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ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUCCESS PROJECT

In January of 2007, Governor Donald L. Carcieri’s State of the State address highlighted the need for improvement in public education. The governor requested the assistance of the state's eleven higher education institutions in this endeavor.

A number of collaborations already exist between Rhode Island's public PK-12 schools and colleges and universities in Rhode Island. Many college students volunteer in public schools as student teachers, or to fulfill a community service requirement. Some programs have grown out of the interest of a particular faculty member or department, and others have developed on the initiative of parents or students.

In April of 2007, the Governor's PK-16 Council heard a presentation outlining some of the partnerships between colleges and public schools given by the president of Rhode Island School of Design, Dr. Roger Mandle, in his role as the chairman of Rhode Island Campus Compact and as a member of the Rhode Island Independent Higher Education Association.

As a result of the presentation, a proposal was submitted to the Rhode Island Foundation and the Rhode Island Commodores to fund the systematic documentation of the collaborative relationships between higher education and PK-12 public school districts and to discover and develop partnership models that could be shared and replicated across the state. The proposal established a working group to develop and oversee the work of the project, including a management team made up of Rhode Island Campus Compact, the Rhode Island Independent Higher Education Association, and the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education, as well as individual members from the Department of Labor and Training, the Governor's Office, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Providence Plan, the Providence After School Alliance, and the Rhode Island College Crusade. This report describes the results of that effort.

“ I have always said that Rhode Island’s institutions of higher education must play a critical role in the state’s efforts to improve our public schools. With the data we have collected in this report, we are highlighting existing, successful partnerships between higher education and our public schools which can be shared and duplicated. This will be a great resource for academic leaders, superintendents, teachers, colleges and public schools. By continuing to work collaboratively, we can find ways to better prepare students for the challenges of the workplace.”

– GOVERNOR DONALD L. CARCIERI
MISSION

The Partnerships for Success project had a simple but bold mission statement: TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR ALL RHODE ISLAND STUDENTS.

As part of this mission, the working group identified four key statewide goals:
- Strengthen linkages between PK-12 schools and post-secondary institutions
- Improve student (PK-16) achievement through strategic partnerships
- Enrich students' (PK-16) community experience in RI through civic engagement activities
- Support more RI students’ early preparation and guidance for college and the workforce

In service of these goals, the working group identified a set of tactical objectives:
- Develop a set of data points and a routine process by which to collect data that measures activities between higher education and PK-12 school districts
- Catalog the range of existing programs, collaborations, and partnerships that exist between institutions
- Compile models of existing programs to be shared
- Develop a set of targeted recommendations/investments that support greater alignment between public school districts and higher educations institutions in RI
- Identify opportunities for future collaborations

“These partnership activities are a matter of enlightened self-interest for colleges and universities.”

— ROGER MANDLE, PHD, PRESIDENT, RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN
THE INVENTORY PROJECT

In December of 2007, a comprehensive two-part survey was sent to representatives of each of Rhode Island’s public and private colleges and universities. The first part of the survey collected information about the overall scope of each institution's activities with PK-12 schools and school districts. It included 14 questions about the nature and level of engagement of faculty, students, and staff at each institution in PK-12 partnerships throughout the state.

The second part of the survey asked each institution to identify five PK-12 partnerships that had the greatest impact, were the most innovative, and were the most replicable in other schools in Rhode Island. In selecting the five partnerships, institutions were asked to especially consider partnerships that focused on: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); personalization; Rhode Island’s new high school graduation requirements; workforce development; and underserved communities.

Based on the survey responses, the working group developed a profile for each institution, describing the nature of the institution’s partnership activities and the geographical locations within the state where the activities take place, as well as specifying the partnerships identified as having the most impact.

For each institution, one partnership was selected for an in-depth case study, including interviews with participants from the institution and, when possible, the partner school(s). In choosing partnerships for further study, the working group aimed for diversity in type of school (elementary, middle, or high), location of school, and type of partnership, as well as trying to ensure that the 11 partnerships selected met the following criteria:

- Innovative
- Replicable
- Dual Enrollment
- Measurable impact
- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)
- New high school graduation requirements
- Workforce development
- Underserved communities
- Professional development

The working group has produced a number of products based on the survey responses. This report represents a summary of the findings as well as recommendations to the Governor’s PK-16 Council. The Providence Plan has created a number of maps showing where in Rhode Island partnership activities are (and are not) taking place. Finally, an online data repository and resource center has been created to make this data available to the public.
RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

All 11 institutions of higher education in Rhode Island received the survey, and all 11 responded. In total, the institutions described more than 250 partnership activities with PK-12 schools across the state. From each institution's identified five partnerships with the greatest impact or that were the most likely to be replicable, a list of 55 top impact partnerships was generated. From this list, the working group selected 11 model programs for further investigation and a detailed case study.

