Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

of

Rhode Island College
Providence, Rhode Island

by

An Evaluation Team representing the
New England Commission of Higher Education

Prepared after study of the institution's
self-evaluation report and a site visit
November 7-10, 2021

The members of the team:

Chairperson: Dr. Sue Henderson, President, New Jersey City University, Jersey City, NJ

Dr. Helen Abadiano, Professor, Central Connecticut State University, New Briton, CT

Dr. Maureen Keefe, Vice President of Student Development, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston, MA

Dr. Anita Lee, Professor of Health Sciences, Eastern Connecticut State University, Willimantic, CT

Dr. Bryant Morgan, Chief Financial Officer, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, MA

Dr. Robert Prezant, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven, Ct

Dr. Jeffrey St. John, Associate Vice Chancellor for Accreditation and Strategic Initiatives, University of Maine, Orono, ME

Dr. Sarah Strout, Assistant Vice President for Assessment and Planning, Worcester State University, Worcester, MA

This report represents the views of the evaluation committee as interpreted by the chairperson. Its content is based on the committee's evaluation of the institution with respect to the Commission's criteria for accreditation. It is a confidential document in which all comments are made in good faith. The report is prepared both as an educational service to the institution and to assist the Commission in making a decision about the institution's accreditation status.

New England Commission of Higher Education
Preface Page to the Team Report
Please complete **during the team visit** and include with the report prepared by the visiting team

Date form completed: 11/8/2021

Name of Institution: Rhode Island College

1. **History:** Year chartered or authorized 1854   Year first degrees awarded 1855

2. **Type of control:** ☑ State ☐ City   ☐ Religious Group; specify:_____
   ☐ Private, not-for-profit   ☐ Other; specify: _____
   ☐ Proprietary

3. **Degree level:**

   ☐ Associate   ☑ Baccalaureate   ☑ Masters   ☐ Professional   ☑ Doctorate

4. **Enrollment in Degree Programs:** (Use figures from fall semester of most recent year):

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention[a] *	Graduation[b] *	# Degrees[c]
Associate						
Baccalaureate	4,044	1,065	4,441.63	73.7%	45.7%	1,383
Graduate	241	538	620.22	78.2%	71.9%	303

   (a) full-time 1st to 2nd year   (b) 3 or 6 year graduation rate   (c) number of degrees awarded most recent year
   *"Graduate" Retention and Graduation figures presented here are for Master's students only; "Graduation" is the percentage that graduated in 4 years for this population.

5. **Student debt:**

	Most Recent Year	One Year Prior	Two Years Prior
Three-year Cohort Default Rate	7.5%	8.6%	7.3%
Three-year Loan Repayment Rate	55.1%	60%	60%

	Associate	Baccalaureate	Graduate
Average % of graduates leaving with debt		76%	50%
Average amount of debt for graduates		$26,331.96	$27,781.05

6. **Number of current faculty:**   Full-time 297   Part-time 301   FTE 397.33

7. **Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (Specify year: 2021)
   (Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions, e.g., $1,456,200 = $1.456)

Revenues		Expenditures	
Tuition	$51.2	Instruction	$51.8
Gov't Appropriations	$52.2	Research	$11.2
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	$27.1	General	$80.4
Auxiliary Enterprises	$7.9	Auxiliary Enterprises	$10.8
Other	$29.8	Other	
Total	$168.2	Total	$154.2

8. **Number of off-campus locations:**
   In-state 1   Other U.S. _____   International _____   Total 1

9. **Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:**
   Programs offered entirely on-line 0   Programs offered 50-99% on-line 0

10. **Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?**
    ☐ No   ☑ Yes   Specify program(s): Medical Imaging; Nurse Anesthesia

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Standard 1: MISSION AND PURPOSE

Rhode Island College (RIC) has served the state for over 170 years, educating the state's students and helping to provide an educated workforce. As the state's only state college, RIC is positioned to make a difference in a state with one university, one state college, and one community college. Under a recent reorganization, the University of Rhode Island was removed from the purview of the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) which is one of two councils that comprise the Rhode Island Board of Education. Some on campus were unclear regarding the new arrangement and the relationship of RIC and the CPE. The President has been successful in recent years in obtaining bond funding for new construction which has benefitted the campus.

The adoption of the current mission statement began in 2012 with revisions, some of which were adopted in 2014 through work with the Council of Rhode Island Council Committee (RICC). In 2016, President Sanchez began his tenure as President and charged the RIC Council Mission and Vision committee co-chairs with updating the mission and vision in advance of the new strategic planning process. While the new statement was not formally approved by the RIC Council, the associated strategic plan, which was completed in 2017, was adopted.

The RIC self-study, created by faculty, staff and administration, boldly discusses perceptions and possible historic processes that led to concerns about shared governance. During challenging times of enrollment decline, fiscal concerns and worries, and uncertain future support, administrators, who are ultimately responsible for the viability of an institution, make important decisions that are imperative for the future viability of that institution. Not always popular, these decisions are made with the best intentions and on behalf of the longer-term health of the home institution. Those decisions are made considering shared goals, the future success of RIC students and RIC proper. Because some of these decisions are not just fiscally imperative but must be managed quickly, communication across campus can be perceived as lagging despite efforts to make them fluid and rapid. There is an impressive sense of "goodwill" within the self-study and on campus that suggests all parties are committed to enhancing campus communication and thus yielding more inclusive conversations and shared governance.

Concerns that change in the CPE oversight and in the RIC administration in recent years created challenges to shared governance. Shared governance from the faculty perspective is described in the RIC Council charter where, again, roles of faculty through the President are described. Concerns are raised about "parallel shared governance structures" and the administrative decision to create a separate Strategic Budget and Resource Planning Committee. From discussions with faculty and the RIC Council, greater opportunities for shared governance have taken place as the current administration gains traction in working with the RIC Council and understanding the RIC history and culture. Changes, however, must be understood within a higher education background with serious enrollment, retention, and fiscal challenges, and challenges that demand rapid and effective action.

While the strategic planning process found in the Council of RIC Charter designates the Council as the representative body of the university that has the authority to act on policies of interest to the faculty, there have been recent questions as to boundaries and responsibilities. There is a perception among some faculty members that the reorganization and the transition from a VPAA to a Provost has clouded perceived roles. Responsibilities, relative authority, and approaches to collaboration remain a work in progress to best ensure the positive trajectory of the College.

The RIC Self-study parallels many institutions of higher learning as we emerge from the prolonged pandemic. In one word, RIC has concerns about "ambiguity." The pandemic came on the heels of administrative changes, changes in the state system office, and declining enrollment and state funding. There is concern over presidential autonomy, reduced resources, the diminished authority of the CPE, perceptions of shared governance, longer term administrative stability, the voice of staff (as opposed to faculty) in governance, how the College will brand itself going forward, and overall campus communication and ability to deal with multiple priorities. It is of little solace to any institution that they are not alone in many of these concerns.

Standard 2: PLANNING AND EVALUATION

Planning

Since the last self-study, Rhode Island College (RIC) has implemented two strategic plans and the process for the next strategic plan is underway. In the most recent plans, the process has become more inclusive, with representation from faculty, staff, students, and alumni on the planning committees, as well as participation from the overall campus community through open meetings, surveys, and comments on drafts. The team commends RIC for its transparent and inclusive planning process.

The Vision 2020 (2015-2017) plan focused on addressing the increasingly diverse student population as evidenced in the Data First Forms and the Factbook, which show an increase in enrolled undergraduate BIPOC students from 20.7% in 2011 to 40.9% in 2020. As a result of this plan, the College created a new Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, a new Title IX Officer position, the establishment of the Division of Student Success, and many new initiatives relating to all aspects of student success.
The most recently completed plan, Affirming Our Strength, Building Our Future (2017-2020), made a concerted effort to include input from historically underrepresented and underserved groups and has led to the designation of the College as a Hispanic Serving Institution. A review of auxiliary strategic planning documents showed that implementation was not centrally coordinated, in that the responsibility of initiatives was assigned to various departments and individuals. However, discussions with the chairs of previous strategic plan steering committees and the Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives indicated that tracking of the implementation of initiatives was centrally coordinated. For the first six months of the plan, the Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives followed up with the responsible parties, while after the first six months, the President took over this review and incorporated it into direct report meetings. The final report of the Strategic Plan as well as implementation updates were made available to the community through the website.

The current strategic planning process for FOCUS (Fueling our College's Undeniable Strengths), began in 2019 with the goals of being inclusive with strong stakeholder engagement, transparent, research-informed and data driven, and innovative. The plan's original areas of focus included the areas of academic excellence, student experience, and resource generation and financial stewardship through the lens of community partnerships and diversity, equity, and inclusion. This plan continues to be highly inclusive. The steering committee is made up of faculty, staff, and administration and is co-chaired by a faculty member and an administrator. In addition, the teams overseeing the areas of focus are also co-chaired by faculty and administration. As shown on the FOCUS Strategic Planning website, multiple open forums were held for faculty, staff, and students.

Although RIC has done an admirable job in creating an inclusive planning process, the past two strategic plans and the current strategic plan are short-term plans (three years or less). Standard 2.1 indicates that institutions should "plan beyond a short-term horizon, including strategic planning that involves realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints." It can be difficult to assess the effectiveness in short-term plans, as it may take more than three years for an initiative to be established enough to assess its value and effectiveness. In addition, the examination of strategic plan evaluation documents shows that the evaluation of past strategic plans was limited to a review of initiatives that had been completed. Discussions with staff and administration involved in past and current strategic planning processes confirmed that the focus of strategic planning evaluation has been process-oriented and tactical rather than outcome-oriented and strategic. The self-study notes it will be critical to the success of the strategic plan to establish benchmarks as a means of measuring effectiveness and accountability.

As part of the self-study, Rhode Island College was asked to provide evidence of its success in integrating its comprehensive strategic planning and financial processes and demonstrating a realistic course of action to achieve its identified objectives. Following an inclusive budgeting process, the final budget is sent to the Postsecondary Council for approval before finally being sent for approval to the governor and legislature. The team was unable to verify that this budget process is linked to strategic planning priorities or that funding is prioritized in relation to the strategic plan. As noted in the self-study and confirmed during meetings, budget cuts appear to be the driving force for budget decisions rather than any strategic plans. Meetings with the President's Executive Cabinet indicated that in the future, strategic planning priorities will be used to make decisions regarding funding for initiatives.

According to the self-study and interviews with the Vice President for Administration and Finance (CFO), RIC recognizes the need for longer-term budgetary planning and new structures have been created to help facilitate these plans including the Strategic Budgeting and Resource Planning Committee (SBRPC), whose charge is to examine cost drivers, evaluate new projects, assess the results of ongoing projects, suggest new sources of revenue, and recommend decisions to the president that utilize the college's resources more effectively. During conversations with members of the SBRPC, the team was made aware that currently these recommendations are not aligned with the strategic plan, but in the future strategic planning priorities will be considered as part of this decision-making process. In addition, in 2017, the College established the Workforce Planning Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the president regarding whether to fill vacant non-faculty positions or create new positions. The committee makes these decisions by considering the priorities of the College, the alignment of strategic goals, the availability of funding, and a review of possible alternatives.

