

**RHODE ISLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

**MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF RHODE ISLAND  
21ST CENTURY WORKFORCE COMMISSION**

**PUBLIC SESSION**

**OCTOBER 23, 2009**

The fifth meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce Commission (the Commission) was held on Friday, October 23, 2009, in Public Session in the office of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, 315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101, Providence, Rhode Island pursuant to notice of the meeting to all Members and public notice of meeting, a copy of which is attached hereto, as required by applicable Rhode Island Law.

The following Members were present and participated throughout the meeting as indicated: Armeather Gibbs, Chair; J. Michael Saul; Rep. Joseph Almeida; Diane St. Laurent; Sandra Powell; Leslie Taito; Robert Shea; and Eileen Farley.

Those absent include Christopher Wissmann; William McGowan; Paul Harrington. Sen. Daniel Connors and Rep. Gordon Fox were absent but sent their designees Marie Ganim and Beth Cotter respectively.

Others present were Mr. Julian Alssid and Ms. Maureen Bozell of Workforce Strategy Center, CCRI President Mr. Ray DiPasquale, Paul Harden and Christine Smith from EDC. Ms. Gibbs presided.

**Welcome**

Ms. Gibbs called the meeting to order at 9:06 am. She welcomed everyone and articulated how pleased she was to have President Ray DiPasquale from the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) with the group. President DiPasquale would be giving a presentation on the CCRI Strategic Plan.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the September 25, 2009 meeting were approved upon a motion duly made by Mr. J. Michael Saul and seconded by Robert Shea.

**Presentation on CCRI Strategic Plan, Workforce Development**

Ms. Gibbs then opened the floor to CCRI President Ray DiPasquale. President DiPasquale began by informing the group that the challenges community colleges are currently facing are similar to those throughout the state and throughout New England. Workforce development is a huge issue throughout the northeast region of the country. Rhode Island specifically needs to bring companies into the state and retain them, while also providing trained and educated workers.

The Community College of Rhode Island has received an increasing number of applicants and a

decrease in funding. President DiPasquale stated another cut in funding would only further damage the quality of education the College can provide. CCRI's Strategic Plan centralized on three goals the College should address in order to leverage the decreased funds available to institutes of higher education and their ability to provide an educated and trained workforce.

First, the College needs to work on increasing their retention and graduation rates, increasing enrollment in underrepresented groups and transfer students, and work to ensure student satisfaction is high. Second, the College wants to help students be successful. This includes monitoring job placement after graduation, student success as they transfer out to other institutions, fulfillment of general education requirements, enrollment completion rates, and increased faculty participation. Third, the College needs to prioritize the funding available in order to successfully reach goals one and two. President DiPasquale affirmed that the College needs a set of recommendations that are solid and based in reality to leverage the Community College of Rhode Island's three goals.

### **Discussion on Findings/Recommendations**

Ms. Bozell and Mr. Alssid then discussed the key findings discovered by the Workforce Development Center based on literature review, labor market analysis, various interviews and focus groups from a variety of participants such as community based organizations, industry partners, and students. These findings aim to help facilitate the development of recommendations and action items that will strengthen the College's position as a key institution in Rhode Island's effort to raise a prepared workforce for the up-and-coming knowledge-based economy. The key findings are as follows:

Market Opportunity and Requirements:

- There is a mismatch between CCRI's workforce development courses and programs and the occupations most in demand;
- CCRI has opportunities to compete in more than 25 key occupational fields;
- The majority of occupational vacancies were for educated and experienced workers who have work experience in the field to which they are applying; and
- to increase student earning potential CCRI needs to expand the number of technical degrees available and the enrollments in technical programs beyond the health care field.

Ms. Bozell then gave a brief overview of where CCRI stands and in conclusion she affirmed that there are a number of demands pulling RI's community college in too many directions. There needs to be a systematic approach to workforce development.

Ms. Bozell turned the floor over to Mr. Alssid who articulated the draft recommendations the College should adhere to in order to reach their goals. The priority recommendation was to adopt a statewide career pathways system around which to organize the state's and CCRI's workforce development efforts. The other recommendations presented by the Workforce Strategy Center are as follows:

- Expand and enhance the CCRI workforce develop department to serve the nine industry partnership areas;
- Launch statewide initiatives to close the middle skill gap in RI by increasing the attainment of postsecondary credentials valued by employers in the new economy;
- Strengthen the pipeline of college ready students; and
- Create a culture on innovation to respond to the workforce development needs of students and businesses.

### **Next Steps**

The next meeting of the CCRI Commission will be held in November 13, 2009 in the offices of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:22 pm.

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Kristen A. Coogan  
Secretary