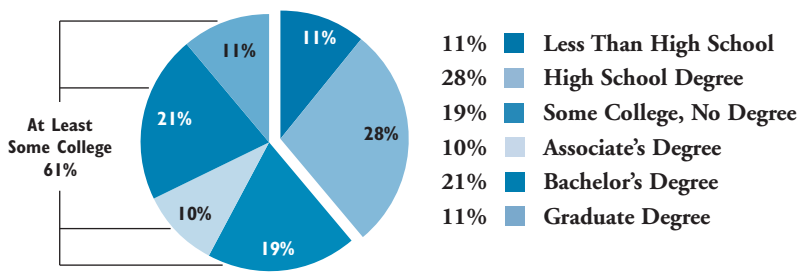


Issue Brief

IMPROVING COLLEGE ACCESS AND COMPLETION IN RHODE ISLAND

Post-secondary education is increasingly critical in today's job market. By 2018, nearly two-thirds (63%) of jobs in the United States will require at least some college education, and many will require a two- or four-year college degree or additional education beyond a college degree.¹ In Rhode Island, the job picture is quite similar. By 2018, 61% of jobs in Rhode Island will require at least some college.²

PROJECTED EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR JOBS, RHODE ISLAND, 2018



Source: Carnevale, A., Smith, N. & Strohl, J. (2010). *Help wanted: Projections of jobs and education requirements through 2018 – State-level analysis*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce.

- ◆ A college education offers substantial benefits. While outcomes vary across majors and occupations, those with bachelor's degrees will earn 50% more during their lifetimes than those with only a high school diploma, and they will be half as likely to experience unemployment as those without a bachelor's degree.³ Between 2009 and 2011 in Rhode Island, the median income of adults with bachelor's degrees was \$51,157, compared to \$29,828 for adults with high school degrees and \$21,736 for adults with no high school diploma or GED.⁴ During that same time period, the unemployment rate for Rhode Islanders with bachelor's degrees was 4.1%, one-third as high as for Rhode Islanders with only a high school diploma (12.1%).⁵
- ◆ Attending and completing college has other benefits as well. College graduates are more likely to hold jobs that offer more independence, opportunities for creativity, and social interaction than jobs available to non-college graduates. They also are less likely to be divorced, give birth as a teen, and have a child retained at a grade level than non-college graduates.⁶ Greater educational attainment also is associated with improved health behaviors and health outcomes, including more timely health care check-ups and screenings, better psychological health, and longer life spans.^{7,8}



COLLEGE READINESS

◆ College readiness is generally understood to be the level of preparation a student needs to be prepared to enroll in and succeed in college (i.e., for a certificate, associate's degree, or bachelor's degree) without requiring remedial education.⁹ However, being college-ready does not just mean having the academic skills and knowledge to succeed in college-level courses, though having these skills is important. It also means having the motivation and tenacity to overcome challenges and knowledge about how to navigate the college application and financial aid processes.¹⁰

KEY COMPONENTS OF COLLEGE READINESS:

- Academic preparedness
- Academic tenacity
- College knowledge

Source: McAlister, S. & Mevs, P. (2012). *College readiness: A guide to the field*. Providence, RI: The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.



ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS

◆ Many students arrive at college unprepared for the work. Nationally, nearly a quarter of all students entering four-year institutions require some remediation in reading, writing, and/or math.¹¹ Students who enter community colleges, which generally have open admissions policies, are even more likely to need remediation. At the Community College of Rhode Island, 70-75% of incoming students who have earned their high school diplomas the previous spring need some type of remedial course.¹²

◆ Currently, Rhode Island uses a statewide assessment system called the *New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)*, which includes tests in reading and math to determine proficiency. Among current high school seniors who took the *NECAP* in 2011 when they were juniors, 77% scored at or above proficiency in reading and 30% scored at or above proficiency in math.¹³

◆ Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, Rhode Island will begin administering a new test developed by the *Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)* Consortium, a consortium of 22 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This assessment system, which includes English and math tests, is designed to be aligned with the Common Core Standards and to reflect what students need to be college- and career-ready.¹⁴