The data presented below come with a few caveats. First, only the higher education institutions were surveyed, not the PK-12 schools. Secondly, the list of partnerships was self-selected by those institutions. Although some institutions of higher education have dedicated staff that track PK-16 partnership activities—typically through their community service departments—many do not. The survey data reflects each institution's best estimates. As a result, this data is a representative view of PK-16 partnership activities in Rhode Island, but should not be interpreted as a comprehensive catalog of those activities.

MAJOR THEMES

Although the partnerships identified by the colleges and universities vary greatly, a number of major themes stand out from the data.

Many of the partnership activities focus on COLLEGE READINESS OR COLLEGE ACCESS. In particular, Bryant University, Rhode Island School of Design, and the three public colleges and universities provide a number of programs in these categories. College readiness programs, such as the Pathways Through College program at Rhode Island College, are designed to provide academic assistance to college-bound students, especially those from underserved populations. College access programs, such as the L.G. Balfour Foundation Partnership at Bryant, are designed to encourage high school students who might not otherwise consider attending a four-year higher education institution.

College readiness programs are a crucial component in improving student achievement. Approximately 80 percent of postsecondary students nationwide attend a “broad access” institution, one that admits most applicants. As a result, many postsecondary students find that the most difficult hurdle they will face is not admission to a college or university, but the placement exams they must take to enroll. Poor performance on these exams requires a student to do remedial work. Adequate college preparation can therefore have multiple beneficial effects: it encourages more students to apply to college, it increases the odds of a student being accepted, and it helps to improve students’ performance when they begin their college education.

A significant number of partnership activities provide opportunities for college students to serve as “ROLE MODELS” to PK-12 students in Rhode Island. These types of partnerships include a wide range of tutoring, mentoring, and after school programs, as well as student teaching and classroom support positions. For example, in Providence, several higher education institutions partner with the Providence After School Alliance (PASA) to provide after school programs at many of the city’s middle schools. Providence College’s partnership with PASA’s North End AfterZone is an example of this approach.

Programs in which college students serve as mentors or role models include Brown’s Urban Debate League and College Guides programs; Bryant University’s PASA partnership; Johnson & Wales University’s collaborations with the Mary E. Fogarty Elementary School, Calcutt Middle School, and Fortes Magnet Academy; Providence College’s programs at San Miguel and Times’ Academy; Rhode Island College’s Hopkins Hill Math Mentors program; Roger Williams University’s Bridge to Success program; and the University of Rhode Island’s Mentor-Tutor Internship.

In addition to programs that focus on mentoring students, there are a number of programs in which university or college faculty serve as mentors for PK-12 teachers. These professional development programs have generated a great deal of interest. Examples include Brown’s Project ARISE, Salve Regina’s GIBIS program, and URI’s Research Experiences for Teachers program.

All of Rhode Island’s public colleges and universities, and many of the state’s independent institutions, offer DUAL ENROLLMENT opportunities, through which high school students can receive college credit for courses while still enrolled in high school. In 2006, approximately 4,000 students (16 percent of all juniors and seniors in Rhode Island) participated in a dual enrollment program. One example is “Pathways Through College: A Collaborative Dual Enrollment Program” at Rhode Island College. It provides 12th graders who probably would not have considered a four-year college before committing to this program the opportunity to enroll in credit bearing courses on the Rhode Island College campus.

Other partnerships offering dual enrollment include Bryant University’s Smithfield High School Academy of Finance program; CCRI’s Running Start, High School Enrichment, and College Now programs; and New England Tech’s various early enrollment programs.

“Considering the brief length of time involved, the growth, continuity, and creativity of the Fogarty School collaboration is extraordinary.”

– IRVING SCHNEIDER, PH.D. PRESIDENT, JOHNSON & WALES UNIVERSITY

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WHERE ARE PARTNERSHIPS LOCATED?

The identified top impact partnerships are concentrated in Rhode Island's urban core. Of the 55 partnerships selected by the universities and colleges for the Partnerships for Success survey, 29 are located in Providence, 12 are in Central Falls, and 14 are in Pawtucket. Providence is the only municipality in which each of the 11 institutions has at least one partnership.

