



HOPE SCHOLARSHIP
Policy Manual
RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

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I. Rhode Island Hope Scholarship Program Overview

In June 2023, the State of Rhode Island created the Rhode Island Hope Scholarship Pilot Program Act (“Hope”). The three purposes of the RI Hope legislation are:

1. To increase the number of students enrolling in and completing four (4) year degrees and certificates on time from Rhode Island College (RIC);
2. To promote more graduates in high-need fields such as nursing, Pre-K through grade twelve (12) education and degrees that meet workforce demands, which are fields for which RIC provides a strong and affordable education;
3. To determine whether a scholarship program for RIC that is modeled on the Promise scholarship program in Chapter 107 of Title 16 would be successful in attaining the goals set forth by this legislation.

Through the Hope Scholarship program, eligible students who attend RIC for their freshman and sophomore years are able to attend RIC for their junior and senior years with free tuition and mandatory student fees. This also applies to adult students who meet the requirements described below. The current Hope legislation provides this scholarship to current and future RIC students.

Under the legislation creating the program, the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) is authorized to promulgate rules and regulations to effectuate the purposes of this legislation, including but not limited to, the residency policy, and Rhode Island College must establish appeal procedures for the award, denial, or revocation of funding under this scholarship program.

The purpose of this Hope Scholarship Policy Manual is to further clarify RIC’s interpretation of the Hope Scholarship legislation and the CPE Policies and Procedures. This document describes the policies and processes that RIC uses in its administration of the Hope Scholarship program.

II. Items Covered by the RI Hope Scholarship

The Hope Scholarship program allows Rhode Island residents who meet program eligibility criteria to attend RIC for their junior and senior years free of tuition and mandatory fees. These are costs and fees that every RIC student is required to pay to enroll in classes. Hope Scholarship funding is available to eligible students regardless of family income.

Hope Scholarship **will cover**:

- Fall and spring courses during both the junior and senior years;
- Intersession (i.e., early spring) courses during both the junior and seniors years;
- Summer classes taken between a student's junior and senior years;
- Any credits taken in excess of eighteen (18) credits per semester during the student's time of eligibility for the award.

Additional **costs not** covered by Hope Scholarship funding include:

- Textbooks;

- Late registration fees;
- Fees associated with particular academic programs (for example, nursing fees);
- Fees associated with particular courses (for example, materials fees);
- Housing and food costs; and,
- Travel costs associated with attendance at RIC.

Hope Scholarship funds are applied after all other sources of federal aid (e.g., Pell Grants, Supplementary Educational Opportunity Grants, etc.), scholarships, and any additional financial aid funding are applied to the student's cost of attendance. No grants received by students from the Department of Children, Youth and Families' Higher Education Opportunity Incentive Grant as established by Chapter 72.8 of Title 42 or the College Crusade Scholarship Act as establishes in Chapter 70 of Title 16 shall be considered federal or financial aid for the purposes of this program.

III. RI Hope Scholarship Eligibility Requirements

The Hope Scholarship program is available to Rhode Island residents who meet the following criteria:

1. The student must **apply to and attend RIC**. More information on admissions can be found on the [RIC Admissions FAQs](#).
2. The student must qualify for **in-state tuition** and fees prior to their junior year, pursuant to the Residency Policy adopted by the Council of Postsecondary Education, as amended, supplemented, restated, or otherwise modified from time to time. (Please refer to <https://riopc.edu/policies/residency-policy/>).
3. The student must have enrolled at Rhode Island College as a **first-time first-year undergraduate student**. The college defines "first-time student" in accordance with the federal definition, which is provided by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). [IPEDS](#) defines a first-time undergraduate student as one who has no prior postsecondary experience (except as noted below) attending any institution for the first time at the undergraduate level. This includes, but is not limited to, a transfer with zero credits and any student who has matriculated at another institution of postsecondary education.
4. The student must have completed both **freshman and sophomore years** at Rhode Island College.
5. The student must enroll, and have continuously been enrolled as a **full-time student**. To remain eligible, the student must continue to be enrolled on a full-time basis at RIC by the dates within the statute. A student who enrolls in fewer than twelve (12) credits in a given semester will be removed from the Hope Scholarship program, unless they are completing remaining graduation requirements in their last semester.
6. The student must complete the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** and any required FAFSA verification or other financial aid forms by the deadline prescribed by RIC for each year in which the student seeks to receive funding under the scholarship program. These forms must be submitted by the deadline prescribed by RIC, for each year in which the student seeks to receive funding under the scholarship program. If you have any questions about FAFSA or financial aid processes contact the [Office of Financial Aid](#).
7. The student must have a **cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5** or greater prior to obtaining the scholarship, and also as a condition of being able to continue to be a scholarship recipient.