◆ Scores on the SAT have been shown to be reliable and valid predictors of college readiness and first-year college GPA, which in turn is associated with overall college success. Scores of 500 or better on each section of the test indicate that the student is college-ready and more likely to enroll in and succeed in college.^{15,16} In 2012, average SAT scores for Rhode Island students were 490 in critical reading, 491 in math, and 485 in writing, somewhat lower than the average SAT scores for students nationally, which were 496 in critical reading, 514 in math, and 488 in writing.¹⁷

◆ High schools can better prepare their students for the academic transition to college by offering college-level courses, such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses, the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, and dual or concurrent enrollment courses (college-level courses for which high school students receive both high school and college credit).¹⁸ Among Rhode Island's 2012 high school graduates, 23% took at least one AP exam during high school, lower than the national rate of 32%.¹⁹



COLLEGE READINESS INDICATORS: ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS, RHODE ISLAND, 2012

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL 12TH GRADE ENROLLMENT, OCT. 2012	% OF 12TH GRADERS WHO PLANNED TO ATTEND COLLEGE, 2012	% OF 11TH GRADERS PROFICIENT IN READING, 2011	% OF 11TH GRADERS PROFICIENT IN MATH, 2011	4-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE, 2012	MEAN CRITICAL READING SAT SCORE, 2012	MEAN MATH SAT SCORE 2012	MEAN WRITING SAT SCORE 2012
Barrington	269	96%	92%	69%	94%	573	588	559
Bristol Warren	252	87%	89%	35%	85%	486	502	475
Burrillville	174	82%	83%	30%	81%	512	503	501
Central Falls	235	86%	41%	7%	68%	389	410	385
Charlho	292	79%	92%	52%	86%	506	500	488
Coventry	405	85%	85%	31%	87%	479	489	475
Cranston	838	89%	78%	24%	81%	479	476	470
Cumberland	349	87%	82%	31%	81%	500	499	489
East Greenwich	185	92%	90%	65%	94%	556	561	563
East Providence	397	83%	78%	25%	69%	474	475	459
Exeter-West Greenwich	152	88%	90%	54%	90%	535	536	523
Foster-Glocester	184	84%	78%	34%	86%	515	508	503
Johnston	185	87%	74%	27%	82%	462	467	466
Lincoln	254	82%	90%	48%	83%	529	527	517
Middletown	178	91%	87%	52%	81%	508	535	509
Narragansett	128	96%	94%	54%	83%	507	524	502
New Shoreham	6	NA	NA	NA	NA	570	544	540
Newport	139	88%	70%	26%	74%	444	440	423
North Kingstown	383	92%	91%	48%	88%	538	527	528
North Providence	240	91%	84%	22%	87%	450	451	452
North Smithfield	134	81%	87%	41%	78%	486	498	489
Pawtucket	461	87%	60%	14%	67%	416	428	412
Portsmouth	229	92%	90%	51%	91%	517	528	512
Providence	1,456	88%	56%	11%	65%	396	399	390
Scituate	120	89%	94%	51%	91%	501	510	510
Smithfield	187	88%	82%	36%	94%	494	504	497
South Kingstown	298	86%	87%	52%	80%	542	554	536
Tiverton	150	73%	85%	35%	83%	488	474	473
Warwick	746	84%	79%	25%	79%	486	478	480
West Warwick	226	90%	80%	21%	70%	461	463	450
Westerly	251	86%	91%	46%	87%	492	509	492
Woonsocket	372	83%	64%	16%	65%	442	437	428
<i>Beacon Charter High School for the Arts</i>	62	90%	91%	58%	90%	441	396	426
<i>Blackstone Academy</i>	38	94%	79%	32%	86%	398	406	398
<i>William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School</i>	160	80%	87%	35%	76%	441	454	429
<i>DCYF Schools</i>	23	NA	6%	0%	7%	NA	NA	NA
<i>Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center</i>	222	84%	66%	15%	73%	498	363	483
<i>Rhode Island School for the Deaf</i>	13	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	2,524	NA	57%	12%	66%	NA	NA	NA
<i>Remainder of State</i>	7,351	NA	84%	36%	83%	NA	NA	NA
Rhode Island	10,509	87%	77%	30%	77%	477	480	470

Sources: 12th grade enrollment data (October 1, 2012), 11th grade *New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP)* data, high school graduation rate data, and SAT scores are all from the Rhode Island Department of Education. % of 12th graders who planned to attend college is from the 2011-2012 administration of *SurveyWorks!*, based on responses to the question, "What are you thinking about doing after finishing high school?" and includes students who responded that they planned to go to a community college, two-year college, or four-year college. NA indicates that data are not available either because data were not collected or reported or because the number of students was too small to report.