WHO INITIATES PARTNERSHIPS?

Over half of the partnerships were initiated by the college or university, rather than the partner PK-12 school. In fact, fewer than 15 percent of the partnerships were initiated by the partner school. More than a third of the colleges and universities were the initiator of all of their partnerships. Five partnerships were initiated by an intermediary organization, such as Providence After School Alliance (PASA).

In response to the preliminary survey results, many educators have indicated that they would be interested in seeking out partnership opportunities with a college or university, but do not know what resources are available. For this reason, one of this report's recommendations is to create a mechanism for pairing up interested parties from the PK-12 and higher education communities.

HOW ARE THE PARTNERSHIPS STRUCTURED AND FUNDED?

Of the 55 partnerships described in the survey, more than 40 percent have a formal agreement, such as a contract or memorandum of understanding.

Half of the partnerships have budgets under $25,000. Another quarter have budgets over $100,000. Most of the partnerships are funded out of the operating budget of the appropriate department at the sponsoring college or university. About 40 percent of the partnerships receive some kind of grant funding.

While all of the higher education institutions provide financial support to their PK-12 partners, most also provide physical space and technological assistance. Eight of the eleven provide grant-writing support, and more than half provide fiscal management services.
The survey data shows an uneven distribution of partnership activities at schools throughout the state. Several maps were created to illustrate partnership involvement at schools in the Providence area.

All but two of the elementary schools in Providence have a partnership program, as does every middle school except for the Nathan Bishop Middle School. Most of Providence's high schools have at least one partnership activity; Hope High School has seven. (See following maps.)
Partnership Saturation: Providence High Schools
Partnership Saturation: Providence Middle Schools
OTHER IMPORTANT FINDINGS

When there is a strong college or university president engaged in and committed to community service, it is reflected in the institution’s level of involvement in the PK-12 arena.

At Rhode Island School of Design, President Mandle has been an advocate for public education and especially for the role of arts education in schools. He was also instrumental in the establishment of two full 4-year scholarships for students who graduated from Hope High School in Providence and who gained competitive entry into RISD.

President Schneider directed each of Johnson and Wales University’s colleges to establish partnerships with elementary and secondary schools serving low-income children and youth in Providence.

At the University of Rhode Island, President Robert Carothers’ commitment to the Central Falls school system has resulted in direct financial support and staff assistance to support the partnership.

Involvement by an Office of Development strengthens the commitment of the institution and contributes to the sustainability of the partnerships.

At Rhode Island College, the Development Office and the RIC Foundation support teacher training workshops and conferences for PK-12 educators. Additionally, the Foundation provides budget management support including oversight of major grants for college/community partnership activities.

Funding efforts to leverage Brown University’s resources for local communities, including schools, are an important aspect of the Office of Development.

There are tangible benefits to exposing youth to the college experience as early as possible.

New England Institute of Technology works with Rhode Island high schools to develop articulation agreements in technical courses and allows high school seniors to enroll full time at NEIT while still completing high school.

Rhode Island College’s “Science Partnerships” program, which focuses on physical and life sciences, brings highly qualified, highly motivated high school students to the campus during the summer to participate in workshops and lab work.
Student-athletes have a unique opportunity to serve as meaningful role models in the lives of students at every level.

The University of Rhode Island’s student-athlete advisory committee participates in the Rhody Reads program. Members of various teams go into elementary schools to read to classes and talk about the importance of getting an education.

Student-athletes at Roger Williams University tutor elementary school children at two Bristol/Warren schools.

The magnitude of the impact by institutions with a dedicated community service program is substantial, but even schools without such a program are still able to make a difference.

The Office of Community Service at Salve Regina University supports a variety of PK-12 partnership activities including Project BOLD, a literacy program in collaboration with public elementary schools in Newport; the Thompson Middle School After-School Program, in collaboration with Big Sisters of Rhode Island; tutoring in collaboration with Volunteers in Newport Education; and Middletown after-school tutoring at the Middletown Library.

Providence College offers the first integrated major in Public and Community Service in the nation. The program provides many opportunities for students to become involved in PK-12 activities including after-school and tutoring programs.

Although Rhode Island School of Design does not have such a formal program, the school is committed to providing students with community service opportunities, including support for Campus Compact’s AmeriCorps VISTA project within Project Open Door.

“Being around other artists lifts my spirits and helps my art. It’s so helpful to be around people who enjoy doing the same things I do. This program has given me many new opportunities.”

