mello, Marianne Monte, and Jeffery Williams.
	NAYS:	0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. Open Forum

Chair DelGiudice noted that individuals interested in providing public comment were encouraged to submit written comments to the Council. Those written comments have been shared with Council members, are available at the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, and will be made part of the permanent record of this meeting.

Chair DelGiudice stated that seven people registered in advance to provide verbal testimony; the registration period closed at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday. He noted that each speaker was afforded three minutes to speak; four people yielded their time to Mr. Scott Bromberg, president of the Henry Barnard School Parent-Teacher Association.

Mr. Bromberg shared the concerns of parents and students of the Henry Barnard School, regarding Rhode Island College's decision to close the school at the end of this academic year. He noted that parents are motivated to continue the legacy of the school, and thanked the Chair and the Board for their willingness to work with the parents.

Erik Christiansen, President of the Rhode Island College/AFT (American Federation of Teachers) representing the full-time faculty at the college, shared the concerns of the faculty union members regarding Rhode Island College's process and decision to close the Henry Barnard School.

Vincent Bohlinger, Chair, College Council and Professor/Director of Film Studies at Rhode Island College, shared his complaint and protest of the announced closing of the Henry Barnard School and the layoffs of school personnel.

Chair DelGiudice noted that President Sánchez and Acting Commissioner Cavallaro will address in their reports some of the points brought up during the Open Forum.

3. Approval of the Minutes

A. Minutes of the August 5, 2020 meeting.

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve the minutes of the special meeting that took place on August 5, 2020, as presented.

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Rachelle Green, it was

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approves the minutes of the special meeting that took place on August 5, 2020, as presented.

VOTE: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members

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voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Dennis Duffy,
Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Michael Mello, Marianne
Monte, and Jeffery Williams.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

B. Minutes of the August 12, 2020 special meeting.

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve the minutes of the special meeting that took place on August 12, 2020, as presented.

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Rachelle Green, it was

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approves the minutes of the special meeting that took place on August 12, 2020, as presented.

VOTE: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Dennis Duffy,
Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Michael Mello, and
Marianne Monte.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: Jeffery Williams (did not attend the August 12th meeting).

C. Minutes of the August 19, 2020 special meeting.

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve the minutes of the special meeting that took place on August 19, 2020, as presented.

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Rachelle Green, it was

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approves the minutes of the special meeting that took place on August 19, 2020, as presented.

VOTE: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Dennis Duffy,
Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Michael Mello, Marianne
Monte, and Jeffery Williams.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

4. Reports from the Chairs

- A. Council on Postsecondary Education – Updates and issues affecting local and national higher education.

Chair DelGiudice commended President Hughes, President Sánchez, and their respective staffs, on a safe and uneventful opening of schools, and the delivery of education to our student population through the various modes.

He yielded his time for presidential presentations.

- B. Board of Education – Updates and issues affecting local and national PK-20 education.

Chair Barbara Cottam reported that the full Board of Education will meet on September 22nd. She stated that the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education met last night and discussed the successful opening of schools throughout the state. She visited three elementary schools in Providence, East Providence and Johnston for dismissals and morning greets, and she witnessed the excitement of students and teachers to return to class, as well as the tremendous work done by administrators to present organized and clean schools. She noted that the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education is working to address Providence’s virtual learning academy.

5. Report from the Commissioner

- A. Updates and issues affecting local and national higher education.

Acting Commissioner Cavallaro, at the request of the Chair, dispensed with his regular report, and addressed the Council’s question about its authority regarding changes in departments, divisions, programs and courses of study at the institutions. He noted that in July of 2014, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Council on Postsecondary Education were established. Prior to that, the statute that authorized the then Board of Education, and prior to that the Board of Governors of Higher Education, included in Subsection 4 certain enumerated powers and authority. Back then, these governing boards had authority regarding the adoption and submittal of a budget, the approval of tables of organization, but more importantly in regard to this issue, the creation, abolishment and consolidation of

departments, divisions, programs and courses of study. The present Council's regulations regarding changes in academic programs (dated from 2006) reflect this prior statutory authority; RIOPC has not yet changed all of those regulations to reflect the 2014 changes in the statute. In 2014, when the Council was established, the RI General Assembly took certain powers that were previously vested in the Board and gave them to the presidents of URI, RIC and CCRI.

Acting Commissioner Cavallaro explained that, in the case of Rhode Island College, as of July 2014, R.I.G.L. § 16-33.2.1(a) grants to the president of Rhode Island College, the powers and duties to create and consolidate departments, divisions, programs and courses of study within the college with the assistance of the Commissioner within the approved role and scope adopted by the Council. The Council's powers still include the power to approve the role and scope of a program.

