

Restructuring Rhode Island Public Higher Education

Table of Contents

- I. The Problem
- II. Developing a Solution
- III. Academic and Administrative Structure
- IV. Employee Relations vs. Labor Relations
- V. RI Academic Publishing Industry

I. The Problem

The current Higher Education structure contains many academic and administrative inefficiencies. URI, RIC, and CCRI currently function as three independent units with numerous business agreements that formally tie them together. This creates the need for layers of administrative support that slows decision and implementation of all reasonable business requests.. Some of the administrative support is tied to academic agreements that are not always in the students' best interest. Articulation agreements that diminish the value of college courses at CCRI from program requirement courses to general education requirements at the four year schools continues to disappoint and anger students at CCRI.

With respect to the economic situation, Rhode Island is desperately seeking business opportunities to create jobs. It is looking to the public higher education system to provide a marketable workforce to bring companies to Rhode Island. But unlike 50 years ago, companies are developing products and services in smaller time spans than higher education can respond. Any solution to this part of the problem requires a business approach that is foreign to the Academic Community. The current difficulties in transforming higher education are rooted in classical academic tradition.

Improving speed and efficiency in higher education, without sacrificing academic integrity, requires more than "thinking outside the box". This is Rhode Island; throw the box out. We need a solution that addresses the uniqueness that is Rhode Island. Hopefully the suggestions below will accelerate the typical Rhode Island process (i.e. drop the lattes, leave the cannolis,

and forget the meaningless anecdotal stories, we need deep thought and real problem solving skills right now).

II. Developing a Solution

To transform the current system of three independent institutions into a well-oiled education machine, we need a three-in-one system. The University of Wisconsin System <http://www.uwc.edu/> and Ohio's Community Colleges <http://www.ohiohighered.org/campuses> offer some insight on how to combine two year schools with the university. The structure at Wisconsin seems closest to our needs, so I refer the reader to that link for details about that system.

To streamline administrative and academic functions without losing the uniqueness of each institution, let's begin with a quick review of Rhode Island laws that define the institutions.

URI: § 16-32-3 Purposes of university "... the University of Rhode Island as a university where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach any branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life,..."

History of Section.(G.L. 1896, ch. 66, § 1; G.L. 1909, ch. 76, § 1; P.L. 1909, ch. 417, § 1; G.L. 1923, ch. 83, § 1; P.L. 1938, ch. 188, § 2; impl. am. P.L. 1939, ch. 688, § 3; P.L. 1951, ch. 2686, § 3; G.L. 1956, § 16-32-3.)

RIC: § 16-33-2 Powers over college – Purposes of college. "...the Rhode Island College as a college the chief purpose of which shall be the preparation of teachers, principals, supervisors, and superintendents for service in the public schools of Rhode Island. The board of governors for higher education is authorized to extend the scope of the educational interests of Rhode Island College to include, in addition to and without in any way limiting its educational programs related to the educational preparation of teachers for the schools of the state, general education through degree programs in the liberal arts and sciences."

History of Section. (P.L. 1920, ch. 1869, § 2; G.L. 1923, ch. 74, § 2; G.L. 1938, ch. 188, § 14; impl. am. P.L. 1939, ch. 688, § 3; G.L. 1956, § 16-33-2; P.L. 1959, ch. 44, §§ 1, 4.)

CCRI: § 16-44-2 Purposes of community colleges. – It shall be the purposes of the community colleges to provide educational programs of two (2) years' duration as follows:

- (1) Two (2) year college transfer programs;
- (2) Two (2) year terminal general education programs;
- (3) Two (2) year college technical and vocational programs; and
- (4) Any other educational programs and services as are appropriate to these institutions.

History of Section. (P.L. 1960, ch. 47, § 1.)

§ 16-33.1-2 Purposes of community college. – The governors, as now constituted, and their successors, for the terms for which they have been or for which they hereafter may be appointed trustees, shall continue to be a body politic and corporate for the purpose of continuing and maintaining the Community College of Rhode Island as a junior college and a workforce development center, the chief purpose of which shall be to offer all students the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for intellectual, professional and personal growth by providing an array of academic, career and lifelong learning programs, while contributing to Rhode Island's economic development and the needs of the region's workforce.

History of Section.(P.L. 1968, ch. 180, § 1; P.L. 1981, ch. 24, § 1; P.L. 2010, ch. 99, § 1; P.L. 2010, ch. 104, § 1.)

These RI Laws give each institution a unique identifier that separates it from the others.

URI: “to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life”. In truth, this requires the pursuit of original research in order to provide the innovation needed for both “the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes.” This type of research is unique to URI. *It should be clearly stated in the RI charter for URI.*

RIC: “chief purpose of which shall be the preparation of teachers, principals, supervisors, and superintendents for service in the public schools of Rhode Island.” This is a critical mission for the state. Quality, dedicated teachers are the heart and soul of a free society.