8. The student must have a **declared a major** and be accepted into an undergraduate degree program prior to their junior year.
9. The student must remain **on track to graduate on time**. A degree audit must indicate that prior to the beginning of their **junior year** a student has earned 60 credits and needs no more than 78 credits to complete their degree. Likewise, a degree audit must indicate that prior to the beginning of their **senior year**, a student needs no more than 39 credits to complete their degree and graduate. The degree audit will occur after July 1 for students whose first semester at RIC was in the fall and after December 31 for students who started in the spring.
 - a. In the case of a student pursuing a **double-major**, the degree audit will be based on the student's major on record.
 - b. *Students enrolled in majors designated to take more than four (4) years to complete (prior to Fall 2025) must complete the same proportion of those degree requirements to remain eligible for the Hope Scholarship; however, Hope Scholarship funds are not available after the completion of the eighth (8th) spring or fall semester, regardless of whether the student has graduated.*
10. An **"adult" student** is a student who is twenty-four (24) years or older at the beginning of the four-year period in which they earn sixty (60) credits at RIC. Adult students must have completed sixty (60) credit hours of tuition and mandatory at RIC over the duration of no more than four (4) years.
11. The student **must not have already received an award under this program** or under the Promise program, Chapter 107 of Title 16. A student who has received an award under the Promise program is not eligible for the Hope Scholarship.
12. The student must acknowledge their **commitment to live, work, or continue their education** in Rhode Island after graduation through acceptance of the Hope Scholarship as part of their financial aid award.

IV. Removal from the RI Hope Scholarship

Hope Scholarship funding may be applied to any bachelor's degree program or certification at RIC. Students who do not meet the eligibility requirements for the Hope Scholarship program may no longer receive funding. Students may be removed from the scholarship program for failing to file the FAFSA (or the comparable form created by RIC for persons legally unable to complete the FAFSA), failing to enroll full-time, earning fewer than the required credits as described below in "on track to graduate," falling below the cumulative GPA minimum, and/or not enrolling in continuous or sequential fall and spring semesters, and/or after the completion of the eighth (8th) spring/fall semesters.

The Hope Scholarship Program permits certain exceptions to these requirements. See Section V of this manual for these "Special Circumstances."

V. Special Circumstances

The following may be exceptions to the eligibility requirements for students with special circumstances:

- **Leave of Absence.** In the case of a recipient-student who has an approved personal leave of absence or is unable to satisfy one or more specified conditions because of the student's medical or personal circumstances, as approved by the Assistant Vice President, Student Success & Dean of Students, the student may receive or continue to receive an award under the scholarship program upon resuming the student's education, so long as the student continues to

meet all other applicable eligibility requirements. If it is a disability accommodation, please contact the Center for Disability Access.

- **Military Service.** In the case of a recipient-student who is a member of the National Guard or a member of a reserve unit of a branch of the United States military and is unable to satisfy one or more specified conditions because the student is or will be in basic or special military training, or is or will be participating in a deployment of the student's guard or reserve unit, the student may receive or continue to receive an award under the scholarship program upon completion of the student's basic or special military training or deployment.
- **Ingaugural Cohorts.** Students enrolled at RIC as of July 1, 2021 who have attained junior status at RIC as of July 1, 2023, or who enrolled at RIC as of July 1, 2022 and who attain junior status as of July 1, 2024 and who are otherwise in compliance with RIGL Section 16-113, shall be eligible for a Hope Scholarship under that chapter.
- **Students with Disabilities.** Any student with a disability otherwise eligible for a scholarship pursuant to the provisions of RIGL 16-113 shall be entitled to access this program and shall be afforded all reasonable accommodations, as required by the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, including but not limited to, enrolling on a part-time basis and taking longer than four (4) years to graduate with a bachelor's degree. (See Section VI below.)
- **On Track to Graduate.** Students enrolled in certain academic programs that have been identified as needing additional time to complete (i.e., in excess of 120 credits); students who require developmental education, including multilingual learners; or students in double majors may be considered "on track to graduate" for the purposes of Hope Scholarship program, even though they are not on a path to complete a bachelor's degree in four (4) years. For students who meet these criteria, "on track to graduate" will be determined based on the length of their program.

Students who have one of these circumstances and are otherwise eligible for the Hope Scholarship, but have not received notification of award, should follow the appeals process outlined in Section VII of this manual and should email hope@ric.edu if they have any questions about the appeals process.

VI. Hope Scholarship for Students with Disabilities

A student with a disability shall be afforded reasonable accommodations as necessary to provide students with an equal opportunity to benefit from the Hope Scholarship. Students who are approved for a reduced course load as a disability-related accommodation by the RIC Center for Disability Access may be considered as a full-time student for the purposes of eligibility for the Hope Scholarship. However, students must meet all other relevant eligibility criteria.

