Meeting Minutes

Chair Timothy DelGiudice called this meeting to order at 5:36 PM, and acknowledged that a quorum was present.

Council on Postsecondary Education members present:

Timothy DelGiudice, Chair, Council on Postsecondary Education
Barbara Cottam, Chair, Board of Education
Rachelle Green (on Zoom)
Thomas Izzo
Michael Mello
Mackenzie Raimond

Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (RIOPC) staff present:

Shannon Gilkey, Ed.D., Commissioner
Anne Marie Coleman, Director of Labor Relations
Ronald Cavallaro, Esq., General Counsel
Tammy Warner, Ph.D., Assistant Commissioner, Academic and Student Affairs
Amy Grzybowski, Executive Director, Westerly Education Center
Jill Olson-Crowley, Assistant to the Commissioner

Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) participant: Meghan Hughes, President

Rhode Island College (RIC) participant: Frank Sanchez, President

1. Acceptance of the Agenda
Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education accept the agenda for the meeting of February 16, 2022.

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Thomas Izzo, it was:

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education accept the agenda for the meeting of February 16, 2022.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, and Michael Mello.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

2. Approval of the Minutes

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve the minutes of the meeting that took place on January 5, 2022, as presented.

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Thomas Izzo, it was:

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approve the minutes of the meetings that took place on January 5, 2022, as presented.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, and Michael Mello.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve the minutes of the special meeting that took place on January 12, 2022, as presented.

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Thomas Izzo, it was:
VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approve the minutes of the special meeting that took place on January 12, 2022, as presented.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, and Michael Mello.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

3. Reports from the Chairs

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

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

Chair DelGiudice acknowledged student Council member McKenzie Raimond, whose term has concluded, and thanked her for her contribution to the work of the Council on Postsecondary Education and the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner. He praised her contributions to the Advisory Committee, and for bringing the student voice to the Council. Chair DelGiudice presented her with a citation from Governor McKee expressing appreciation and gratitude for a job well done. President Sanchez also acknowledged Mackenzie’s remarkable contributions to the Council and the Advisory Committee.

4. Report from the Commissioner

Commissioner Gilkey shared that nationally, higher education is wrestling with the evaluation of institutional performance on several fronts, and he wanted it flagged for Rhode Island. First, is the cumulative loan debt happening across institutions for students and the relationship that credentials have with income earnings. Another is the alumni experience and how that is tied to the workforce and occupational data. The sources of this information are the Georgetown Center for Education and the US Department of Education Scorecard.

Commissioner Gilkey also indicated that the proposal for the Rhode Island Higher Ed Academy was part of the Governor’s State of the State address, and that $20 million has been committed for this investment. If approved by the legislature, these resources will come from the American Rescue Plan. The one-time investment would have to be spent by the end of 2026.
Commissioner Gilkey stated that OPC will begin partnerships with agencies and organizations to bring together industries with an intentional focus on closing the workforce gaps. He shared that in April OPC is hosting a healthcare summit in partnership with the Office of Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor and Training, the Department of Health, and the Rhode Island Foundation.

5. Reports from the Presidents

President Sanchez reported that COVID cases are trending down at Rhode Island College. All mitigations are still fully in place including, case tracking, masking, distancing, air exchanges, increased sanitation, etc., and that in-person classes have resumed. RIC received RIDOH’s recommendation for colleges which called for continued masking on campus while the state is in “substantial” or “high” community transmission. RIC’s COVID team is working on a final policy and taking this recommendation under advisement. President Sanchez advised that as of February 14, 2022, 96% (5,424 out of 5,654) of RIC students are in compliance with the Council’s booster vaccination mandate. President Sanchez acknowledged the student body for their efforts in keeping the community safe, and the College Health Services staff and faculty for ensuring compliance so students would stay enrolled.

President Sanchez reported that RIC’s enrollment is still experiencing the impact that Covid has had on new and returning students. He shared that a study done by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center estimated there are significant decreases in the number of students in higher education, and the undergraduate enrollment drops are most significant at four-year public institutions. At RIC many lower-income and diverse students have been hit hard, finding it difficult to return to college as they recover financially from the pandemic. Spring enrollment for new undergraduates is down approximately 8.5%, and returning undergraduate spring enrollment is down approximately 14%. New graduate spring enrollment is up 14.7%, and returning graduate spring enrollment is down 3.9%. Fall 2022 undergraduate admissions or applications are up approximately 1.4%.