To address enrollment declines, there are plans to establish a Strategic Enrollment Management Committee charged with creating, monitoring, and assessing a strategic enrollment plan aligned with RIC's mission and vision. While the College has paused the creation of this committee to better align with the strategic plan, the Administration recognizes the urgency of strategic enrollment management, and has identified low-hanging fruit in the strategic areas of aligning personnel and purpose, establishing the appropriate base budget to support enrollment management efforts, identifying and working with a strategic enrollment partner in Financial Aid, and utilizing enrollment technology to drive effectiveness and efficiencies in recruitment and retention. As a result of these strategies, Enrollment Management has reorganized structures to include an area focused on new student outreach and recruitment and a focus on the Admissions campus visit experience including the creation of the College's Prospective Student Center. In addition, the College has invested in technology such as

Salesforce (a customer relationship management software) and Starfish (an advising and retention solution).

The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the strengths of Rhode Island College's emergency planning preparedness. On March 7th, 2020, the College announced a plan to move all classes online and extend spring break to two weeks. The College closed all residence halls except for one used for quarantine purposes. By March 23rd, the College re-opened more than 1,000 classes, using a variety of resources while keeping most students, faculty, and staff off-campus for safety. The College also provided refunds to students for dorm and meal plan expenses. Dining services remained open and adjusted operations to provide food to students while maintaining health and safety standards. Approximately $150,000 was spent on technology, including a Zoom license, laptops, chrome books, and mobile hotspots to loan to students, and other equipment to help facilitate the transition to remote and hybrid learning.

RIC developed plans for the return to campus in Fall 2020 as part of the application to the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) for their approval of a remote and in-person teaching/learning plan. The process was highly inclusive with both faculty and staff, particularly those who had been set to participate in the strategic planning efforts, participating. It also included the Presidents Executive Council. This group provided data, information, and support to create the plan. For fall 2021, a structure was set up as it became clear that an ongoing COVID response plan was needed. This included a RIC COVID-19 Response Team, the RIC COVID-19 Steering Committee, President Frank D. Sánchez, and the President's Executive Cabinet.   Comments were sought on the draft documents from individuals throughout the College community.

The Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) provides integral data for decision-making. OIRP provides data and reports for internal audiences such as those relating to strategic planning, academic program review, online course evaluations, accreditation, administrative policies, as well as ad-hoc data requests from individuals and committees. OIRP is also responsible for external reporting such as federal and state compliance reports, publication surveys (US News, Princeton Review) and responding to public records requests. OIRP publishes the Factbook which provides annual and longitudinal data sets available to all campus members. In addition to data requests, OIRP also manages the deployment of several surveys including the Alumni Survey, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and the Non-Returning Student Survey as well as consulting and assisting with the development of internal, ad-hoc surveys. To assess achievement gaps and equity concerns, OIRP has begun the process of disaggregating data based on demographic variables.   A Campus Climate Survey was managed by the AVP for DEI and the Interim Provost with assistance from OIRP.

Data integrity is overseen by the Data Governance Council, established in 2019. This council is co-chaired by the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and the Director of OIRP and includes representation from senior leaders at RIC who have policy-level responsibility for data, a faculty representative, and a member of the Professional Staff Association. The charge of this council is to create and approve institutional data policies, processes, and standards, prioritize and approve data governance-related projects, act as the champion for data governance, and provide regular communication on the status of data governance work at the College. Recently, the Data Integrity Review and Standards group was created as a working group of the Data Governance Council to examine data quality issues that arise either in the council or from other areas.

While the work of OIRP and the Data Governance Council is exceptional, the self-study notes that overall, the College needs a stronger data system and additional staffing to do evaluation tracking

effectively. As evidenced in the data request form numbers provided by OIRP, the number of internal ad-hoc data requests has increased by 112% since 2016 and the requests have become more complex. However, the number of staff in OIRP has not increased, including only two full-time staff, a Director and Associate Director, with support from a graduate assistant. In addition, discussions with members of various divisions confirmed that the current Enterprise Data System (ERP), PeopleSoft, was not being utilized to its fullest extent and that it is nearing its end of life. In addition, many departments use external specialized software, which vary in their ability to integrate with PeopleSoft. In several meetings with administration and staff, Rhode Island College was described as 'data rich, but information poor.' In addition to replacing the College's ERP, OIRP staff suggested that data visualization software (such as Tableau or PowerBI) would assist with increasing comfort and literacy with data and allow for more robust data analyses to inform decision making.

Evaluation
Rhode Island College has a robust assessment and evaluation process. At the institutional level, the College assesses educational effectiveness through both quantitative and qualitative measures. The College regularly monitors retention and graduation rates, student engagement indicators, first-year credit accumulation and post-graduate outcomes. In addition, college-wide surveys such as the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE), alumni surveys, and non-returning student surveys provide information regarding student experiences at RIC.

Program level learning assessment is also rigorous. Each academic division has at least one assessment coordinator, with some also having assessment committees. Learning outcomes are present in nearly all programs and are published on program webpages. Each school has a different process and measures for the assessment of student learning. Departments provide assessment reports through PB Works, a web-based file-sharing software, which are then reviewed by the Assessment Coordinator and the Committee on Assessing Student Outcomes (CASO). While some of these programs' reports are on their webpages, many programs only publish their reports on PB works, which is not accessible to the public. In addition, the self-study observes that a review of these reports shows that some programs are still struggling with closing the loop on assessment.

The self-study makes it clear that the College has not followed the program review cycle for non-accredited programs and has not adhered to the schedule of reviews announced in the 2016 NEASC interim report. Of the 27 programs in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, four new programs have not yet been reviewed and eight programs have not been reviewed in the last decade. The reasons for the non-adherence include the leadership changes discussed previously, as well as a decline in interest for program reviews from the Council of Postsecondary Education.

To address the concerns with program review, a Program Review Committee, composed of faculty, administrators, the Provost, and the Director of OIRP was created in Fall 2020. The charge of this committee was to draft a transparent process within the College's shared governance structure that included a deliberate and data-driven approach to decision making and a standardized annual program review report. The reports will address mission alignment, enrollment trends, student outcome trends, assessment, and program resources. The committee presented the proposal in Spring 2021, and workshops are planned for Fall 2021 to help programs complete the forms. In meetings with the Provost and Provost's Council, the team was made aware that the process has begun with the creation of standardized data reports for programs and data validation of those reports are underway.

While a program review process is in place for academic programs, a similar process is not currently in place for non-academic departments. Because of the increase in the number of these departments and the relationship with strategic plans, it would be beneficial to create a non-academic review process modeled on the academic program review process.

Standard 3: ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

External Governance
Rhode Island College, a Carnegie Masters College, has clearly delineated administrative and governance protocols set among the Board of Education, Council of Postsecondary Education (CPE), RIC Administration, and the internal RIC Council. The CPE, a public and independent council composed of eight volunteer members plus the Chair of the Board of Education as an ex-officio member, and a single non-voting student member, has oversight of the Office of Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC), the Commissioner being the state's Chief Education Officer. Administrative relationships are demonstrated within the relevant documents that outline responsibilities including the Board of Education Regulations, the CPE Mission and Responsibilities, the RIC Administrative Policies and Governance Documents and the RIC Council Charter and By-laws. These roles and individual associations of each member of the CPE with RIC is confirmed by those members as is their dedication and focus on Rhode Island College. The CPE has responsibilities that include data analysis, strategic planning, policy creation, fiscal assistance and allocation, regulatory and administrative policies and regulations, and representing RIC (and the Community College of Rhode Island) (https://www.riopc.edu/page/OPC%20mission/).

The official function of the CPE is to act as Rhode Island's legal representative for post-secondary institutions, to act as the official employer, property owner, and representative for any contractual negotiations. The CPE also sets tuition. This limited statement of roles is extended through the good coordination between the CPE Commissioner and the President of Rhode Island College allowing strong exchange of planning, efficiencies, and student outcomes. The CPE is responsible for hiring the President of RIC but the President, in turn, is ultimately responsible for all hiring on the RIC campus. Members of the CPE confirm that the Governor and Legislature recognize the individual roles of each state institution of higher learning.

The RIC self-study is forthcoming in recognizing that the recent decade (since 2011) has brought challenges due to fluctuating upper administration and changes in the Rhode Island system, especially with the extraction of the University of Rhode Island from oversight by the Council of Postsecondary Education. The President of RIC also recognizes that he came to campus at a time when the RIC Council was accustomed to operating as more than an advisory group and claiming more administrative authority than might be expected. To that end the President set up meetings to align expectations and worked hard to create inclusive strategic committees with strong faculty presence.

Some members of the CPE itself, early in the process of transitioning the University Rhode Island (URI) out of the CPE, voiced that they had concerns about the changes, but those concerns have since been assuaged. Specifically, the CPE and members of the President's Executive Cabinet find strengths in the new CPE, with the greater focus this group can now offer RIC. The CPE also points out their work in helping to obtain bond issuances to support new facilities on campus. Members of the CPE also confirm that URI remains committed to relevant partnerships with RIC and the Community College of Rhode Island. The Board of Education advisory committee met as an ad hoc committee when the governance

structure changed and focused on outcomes, with membership that includes the Presidents of the three state schools plus a single private school.

The working relationship between RIC and CPE is demonstrated through various initiatives that include the Rhode Island Nursing Education Center which opened in 2017, in downtown Providence, to share a facility with the University of Rhode Island; and creation of the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as well as the RIC Division of Student Success. While the reporting structure is clear, the CPE is "prohibited by law" from interfering in RIC administration. CPE, in fact, designates the RIC president as the campus authority to oversee all operations. This autonomy is essential to best ensure agile responses to any college challenge or needs.

Internal Governance
The internal governance of RIC is represented by a set of upper and mid-level administrators (defined as reporting to the President) that range from Director to Vice President. The CPE appoints the College President after a national search, with input from the campus and after receiving a recommendation from the Board. The President serves a three-year term with annual reviews by a CPE Personnel Review Committee.   At RIC the President's Executive Cabinet is represented by the Vice Presidents (including revisions that converted the Vice President for Academic Affairs to Provost plus AVPP, in addition to a VP for Administration and Finance, VP for Advancement and College Relations, a VP for Student Success, plus several Associate VPs and Executive Directors. Non vice-presidential direct reports to the President include two Associate Vice Presidents (DEI and Professional Studies and Continuing Education) plus an Executive Director for Strategic Initiatives, a Director of Athletics, and a Director for External Affairs and Communication.

An Extended President's Executive Cabinet includes the college deans and other mid-level administrators that help bring a wider array of relevant parties to the table (including union leadership, faculty council representation, athletics, etc.).   The 32 members of the Extended Cabinet ensures good representation and provides a venue for information sharing. It is not a decision-making body.

Within the Division of Academic Affairs, Provost's Council is composed of the six deans, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, and several Directors (including the Library, Sponsored Projects, Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, and Center for Research & Creative Activity). Three of the current six deans are interim. The Provost is relatively new (hired near the start of the pandemic) but has clearly developed a good rapport with her direct reports.