ACADEMIC TENACITY

- ◆ An important component of college readiness is academic tenacity or grit, a range of behaviors often called “habits of mind” that are necessary for academic success, including critical thinking, an inquisitive nature, a willingness to accept constructive feedback, acceptance of possible failure, and the ability to cope with difficult learning tasks.²⁰
- ◆ Students living in poverty may have high levels of stress and limited social support at home, which can undermine perseverance toward milestones in education.²¹
- ◆ Schools can help foster academic tenacity by providing students with opportunities to increase their self-awareness and control, improve study habits, and strengthen 21st Century skills, including critical thinking and inquiry, by offering extended learning opportunities that make learning relevant and expose students to career options, and by providing personalized academic support to struggling students.²²
- ◆ One indicator of academic tenacity is regular attendance in school.²³ In fact, one of the most effective strategies for increasing student achievement, high school graduation rates, and college access and completion and closing achievement gaps would be to increase the number of low-income students who attend school regularly.²⁴



COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE

- ◆ Students are more likely to go to college when they attend high schools with strong college-going cultures, in which teachers encourage them to attend college, help them with the application process, and make sure that students are academically prepared.²⁵
- ◆ Students need information, support and encouragement to plan, prepare for, and attend college. Without such support, low-income, minority, and first-generation college students may “undermatch” or enroll in a college for which they are academically overqualified or not enroll at all.²⁶ However, schools with high proportions of low-income and minority students have fewer counselors (1,000 students per counselor), compared to all schools nationally (500 students per counselor).²⁷
- ◆ The percentage of students in a school or district who have taken the SAT or ACT is one measure of college knowledge.²⁸ In 2012, 60% of 12th graders in Rhode Island public schools had taken the SAT. The percentages varied considerably across districts.²⁹

FAFSA COMPLETION PROJECT

- ◆ Even after controlling for students’ academic qualifications, family background, neighborhood, and the level of support from parents, teachers, and guidance counselors, students who have completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by May of their senior year and been accepted into a four-year college are 50% more likely to enroll than students who have not completed their FAFSA.
- ◆ In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education began piloting a FAFSA Completion Project that provides timely, verifiable, and actionable information to district and school administrators, guidance counselors, and college access professionals in participating school districts. Providence Public Schools became one of the project pilot sites in May 2012. Among Rhode Island seniors expected to graduate in 2013, 54% had completed a FAFSA by May 2013; however, there was a great deal of variation across districts.

Sources: Roderick, M., et al. (2008). *From high school to the future: Potholes on the road to college*. Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research, University of Chicago. U.S. Department of Education. (2012, May 31). ED Announces FAFSA Completion Project Expansion [Web log message]. Retrieved from www.ed.gov/blog. U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid. (2013). *FAFSA completion by high school*. Retrieved June 13, 2013, from studentaid.ed.gov