CCRI: “the purposes of the community colleges” are “college transfer programs”, “terminal general education programs”, “technical and vocational programs” and “[a]ny other educational programs and services as are appropriate to these institutions”. This is founding language of the community colleges. I will restrict the current presentation to this legislation. (The language in § 16-33.1-2 generated quite a bit of controversy at CCRI since it is a revision of the institution’s Mission Statement posted on the school’s website.) Clearly, the original language empowering the community colleges is applicable today. Under the phrase “[a]ny other educational programs and services” I will include Academic Readiness for underprepared students.

The following table summarizes these institutional missions.

URI		RIC	
research		preparation of teachers	
college transfer programs	technical and vocational programs	terminal general education programs	academic readiness

CCRI

Table 1

The flow of academic and administrative activity for the current higher education structure is best visualized in the following figure

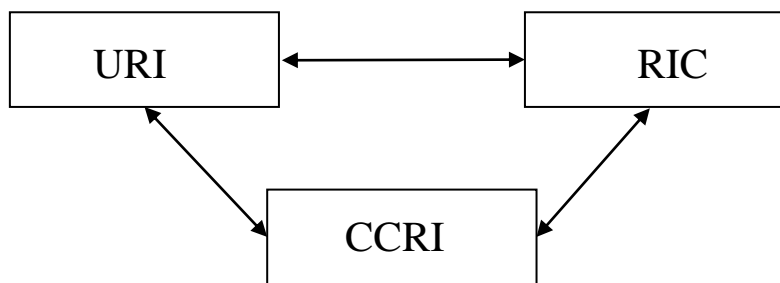


Figure 1

By eliminating a layer of administration at the community college, we can improve the inter-institutional flow dramatically. The next figure implies a more cohesive system.

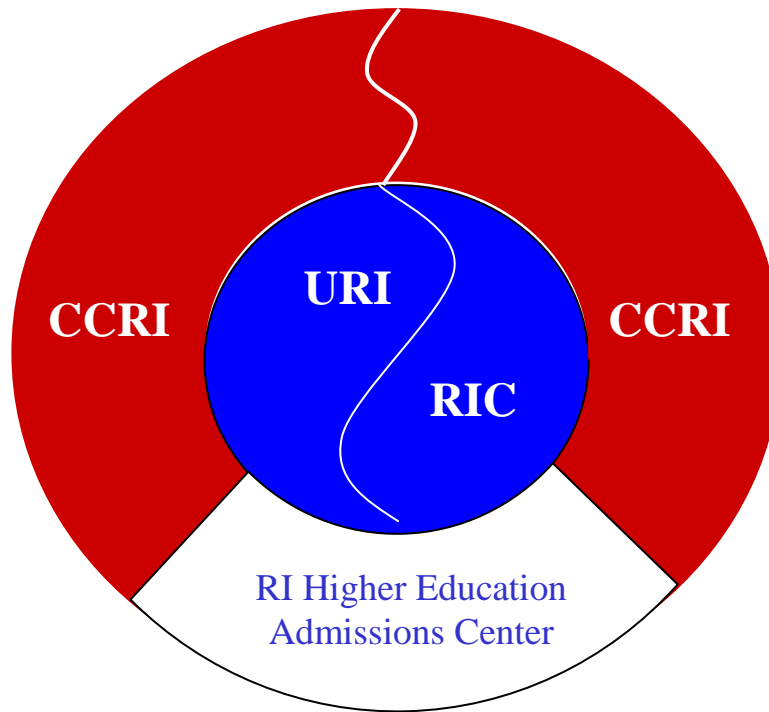


Figure 2

The inclusion of the four year institutions at the center of this diagram is important. The academic integrity of the four year schools is critical for the economic growth of Rhode Island. The Community Colleges, CCRI_URI and CCRI_RIC, and the RI Higher Education Admissions Center have the responsibility to ensure that all students moving into the four year institutions are the best students in the educational system.

III. Academic and Administrative Structure

Simplifying the higher education system requires eliminating administrative and academic redundancy (see Commission website for a “sense of the Assembly”). The same is true of private sector businesses. The following table provides a potential solution for the current system.