There are many positions on campus that remain interim. This is at least in large part a result of the difficult and somewhat tortuous process involved in receiving permission to bring on new positions. Replacement hires can be approved internally. Revising job descriptions/titles is a cumbersome process that may require external approval. The process involves what seem to be extraneous steps and permissions from off-campus offices

The Executive Committee of the RIC Council oversees the Council activities and designates the agenda for regular meetings. The Executive Committee also oversees the RIC Council by-laws for review by the Council. The Council Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and two additional elected Council members make up the Executive Committee. The College President and VPAA (now Provost) are ex officio members. The inclusive membership of the Executive Committee including faculty and upper-level administrators is a serious commitment to shared governance and helping promote transparency.   In addition, strong

inclusion of faculty on the budget planning committee is an excellent and transparent approach to shared governance. Faculty shared that the administration has been making important inroads to growing shared governance.

As is true at many institutions of higher learning, the faculty representative body, the RIC Council, is composed of representation from across campus totaling 38 members. The Council is composed of a majority faculty (31), one adjunct faculty member representative, plus representatives from other divisions, including the President and Provost, staff (2 members), and two undergraduate students. This structure, even without voting rights for the upper administration, allows for input of administrative views and better access to high level data. The RIC Council has 24 standing committees allowing for a wide variety of service activities for participating faculty and staff. Still, 24 committees produce possibly narrower silos of responsibility than might be needed in resolving issues that cross individual committee charges and the need to consider broader College issues (e.g., enrollment, retention, financial, etc.). It is appropriate that the RIC Council leadership shared that they are considering blending or redesignating some of the many committees and possibly reducing the overall number.

Two students (both undergraduate and with voting rights) sit on the RIC Council. These students are appointments made by the Student Community Government (SCG). A student also sits on the CPE but that seat rotates between RIC and Community College of Rhode Island, thus representation by a student in a given year is one or the other.

A Committee on Academic Policies and Procedures with a faculty member as chair, reviews and approves policies for the RIC Council action. As these policies likely impact a student's transition through the College and that in turn can influence retention and enrollment issues, it would be important to have representation from enrollment management on the committee which currently seems to be absent.

The RIC Council is considered, as stated in the self-study, the primary mechanism for shared governance within RIC. The RIC Council was created and operates within an established charter that is considered the "chief regulatory agency of the faculty" covering matters of curriculum, faculty roles as teachers, academic criteria and standards, and the wellbeing of faculty. The latter is an overlap with the role also assumed by the representative faculty union thus. The co-mingling of responsibilities and oversight (with grievance policies outlined in the contract) can create lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities.

Staff voiced concerns that their voices on the RIC Council was exceptionally limited and that college layoffs of staff in 2020 sent "shock waves" through the College. A discussion about the possibility of a Staff Council began but has not continued.   RIC is to be commended for starting processes to consider best approach to ensuring each issue is handled collaboratively while exploring additional revenue and enrollment options to support any new initiative.

Adjunct representation during an open meeting was quite small but the few that attended, including the union president, noted the very strong links they have within their departments. They also note they feel they have "no role in shared governance". The President of the adjunct union felt that the adjunct faculty "were the last to know."   Another adjunct faculty member lauded the work of RIC in supporting her as an adjunct colleague.

Faculty voiced concern that they have had little interaction with the Council on Postsecondary Education. It is not unusual for a governing board of this type to be held separate from faculty with the conduit being the upper administration. There is a desire for the CPE to offer additional clarity to the College on specific goals and outcomes and then trust the College to effectively seek to remedy shortcomings or meet those goals.

The President and upper administration are accessible to faculty representatives within both the RIC Council and the AFT through regular meetings. The Provost holds regular meetings with the Provost's Council and separately with her staff. Several years ago, the AFT began to conduct surveys on upper administration to share feedback from faculty with administration. The results are shared with the RIC/AFT committee, individuals reviewed, and sometimes with the supervisor of the person reviewed. It is not incorporated into an official evaluation process. Shared governance might assume the opportunity for the upper administration and faculty in general to also evaluate the success of the faculty governance bodies but this does not take place.

Students have an excellent opportunity to contribute to student well-being on campus through the RIC Student Community Government, Inc. Their by-laws, in many ways, parallel those of the RIC Council and their processes and governing rules outlined in those bylaws offer a strong approach to participatory government for students and a conduit to serve the College.

Standard Four: THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Rhode Island College (RIC) offers nearly 60 undergraduate degree programs, 28 master's degree programs, a self-designed undergraduate major, 17 undergraduate certificates, 24 graduate certificates, and one certificate of advanced graduate study. The institution offers two doctoral programs: Nursing Practice (DNP) and a Ph.D. in Education, the latter delivered jointly with the University of Rhode Island. It does not offer associate degrees. RIC comprises five schools: the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the School of Nursing, the School of Business, the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development, and the School of Social Work. As reported in the Data First Forms, RIC awarded 1,312 bachelor's degrees, 298 master's degrees, and 1 doctoral degree in 2020.

In Fall 2020, RIC's unduplicated undergraduate headcount was 5,998, a decrease of 15.3% since Fall 2017. Its unduplicated degree/certificate graduate headcount was 893, a 3.2% increase. Enrollments in the School of Social Work fell slightly over that period, while RIC's other four schools experienced double-digit declines.

The institution's largest school is the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, which enrolls slightly fewer than half of RIC's undergraduates. As the Data First Forms indicate, the most common (popular) major is Nursing, followed by, Psychology, Management, Social Work and Medical Imaging. RIC's largest graduate school by enrollment is Education and Human Development, followed by Social Work and Nursing.

All RIC coursework is credit-bearing except for developmental/remedial math and English. The institution offers CEU and CCS (Certificate of Continuing Study) programming through its Professional Studies and Continuing Education division. While that unit currently reports outside of Academic Affairs

(to the President), the Provost has developed appropriate mechanisms for assuring the quality and integrity of CEU and CCS offerings in her role as chief academic officer.

As evidenced by a review of the catalog and sample syllabi, RIC's portfolio of academic programs appropriately reflects its mission of "offer[ing] vibrant programs in arts and sciences, business, and professional disciplines." A 40-credit General Education program is required of all undergraduates, and students earn a varying number of credits in the major. There is no College-wide policy stipulating the number of upper-level courses a student must complete in a baccalaureate program, but faculty affirmed in two meetings with the evaluation team that students preparing to enter "high credit" programs are apprised of the implications of those credit requirements for time-to-degree. Faculty noted this is especially true of students in professional programs like Secondary Education.

Assuring Academic Quality
Working through their departments, schools, College-wide curriculum and assessment committees, and governance body (the Council of Rhode Island College), the faculty are responsible for academic content and its quality at all levels, in all modalities (hybrid, in person, online), and at all instructional locations. Quality of instruction is assessed through student evaluations of teaching and surveys of faculty instructional activity. Student learning is evaluated against program/course learning goals through an array of formative and summative assessments as detailed in the E Series Forms. Institutional learning goals and student outcomes are reviewed annually by RIC's Assessment Coordinator, who chairs the Committee on Assessment of Student Outcomes (CASO). A separate assessment of General Education outcomes is conducted by the Committee on General Education (COGE).

RIC acknowledges that it did not have an Assessment Coordinator between Spring 2018 and Spring 2021, and that a model of outcomes assessment reliant to some degree on individual faculty members' interest in assessment may not be sustainable. In a meeting with the evaluation team, Council of Rhode Island faculty members confirmed that a new Coordinator is in place and is working with faculty and department chairs to improve assessment practices in collaboration with RIC's schools and departments. A group of chairs seconded this in a subsequent meeting.

The institution's professionally accredited programs respond to external review requirements set by their respective accreditors, which include the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), and the International Accreditation Council for Business Education. Externally accredited programs at RIC include social work, business, art, music, nursing, and counseling. The accreditor for education is the Rhode Island Department of Education.

In separate meetings with the evaluation team, the Provost and several faculty acknowledged that RIC has not followed a consistent program review cycle for non-accredited programs for the past decade or more. As outlined in Standard Two, the institution is addressing the issue.

Four of the institution's eleven General Education outcomes have been assessed since 2013-14. The faculty receive reports on General Education generated by a committee of peers in coordination with the Faculty of Arts and Sciences' Assessment Coordinator, the Committee on General Education (COGE), and the General Education Coordinator.

At the department level, faculty use the review of artifacts collected in their courses to improve courses and/or re-sequence them, and to add or eliminate specific requirements within degree programs.

Faculty in externally accredited programs also assess student learning through a number of standardized measures (e.g. NCLEX-RN for nursing, Praxis exams for education).

The chain of approvals for new and revised courses and programs begins with the department chair and continues with the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) or Graduate Curriculum Committee (GCC). The program goals of courses proposed for inclusion in RIC's General Education program are reviewed by the Committee on General Education (COGE). The program and course approval process includes consideration of student and institutional needs and resource adequacy.

Program eliminations ("deletions") are ostensibly governed by the UCC or GCC. Following the evaluation team's discussions with Rhode Island's Commissioner of Postsecondary Education, the state's Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) chair, several Council members, the Provost, deans, and faculty, it remains unclear whether— and if so, to what precise extent— regulations set forth previously by the CPE and the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner (OPC) still bear on RIC academic program decisions. The team encourages RIC to work with the Commissioner and CPE to establish an exact delineation of authority with respect to academic program management.

Factors weighed currently in program eliminations include the effects on key constituencies, including faculty and staff; resource implications; and teach-out provisions for affected students.

Undergraduate Degree Programs
Students are guided by a degree planning tool (the "Rhode Map") along with an individually tailored academic advising report. Faculty are the primary advisors. Several faculty across multiple meetings emphasized a strong culture of institutional pride with respect to detailed and student-centric advising practices.

As confirmed by a review of select departmental sites, academic programs publish their learning goals on their web pages in a clear format where they are readily locatable.

Students' proficiency in written and oral English is supported by the institution's First Year Writing program and by a university-wide Writing in the Discipline (WID) course requirement.

The team encountered some instances of faculty discontentment regarding the need to honor established credit transfer protocols, particularly where Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) students are concerned. The team urges the RIC academic leadership to work with the faculty in ensuring that the College meets its obligations to MOUs and articulation agreements governing the evaluation and award of transfer credit.

General Education
As noted above, all RIC undergraduates must complete the same 40-credit program in General Education. The program comprises three core courses, seven distribution areas, and a discipline-based writing requirement. Undergraduates must further complete nine credits of "milestone" coursework, including a one-credit course on navigating College life. Required proficiencies in math and a foreign language may or may not entail credit applied toward the "milestone" total (students have a choice, and work with their faculty advisors in making that choice). Discussions with three faculty groups and one large group of department chairs revealed no endemic concerns about the quality or delivery of RIC's

General Education program, though one Arts & Sciences chair noted that staffing shortfalls can make offering certain courses on a regular basis challenging.

The Major or Concentration
All RIC undergraduates complete a defined program of study while earning a minimum of 120 credits. Credits in the major vary markedly by program and by broader classification (e.g. liberal arts v. professional degree programs), such that some liberal arts majors take up to 40 credits of electives (outside of General Education and requirements for the major), while some professional program students take no elective credits. In that context, one faculty member expressed concern about "credit creep" in RIC's professional programs and its implications for student progression and retention.