COLLEGE READINESS INDICATORS: COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE, RHODE ISLAND, 2012

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL 12TH GRADE ENROLLMENT, OCT. 2012	% OF 12TH GRADERS TAKING THE SATS, 2012	FAFSA APPLICATIONS INITIATED, MAY 2013	FAFSA APPLICATIONS COMPLETED MAY 2013	% OF 12TH GRADERS COMPLETING A FAFSA, MAY 2013
Barrington	269	97%	162	158	59%
Bristol Warren	252	61%	147	142	56%
Burrillville	174	54%	90	90	52%
Central Falls	235	31%	89	80	34%
Chariho	292	60%	155	150	51%
Coventry	405	70%	213	211	52%
Cranston	838	55%	484	468	56%
Cumberland	349	69%	202	197	56%
East Greenwich	185	89%	94	92	50%
East Providence	397	48%	211	199	50%
Exeter-West Greenwich	152	62%	93	92	61%
Foster-Glocester	184	68%	102	98	53%
Johnston	185	50%	106	100	54%
Lincoln	254	56%	157	155	61%
Middletown	178	54%	100	99	56%
Narragansett	128	82%	81	78	61%
New Shoreham	6	83%	0	0	0%
Newport	139	55%	78	74	53%
North Kingstown	383	73%	240	232	61%
North Providence	240	54%	143	133	55%
North Smithfield	134	58%	101	98	73%
Pawtucket	461	59%	242	229	50%
Portsmouth	229	88%	145	139	61%
Providence	1,456	74%	1,040	958	66%
Scituate	120	70%	86	83	69%
Smithfield	187	78%	104	104	56%
South Kingstown	298	66%	155	151	51%
Tiverton	150	53%	87	85	57%
Warwick	746	52%	389	374	50%
West Warwick	226	54%	127	123	54%
Westerly	251	61%	138	136	54%
Woonsocket	372	35%	160	152	41%
<i>Beacon Charter High School for the Arts</i>	62	52%	37	34	55%
<i>Blackstone Academy</i>	38	87%	29	26	68%
<i>William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School</i>	160	35%	53	47	29%
<i>DCYF Schools</i>	23	NA	6	6	NA
<i>Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center</i>	222	2%	103	97	44%
<i>Rhode Island School for the Deaf</i>	13	NA	NA	NA	NA
Four Core Cities	2,524	61%	1,531	1,419	56%
Remainder of State	7,351	63%	4,190	4,061	55%
Rhode Island	10,509	60%	5,949	5,690	54%

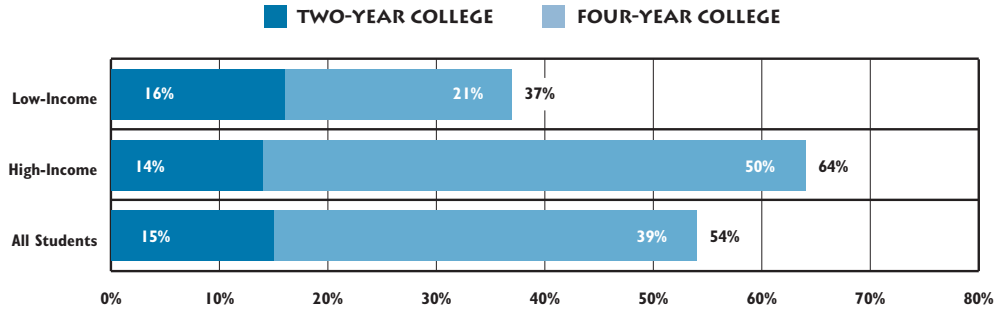
Sources: 12th grade enrollment data (October 1, 2012) and % of 12th graders taking the SAT are from the Rhode Island Department of Education. FAFSA data are from U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid. (2013). *FAFSA completion by high school*. Retrieved June 13, 2013, from studentaid.ed.gov. NA indicates that data are not available either because data were not collected or reported or because the number of students was too small to report.



HELPING LOW-INCOME STUDENTS GO TO COLLEGE

◆ There are large gaps in college access between low- and high-income students. In 2008, 91% of seniors in low-poverty schools graduated from high school, compared to 68% of seniors in high-poverty schools. Fifty-two percent of high school graduates from low-poverty schools immediately enrolled in a four-year college, compared to 28% of high school graduates from high-poverty schools.³⁰ Among Rhode Island students who graduated from high school in 2010, 50% of higher-income students immediately enrolled in a four-year college, compared to 21% of low-income students.³¹

IMMEDIATE COLLEGE ENROLLMENT BY INCOME AND TYPE OF COLLEGE, RHODE ISLAND, CLASS OF 2010



Source: Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2010.

◆ Academic preparation for college accounts for some of the differences in college enrollment rates by income, but low-income students also are more likely to lack the guidance and support they need to prepare for and enroll in college.³²

PROVIDENCE YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON THE SUPPORT THEY NEED TO PREPARE FOR AND ENROLL IN COLLEGE

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT partnered with Young Voices to conduct a series of focus groups with Providence youth in 2012 to get their perspectives about the support that is available from the schools and the larger community to help them select and apply to college.