Joseph N. Allen, Ph.D.
Resident, West Greenwich/Faculty, CCRI

Chancellor	
Government Liaison Officer	Business Liaison Officer
President URI	President RIC

Table 2

Chancellor's Office

Chancellor: chief advocate for higher education

Government Liaison Officer (Federal Liaison, State Liaison)

Business Liaison Officer (interact with RIEDC, Chamber of Commerce,
Corporations, etc)

Administration

President URI

VP Academic Affairs

Dean CCRI_URI, 2 year college

CCRI_URI

College Division [Associate Dean]

Academic Readiness Division [Associate Dean]

Voc-Tech Division [Associate Dean]

President RIC

VP Academic Affairs

Dean CCRI_URI, 2 year college

CCRI_RIC

College Division [Associate Dean]

Academic Readiness Division [Associate Dean]

Voc-Tech Division [Associate Dean]

Information Technology

Higher Education's Cloud: application of Cloud technology to integrate the IT systems of the Higher Education system. This will allow the unique features of each institution to be preserved.

Academic

URI courses will be offered in the College division of CCRI. Students are enrolled in a URI course, not a CCRI course with “articulation agreement”. The URI course that is offered at the CCRI College division can be taught by CCRI faculty approved by URI (department chair for the appropriate academic department).

RIC courses will be offered in the College division of CCRI. Students are enrolled in a RIC course, not a CCRI course with “articulation agreement”. The RIC course that is offered at the CCRI College division can be taught by CCRI faculty approved by RIC (department chair for the appropriate academic department).

IV. Employee Relations vs. Labor Relations

Employee-owned business: This is the ideal employee-management relationship since everyone in the organization is dedicated to the success of the business. Although ideals are never realized, they are worthy of being pursued. Given the shift from primarily tax-funded public higher education to a “more private-than-public” funding formula, the employee-owned business provides greater flexibility for generating institutional revenue.

Labor representation: If labor representation is necessary, AAUP is the appropriate labor representative for professional educators at the college level. At this time, AFT represents the faculty at RIC and NEARI represents the faculty at CCRI. All three institutions would benefit from AAUP being the official bargaining unit. Although I strongly advocate open market principles for labor representation (i.e. elimination of the exclusive bargaining clause in RI public law), it is essential that faculty at all three institutions establish a professional bond that really doesn’t exist this time. A labor representative that coordinates, and arbitrates, labor agreements across the institutions should minimize business snags that restrict growth for Rhode Island’s Higher Education System.

V. RI Academic Publishing Industry

(This section is an update to my original recommendations to the Commission)

Based on the unique demographics of Rhode Island, the state is ideally positioned to create and publish academic materials for students at all academic levels. Printed material as well as software can be developed and produced here. Given the multilingual population, the possibility of creating an international market seems likely. This market can serve all age groups.

Benefits of an academic publishing industry

1) course materials designed with respect to local needs

Collaboration between higher education faculty and teachers in elementary/secondary education will provide the quality textbooks and software needed for student success. This provides a dynamic curriculum alignment that cannot be produced through legislative mandates.

2) reduced cost for textbooks and software

The course materials generated above will be more cost effective since they are produced within a statewide publishing industry. Cost control will be enhanced through recycling of paper and other resources used in the publication process. Local distribution from the publishing centers will also keep the prices within student and district budgets.

3) professional development opportunities for teachers

Collaboration among educators throughout the PK-16 system will open the door for professional development opportunities. The need to understand the impact of curriculum and pedagogy at all levels will make

it necessary for teachers to move throughout the educational system.

Teachers in elementary-secondary education will need to collaborate with college faculty on content and pedagogy for new course materials. These teachers can be given sabbatical leave to collaborate with college faculty.

4) generate state revenue in a number of different ways

Sales of textbooks and software will not only generate tax revenue, it can contribute to salary and compensation packages to faculty and staff throughout the system. Royalties from this material and the development of online courses can be used for “merit pay”. Sales of books and software outside the state will also generate revenue directly (through state sponsorship of the development of these materials) and indirectly through tax receipts on sales of these items. The development of bilingual textbooks will open the door to international markets; Rhode Island can be a global player in education.

5) engage a larger segment of the population in the education industry

There are many components and subsystems in the publishing industry. Paper supply (new and recycled sources require different workforces), printing operations, transportation for distribution (intrastate, interstate and international [Quonset??]), marketing, finance, etc. These are new job opportunities which will provide a Statewide Mission for Rhode Islanders: build a knowledge-based economy for Rhode Island from the ground floor up.

6) provide a solid workforce foundation for a knowledge-based economy

Providing an integrated public educational system with a publishing industry designed by Rhode Islanders, built by Rhode Islanders and run by Rhode Islanders will inspire Rhode Islanders to embrace education as a way of life. A highly, qualified knowledge-based workforce is inevitable.

Joseph N. Allen, Ph.D.
Resident, West Greenwich/Faculty, CCRI

It is critical that if higher education policies are going to support a successful economic development plan, then the economic plan should be based on sound principles. Just as the Commission has committed to examining best practices in the academic world, it must also include best practices in the business world. I encourage members of the Commission to review the following:

[Research Triangle Region](#)

[The Research Triangle Park Documentary](#)

(to be continued)