Graduate Degree Programs
As indicated by a review of university websites, the catalog, and sample syllabi, RIC offers a well-designed complement of graduate programs. All master's programs require a minimum of 30 credits. Master's level study includes research-based, disciplinary, and professional/practice programs (featuring clinical, practica, or related experience leading to certification or licensure). A Graduate Committee comprising primarily faculty is responsible for ensuring the quality of programs and curricula. Graduate students at any level may bring in no more than six transfer credits.

NECHE asked the evaluation team to secure an update on the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program, including RIC's success in achieving its enrollment goals for that program. The Dean of Nursing confirmed that she and her colleagues have targeted a yield of 10 students "or more" for the DNP over the next several years, and that the program's current total enrollment is 19 for fall 2021 and 13 for fall of 2020. (Related plans for the program include the further development of the BSN to DNP track in nurse anesthesia, a move responsive to anticipated demand as prompted by new state licensure requirements.) The Dean affirmed that the outlook for the DNP is positive, and that she and her faculty are eager to grow the program over time.

The Rhode Island Nursing Education Center (RINEC) is jointly occupied by RIC, the University of Rhode Island (URI), and Brown University. The facility opened in 2017 and is co-managed by RIC and URI, including shared use of clinical and classroom spaces through coordinated scheduling. RINEC houses RIC's graduate programs and upper-level undergraduate courses and clinicals. The Dean of Nursing and the Director of the DNP confirmed that RINEC's simulation labs (in particular) are a vital instructional resource and an effective recruitment tool for drawing undergraduates to the School's graduate programs. A wide-ranging discussion with Nursing's faculty, adjunct faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates provided ample evidence of the School's strong commitments to collegiality and student success.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit
The awarding of credit and degrees is governed by policies set forth in the institution's catalog and in its Manual of Academic Policies and Procedures (MAPP). The determination of course credit hours is established by MAPP policy 14.1.b, with one credit hour requiring 50 minutes of face-to-face contact per week, and two additional hours of work for each contact hour, across a 15-week semester. An explanation of how the credit hour is to be awarded in new or revised courses is required by the undergraduate or graduate curriculum committee (UCC or GCC) as a component of its review process.

Internship and/or experiential learning opportunities are available to most RIC students. Independent study must be arranged through the department chairs—who also evaluate study abroad credit— and are guided by expectations set forth in MAPP. Deans provide final approval.

The institution awards credit for prior learning for defined military and law enforcement experience. Credit award or prior learning does not count toward fulfillment of the institution's residency requirement. Students seeking prior learning credit are supported by a faculty sponsor in preparing a portfolio that serves as the basis of the assessment.

Dual (early) enrollment programs are governed by college policy and must meet NACEP standards. As affirmed in the self-study, all distance learning, dual and concurrent enrollment, and continuing education courses are under the institution's direct control, and all courses except high school-based early enrollment courses are taught by RIC faculty.

RIC's policy on transfer credit is in its catalog along with related resource information for transfer students. The transfer policy is also available on the Admissions website, which links in turn to the statewide articulation agreement. The policy stipulates the maximum number of credits that may be transferred in, the minimum number of credits that must be earned at RIC to earn a degree from the institution, and the minimum number of those credits that must be earned in the major. The institution also offers transfer minors.

As reported in Standard Four and in the Affirmation of Compliance, the identity of distance education students is verified through login credentials required for accessing the College's various instructional resources (Blackboard, Zoom, Office 365).

Standard 5: STUDENTS

Rhode Island College (RIC) holds a unique place in Rhode Island's public higher education system as a mid-sized, 7,072 (fall 2020), institution serving a very diverse student body as evidenced by its designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). Roughly 40% of RIC's undergraduates are students of color, 47% are Pell Eligible, and 46% are first generation students. RIC prides itself in being a "College of Opportunity" by providing access to an educational experience to a population of traditionally underserved students that creates pathways to advancement at an extremely competitive value.

RIC is truly a state institution; 86% of their undergraduates being from Rhode Island, 12% regional students, and around 1% coming from out of the region. Additionally, most of the students commute to campus with only 15% of students residing on campus before COVID.

The student meetings affirmed that students value RIC for its affordability, strength of academic programs, and opportunities for social mobility. Most students testified to the caring nature of faculty and staff, noting that this level of care and attention is what has supported their staying at the college.

RIC's Division of Student Success provides services to support students through the areas of enrollment management, academic support, and campus life. This division has several staff in interim roles, and many who are also new to the college. Coupled with the impact of COVID, interrupted strategic planning, the staff in this area have dealt with challenges in a thoughtful way to sustain services to support students. Their 2021-2022 Strategic Plan identified a range of outcomes with priorities being

increasing retention and degree completion, access to higher education, advising, improving the transition and integration of new students, increasing the sense of belonging, and increased social and emotional growth. The 14 goals within the plan align with the mission and values of the division. In meeting with the staff from this area it was clear that they work well together and are focused on forging partnerships cross-divisionally to address the needs of students and challenges of the current environment.

An area of emphasis for this visit was to understand how RIC is meeting enrollment goals, measuring student success, and assessing initiatives to improve retention. Since 2009 the college has experienced declining enrollment from an overall headcount of 9260 in 2009/10 to 7072 in 2020/21. Looking at the size of recent incoming classes of first year students we see a decline from 1147 in 2016/17, to 780 in 2020/21 - though 1019/20 was an increase of 228 students from 830 in 2018/19. As was described by the Division of Student Success and supported by the data in the self-study, one issue in the management of enrollment is in retention efforts. Specifically, the percentage of students persisting from first to second semester is solid, ranging from 86%-88% from 2017/18 - 2019/20, however the slip begins in the between first and second year where the fall-to-fall retention rate has averaged 74% in recent years. Another enrollment concern is the loss of new freshmen and transfer students.

In addition to declining enrollment of transfer students, the team heard from students how difficult the process was. The barriers shared at a student meeting ranged from equivalency evaluations to being redirected to many offices to get issues resolved. One student, now a senior in the nursing program, was frustrated that after having earned an associate degree in health sciences, many fewer credits were accepted than expected. Further understanding of barriers to transfer students deserves attention.

While awaiting the establishment and charge to the planned Strategic Enrollment Committee, the department of Enrollment Management has made good progress toward addressing enrollment concerns. Much of this staff is new and highly qualified with excellent experience to inform smart strategy. From an admissions perspective, progress has been made to align fiscal, human, and technological resources, such as SalesForce, to better position the college to address concerns.

The new Prospective Student Center is well situated on the campus and creates a very welcoming environment for all. Restructuring of positions and job descriptions will allow for more strategic outreach and recruitment and the addition of five new recruiters who should start this coming January further assist in broadening and deepening outreach to existing and new markets. Training of staff is newly focused on customer service with an aim to be relational rather than transactional. Instead of relying solely on the Common App, the funnel is being increased, they will be looking outside of Rhode Island, as well as increasing the number of touchpoints prospective students will receive in the process.

There is a disconnect between the admissions experience for undergraduate and graduate students. The process for recruitment of graduate students appears to be decentralized and may not be maximizing enrollment in these programs although the implementation of CollegeNet to centralize the application process may help. It is not evident what the marketing plan is for graduate programs.

 College and Student Success leadership recognizes the importance of financial aid in recruiting and retaining students. They are in the final stages of an RFP to select a partner for packaging strategies that will better position RIC to support students in all years of study, not just first year. The college's ability to

meet the gap was emphasized by comments made in one of the student forums that the visiting team attended.

As much as getting students matriculated, the issue of retention remains a challenge to overall enrollment. As many staff shared with the team during the visit, getting the students here is not the real problem, keeping them here is. New strategies around retention are also being developed, including the addition of platforms like Starfish to better track students and identify opportunities for earlier intervention to support student success. Important to the retention of students is a strong advising program. The OASIS is staffed by professional advisors who collaborate with faculty advisors. This group, along with New Student Programs have developed a more comprehensive first year program with initiating alerts earlier in the fall semester. Since Starfish was introduced in 2019 more users, faculty and staff have been added with the goal of all appropriate staff being in the system ensuring a more effective process for intervention and reporting across the college. Counseling Services engaged more social workers for a case management model for students in need.

The "RIC Run around" is felt by students across years and disciplines. There is frustration that they are referred to one too many offices and/or people to get an answer or issue resolved. The Division of Student Success has discussed hopes to create a One Stop Office that warrants further investigation including student input into what that might look like.

The climate survey completed in 2019 is very comprehensive in identifying the positive aspects of RIC, specifically the overall welcoming environment in which most feel safe and comfortable. The data also suggest areas that need attention which will help inform and guide strategic plans, resource allocation, elimination of barriers, and increased training and awareness to further improve the climate for all (faculty, staff, and students)

Overall, the team saw evidence from documents and meetings on campus that there are many efforts in place to address the concerns and challenges enrollment management and campus climate to improve the experience for students. However, many of these strategies, programs, and initiatives are too nascent to fully assess their level of effectiveness. It is also important that when RIC is considering technology to support these efforts that they are coordinated and compatible with platforms and systems across the college.

Student life includes a wide array of organizations, a Student Community Government, and a strong athletic program with 21 teams that supports student success and retention. The Student Community Government is a separate 501C3 and is understaffed or with interim staff in the area. Hiring new staff should help in advisement.

An additional area of emphasis that the self-study was asked to address was whether the college is admitting students who can be successful in the Certificate of Undergraduate Study in College and Career Attainment (CUS CCA) program and ensuring that the advising and academic support services are sufficient to support this program. This program, which began in 2016, was designed for those with intellectual disabilities to advance their knowledge, work experience, and social opportunities in an inclusive environment for two years of half-time study. It was supported by student tuition and federal funding admitting five students the first year with a goal of cohorts of no more than 10 as the program progressed. The evaluations were positive from enrolling students who could successfully complete; 4 of 5, 4 of 7, and 6 of 7 in years 1-3 and highly positive feedback, especially from employers of these

students. Though the federal funding for the CUS CCA was extended from October 2020 through 2021, a subsequent grant was sought and was not received. As a result, this program closed with the final cohort completing in summer 2021. After the program expiration, students may select to take classes at RIC with support from Paul V. Sherlock Center for Disabilities as a component of the College. The Center also provides services to children, youth, and adults with disabilities in the community.

Standard Six: TEACHING, LEARNING, AND SCHOLARSHIP

Faculty
Teaching, learning, and scholarship play a central role in the Rhode Island College (RIC) mission to maintain high academic standards both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The self-study states, "RIC places considerable emphasis on recruiting, hiring, evaluating, supporting, developing, and sustaining its faculty base" (p.58). The administration, faculty, and staff share a common goal of academic excellence, and together, they work and support each other to achieve it.

The RIC faculty and staff cadre consists of 319 (52%) full-time and 294 (48%) adjunct faculty, faculty librarians, a Library Director and library staff, 4 Office of Academic Support and Information Systems (OASIS) staff, and 21 funded graduate teaching assistants (GTAs). The departments that rely on GTAs are responsible for assigning, training, supervising, and evaluating them. Perhaps the RIC Office of Graduate Studies can consider creating an infrastructure for a graduate teaching assistant program to permit careful selection, training, supervision, evaluation, and coaching of GTAs that is grounded in research on teaching and learning.