KEY FINDINGS:

- ◆ Students want to start the conversation about preparation for college early (i.e., by middle school).
- ◆ Students want more advice about what courses they should take to best prepare them for college and their desired major or career path.
- ◆ Students want a clear timeline outlining the steps they need to take to apply to college, including clear deadlines for SATs, FAFSA, the College Scholarship Service (CSS) profile, college essays, and scholarship applications.
- ◆ Students want help selecting a college that is a good match for them, including more opportunities to participate in college visits and tours.
- ◆ Students’ parents need more information about the college selection and application processes.
- ◆ Students believe that guidance offices are overwhelmed and understaffed and therefore not able to give them the individual attention they need. Many view the college guides and advisors from college access organizations as the “go-to” adults on the topic of college.

More complete information on youth perspectives on college access is available in Rhode Island KIDS COUNT’s report, *Improving College Access and Success: Providence Youth Perspectives*.



COLLEGE ENROLLMENT, RHODE ISLAND, CLASS OF 2010

SCHOOL DISTRICT	% OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL IN 4 YEARS, 2010	# OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED IN 2010	% OF GRADUATES WHO ENROLLED IN COLLEGE WITHIN 6 MOS.	% OF GRADUATES WHO ENROLLED IN COLLEGE WITHIN 12 MOS.	% OF GRADUATES WHO ENROLLED IN COLLEGE WITHIN 24 MOS.	% OF GRADUATES WHO HAD NOT ENROLLED IN COLLEGE WITHIN 24 MOS.
Barrington	96%	276	74%	74%	76%	24%
Bristol Warren	82%	263	52%	58%	65%	35%
Burrillville	83%	181	45%	50%	55%	45%
Central Falls	51%	144	33%	41%	49%	51%
Chariho	82%	288	56%	60%	66%	34%
Coventry	80%	393	59%	64%	69%	31%
Cranston	81%	791	56%	62%	67%	33%
Cumberland	83%	322	61%	63%	68%	32%
East Greenwich	96%	178	74%	78%	82%	18%
East Providence	72%	422	40%	45%	50%	50%
Exeter-West Greenwich	89%	155	72%	75%	80%	20%
Foster-Glocester	83%	220	55%	58%	66%	34%
Johnston	61%	162	51%	59%	62%	38%
Lincoln	81%	262	68%	71%	75%	25%
Middletown	82%	148	66%	71%	74%	26%
Narragansett	90%	106	84%	84%	86%	14%
New Shoreham	NA	12	NA	NA	NA	33%
Newport	78%	112	54%	57%	63%	38%
North Kingstown	86%	377	71%	75%	77%	23%
North Providence	80%	269	38%	45%	50%	50%
North Smithfield	83%	136	72%	75%	79%	21%
Pawtucket	58%	443	42%	47%	53%	47%
Portsmouth	85%	221	71%	74%	76%	24%
Providence	68%	1,436	38%	47%	55%	45%
Scituate	93%	114	64%	68%	70%	30%
Smithfield	91%	215	60%	65%	70%	30%
South Kingstown	86%	288	68%	70%	76%	24%
Tiverton	77%	156	70%	72%	77%	23%
Warwick	75%	745	61%	65%	70%	30%
West Warwick	65%	211	45%	51%	57%	43%
Westerly	87%	244	65%	69%	72%	28%
Woonsocket	63%	364	40%	45%	50%	50%
<i>Beacon Charter High School for the Arts</i>	60%	27	30%	30%	33%	67%
<i>Blackstone Academy</i>	88%	33	33%	39%	45%	55%
<i>William M. Davies Jr. Career & Technical High School</i>	77%	112	37%	44%	51%	49%
<i>DCYF Schools</i>	9%	8	NA	NA	NA	75%
<i>Metropolitan Regional Career & Technical Center</i>	82%	157	48%	54%	56%	44%
<i>Rhode Island School for the Deaf</i>	NA	5	NA	NA	NA	60%
<i>Four Core Cities</i>	65%	2,387	39%	46%	53%	47%
<i>Remainder of State</i>	82%	7,267	60%	64%	69%	31%
<i>Rhode Island</i>	76%	9,996	54%	59%	64%	36%

Source. Rhode Island Department of Education, Class of 2010. NA indicates that data are not available either because data were not collected or reported or because the number of students was too small to report.