President Sanchez highlighted that RIC is doing extraordinary work to address the shortage of behavioral health specialists across the state. The goal is to increase the supply of behavioral health professionals while increasing access to behavioral health services.

President Sanchez also highlighted programs taking place at RIC in celebration of Black History Month, including the Rhode Tour digital project inspired by the papers of the late Dr. Carl Russell Gross entitled “Through the Wisdom and Knowledge of Dr. Gross”: Stories from Black Life in Rhode Island. The tour tells the stories of Black Rhode Islanders who made important contributions to medicine, the arts, the armed forces, and other fields throughout the 20th century.
President Sanchez shared that RIC recently became a founding member of the North Star Collective through the New England Board of Higher Education. This initiative is designed to cultivate and support diverse faculty across the New England region, this year, there are 13 inaugural institutions and 26 North Star fellows that are being supported in their academic pursuits and career.

President Hughes stated that the Community College of Rhode Island returned to in-person teaching and learning on Monday, February 14. CCRI continues to work with employees and students to bring them into compliance with the booster policy. Many of the same COVID policies, mitigation measures, and operations that were in place in the Fall continue to be in place in the Spring, including masking, on-campus testing and vaccine clinics, and entry screening. CCRI will continue to review COVID policies to ensure the college community is healthy and safe from COVID, and will make decisions in coordination with recommendations from public health officials.

President Hughes shared that final enrollment for the Winter Session was 611 students, representing a 17.3% increase over Winter Session 2021, and a 133% increase since 2019, the first year CCRI offered Winter Session. Spring enrollment is behind the previous two years, but CCRI exceeded its target enrollment of 10,168 by 6%, or 578 students, landing at 10,746 students as of February 11. Comparing Spring 2022 enrollment to Spring 2019, CCRI has experienced a cumulative 19% decline in enrollment. President Hughes reported that Rhode Island Promise applications are up 17% for Fall 2022. There are 1,502 RI Promise applications as of 2/15/22 compared to 1,238 the same day last year.

President Hughes shared that Sandra Sneesby, professor, and Chair of CCRI’s English department brought forward an amendment to the governance system. The amendment which created a Faculty Senate passed with overwhelming support, and Professor Sneesby and a team of faculty, in partnership with Dr. Rosemary Costigan, worked to develop a constitution and bylaws for the Senate. The constitution and bylaws were approved by the Senate in January 2022.

President Hughes indicated that CCRI is in partnership with the Governor’s Office and various state agencies, to develop a multi-pronged approach to graduate more healthcare professionals in response to the state’s short- and long-term healthcare worker crisis. CCRI has also conducted a comprehensive review of the General Education (Gen Ed) requirements for all students in a degree program. CCRI’s Gen Ed program is designed to ensure students graduate with the skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to transfer to a 4-year college/university or to transition to professional work. CCRI has modified and approved 140 Gen Ed courses to ensure the outcomes meet the stated goals and that those credits are transferable to URI and RIC.

President Hughes shared that CCRI’s Division of Workforce Partnerships continues to be an area of strength and growth for the college. Last year, CCRI trained over 4,000 Rhode Islanders in workforce programs directly tied to labor market needs and in partnership
with RI employers. CCRI is also working with RI DLT, Commerce Corporation, Building Futures, Revolution Wind, and the RI Building & Construction Trades Council to develop and launch Global Wind Organization (GWO) training. She also indicated that CCRI’s Division of Workforce Partnerships and the Independent Insurance Agents of Rhode Island have partnered to develop and offer a workforce training program for those interested in a career in the insurance industry. CCRI will launch the program, which is funded in part by RIDLT’s Real Jobs RI program, with two cohorts on March 1.

President Hughes stated that CCRI’s commitment to recruiting, selecting, and retaining a diverse workforce is a fundamental core value of the campus community and is central to CCRI’s mission as a public institution of higher education. In 2020, 29% of new hires were BIPOC (12 of 42 new hires) and in 2021, 43% of new hires were BIPOC (31 of 72 new hires). In 2022, 46% of new hires represent BIPOC communities (6 of 13 new hires).

President Hughes shared that the CCRI Foundation Board of Trustees and Alumni Association Assembly received the 2021-2022 John W. Nason Award for Board Leadership by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB). The CCRI Foundation is the first community college foundation to ever receive this award.

In celebration of Black History Month, CCRI is holding several virtual and in-person events. Anchoring the month-long series of events is CCRI’s inaugural Equity Summit: Transforming Campus Communities Through Equity Mindedness. CCRI is partnering with URI, RIC, and the Tomaquag Museum for panel discussions on tangible action steps and skills to transform campus communities through equity mindedness.