Among the full-time faculty, 37% hold the rank of professor, another 37% hold the rank of associate professor, and 26% hold the rank of assistant professor. Eighty-five percent of full-time faculty have a doctorate degree relevant to the discipline they teach; 15% of full-time faculty have a master's degree relevant to what they are teaching or equivalent experiences and specialization in the discipline they teach. Some of these faculty are in limited-term positions. The curriculum vitae provide evidence of adequate to exceptional qualifications (i.e., educational attainment, research, work experience, publications, and presentations) of full-time and adjunct faculty that appropriately qualify them to carry out the RIC mission and programs.

Faculty who are teaching at the graduate level demonstrate command of their discipline and ability to sustain teaching excellence through dedicated professional development and scholarly endeavors. There is no distinction between undergraduate and graduate faculty. Full-time faculty are expected to maintain a 12-credit-hour workload per semester, which includes teaching, research, and service as defined in the collective agreement between RIC/American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the Council on Postsecondary Education, referred to as "the Contract" (2018-2021). Adjunct faculty are hired directly by the department chairs. The NECHE team learned from the adjunct faculty that their positions are not usually posted or advertised publicly; rather, the typical process is by word of mouth. The Contract also gives preference to adjunct faculty who have accumulated teaching load hours at RIC.

Diversity and inclusion are one of the six RIC core values. The Strategic Plan promises to invest in highly qualified, diverse faculty and staff through equitable and competitive salary structures (RIC Three-Year Strategic Action Plan, July 1, 2017-June 30, 2020, p.9). As of 2020, the composition of faculty reflects diversity in gender (female: 61.8%, male: 38.2%) and professional and racial/ethnic backgrounds and

experiences. Hiring policies and practices suggest RIC's effort in recruiting faculty with a lens for equity, diversity, and inclusion. However, there is a noticeable disparity in the racial/ethnic distribution of faculty. Whites dominate the RIC full-time and adjunct faculty (81.5%/79.9%); Asian (8.8%/.7%), Hispanic/Latino (4%/5.1%), and Black/African American (2.5%/5.1%). However, among the academic staff, 72.2% are female and 27.8% are male, while 83.3% are White, 11.1% are Asian, and 5.6% are Hispanic/Latino. The self-study does not report any Black/African American academic staff member. When asked how they can better serve students, faculty and staff expressed the need for more racial and ethnic diversity among faculty and staff. The NECHE team notes a lack of strategic clarity to ensure effective execution of recruitment and retention plans for diversifying faculty and staff, as well as metrics that will be used to measure progress toward this goal.

Since 2017, RIC has decreased the number of its full-time faculty (approx. by 5%) and adjunct faculty (approx. by 30%). The administrators and faculty cite the drop in enrollment over the last three years, the COVID-related austerity measures, and efforts to contain staff costs at a time of tight state budgets, as reasons for this action. Even though the self-study, corroborated by faculty and staff, indicates faculty overload, both administrators and faculty seem positive that the current number of faculty is adequate to continue advancing the RIC mission.

The recruitment, appointment, tenure, and promotion processes appear to be fair and well-administered. The tenure and promotion process provides a structure that assures objective, systematic, and thorough appraisal of candidates. The two main criteria in determining the contributions of a faculty member are: teaching effectiveness (i.e., content knowledge, organization, and presentation of evidence, teaching performance) and professional competence (research, publications, grants, creativity; leadership and service to RIC; professional improvement; leadership and service to the community, state, or nation). Students' faculty evaluation report is among the documents included in the faculty candidate's portfolio. Each academic department has its own course evaluation instrument that invites candidates' feedback about curriculum, courses, and pedagogy to be used for the annual evaluation of course instructors. The course evaluation form is filled in by the students and then fed through a Scantron scanning machine to automatically score and analyze. A statistical data report is forwarded to the department chair and course instructor who discuss the results of the students' evaluation. Even though the RIC community recognizes the primacy of teaching in its mission, it also emphasizes faculty scholarship. The Contract (2018-2021) has detailed guidelines for tenure and promotion, and other major faculty matters (i.e., salary and benefits, professional conduct, and academic freedom) and defines how faculty will be assessed on the two criteria. The five Schools use these procedures.

There is a separate collective bargaining agreement for adjunct faculty to determine their evaluation and criteria for advancement. The Contract requires an evaluation of adjunct course instructors every semester and classroom observation by full-time faculty. Some adjunct faculty members suggested an inconsistency in the administration of classroom observations; in other departments classroom observations are rarely or never conducted. To further strengthen adjunct faculty's teaching effectiveness, the NECHE team encourages departments to provide their adjunct faculty with opportunities to become more integrated into the larger RIC professional learning community.

The Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) provides data and reports for internal audiences such as those relating to academic program review, online course evaluations, and accreditation. OIRP has conducted several surveys, i.e., Alumni Survey, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE),

and the Non-Returning Student Survey that give important information about faculty, staff, and programs to determine the quality of teaching and learning. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion led the effort on a Campus Climate Survey that the OIRP assisted with. The NECHE team encourages faculty to put forth considerable and focused efforts in fostering a culture of assessment integrated into their instructional practices and consistently make data-driven decisions to change good programs into excellent ones. Essential to the process of student learning and academic program improvement and prioritization, the faculty can perhaps collaboratively utilize the expanded functions of the OIRP to create a systematic assessment system within and across academic programs and use data to inspire reflection and critical discussion around findings.

Area of Emphasis
One of RIC's areas of emphasis is continuing its efforts to address faculty salary and workload issues and to assess the effectiveness of faculty advising. In effort to address faculty salary disparities based on gender, race, or other characteristics, the Contract created a salary structure for faculty that levels the average salaries with the national average salaries for faculty in comparable institutions. The Contract describes the implementation of the salary correction process, increment placement, and performance increments using the scales in Salary Chart A and B (pp. 59-63). The Contract addresses the workload issues by creating opportunities for faculty to reduce teaching load to concentrate on other endeavors (i.e., scholarly research or curriculum development), including research reassigned time that is distributed by the Committee for Faculty Scholarship and Development, sabbatical leave, grants, and special assignments. In Standard Five: Students, the section on Academic Advising (p. 45) discusses the implementation of Starfish, an advising, early-alert, and retention tool that enhances the advising experience for advisors and students, since its adoption in 2018. RIC conducted an advising survey in effort to assess the effectiveness of mandatory advising. However, the survey was limited to department chairs, directors, or program coordinators. Departments serving only graduate students were excluded. There is no clear indication of RIC's intent to assess the effectiveness of faculty advising although at a meeting with the Division of Student Success, the NECHE team learned about a plan in motion to reconfigure the organizational structure for advising. Once the structure of the advising system is in operation, RIC should begin its periodic assessment of the effectiveness of the advising system to ensure that students are well served.

Teaching and Learning
There is no doubt regarding the faculty commitment to student learning. Students comment on faculty effectiveness as well as the close interactions between students and teachers and the caring and nurturing nature of most faculty members.

In fall 2021, courses are taught in-person, online, or hybrid. Sample course syllabi illustrate the faculty's ability to use suitable and relevant pedagogy for in-person and online teaching. Courses with multiple sections are taught in-person and online. Majority of courses are taught in-person. The self-study describes how, during the faculty's transition into online teaching, faculty had no familiarity with the Learning Management System (LMS). Faculty quickly learned about online platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Blackboard, and Zoom which allowed them to create educational courses using options of video meeting, workplace chat, and file storage to keep their classes organized and easy to work. They had opportunities for training throughout the spring months. Some faculty started by integrating into the course syllabus online features they have already mastered such as email, slides, PowerPoint, audio, videos, and structured assignments. The spring 2020 survey of full-time and adjunct faculty reveals faculty use a variety of approaches to remote teaching in varying levels of expertise to

engage and retain their students: Blackboard with its collaborative functions (12%), Blackboard and other components (3%), email and Blackboard (23%), video and Blackboard (11%), video and other components (7%), and multiple platforms and other components (30%). Many faculty members agree that keeping track of technological development can be very challenging. The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL) can further support full-time and adjunct faculty's teaching and learning by broadening and deepening their competence in terms of knowledge, skill and experience through practice and training in the use of various online platforms and innovative technology tools.

RIC faculty strongly believe their academic freedom is well protected. At the faculty forum, they shared examples of how, as individuals and as a collective, they have enjoyed academic freedom in curriculum development, pedagogy, content selection, scholarly inquiry, and/or creative endeavor. RIC has written policies (in the Contract) covering both academic freedom and academic misconducts/ethics.

Regarding faculty diversity, as discussed above, RIC reports that in 2020-2021, 18.5% of the full-time faculty are faculty of color, and the majority of full-time and adjunct faculty are female, and Whites. RIC recognizes that a highly qualified diverse community of faculty and scholars is necessary to achieve academic excellence. In the Summary of Principal Findings of the Self-Study (p. xxvii), one of RIC's diversity priorities is to hire faculty and staff that represent the diverse student body. Administrators present in the Standard 3 and 9 session affirmed their commitment and determination to invest in diversifying the faculty and staff. They also shared a few RIC successful major faculty diversification efforts. Even though administrators seem to be well versed in recruitment marketing and strategies, it appears that deep, meaningful conversations about retention strategies should also occur.

Institutional Effectiveness
RIC has a well-developed vehicle in place to support faculty endeavors (teaching, scholarship, service). Moving forward, RIC should engage in efforts to assess the effectiveness of these endeavors in supporting its mission then subsequently use assessment results for improvement. RIC aspires to maintain and increase its reputation as a strong undergraduate institution. It may also want to consider whether a greater emphasis on graduate education and research will be needed moving forward, particularly to support and retain its doctoral candidates. The NECHE team acknowledges the significant and productive degree of faculty engagement in RIC's pandemic response efforts, strategic planning work, and related College initiatives. Discussions with faculty, deans, and the Provost have made clear the importance and weight of the faculty's contributions in those areas. RIC has recognized that faculty salary disparities based on gender, race, or other characteristics need to be addressed, as demonstrated by the creation of a salary structure for faculty that levels the average salaries with the national average salaries for faculty in comparable institutions as well as the implementation of the salary correction process, increment placement, and performance increments. It will be important for RIC to continue to think carefully about how best to reward faculty who excel in teaching and research and to identify impediments to achieving excellence in these areas.

Standard 7: INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

Validating the sufficiency of institutional resources devoted to fulfilling the mission of Rhode Island College during what is presumed, or at least hoped, to be the waning phase of the COVID-19 pandemic represents both a challenge and opportunity. The challenge arises from not knowing the extent to which conditions revealed in the self-study and observed during the on-campus evaluation arose from

the unprecedented impact of the pandemic or served as indicators of the general condition of the institution. Understanding how RIC responded to the adversity of the pandemic, however, in terms of resource management offered a unique opportunity to evaluate the mettle, resolve, and resilience of the institution.

