

**PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUCCESS**

**College and PK-12 Activities  
and Opportunities Across RI**

**A Preliminary Report**

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## ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUCCESS PROJECT

In January of 2007, Governor 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 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, President of the 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, presented an overview of some of the partnerships between colleges and public schools to the Governor's PK-16 Council. As a result of the presentation, a proposal was submitted to the Rhode Island Foundation and the Rhode Island Commodores for funding in the spring of 2007 in order to systematically document the collaborative relationships between higher education and PK-12 public school districts and to discover and develop partnership models that can 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 preliminary report describes the results of this effort.

## MISSION

The Partnerships for Success project has 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 education institutions in RI
- Identify opportunities for future collaborations

## 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 partnerships with PK-12 schools and school districts. It included fourteen 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 the 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 overall 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 selected 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
- ★ Measurable impact
- ★ STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)
- ★ New high school graduation requirements
- ★ Workforce development
- ★ Underserved communities
- ★ Professional development

Based on the survey responses, the working group is currently producing a number of products. This report represents an initial summary of the findings, and a more detailed report will be presented to the Governor’s PK-16 Council on June 6, 2008. The Providence Plan has created a number of maps showing exactly where in Rhode Island partnership activities are (and are not) taking place. Finally, an online data repository and resource center will be 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 all, the institutions described more than 250 partnership activities with PK-12 schools across the state. Out of all of their activities, each institution was asked to identify five partnerships with the greatest impact or that were the most likely to be replicable, generating a list of about 55 top impact partnerships. 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 should be a representative view of PK-16 partnership activities in Rhode Island, but is not 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, 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 Running Start Program at Community College of Rhode Island, 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 it to attend a four-year higher education institution.

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.

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. As an example, “Pathways Through College: A Collaborative Dual Enrollment Program” at Rhode Island College provides 12th graders that probably would not have considered a 4-year college before committing to this program the opportunity to enroll in three credit classes on the Rhode Island College campus.

## FACTS ABOUT THE “TOP IMPACT” PARTNERSHIPS

**Where are partnerships located?** The identified partnerships are, unsurprisingly, 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. 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

**Who initiates partnerships?** Most of the partnerships (over half) 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 of the partnerships were initiated by an intermediary organization, such as PASA.

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

**How are the partnerships funded?** 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 other technological assistance. Eight of the eleven provide grant-writing support, and more than half provide fiscal management services.

## OTHER IMPORTANT FINDINGS

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

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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.

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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.

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

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Involvement by an office of development strengthens the commitment of the institution and contributes to the sustainability of the partnerships.

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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.

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

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

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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.

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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.

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Student-athletes have a unique opportunity to serve as meaningful role models in the lives of students at every level.

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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.

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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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## 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 seen through the partnership case studies all point to the importance of PK-16 collaborations. The survey data will be 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.

[www.pk-16.com](http://www.pk-16.com)

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