The Acting Commissioner confirmed that since 2014, the line of demarcation as to when the Council acts, or when the Council just receives notification, is whether the change to the program is within the approved role and scope of the program. Since 2014, if it is determined that the change is within the approved role and scope of the program, the Council receives notice of the change, and no further action is required. If the proposed change is not within the approved role and scope, then the Council must vote on the proposed change.

In the case of the Henry Barnard School closing, Acting Commissioner Cavallaro indicated that since HBS is a program within a department at Rhode Island College, and within the approved role and scope, the termination of that program is within the authority of the President of the college.

This has been the practice of the Council on Postsecondary Education since July of 2014.

6. Reports from the Presidents

- A. Community College of Rhode Island – Update on the college's enrollment and most recent budget situation, and the current and anticipated impact and response.

President Hughes welcomed the Council back to campus for the meeting. She noted that CCRI is delivering most of its courses in a remote fashion with a handful of exceptions for labs and other hands-on courses. She was pleased to report that early reports suggest the first week has gone well, noting that positive feedback received is a credit to the work of faculty and staff dedicated to preparing for the fall term, adapting to new ways of teaching, learning, and serving CCRI students.

In terms of budget and enrollment, President Hughes had previously outlined the financial challenges the college is facing due to a decline in enrollment and uncertainty over the state budget, both of which remain today. At last month's meeting, she shared the cost-saving measures the college had already taken, including reduction in pay for senior administration staff, a freeze in filling non-critical

vacancies, consolidation of course offerings, a reduction in overtime, renegotiation of vendor contracts, and other measures. She reported that these measures helped to mitigate the financial impact caused by the pandemic, but were not sufficient to meet CCRI's significant fiscal challenges. As a result, President Hughes reported that on August 19th, CCRI announced the college was laying off 122 part-time employees.

In terms of enrollment, President Hughes reported that CCRI continues to monitor enrollment – as well as discussions at the state and federal level – daily, and anticipates taking further steps to reduce its costs. The President stated the school expects to have a total fall enrollment of approximately 13,200 students, 10% down from last fall's enrollment of 14,775 students.

President Hughes noted that the college is offering a late-start, 11-week condensed term in an effort to shrink the enrollment gap and to provide more students with the opportunity to pursue higher education. The Late Start Semester – or “Last Call for Fall” as it is being marketed – will allow CCRI to serve students who, for a variety of reasons, were delayed in registering and may have otherwise felt it was too late for them to enroll in college this fall, including Promise students. CCRI is actively enrolling students in the “Last Call for Fall” courses, which begin on September 28, and as of today, more than 850 students have enrolled in these late start courses.

The President reported that, as part of this Late Start Semester, CCRI expects to serve between 30 and 50 Providence Public School District seniors as part of the Accelerate program, a full-time dual enrollment partnership between RIDE, Providence Public Schools, CCRI, RIC and the College Crusade. Accelerate will allow Providence high school seniors to earn up to 24 credits over the fall and spring semesters. The school has developed a holistic program that will provide students a full-time college experience in one of four guided pathways, delivered in a modified cohort model matched with personalized support and embedded academic support. CCRI's Running Start dual enrollment program has proven to be a success for many high school seniors over the years, and provides a solid platform for CCRI to launch this initiative.

President Hughes cautioned that while fall enrollment numbers won't be finalized until mid-October, if the projected 10 percent decline in enrollment holds true, it equates to an approximately \$4 million decline in tuition revenue from what was originally budgeted.

Regarding state appropriations, President Hughes indicated that uncertainty remains. For FY21, CCRI continues to project a state cut between \$8 to \$10 million. That cut is consistent with the school's share of the state's budget deficit for FY21, and is consistent with the amount the state's budget office has asked the school to target for its FY22 reduction. As a result, combined with the \$4 million projected reduction in tuition revenue, the college projects a \$12 million to \$14 million shortfalls in our FY21 budget. The first phase of cost reduction actions outlined earlier, including the layoff of part-time employees, account for \$9.7 million in annualized savings. Between \$2.5 million and \$4.5 million in additional cost-saving measures must be

implemented. She noted that it is very likely CCRI will need to take further action to bring its budget into balance – including furloughs and staff reductions beyond the part-time layoffs – in order to meet this serious financial challenge.

President Hughes concluded her report by saying that despite the difficulty and the challenges that lie ahead, CCRI's commitment to providing its students with an exceptional educational experience and its focus on maintaining a safe learning and working environment remain constant.

Council member Mello applauded the President for the school's Last Call for Fall initiative.

B. Rhode Island College

1. Update on the college's enrollment and most recent budget situation, and the current and anticipated impact and response.