Financial Resources
As a key component of the evaluation of institutional resources, the visiting team directed specific attention to assessing the extent to which RIC responding to areas of concern identified by the Commission:

- "Success in integrating its comprehensive strategic planning and financial process and demonstrating a realistic course of action to achieve identified objectives" (NECHE, November 16, 2017).

- "Success in increasing transparency in budget process, linking budget allocations to priorities identified in the strategic plan, and aligning central and unit budget reporting with emphasis on information technology infrastructure and services" (NECHE, September 22, 2016).

- "Progress in implementing the recommendations outlined in the audit report of the Council on Postsecondary Education" (NECHE, September 22, 2016). Those recommendations were manifold, including
    - "Review the college's strategic vision as part of the budget cycle."
    - "Require departmental management to submit budgets, operational plans and cost mitigation strategies which align with the strategic vision."

Useful perspective for the assessment of the financial resources of RIC is offered in the self-study in Table 7.1, "State General Revenues 2000-2021 and Funding for RIC." That table summarizes annual appropriations from the State of Rhode Island, gross tuition and fees, and other unrestricted revenue. Although the data in Table 7.1 extend as far back as FY2000, for purposes of this evaluation, concentration largely centered on FY2010 and later to exclude the confounding influence of the Great Recession of 2008 and 2009.

In the narrative of the self-study, RIC leadership sees, "The table . . . show[s] that the College has increased its reliance on tuition revenue over time" (p. 71). Indeed, from FY2007, the earliest year for which gross tuition and fees revenue is presented, tuition and fees revenue grew from nearly $43.0 million to approximately $65.5 million in FY2021; but further insight into the funding of RIC is derived from a closer examination of Table 7.1. A different conclusion emerges, for example, by isolating on the past decade, from FY2011 to FY2021. During that time, the rate of increase in gross tuition and fees is attenuated, rising from $62.4 million to more than $65.5 million in FY2021. Uneven variability exists in that trend, with the annual amount for gross tuition and fees exceeding $70 million in three of the past ten years, but the growing reliance on tuition and fees revenue is less pronounced than when relying on FY2007 as the starting point.

Further perspective regarding reliance on tuition and fees revenue is offered by comparing that with appropriations in state general revenue. From FY2011 to FY2021, those general appropriations expanded from $37.6 million to $52.2 million. Contrary to the supposition that the increased reliance on tuition and fees revenue was a consequence of a decline in state funds, during the past decade the

mean annually compounded rate of increase in state appropriations exceeds that of tuition and fees: 3.3% versus 0.5%, respectively. Controlling for the unusually large increment in the state appropriation for FY2021 by looking at the decade from FY2010 to FY2020, that same relationship exists. During that earlier decade, state appropriations increased 2.4% annually on average, compared with mean annual increases in tuition and fees of 1.4%.   Over time, due to that differential in rates of increase, the proportion of total unrestricted revenue derived from state appropriations increased modestly from 35% in FY2011 to 43% in FY2021 (or 38% in FY2010 to 41% in FY2020). By contrast, gross tuition, and fees as a percentage of total unrestricted revenue declined slightly over that same period, from 59% to 54%.

Even though gross tuition and fees represents a moderately declining percentage of total unrestricted revenue, the salience of the suggestion that RIC increasingly relies on that source of revenue may accrue from other trends in Table 7.1 pertaining to other unrestricted revenue and annual student headcount. The table reveals volatility from year to year in levels of other unrestricted revenue. From FY2011 to FY2021, annual unrestricted revenue varied between a high of $7.7 million in FY2013 to $3.2 million in FY2021. Generally, however, the level of other unrestricted revenue declined at a mean annual rate of 6.3%. The shrinking and inconsistent nature of other unrestricted annual revenue likely contributes to the perception of necessary, increased reliance on the more predictable revenue source of tuition and fees.

Further, concern about reliance on tuition and fees revenue becomes particularly noteworthy when examining the trend in annual student headcount reported in Table 7.1. For more than a decade, headcount declined each year from a high of 9,260 in FY2010 to 7,072 in FY2021, a precipitous drop of 23.6%. (In the FY2022 budget request submitted to the state, headcount was projected to be less than 7,000.)   The mean annual decline in student headcount over the most recently completed ten years is 2.5%. More critically, but Table 7.1 shows acceleration in the rate of decline in recent years. Contrasting the decline in student headcount with the albeit modest upward trend in gross tuition and fees gives rise to a key implication in Table 7.1: that a decreasing number of students is shouldering a growing level of cost to attend RIC.

The long-term trend in declining enrollment was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In FY2021, student headcount decreased 6.1% from 7,531 to 7,072, resulting in a $6 million loss in tuition revenue, as estimated by RIC. Related, as a rippling of the impact of the pandemic, during FY2021, budgets for revenue from housing and dining services were reduced $1.5 million and $3.2 million, respectively, reductions of nearly 60%.   Intertwined with the adversity caused by the pandemic, and furthering the competition for new students, in 2017 the State of Rhode Island introduced the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship that enables students entering Community College of Rhode Island directly from high school, and fulfilled other criteria, to complete two years of fulltime study tuition free.

To mitigate the unfavorable decline in tuition and fees revenue caused by decreased enrollment, for four of the five most recent fiscal years, including FY2022, RIC instituted increases in tuition and fees that consistently exceeded the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Wage Earners (CPI-W) and the Higher Education Price Index (HEPI). During that period, excluding the modest increase of 1.7% in FY2019, increases in the price of in-state tuition ranged between 5.5% and 7.8%. The cumulative increase in tuition and fees across those five years was 24.1% compared with 12.4% and 13.4% for the CPI-W and the HEPI, respectively. RIC also was near the bottom of their peer group in tuition and tuition increases would put them more on par with their peers. RIC leadership appears to have adopted this tuition-

pricing strategy as one of limited options to respond to the financial constraints facing the college. Implementing a series of large annual increases in tuition, however, would seem to impose substantial risk on finding success in attracting a growing number of students from a shrinking pool of traditional college-bound students, particularly when a sister state-sponsored institution offers free tuition.

Responding further to the growing financial stress caused by more than a decade of declining enrollments—punctuated by the pervasive impact of the pandemic (including an unanticipated $4 million reduction to the FY2020 state allocation)—RIC implemented austerity measures in FY2019 and FY2020. Those austerity measures were broadly spread throughout the institution, and produced $10.3 million in cost reductions, approximately equivalent to 4.4% of the combined budgets for those two years of $233 million.

During the comprehensive review evidence was found that current circumstances of RIC have enhanced the impetus of the leadership to enact the recommendations of NECHE to exercise greater inclusion and transparency in the budget process, and to rely on comprehensive long-range strategic planning as the guiding framework for determining the allocation of resources.

In FY2020, the effort to address the strain on financial resources was augmented by the creation of a presidentially established planning group, the Strategic Budget and Resource Planning Committee (SBRPC). The SBRPC is composed of faculty members, staff members, and administrators tasked with identifying potential strategies for restoring the financial vitality of the institution. Companions in that effort are the Capital Planning Committee, and Workforce Advisory Committee. RIC also embodies other committees and groups with capacity for informing how to beneficially deploy the resources of the college.

The budget process now engages a broader cross-section of budget managers and other constituents at all levels of the institution to develop annual operating and capital budgets for the college. Each year, pursuant to the requirements of the State, RIC prepares and submits balanced budgets to solicit state appropriations, and re-crafts balanced budgets that align with the appropriations ultimately provided by the state. Results of the past two budget cycles suggest that the comprehensive and inclusive budget processes more recently employed by RIC has enhance the ability of the institution to advocate for necessary state appropriations. For FY2021 and FY2022, state appropriations allocated to RIC grew annually by 9.1% and 11.3%, respectively.

As further observation, relying only on cursory knowledge of the legislative and political forces impinging on RIC, insight garnered from this evaluation suggests that, to some degree, even with the most robust processes for institutional planning and budgeting, the college is impeded in its strategic initiative by policies and processes of the State of Rhode Island. For example, financial planning is rendered difficult by the obligation of RIC to announce new rates for tuition and fees before being apprised of the level of appropriation from the state. Also, the lack of formulaic means for predicting or estimating even the order of magnitude for the state allocation constrains the capacity of the institution to fully engage in advanced, long-range planning.

Human Resources
The work of RIC is conducted by a loyal and dedicated workforce. Underscoring and undergirding the affinity and devotion of the employees, roughly one-third of the employees of RIC are graduates of the college. They understand the valuable mission of the institution of providing affordable postsecondary

education and enhanced opportunity for the future to students, largely from throughout Rhode Island, many of whom are first-generation college students.

Inasmuch as nearly three-quarters of the expenses of the college are personnel related, employees have been directly affected by the fiscal challenges facing RIC; and that impact was compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since FY2019, the college invoked reductions in personnel as one facet of addressing extraordinary deficits. Over that time, 68.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions were laid off, and another 58.5 FTE positions were held vacant. The cumulative effect of those layoffs and extended vacancies was a reduction in overall staffing of approximately 20 percent. Employees have also experienced delays in salary increases and, in some cases, reductions in salary.

The magnitude of the decrement in staffing is more than can be accommodated by efficiencies in processes or organizational realignments. Consequently, employees carry increased responsibilities, or some functions are minimally fulfilled, if fulfilled at all. Overall, employees pursue their responsibilities with aplomb, pride, and determination, but the magnitude of the reduction in workforce is not without detrimental effect on the institution and the students it serves. Nonetheless, despite the duress of short staffing compounded by the pandemic, employees of the institution maintain a student-first orientation and remain steadfastly focused on the academic success and wellbeing of the students.

RIC is well intentioned in the management of human resources. One example described during the evaluation visit was of a review of the Security Department that produced an updating of employment classifications in that department, and a modernization of procedures. On other dimensions, those intentions are less well fulfilled. Anecdotally, in an open forum with staff, roughly half indicated that they had not participated in annual evaluations in more than one year. In addition, an unusually large proportion of employees carry the term, "Interim," in the titles for their positions. College leadership explained that phenomenon, in part, as a function of adapting to what is hoped to be the temporary nature of reduced employment levels, and/or of the byzantine bureaucratic process of the state for authorizing new positions or changes in responsibilities for existing positions. Employees reported that the pervasive use of the "interim" designation contributed to an air of tentativeness that produced insecurity among them and inhibited long-term perspective.

Information, Physical, and Technological Resources
Over the past decade, supported by capital appropriations from the state, RIC implemented a significant revitalization of its campus. Since 2012, in collaboration with the state, the college invested approximately $124 million in substantially renovating over 100,000 square feet of facilities space, including classrooms, laboratories, academic and administrative offices, athletics facilities, and welcome center. In addition, another $63 million is designated for further major renovations that are in progress and planned. The results of those investments are readily apparent and contribute well to enhancing the education experience of students and the quality of work life for employees.

Toward the end of ensuring the prolonged utility of its facilities, the college has established schedules for regular maintenance and upgrades of buildings, systems, and equipment. Those are supported by institutional funding and by capital appropriations from the state determined as a component of the annual state budgeting process.

Technological resources are widely deployed across campus for both academic and administrative purposes. The nimbleness of RIC in responding to technological needs was demonstrated by the ability

of the institution to transition in a two-week period, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, from in-person to remote learning.