—Owen Andrade, Hope High School Student
BROWN UNIVERSITY

The Swearer Center for Public Service is the locus for the majority of Brown's PK-12 partnerships, but programs can be found in various academic departments and administrative offices as well (from the Computer Science department to the Office of Admissions). Up to a quarter of the faculty and a quarter to half of the students are actively involved in partnership activities. Brown's faculty provide training and workshop opportunities for teachers and administrators, while Brown's staff and students engage in a variety of partnership activities with a focus on classroom support and access/college readiness programs.

BRYANT UNIVERSITY

Although Bryant University does not formally collect information on partnership activities that take place through the university, approximately 10 percent of the Bryant students and faculty participate in PK-12 partnerships, many through courses that involve community service or curriculum development. Bryant's partnerships show a particular focus on college readiness both locally and regionally.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF RHODE ISLAND

CCRI offers many programs that allow high school students to prepare to further their education at the college level. Several programs are available for students who want to begin taking college courses while they are still in high school. These programs include a number of high school partnerships and dual enrollment programs, basic skills preparation programs, English as a Second Language programs, and workshops to prepare students for the college experience.

A large percentage of the PK-12 partnership activities of CCRI students include field experience internships for Early Childhood Education, Education and Special Education majors within the Human Services Program. Human Services faculty members are committed to observing students in the field on a weekly basis. Many of the students involved in college readiness programs are high school students, who are also part-time CCRI students enrolled in dual enrollment programs. Staff participation in visits to college campuses includes a variety of programs, information sessions, and tours scheduled on the CCRI Campuses for high school and middle school students.

PARTNERSHIPS AT A GLANCE

“This program will support our efforts to provide successful college experiences to students while they are still in high school and put them on a path to be more successful when they enroll in college full time.”

—JACK R. WARNER, STATE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION
JOHNSON & WALES UNIVERSITY

In 2004, responding to the challenges of urban poverty, each of the colleges at JWU established a collaborative relationship with elementary and secondary schools serving low-income children and youth in Providence. JWU approximates that 10 percent of the student population is engaged in K-12 activities, with that engagement divided nearly evenly among tutoring, homework assistance, classroom support, and after-school program support. JWU faculty, students, and staff are all involved in a broad range of different types of activities—including mentoring, student teaching, and college readiness—most of which are in urban settings.

NEW ENGLAND INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

NEIT’s PK-12 partnership activities are primarily focused on college readiness and access activities, including career fairs and early/dual enrollment programs. NEIT works with area high schools to develop articulation agreements in technical courses and allows high school seniors to enroll fulltime at NEIT while still completing high school.

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

Providence College has a strong commitment to making an impact in the community that surrounds the college, and offers many partnerships to neighborhood schools through its education department. Student teaching across the region accounts for approximately half of the College's partnership activities. Through service-learning courses and volunteer opportunities with the Feinstein Institute for Public Service and PC’s Campus Ministry program, over 25 percent of the student population at PC is engaged in tutoring, homework assistance, and after-school program support in local schools.

RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

Both the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development and the Early Enrollment Program at RIC spend at least seventy-five percent of their time on PK-12 partnerships. Through numerous programs and opportunities, more than twenty-five percent of RIC undergraduate and graduate students are involved in partnership activities. Most of that involvement is in the area of student teaching, although other activities include mentoring, college readiness, and after-school or summer enrichment programs.

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN

RISD is involved in numerous partnerships; those with PK-12 schools focus on art and design education. RISD’s Department of Art + Design Education (housed in the College's Division of Graduate Studies) dedicates 26 to 50 percent of its time to partnerships with PK-12 schools. Student teaching counts for the majority of partnership activities in which RISD Art + Design Education graduate students are engaged. RISD students, faculty, and staff serve in a number of different schools in Providence, including Hope High, CVS Highlander Charter, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary, Feinstein High, and Reservoir Avenue Elementary.

ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY

There is support for and commitment to PK-16 partnerships at every level of Roger Williams University. Nearly every department within the university is involved in partnerships in some way, including the Office of Admissions, the School of Education, the School of Justice Studies, and the Office of External Affairs. The Feinstein Community Service Center at Roger Williams University dedicates more than 75 percent of its time to PK-16 partnerships, coordinating an extensive service-learning network, student teacher placement, and before- and after-school programs.

SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY

The Office of External Affairs, the Office of Community Service, and the Undergraduate School at Salve Regina all devote more than one quarter of their time to PK-12 partnerships. Salve Regina’s partnerships show a significant focus on student teaching and mentoring children and youth in the schools. Salve Regina's staff is involved in tutoring, mentoring, classroom support, and other programs. Approximately 26 to 50 percent of the total student body at Salve Regina is involved in partnership activities.

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

The University of Rhode Island has made a significant investment in PK-12 schools in the state. The university's many colleges and departments have formed numerous innovative and replicable collaborations and partnerships with PK-12 schools in every community in Rhode Island. Nearly half of the university's students participate in PK-16 partnerships, most serving as tutors or mentors. The university's faculty is involved in many different types of partnerships, but focus primarily on college readiness programs and classroom support.
FINAL THOUGHTS

The information presented here offers a hopeful vision of the current value—and the future potential—of partnerships between Rhode Island’s universities and colleges and its PK-12 schools. The variety of ways that higher education can support primary and secondary education and the benefits already evident through the partnership case studies all point to the importance of PK-16 collaborations. The survey results are available in a data repository, which is intended to serve as a resource to identify more opportunities for both higher education institutions and PK-12 schools.

Rhode Island School of Design President Mandle describes these partnership activities as a matter of “enlightened self-interest” for colleges and universities. An improved and strengthened PK-12 community is a prerequisite for nurturing the college students and the workforce of the future, but the benefits to the higher education community extend far beyond the impact on the partner schools. Universities and colleges also derive benefit from the social and educational experiences that students are exposed to, and from the opportunities for engagement for faculty and staff.

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Next Steps and Recommendations

SET STATEWIDE PRIORITIES FOR STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT

The partnerships identified through this survey represent only a portion of the collaborations between institutions of higher education and PK-12 schools. The excitement this project has generated indicates the level of need among the schools and the interest among the institutions in Rhode Island. The partnerships in place today have generally come about at the initiative of a college or university, or in response to a request from a PK-12 school. This decentralized and ad hoc approach has led to some notable successes, but it also necessarily creates inefficiencies. Some efforts may be duplicated, while other areas of need may be neglected.

The Governor’s PK-16 Council should establish statewide priorities for partnerships between the state's colleges and universities and its PK-12 schools to ensure that the areas of greatest need receive the greatest attention. By engaging in this collaborative work strategically, the Council in partnership with Rhode Island’s colleges and universities can direct activities to where they can do the most good.

DEVELOP STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Many of the partnerships identified in the survey indicate that they record measurable outcomes. However, the outcomes and the measures vary widely among the institutions. The PK-16 Council should work to develop a means to evaluate which partnerships are the most effective, propose standards for accountability, and popularize those partnership activities and methods that prove to be the best practices.

CREATE A CLEARINGHOUSE FOR PK-16 COLLABORATIONS

Creating a partnership requires initiative on the part of a higher education institution that has the capacity to be involved with a school, and on the part of a PK-12 school with a need that capacity can fill. In many cases, these opportunities come together when the right people at each institution get involved. However, there are other opportunities that do not materialize because the relevant parties do not connect with each other. In addition, a mechanism will be needed to communicate the statewide partnership priorities identified by the PK-16 Council. Rhode Island should establish a statewide clearinghouse for institutions of higher education to advertise program opportunities, and for schools to solicit the help they need. This clearinghouse can then identify points of contact that will connect faculty, staff, and students to create innovative new partnerships and help improve outcomes for students at Rhode Island’s schools. A steering committee should be created comprised of members of the Partnerships for Success project management team and a PK-12 representative to steward these efforts.

CONSIDER LOCAL PK-12 REPRESENTATION ON THE PK-16 COUNCIL

In order to ensure important local priorities are being addressed, it would be beneficial for district-level representatives of Rhode Island’s PK-12 schools to have a voice in the process. The PK-16 Council should consider some local representation, in at least an advisory capacity, from the PK-12 community. In addition, superintendents and principals of the PK-12 schools in Rhode Island should be involved in the process of developing and evaluating partnerships and in setting priorities as noted above.

INVENTORY COLLABORATIONS WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Rhode Island’s eleven colleges and universities are an invaluable resource in the effort to improve the state’s schools. The benefits of an improved educational system, however, apply to all communities and constituencies in the state. One important source of support for Rhode Island’s educational system is the business community. Undoubtedly, businesses are currently involved in partnership activities in the schools. To determine what is currently being done, and what more can be done, the PK-16 Council should ask the business community to undertake a similar inventory project of their collaborations with PK-12 schools.
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