The Center for Disability Access is responsible for working with students to make disability accommodations. The Center for Disability Access is the College's designated agent for determining eligibility, facilitating access, and coordinating accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. Students requesting adjustments, modifications or services related to a disability should register with the Center for Disability Access to determine eligibility.

Students with an approved reduced course load accommodation may complete no fewer than 12 credits per academic year while retaining their status in the Hope Scholarship program. However, the Hope Scholarship program will only cover tuition and mandatory fees for up to 60 attempted credit hours.

Students with an approved reduced course load will not be eligible to receive additional Hope Scholarship funding after 60 credit hours have been attempted. Students must meet all other Hope Scholarship program requirements.

How to Request a Reduced Course Load Accommodation

Students who wish to request accommodations should visit RIC [Center for Disability Access](#) to get started. Students may also contact the Center for Disability Access at cda@ric.edu, 401-456-2776, or visit the [Center for Disability Access](#) for more information. Please note that relevant and current documentation from a qualified professional is required to establish a non-obvious disability and disability-related need for the specific accommodation requested.

At the time of approval, the Center for Disability Access will communicate a student's reduced course load accommodation to relevant offices, including the Office of Financial Aid. The Office of Financial Aid will note the approved exception to full-time status and will determine whether the student meets all additional criteria for eligibility for the Hope Scholarship at the time the student earned sixty (60) credits. Please note that a reduced course load accommodation may impact other forms of financial aid. Students are encouraged to confirm their status and total impact to their aid package with the Office of Financial Aid before registering for fewer than 12 credits or withdrawing or dropping from courses that will reduce their number of registered credits each semester.

Please note: Students who are permanently approved for this accommodation do not need to reapply for the reduced course load accommodation every semester. The accommodation would apply to that academic year and future semesters.

VII. Appeals Processes

Any student who believes they have met all of the eligibility criteria under the Hope Scholarship program but has been denied may submit a [Hope Scholarship Eligibility Appeals Form](#). This Appeals Form should also be submitted by any students who believe they should be eligible for the Hope Scholarship due to Special Circumstances as described in Section V of this policy manual. The appeal must be submitted the year for which they are seeking a Hope award. The Director in their discretion may review, may extend this period. The Hope Appeals Committee will review appeals and make decisions regarding approval or denial. The decisions of this committee cannot be appealed unless additional information is presented that was not included in the original appeal. Appeals that are approved will be awarded for the current academic year and cannot be awarded for past years.

VIII. Return to Hope Scholarship Eligibility

(1) GPA Improvement

A RIC student who is removed from the Hope Scholarship program due to falling below the required 2.5 cumulative GPA may be able to return to the Hope Scholarship program eligibility. A student may return to eligibility if, after the semester they are removed, they return to RIC for eligibility and they earn a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher. RIC will conduct a review of students who may be eligible to return to the Hope Scholarship program eligibility once final grades are available for each fall, spring,

and summer semester.

(2) Incomplete Assignments

A student whose eligibility depends upon the resolution of an incomplete grade will be eligible for the Hope Scholarship if they successfully resolve the incomplete grade and meet all other requirements at the time that the final eligibility for the upcoming year is determined.

Should a student satisfy the above criteria, they will be able to receive Hope Scholarship funding. Any tuition and mandatory fees already paid by the student that are covered by the Hope Scholarship will be refunded by RIC.

IX. Mistakenly Paid Out-of-Pocket Tuition

Students who pay tuition and mandatory fees and then receive Hope Scholarship funding will receive a refund of their payment once Hope Scholarships are officially disbursed. Refunds are scheduled to begin in October each fall and March each spring.

X. Previous College Credit

All Hope Scholarship students must be enrolled as first time full-time to receive scholarship funding. Transfer students are not eligible for the Hope Scholarship program. Students must enroll at Rhode Island College as first-time first-year undergraduate students.

Under limited circumstances listed below a student may use credits earned prior to first time full-time enrollment at RIC toward the 60-credit program requirement. Students entering with any form of prior credit are still required to continuously enroll full time each semester at RIC to be eligible for the Hope Scholarship.

College credit earned through dual and/or concurrent enrollment programs that are recognized by Rhode Island College (e.g. RIC EEP, CCRI Accelerate, High School Enrichment and Running Start, Seal of Biliteracy, certain college-level RI All Course Network offerings and certain other transferrable programs) will be counted toward the 60 credits students must earn in their first two years to obtain Hope Scholarship eligibility.

College credits earned through 1) Advanced Placement courses, 2) International Baccalaureate courses and/or 3) CLEP exams (and other equivalent college level proficiency exams) must be considered as part of an incoming student's Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). Credits that are approved through the PLA will be applied toward the 60 credits students must earn in their first two years to obtain Hope Scholarship eligibility.