Growth and application of technology across campus, however, appears to have occurred with a rapidity that, to some degree, defied integrated planning. The college employs an estimated 80 different satellite systems used for broad and diverse purposes. Despite the ubiquitous nature of those systems, a paucity of data integration was observed. Inconsistency exists in terms of connectivity and conventions for defining, maintaining, and sharing data. In some cases, relevant data are not easily accessible to decision makers. RIC is striving to establish unity and standardization in the use of technology, and to transition the institutional research function of the institution from one of a custodian of data to that of a service provider that facilitates and enables end users to access and effectively utilize data.

RIC relies on an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to manage student records, financial operations, and human resources functions. The most recent upgrade of the system occurred at the time of preemptory actions taken to safeguard technology resources in anticipation of Y2K. The system is current in its functionality because of concerted effort over the past two to three years to address deferred system maintenance. The PeopleSoft application that serves as the basis for the ERP system, however, is nearing the end of its useful life. College leadership estimates that a window of three to four years exists for its replacement and has begun contemplation of a process for implementing and funding that replacement.

Standard 8: EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

RIC provides public undergraduate and graduate education. Evidence of educational effectiveness and student success are reported on the Data First Form, E-Series Form, and Self-Study Report, as well as interview with students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

RIC demonstrates effort to enroll multiple student bodies, including 46% first-generation undergraduate students, 44% BIPOC students, and 38.5% students of color, by using data to inform student recruitment strategy and plan for undergraduate level, which align with the demographic change in the State of Rhode Island.

Assessment Structure
In 2012, RIC appointed a new Assessment Coordinator to coordinate sustained assessment. This position is responsible for coordinating institutional and academic program level assessments. However, between Spring 2018-and Spring 2021, this position was vacant, leading to setbacks in assessment activities. The new Assessment Coordinator recently appointed will need to work with programs to ensure all reports are on the webpage and to assist programs in closing the loop. In addition to the Assessment Coordinator, and in line with shared governance, two committees oversee institutional level student learning assessment. The Committee on Assessment of Student Outcomes (CASO) identifies and evaluates the measures used to assess achievement of college-wide learning goals and reviews student outcomes to guide undergraduate program improvement and development.

This committee, chaired by the Assessment Coordinator, includes administration, professional staff, and faculty, with representation from each of the schools, is responsible for campus-wide undergraduate program assessment, developing training and providing resources for faculty to perform assessment.

The Committee on General Education (COGE) includes faculty and the Assessment Coordinator of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, is responsible for the assessment of General Education outcomes and review of General Education course proposals. Graduate programs assessments are performed by individual programs. Faculty reflected that program with internal self-study processes shall be better connected with undergraduate programs.

Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) is responsible to conduct survey, data collection, analysis, dissemination to inform campus community and leadership for decision making and planning. The evaluation team suggests data validation be performed by OIRP and Academic Affairs to better informs academic departments for their program reviews.

Academic Program Assessment
RIC academic program assessment performed by faculty in academic departments through self-study process. Certain academic programs employ the standards established by programmatic accreditors and other professional organizations, including National Association of Schools of Art and Design, Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology, American Chemical Society, Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs, Rhode Island Department of Education, National Association of Schools of Music, Joint Review Committee on Educational Programs in Nuclear Medicine Technology, International Accreditation Council for Business Education, Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education.

For the academic programs without external accreditation, student learning outcomes, benchmarks, and assessments are developed and completed by faculty in each program and department. Faculty appreciate academic freedom on being able to establish its own standards for program assessment and evaluation. In addition, course level assessment may be achieved through other culminating experiences. This may be through performance (dance), standardized national exam (physics, nursing), portfolios (studio art), senior seminar projects, and/or student teaching and internships (education, social work). The evaluation team reviewed course syllabi and discussed with faculty, deans, and the Provost, confirmed that RIC has a place standards of achievement appropriate to the degrees it awards.

All academic departments are required to submit annual reports in June, which are reviewed by CASO and the Assessment Coordinator. While some of these program annual reports are available on their webpages, many programs selected to publish their reports on PB works, a RIC internal electronic platform, which is not accessible to the public.

Each school has different personnel facilitate student learning assessment. Feinstein School of Education and Human Development has a full-time Director of Assessment who coordinates assessment activities in the school, the School of Social Work and School of Nursing have assessment and program improvement committees. The Dean coordinates and oversees all assessment work in the School of Business. In the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, assessment remains the responsibility of individual programs.

Currently, each school and academic department has their own assessment model, some have Assessment Coordinators and/or Assessment Committee, which develop assessment benchmarks and conduct evaluation. There is no standardized assessment process and the length of review cycle across academic programs is not consistent. Despite the setbacks, assessment has continued and with the new Assessment Coordinator in place, gaps are being addressed. In addition, the self-study observes that a review of these reports shows that some programs are still struggling with closing the loop on

assessment. RIC academic leadership acknowledges the needs of standardized academic program assessment, sustainable model, streamlining the process, and is establishing a unified self-study cycle, while continuing to allow and appreciate academic freedom.

Assessment Measures
The measures used to assess student learning outcomes also vary by school. The School of Nursing uses licensure exams, the School of Social Work uses licensure passage rates, the School of Business, as part of an application to be accredited by the Accreditation Council for Business Education (IACBE) conducted extensive assessment of student learning outcomes in their programs and courses, Feinstein School of Education uses results on PRAXIS examinations. Through a review of the E-Series forms and interview with faculty, the evaluation team found that in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, programs that are not subject to external accreditation generally use course-embedded assessment measures. Programs have identified areas that need additional attention or a different approach. For example, the Physics program results from Force Concept Inventory (FCI), a nationally normed standardized test, revealed two areas in which students did not score high: Understanding different representations of motion and using Newton's Laws to predict motion. Faculty worked to redesign the lab manual for this course to increase the emphasis on these areas. Assessment results are utilized to improve learning opportunities. The information collected from all departments by CASO demonstrates most programs are utilizing the data to discuss outcomes and improve the programs, typically in faculty meetings within schools and departments.

General Education and Writing in Discipline
General Education program and First Year Seminar (RIC 100) learning outcomes establishment and assessment are coordinated and collaborated by Committee on General Education (COGE) and Committee on Assessment of Student Outcomes (CASO), which include representatives from each academic school. Since the last NECHE self-study, RIC developed a new General Education program and four of the 11 learning outcomes have completed a full outcomes assessment.

CASO jointly created rubrics with COGE and Writing Board for academic departments to assess General Education and Writing in the Discipline (WID) program. These efforts helped expand campus-wide involvement in assessment activities, and assessment was becoming a part of the broader dialogue about teaching and learning at RIC.

The General Education assessment of senior papers in 2017 led to the establishment of a Writing in the Discipline (WID) Coordinator, who has been working with departments and programs to refine WID course outcomes by discipline. Finally, the General Education assessment of First Year Seminar courses in 2018 contributed to the creation of a new first year course, RIC 100 Introduction to RIC, that focuses on non-academic information needed for success in college. As of Fall 2019 semester, RIC 100 course is required of all incoming students who enter with fewer than 24 credits.

Disciplinary Assessment
The improvement plans for externally accredited programs are rigorous. For example, the School of Nursing (SON)and the School of Social Work have developed tracking mechanisms for student outcomes data, post their results on their website for public view, and utilize the data each year for informed decisions on program improvement. Although still significantly higher than the national average, the SON 2021 first quarter National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX) results decreased to 90%. SON is developing a performance improvement plan to address the needs of students who have had decreased clinical experiences, due to the pandemic, and who struggle with high stakes

standardized testing. The 2019 NCLEX passing rate was 98.4%, which confirms that the program of study in the SON is appropriately geared toward student success. The Graduate SON Department has also maintained a high passing rate with 91% in 2017, 94% in 2018, and 100% in 2019 on the Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) exam.

Graduate Programs
RIC utilizes several measures of student success beyond the standard metrics discussed above, including graduate school attendance, relationship between job obtained and RIC major, and impact of RIC on success in job. Graduate school attendance for recent undergraduate graduates is obtained both through the Alumni One-Year Out survey and the National Student Loan Clearinghouse. Data from the latter source show that an increasing percentage of RIC undergraduate alumni have been pursuing graduate studies one year after completing their RIC credential. For the cohort graduating in 2015-16, the percentage enrolled in graduate studies or earning a credential one year after was 13.9%; for the cohort graduating in 2018-19, the percentage was 17.1%.

When assessing institutional effectiveness, RIC has historically placed more emphasis on the undergraduate than the graduate experience. However, retention and graduation rates for graduate students have been calculated and examined, and surveys of graduate students have been conducted.

Co-Curricular Activities
The Division of Student Success also plans to develop a more robust evaluation of co-curricular activities including student satisfaction surveys and student reflections and portfolios. Currently, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and Student Census Survey to assessment student engagement and campus climate by Office of Institutional Research and Planning. Data and reports are available to RIC faculty and staff. The team found that co-curricular assessment does occur outside of academic work. For example, the Division of Student Success has developed goals for student co-curricular learning including leadership, personal and social responsibilities, multicultural competence, and critical and creative thinking. To date these have not been assessed.

Retention and Graduation Rates
The Division of Student Success satisfies with their undergraduate retention rate, with students usually leaving due to financial reasons. Financial literacy education effort is made to inform students by Bursar's Office. An early alert system has recently been established for students with low academic performance, so that early intervention can be performed by academic supporting staff. The overall retention rate for bachelor's degree seekers is 75.6%, while 6-year graduation rate is 45.9%, with White students having a notably high rate at 50.2% compared to other races for the Fall 2014 cohort.

For master's programs, retention rates from first to second year in 2020 is 85% and graduation rate at 150% of time is 70.5%. The average time to complete master's degree at RIC is 2.43 years. For doctoral programs, from first to second year retention rate is 84.4%, with graduation rate of 150% of time is 48.5%, and the average time to complete doctoral degree is 4.81 years.

Alumni Survey
Alumni Survey, One Year Out for both undergraduate and graduate students inform by OIRP to inform departments and divisions about job placement one year after they graduated from RIC. In addition to providing data on whether students are employed, the survey of undergraduate alumni one year out asks alumni whether their job is related to their major, their salary, and job satisfaction. More than 75% of respondents over the past five years report that their job is directly related to their RIC major, and a

similar percentage report that their major is related to their field of interest. Nearly 80% of employed alumni report they are satisfied or very satisfied with their job, and the percentage has been increasing. However, the response rate is low and may not truly reflect recent alumni employment. RIC has entered a partnership with Emsi to gather more comprehensive data for employment outcomes for its graduates. They have received the data and are beginning to examine it.

An external review of programs in FSEHD in 2016, led to major revisions. Based on input from the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), coupled with student exit surveys, alumni, and employer survey data, 32 program changes were made, with 207 total curriculum changes approved for the undergraduate and graduate programs in AY 2018-19 alone. With the support of a full-time assessment coordinator, the school has assessment plans for all programs in place.

Standard 9: INTEGRITY, TRANSPARENCY, AND PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

Integrity
RIC has all the integrity related policies and procedures available on its website for students, faculty and staff. All integrity policies must be approved by Rhode Island Commission of Postsecondary Education.