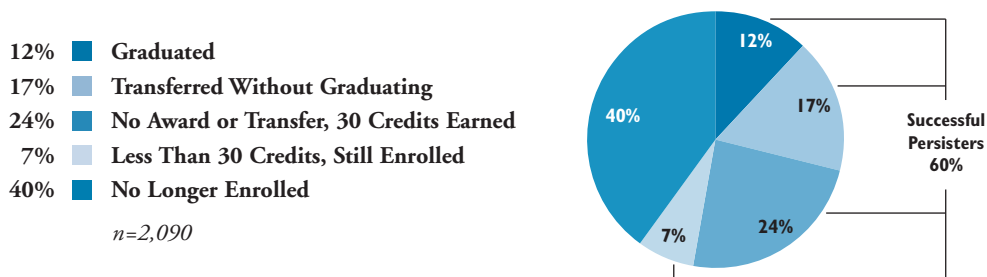
STUDENTS NEEDING REMEDIATION

- ◆ Among U.S. students entering two-year colleges in Fall 2006, more than half (52%) enrolled in a remedial or developmental course because they were not academically prepared for college work. In Rhode Island, the rate is even higher with 70% of Rhode Island students entering the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) in Fall 2006 enrolled in a remedial or developmental course. Low-income, Black, and Hispanic students entering CCRI were even more likely to need remediation, with 93% of low-income students, 92% of Black students, and 81% of Hispanic students entering CCRI in Fall 2006 needing a remedial course, compared to 66% of White students.³³
- ◆ Remedial courses are intended to serve as an academic bridge for students who are not academically prepared for college-level work. However, when students are asked to take remedial courses before enrolling in credit-bearing classes, they often do not enroll in remedial courses at all, do not complete their remedial coursework, or never enroll in credit-bearing college courses after completing their recommended remedial courses.³⁴
- ◆ Among CCRI students who needed to take a remedial course, less than a quarter (23%) completed their remedial coursework and associated college-level courses within two years.³⁵
- ◆ Putting students into credit-bearing courses right away and building in academic supports, such as tutoring, allows students to build the reading and math skills they need to succeed in college while making progress on earning their degrees.³⁶

COLLEGE SUCCESS, COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF RHODE ISLAND

- ◆ In most states, very few students in certificate programs graduate, and associate degree graduation rates are very low, with many students starting programs, but very few completing them. Graduation rates are particularly low among Black and Hispanic students.³⁷
- ◆ Because it is more difficult to measure graduation rates at two-year community colleges where students' goals differ, with some students working toward a certificate or associate's degree and others planning to transfer to a four-year college, graduation rates may not show the whole picture. For this reason, the American Association of Community Colleges has adopted a Voluntary Framework of Accountability to more accurately measure community colleges' performance.³⁸

SUCCESSFUL PERSISTENCE, COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF RHODE ISLAND, 2009-2012



Source: Community College of Rhode Island, 2013.

- ◆ By the Summer of 2012, 12% of first-time, full-time students entering CCRI in the Fall of 2009 had graduated, 17% had transferred without graduating, 24% had not earned a degree or transferred but had earned 30 credits, 7% had earned less than 30 credits but remained enrolled, and the remaining 40% were no longer enrolled at CCRI.³⁹

COLLEGE COMPLETION, RHODE ISLAND'S FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

◆ Nationally, 31% of students who attend four-year colleges graduate in four years, and 56% graduate in six years. Rhode Island's outcomes are slightly better, with 34% of students who attend a four-year college in Rhode Island graduating in four years and 58% graduating in six years.⁴⁰

PERCENTAGE GRADUATING FROM A 4-YEAR COLLEGE WITHIN SIX YEARS

	2010
RI	58%
US	56%
National Rank*	19th
New England Rank**	4th

*1st is best; 50th worst

**1st is best; 6th worst

Source: The Chronicle of Higher Education. (n.d.). *College completion: Rhode Island public colleges (4-year)*. Retrieved June 14, 2013, from collegecompletion.chronicle.com

“A torrent of American talent and human potential entering the educational pipeline is reduced to a trickle 16 years later as it moves through the K-16 system.”