Chair DelGiudice gave high praise for the focus on workforce development and workforce preparedness across the institutions.

6. Action Items

A. Approval of the Strategic Plan for Postsecondary Education 2022 – 2027 and recommend its approval to the Board of Education.

Commissioner Gilkey provided an overview of the process and thanked the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner staff members, staff at the Community College of Rhode Island and Rhode Island College as well as the Council members for their input into the strategic plan.

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve the Strategic Plan for Postsecondary Education 2022 – 2027 and recommend its approval to the Board of Education.

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Thomas Izzo, it was:

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approve
the Strategic Plan for Postsecondary Education 2022 – 2027, and recommend its approval to the Board of Education.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, and Michael Mello.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

B. Approval of Rhode Island College as a RI-SARA institution, as recommended by the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee.

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve Rhode Island College as a RI-SARA institution, as recommended by the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee.

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Thomas Izzo, it was:

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approve Rhode Island College as a RI-SARA institution, as recommended by the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, and Michael Mello.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

C. Approval of proposed amendments to the Council’s Policy on Students with Disabilities (S-3), as recommended by the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee.

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve the proposed amendments to the Council’s Policy on Students with Disabilities (S-3), as recommended by the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee.

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Thomas Izzo, it was:
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VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approve the proposed amendments to the Council’s Policy on Students with Disabilities (S-3), as recommended by the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, and Michael Mello.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

D. Approval of a change in position title - Executive Director, Rhode Island Higher Education and Industry Centers to Assistant Commissioner, Workforce and Executive Director, Rhode Island Higher Education and Industry Centers, as recommended by the System Personnel Review Committee.

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve a change in position title from Executive Director, Rhode Island Higher Education and Industry Centers to Assistant Commissioner, Workforce and Executive Director, Rhode Island Higher Education and Industry Centers, as recommended by the System Personnel Review Committee.

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Barbara Cottam, it was:

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approve a change in position title from Executive Director, Rhode Island Higher Education and Industry Centers to Assistant Commissioner, Workforce and Executive Director, Rhode Island Higher Education and Industry Centers, as recommended by the System Personnel Review Committee.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, and Michael Mello.

NAYS: 0
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ABSTAINS: 0

E. Approval of the Community College of Rhode Island’s FY 22 Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program.

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve the Community College of Rhode Island’s FY 22 Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program.

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Thomas Izzo, it was:

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approve the Community College of Rhode Island’s FY 22 Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, and Michael Mello.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

F. Approval of the Community College of Rhode Island’s new classification of Associate Vice President of Workforce Development, as recommended by the System Personnel Review Committee.

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve the Community College of Rhode Island’s new classification of Associate Vice President of Workforce Development, as recommended by the System Personnel Review Committee.

On a motion duly made by Michael Mello and seconded by Barbara Cottam, it was:

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approve the Community College of Rhode Island’s new classification of Associate Vice President of Workforce Development, as recommended by the System Personnel Review Committee.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Rachelle
Green, Thomas Izzo, and Michael Mello.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

7. Executive Session

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education enter Executive Session.

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

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education enter into Executive Session for the following items:

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).

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, and Michael Mello.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

The Council entered Executive Session at 6:40 PM.

The Council reconvened in Open Session at 8:22 PM.

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education seal the minutes of the Executive Session held on February 16, 2022.

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

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education seal the minutes of the Executive Session held on
February 16, 2022.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, and Michael Mello.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

8. Additional Action Item

A. Approval of the proposed Joint Alternate Retirement Plan Committee Mission and Composition statement.

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion that the Council on Postsecondary Education approve the proposed Joint Alternate Retirement Plan Committee Mission and Composition statement.

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

VOTED: THAT The Council on Postsecondary Education approve of the proposed Joint Alternate Retirement Plan Committee Mission and Composition statement.

VOTE: 5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS: Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, and Michael Mello.

NAYS: 0

ABSTAINS: 0

9. Next Meeting

Chair DelGiudice stated that the next meeting of the Council on Postsecondary Education would be on March 29, 2022.

10. Adjourn

Chair DelGiudice called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.
On a motion duly made by Thomas Izzo and seconded by Michael Mello, it was:

VOTED: THAT  The Council on Postsecondary Education adjourn the meeting of February 16, 2022.

VOTE:  5 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative.

YEAS:  Timothy DelGiudice, Barbara Cottam, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, and Michael Mello.

NAYS:  0

ABSTAINS:  0

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 PM.