Faculty and Staff Integrity
Faculty and staff ethics and integrity are managed by the Office of Human Resources, and the complaint mechanism is available on its website. Conflict of interests and ethics policies for Rhode Island state employees apply to all RIC staff. each) Statement of Ethical Principles.

Students Integrity
Policies and procedures related to student integrity, honesty, and ethics are available and posted on the website. Student Conduct Board membership includes faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and an administrator. These cover academic integrity as well as student behavior on campus.

Academic Integrity
Academic Integrity Board oversees academic integrity and honesty, plagiarism prevention, accepts complaints and appeals for all students and faculty.

Research Integrity
Office of Sponsored Programs manages all internal research policies and procedures, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) facilitates all research approval and compliance using human and animal subjects. All researcher affiliated to RIC must complete Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) online course before research project application to IRB. College Policy on Scientific Misconduct is available with procedures and appeal mechanisms. RIC Financial Disclosure Policy for Investigators Conducting Research or Other Activities Supported by External Grant Funds is also available on RIC website.

Institutional Research
Office of Institutional Research and Planning adheres to Statement of Ethical Principles by the Association for Institutional Research (AIR).

Title IX and Bias Response
Title IX compliance and bias incident response are managed by the Office of Institutional Equity, with a Title IX Coordinator, under the supervision of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, which reports

to the President. Office of Institutional Equity performs training and provides an electronic reporting system to the campus community for reporting bias incidents. Staff in the Office of DEI reported that there is a challenging relationship between RIC students and Campus Police.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) was established in 2014 with an associate vice-president was hired to support BIPOC students, first generation students, students with disabilities and/or special needs, advocate for DEI issue, as well as comply with the required policies and law. On occasion, the Office of DEI assists in conflict mediation among faculty and staff before complaints elevate to grievance and legal levels. Office of DEI also train all search committee members for affirmative action compliance, promoting DEI to avoid implicit biases in the search process.

Title IX compliance and bias incident response is managed by one Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Institutional Equity, under the Office of DEI. The Unity Center has 1.5 FTE staffing to support LGBTQ+, cisgender women, pregnant students, and parents, provides interfaith service, and support international, immigrant, DACA, refugee, and undocumented students through Interfaith Service, International Students Office, LGBTQ+ Office, and Women's Center.

The evaluation team found that Office of DEI is severely understaffed to service a widely diverse student population, assist in compliance and staff conflict mediation, advocate, and DEI issues, prevent and response to bias incidents, and provide training to all students, faculty, and staff.

Accessibility Services
The Accessibility Committee comprised with faculty and staff reviews disability accessibility matters across the campus and led by the Office of DEI. Accessibility services are provided by Disabilities Service Center for students on both the main campus and the Rhode Island Nursing Education Center to support and provide accommodation for students with disabilities and special needs and comply with American Disabilities Act (ADA). It is suggested that student representation is included in the Accessibility Committee.

Transparency
RIC values transparency through disseminates information by RIC Council and its committees and RIC website, the major avenue for transparency, which provides sufficient information to students, faculty, staff, and the public. All policies and guidelines, RIC Council documents are all available on RIC website. Annual reports and recommendations from divisions and departments are also made to the vice-presidents and presidents. Complaint and appeal policies and procedures are available on the website for students, faculty, and staff. Annual Security and Fire Safety Report is available on Campus Police website.

Annual reports are required by all departments and divisions to inform and suggest leadership in decision making. The evaluation team found that RIC provides many services and support to students, and it will be great if faculty can be informed, so that they can better advise and refer students to appropriate resources when changes are made in student-related offices.

The evaluation team found that RIC provides information and processes of admission, employment, grading, assessment, student discipline, complaints and appeals procedures are available at different

pages on its website. Academic catalogs are available to all students, faculty, and staff with program information, student learning outcomes, curricula, and course sequences.

Academic programs perform reviews (see Standard 8) regularly, but more systematic and standardized procedures and processes shall be established for those programs employing internal self-study. Academic self-study reports are not available on the website, but for internal access.

The evaluation team found that there are many data collected and available to faculty and staff and suggests that more sustainable processes be established for the use of data for planning, quality assurance, and improvement.
Public records requests are received through the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. Public records requests policies and forms can be found on the website. The Office of Institutional Research provides information regarding student achievement in the Common Data Set, Factbook, and Retention/Graduation reports on RIC website.

Public Disclosure
RIC website is the major avenue for public disclosure, information available on its website for the public, students, faculty and staff includes RIC mission, vision, and core values, academic program learning goals and curricula are generally posted on program websites. All RIC Council by-laws and all meeting minutes and governance documents and policies are available.

The length of academic program completion is varying, but not explicitly stated; however, course sequences along with curricula are available on academic program webpages. All accreditation information, status, and expiration dates are posted on RIC website. (https://ricollege.prod.acquia-sites.com/academics/assessment)

Transfer Articulation Pathways from Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) to RIC are available on a web link at Admission website to Rhode Island Transfers website (https://www.ritransfers.org), managed by Rhode Island Board of Education.

Student Consumer Information is thorough and complete and published on RIC website including College Catalog, programs and facilities, academic policies and procedures, tuitions, fees, refund policies, financial aid information, net price calculator, Student Handbooks.
Although faculty and staff directory are available on RIC website, the evaluation team found that faculty credentials, such as degrees earned, are not all published.

NECHE Self-Study report, entire NECHE evaluation process, and invitation for public comments was posted on the website. All other external accreditations are also posted on the website. Overall, the evaluation team found that RIC is well done in public disclosure.

Affirmation of Compliance:

To document the institution's compliance with Federal regulations relating to Title IV, the team reviewed Rhode Island College's Affirmation of Compliance form signed by the CEO. As noted in this report, RIC publicly discloses on its website and other relevant publications its policy on transfer of credits along with a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements. Public notification of the evaluation visit and of the opportunity for public comment was made by the College one month prior to the visit in November 2021. Copies of the College's grievance procedures for faculty, staff and students are distributed annually during orientation and welcome- back sessions held at the start of both the fall and spring semesters. For its online programs and courses, RIC uses a system of secure logins and pedagogical approaches to verify students' identities to ensure the integrity of the programs. As discussed in Standard 4: The Academic Program, the team's review of course schedules and syllabi for a cross-section of RIC course offerings, both classroom and online, as well as courses offered in a condensed weekend or intersession/summer format, found the assignment of credit reflective of the College's policy and consistent with the Commission's standards.

STRENGTHS:

RIC has done an admirable job in creating an inclusive planning process including representation from faculty, staff, students, and alumni on planning committees and participation from the campus community through open meetings, surveys, and comments on drafts and has incorporated past efforts in the mission statement. Strategic planning focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as community partnerships.

The RIC self-study is forthcoming in recognizing issues that unfolded in the recent past regarding shared governance and the College is actively putting processes and programs in place to fully face those issues, resolve perceived stumbling blocks and allow the institution to move forward. RIC has relatively new leadership that with a robust and interested faculty and staff stands to make important strides in understanding shared governance that will help move the institution forward. The Council of Postsecondary Education represents a body of strongly supportive individuals who are seriously invested, along with the RIC President, in assisting the College in gaining additional legislative support for fiscal, infrastructural, and reputational enhancement. Some of this has resulted in additional state funding for capital needs.

Students value RIC for its affordability, strength of academic programs, and opportunities for social mobility. Students comment on faculty effectiveness as well as the relatable, caring and nurturing nature of most faculty members. The climate survey completed in 2019 is very comprehensive in identifying the positive aspects of RIC, specifically the overall welcoming environment in which most feel safe and comfortable. The data also suggest areas that need attention which will help inform and guide strategic plans, resource allocation, elimination of barriers, and increased training and awareness to further improve the climate for all (faculty, staff, and students)

The team applauds the comprehensive and thoughtful work being led by the Provost, deans, department chairs, and faculty to establish an effective cycle of academic program reviews leading to the continuous improvement of student outcomes.

The endowment has a more informed administration of designated funds so that there is not "leaving money on the table." There is a more robust system for administration of scholarships, an earlier announcement of spending for the fiscal year to leverage the use of the scholarships and better planning for departments. There is an increased confidence in resilience of the institution because of successful response to the pandemic.

CONCERNS:

The strategic plans (including the plan in process) are short-term plans and seem tactical rather than outcomes-oriented and strategic. Metrics/benchmarks and other outcome assessments have not been used to evaluate the plans. The budget process is not linked to strategic planning priorities nor is funding prioritized in relation to the strategic plan. Budget cuts appear to be the driving force for budget decisions rather than any strategic plans. However, meetings with the President's Executive Cabinet indicated that in the future, strategic planning priorities will be used to make decisions regarding budget The self-study makes it clear that the College has not followed the program review cycle for non-accredited programs and has not adhered to the schedule of reviews announced in the 2016 NEASC interim report. The College has not implemented a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of

non-academic departments, particularly in non-student facing departments. Academic departments need guidance on how to use academic program review results for future planning, quality assurance, student recruitment, retention, persistence, and connection with employability. Undergraduate and graduate academic program assessments shall have better connection.

The relationship between the CPE and the RIC Council remains unclear with both faculty and staff not fully cognizant of the role of the CPE nor the reporting process to move issues to the CPE. Residual concerns remain on campus among faculty and staff that date back to the transition of the CPE from oversight of three to two institutions and the arrival of the most recent administration. Clarity needs to be enhanced as to the advisory role of the RIC Council and differentiation between shared governance and shared authority

As noted by NECHE as an area of emphasis, RIC is aware of the concerns regarding enrollment management. From an admissions perspective, progress has been made to align fiscal, human, and technological resources to better position the college to address concerns. The strategies around retention are also being developed, including the addition of platforms like Starfish to better track students and identify opportunities for earlier intervention to support student success. The process for recruitment of graduate students is decentralized and may not be maximizing enrollment in these programs. Further understanding of barriers to transfer students deserves attention, it needs to be much more seamless. The "RIC Run around" is felt by students across years and disciplines. There is frustration that they are referred to one too many offices and/or people in order to get an answer or issue resolved. The Division of Student Success has discussed hopes to create a One Stop Office that warrants further investigation including student input into what that might look like.

Regarding human resources, there are too many interim positions, a lack of consistent evaluations and communication and a very cumbersome process for hiring, adapting, and changing positions. Concerns were widely voiced over the number of interim positions that reside on campus as well as the serious decrease in Departmental Administrative Assistants. The strain on the College, faculty, staff and departments needs to be examined to understand how this impact the future of the College. Also, human resources for Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is insufficient to serve a large number of BIPOC, women, LGBTQ+, students with disabilities, and students with special needs.

There is a paucity of data integration and a diversity of data systems with limited connectivity. RIC needs a stronger data system and additional staffing to do evaluation tracking effectively. The current Enterprise Data System (ERP), PeopleSoft, is not being utilized to its fullest extent and that it is nearing its end of life. In addition, many departments use external specialized software, which vary in their ability to integrate with PeopleSoft. With a significant increase in data requests (112% increase) the OIRP will need additional staff to continue to meet increasing demands for data requests.