- The Commission on Access, Admissions and Success in Education

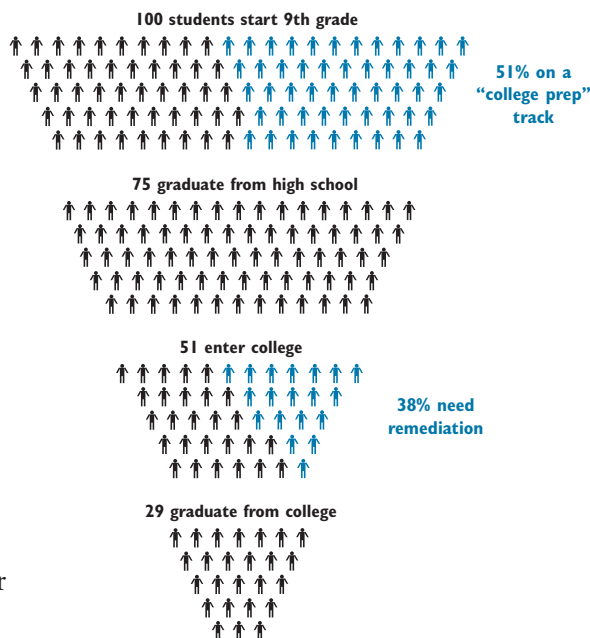
THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL SUPPORTS IN COLLEGE SUCCESS

◆ Students must complete college and earn a degree to accrue the benefits of a college education, in terms of increased income and reduced unemployment. While college enrollment numbers are continuing to increase, there are still gaps in the percentage of students who attain college degrees across different racial/ethnic and income groups.⁴¹

◆ Low-income and first-generation students often arrive at college less academically prepared than other students. They can benefit from a wide range of academic supports, such as summer transition programs, peer-mentored and peer-facilitated programs that offer tutoring and other academic support, and learning communities that allow a group of students to enroll in two or more classes together so they can establish faculty and peer relationships that support their success.^{42,43}

◆ Low-income and first-generation students also may need social support services, such as personal and career counseling, mentoring, or referrals to social services. Early warning and advising systems or dedicated staff who serve as “first responders” can help colleges monitor students’ progress and intervene when students are struggling.^{44,45}

PIPELINE TO COLLEGE COMPLETION, UNITED STATES



Source: *College completion toolkit*. (2011). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data as well as research conducted by the College Board.



RECOMMENDATIONS

INCREASE COLLEGE READINESS AND ENROLLMENT

- ◆ **Intervene in the earliest years to close the achievement gap:** Providing access to high-quality early childhood education programs, including pre-kindergarten, can help close the achievement gap early by ensuring that children have the academic, social, and emotional skills they need to succeed in school.
- ◆ **Increase the percentage of students reading proficiently by the end of third grade:** Students who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade often struggle in later grades and are more likely to drop out of high school than their peers.
- ◆ **Focus on increasing the high school graduation rate and ensuring a meaningful high school diploma:** If students do not graduate from high school, the pipeline to college stops here. Continue implementing strategies to increase the high school graduation rate, including providing access to high-quality teaching and engaging curricula, as well as multiple pathways to graduation, and individualized supports for struggling students to get them on track to graduation.
- ◆ **Reduce chronic absence:** Reduce chronic absenteeism in elementary, middle, and high school by monitoring attendance, contacting parents when troubling patterns of attendance first appear, and recognizing and rewarding good attendance. Students who are frequently absent from school are at-risk of disengagement from school, academic failure and dropping out and are also less likely to succeed in college, even if they graduate from high school and enroll in college.
- ◆ **Foster a college-going culture in schools:** Make sure that all school personnel, including teachers, counselors, and administrators, are encouraging students to go to college, ensuring that students are academically prepared, and providing help with the application process.
- ◆ **Prepare students for the academic rigor of college:** Make sure that students are academically prepared for college by providing high-quality teaching and an engaging curriculum, including Advanced Placement (AP) courses and other challenging courses that will prepare them for college-level work and a major or career path of interest and by helping students who need additional support to reach proficiency in reading and math.
- ◆ **Implement the Common Core Standards:** These national standards set expectations for student learning at each grade level and are designed to ensure that students will be college- and career-ready when they graduate.
- ◆ **Build academic tenacity and 21st Century skills:** Provide students from the earliest grades through high school with opportunities to build skills, such as critical thinking, perseverance, and career and technical skills, through in-classroom support and afterschool, summer, and expanded learning opportunities.