President Sánchez announced that the U.S. Department of Education recently Awarded Rhode Island College (RIC) \$2.6 million in funding for two TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) grants. Over the last two years, RIC has received three grants totaling \$3.6 million from the U.S. Department of Education. The goal of SSS programs is to support students who identify as first generation, low-income, and/or as a student with a disability, to persist and graduate from college. The program provides advising, tutoring, grant aid scholarships, and assistance with applying to graduate programs, all in the context of a supportive environment.

In terms of enrollment, President Sánchez reported that the college has cut its earlier projections in enrollment decline in half - to 6 percent - as a result of strategic efforts taken to increase outreach to prospective students and their families. In addition, the college launched its "Be Bold" multimedia advertising campaign throughout the region with the intent to raise the profile of the college and introduce/reintroduce the college to prospective students and their families. President Sánchez noted that overall enrollment for Fall 2020 is currently down 5.9%, compared to this time last year (7,095 vs. 7,545).

In terms of budget challenges, President Sánchez reported that from FY 2018 through FY 2020, the college managed deficits totaling \$13.7 million, which were addressed each year through reductions in operating costs, lowering financial aid, restricting travel, freezing overtime, limited hiring and raising tuition. The President noted that before the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing shutdown, the college was projecting a \$4.1 million budget deficit for FY 2021. Because of COVID-19, the college projected the deficit would increase to \$10.4 million in light of increased mitigation costs, decreased enrollments and no increase in state aid over the governor's recommended FY 2021 budget. The President asserted that in order to bridge that shortfall, the college had to make an unprecedented 15 percent reduction in operating expenses.

President Sánchez itemized the austerity measures taken to avoid extreme cuts, including reductions to discretionary spending, overtime, travel and compensatory time, executive pay cuts, a continued hiring freeze, reduction in adjunct faculty, delay of cost-of-living adjustments (COLA), and Council 94 participation in the work-share program. He noted that these cuts were not enough to close the gap. Consequently, the college has taken more aggressive action to reduce overall operating expenses, including the permanent layoff of 35 Council 94 employees and the closure of the Henry Barnard School at the conclusion of the 2020-21 school year.

President Sánchez noted that the college has not been informed of its final budget for the current fiscal year and the General Assembly will not reconvene until after the November election. Furthermore, the college has been instructed to prepare a FY 2022 budget that reflects a 15 percent reduction in its state appropriation on top of any FY 2021 reductions.

Council members questioned whether RIC's decision to lower financial aid and raise tuition may have impacted enrollment and development efforts, and asked if further cuts were anticipated. President Sánchez responded that RIC is concerned about the impact of its decisions on college enrollment and retention; final enrollment numbers should be available in October, and further cuts may be necessary.

2. Notices of new programs and/or changes that were submitted and reviewed for notification to the Council: Closure of the Henry Barnard School.

President Sánchez provided a PowerPoint, laying out the logic, rationale and effort over the last four years regarding the decision to close the Henry Barnard School. He stressed that the College remains focused on mission critical functions to support the 7,100 college students it serves.

The President noted that the Henry Barnard School (HBS) was founded with the primary role to support the education of the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development (FSEHD) students at RIC. As the FSEHD and the competencies of teachers have evolved, the private lab school model of HBS no longer provides the training experience required for tomorrow's teachers. President Sánchez highlighted the significant issues revealed in the 2016 RIDE accreditation review of FSEHD certification programs, and the resulting transformation plan to better prepare teacher candidates for the changing demographics of Rhode Island classrooms. He noted that HBS no longer provides that type of critical training experience for today's teacher candidates.

President Sánchez detailed the ongoing efforts to address the fiscal challenges at HBS, including:

- 2016: Request for Proposals to assist with enrollment and marketing. Consultant advised hiring a Director of Advancement for HBS.

- 2017: Director of Institutional Advancement hired to drive endowment and enrollments; unsuccessful.
- 2017-2019: Enrollment declined by 11.6%.
- 2019: RIC sought public funding for HBS; not supported.
- 2020: Work with RIDE, the League of Charter Schools, and a potential charter partner to pursue stability of HBS; no feasible solutions emerged.
- 2020: RIC executives met in January with faculty and staff and laid out the issues, formed a workgroup of faculty and administrators to address issues. Workgroup recommended pursuing the charter option; following exploration of this option, no feasible solutions emerged.

President Sánchez confirmed that HBS requires a significant subsidy to maintain operations. From FY2015-20, operating subsidies from RIC to HBS totaled \$9.8 million dollars. In FY2020, the actual cost per student at HBS was approximately \$20,000; the average tuition was \$12,264, which does not cover operational costs for HBS. These operating losses are covered directly by the college, drawing funds from other programs that support college students at the core of the institution's mission. President Sánchez confirmed that continued losses from the operation of HBS cannot be sustained; the college reached the difficult conclusion that HBS will not reopen in Fall 2021.

The President discussed the process and impact of closing HBS, including RIC's support of impacted employees, students, parents and families. Responding to a concern from one member of the faculty, President Sánchez stated the closure of HBS was an anomaly, in that RIC rarely, if ever, has had to make cuts in the academic areas. He reported that the RIC Council charter does not provide guidance on the process of engaging faculty about financial decisions that will impact academics (layoffs and program closings). He stated that he believes wholeheartedly that faculty should be involved, and has engaged personally with faculty as more difficult decisions must be made.

Having heard the efforts made by the administration to address RIC's structural deficit, and the reasoning behind its difficult decision to close the HBS, Council members were supportive of President Sánchez for his commitment to the mission of the college and to continued dialogue with the parent organization as they explore opportunities for their children's education. Council members respected the comments from parents and faculty, and were encouraged that alternatives are being pursued.

President Sánchez assured the Council that the college administration has committed its assistance to the parent association as things move forward.

7. Discussion Items

- A. Notification of a Proposal from College Unbound for conditional approval to operate in Rhode Island and offer the Bachelor of Arts degree in Organizational Leadership and Change.

- B. Notification of a Proposal from College Unbound to offer more than fifty percent (50%) of the Bachelor of Arts degree in Organizational Leadership and Change through Distance Learning.

Assistant Commissioner Tammy Warner stated that this proposal was submitted for discussion pursuant to the Council's *Regulations Governing Institutions of Higher Education Operating in Rhode Island*. She reminded the Council that an institution seeking approval to operate as a higher education entity in Rhode Island may be granted initial approval, conditional approval, or full approval.

Assistant Commissioner Warner continued, stating that in 2015, the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) granted initial approval for College Unbound (CU). According to the regulations, the initial approval period may only last five years, after which the institution may seek full approval, so long as the entity has received accreditation from its regional higher education accrediting body. College Unbound is currently completing its New England Commission for Higher Education (NECHE) accreditation process, as such, the Council may review and grant conditional approval for a period of one year while the accreditation review is completed. College Unbound will be subject to a complete review upon accreditation decision and/or application for full approval to this body. She invited College Unbound President Dennis Littky to provide the Council with a brief update on the status of their current accreditation review and subsequently, on the College's shift to full distance learning in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Dennis Littky, President, College Unbound, reviewed the steps the school has taken towards regional accreditation. He noted that in order to move forward with the NECHE review, Council approval is required, and confirmed that the first virtual visit towards accreditation is scheduled for later in September. He said they will return (to the Council) in one year, hopefully, with its full regional accreditation. President Littky stated that College Unbound has had two major graduating classes, graduating 84% of its low income adult students.

Adam Bush, Vice President/Provost, College Unbound, confirmed that since 2009, College Unbound has helped to facilitate the graduation of over 100 students at other facilities. He confirmed that they have had thirty graduates from College Unbound over three years of graduation ceremonies; of the first cohort of sixteen students, fourteen have since graduated. He shared statistics and polling results from its alumnus.

President Littky announced that College Unbound was recently awarded the Rise Award from the Omidyar Group and the Lumina Foundation for supporting success of student parents. He stated that they appreciate the support of the Council.

Provost Bush discussed the school's notification of interest to offer more than fifty percent of its degree courses through distance remote education, mirrored after its application filed with the New England Council of Higher Education. He noted that in the uncertainty of COVID-19, and certainly knowing that its student body includes

front line workers, College Unbound wants to make sure it has the avenues to build more robust online degree pathways.

Assistant Commissioner Warner noted that the two items will be back on the agenda as action items at the October meeting.

8. Executive Session

The Council may seek to enter into Executive Session for the following:

- A. Discussion regarding collective bargaining – all bargaining units, pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-5(a)(2).
- B. Discussion regarding potential litigation, pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-5(a)(2).

The Council did not seek to enter into Executive Session.

9. Upcoming Meeting

Chairman DelGiudice stated the next meeting of the full Board of Education is scheduled for Tuesday, September 22nd at 5:30 p.m.

- A. The next meeting of the Council on Postsecondary Education is scheduled for October 14, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

10. Adjourn

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion to adjourn tonight's meeting.

On a motion duly made by Dennis Duffy and seconded by Thomas Izzo, it was

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education adjourn the meeting of September 16, 2020.

VOTE: 8 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Dennis Duffy, Thomas Izzo, Rachelle Green, Michael Mello, Marianne Monte, and Jeffery Williams.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The hybrid meeting adjourned at 7:29 p.m.