SUPPORT COLLEGE APPLICATION AND ENROLLMENT

- ◆ **Start the college conversation early:** Schools, parents, teachers, and community partners should set high expectations for all students. Start talking to students about college by middle school. Establish a clear timeline outlining the steps students need to take to apply for college, including deadlines for SATs, FAFSA, the College Scholarship Service (CSS) profile, college essays, and scholarship applications.
- ◆ **Focus school and community resources on college planning:** Provide students more individualized support with the college selection, college application, and financial aid processes. If schools do not have enough guidance counselors to provide all students with the kinds of individualized help they need, community-based college access organizations can increase capacity.
- ◆ **Increase the FAFSA completion rate:** Raise awareness about the link between FAFSA completion and college enrollment and dedicate school and community resources to identify students who have not completed the FAFSA and provide support to these students and their families.
- ◆ **Maintain access to in-state tuition for undocumented students:** In 2011, the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education approved a measure that allows undocumented students who have attended a



RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

Rhode Island high school for at least three years, graduated from high school, and agreed to take steps to legalize their immigration status to pay in-state tuition at the state's public institutions of higher education if they are admitted. Passing legislation on this issue would ensure that access to in-state tuition is maintained.

◆ **Help students make the right “match”:** Offer students guidance about how to find the college that is the best match for them, considering factors such as student's financial resources, availability of financial aid and scholarships, desired major, location of school, size of school, and the likelihood that the student will be accepted and succeed based on the student's academic record. Students are more likely to succeed in college when they do not "undermatch" or select a college that is not academically rigorous enough for them.

SUPPORT COLLEGE SUCCESS AND COMPLETION

◆ **Reduce the number of students needing remediation:** Ensure that all students in grades Pre-K through 12 are in high-quality classrooms and use early warning systems to identify and intervene with students who are falling behind.

◆ **Explore strategies for remediation:** Look at best practices in Rhode Island and other states and consider policies that allow students to get remedial help while making progress on their degree. Students that are required to take multiple remedial courses that do not count toward their degree may become discouraged by the debt they are incurring and the lack of progress toward a degree and drop out.

◆ **Provide academic and social support:** Foster partnerships between institutions of higher education and community-based agencies to provide the kinds of academic and social supports, such as tutoring, mentoring, child care, and financial counseling that help students complete their degrees.

◆ **Review transfer policies:** Ensure that existing transfer policies are not a barrier to timely completion of a degree when students are transferring from CCRI to a four-year college or between RIC and URI.

◆ **Make higher education a budget priority:** Continue increasing the state's investment in higher education so the state's colleges and universities can offer high-quality post-secondary education and keep tuition affordable.

◆ **Set statewide goals for college completion:** Set statewide goals for increasing the number of certificates and degrees earned at the state's two- and four-year public higher education institutions and develop a roadmap for achieving these goals, including interim benchmarks for each institution and the state as a whole.

◆ **Continue developing a statewide college access and success data system:** A data system that includes data on students' educational experiences and outcomes from early childhood through higher education will allow the state to develop strategies for improving college enrollment and completion.

COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA'S ALLIANCE OF STATES

Rhode Island is a member of an Alliance of states working to increase the number of students who successfully complete college and achieve degrees and credentials with value in the labor marketplace and close achievement gaps for traditionally underrepresented groups.

THE ALLIANCE OF STATES HAS THREE MAJOR GOALS:

- ◆ Set statewide and school-specific college completion goals through 2020.
- ◆ Develop action plans and move key policy levers focused on improving college readiness.
- ◆ Collect and report common measures of progress, including data on progress by level and type of degree, age, race, and income.

Source: Complete College America. (2011). *The Alliance of States*. Retrieved June 15, 2013, from www.completecollege.org

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