

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP

Introduced By: Senators Lawson, Murray, Euer, DiMario, Cano, Britto, Lauria, Mack, Acosta, and Kallman

Date Introduced: February 16, 2023

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Sections 16-107-2, 16-107-4, 16-107-5, 16-107-6, 16-107-7 and 16-107-8 of  
2 the General Laws in Chapter 16-107 entitled "Rhode Island Promise Scholarship" are hereby  
3 amended to read as follows:

4 **16-107-2. Legislative findings and purpose.**

5 (a) The general assembly finds and declares that:

- 6 (1) Education is critical for the state's young people to achieve their dreams and develop  
7 their talents;
- 8 (2) The state's economic success depends on a highly educated and skilled workforce; and
- 9 (3) The state's future prosperity depends upon its ability to make educational opportunities  
10 beyond high school available for all students as part of a free public education.

11 (b) In order to address the findings set forth in subsection (a), the purpose of this chapter  
12 is to increase the number of students enrolling in and completing degrees on time from ~~the~~  
13 ~~community college of Rhode Island~~ eligible postsecondary institutions.

14 **16-107-4. Definitions.**

15 When used in this chapter, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

- 16 (1) "ADA" means the American with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq., as may  
17 be amended from time to time;
- 18 (2) "Eligible postsecondary institution" means Rhode Island college or the community  
19 college of Rhode Island;

1           ~~(2)~~(3) “FAFSA” means the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form;

2           ~~(3)~~(4) “Mandatory fees and tuition” are the costs that every student is required to pay in  
3 order to enroll in classes, and does not include room and board, textbooks, program fees that may  
4 exist in some majors, course fees that may exist for some specific courses, meal plans, or travel;

5           ~~(4)~~(5) “On track to graduate on time” means the standards determined by the ~~community~~  
6 ~~college of Rhode Island~~ eligible postsecondary institutions in establishing the expectation of a  
7 student to graduate with:

8           (i) An ~~an~~ associate’s degree within two (2) years of enrollment in the case of a student  
9 attending the community college of Rhode Island full-time; or

10           (ii) A bachelor's degree within four (4) years of enrollment in the case of a student attending  
11 Rhode Island college, or the prescribed completion time for a student completing a certificate at an  
12 eligible postsecondary institution (recognizing that some students, including students who require  
13 developmental education, are double majors, or are enrolled in certain professional programs may  
14 require an extended time period for degree completion);

15           ~~(5)~~(6) “Reasonable accommodations” means any necessary modifications or adjustment to  
16 a facility, equipment, program, or manner of operation as required by the Americans with  
17 Disabilities Act (“ADA”) and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794, as  
18 may be amended from time to time;

19           ~~(6)~~(7) “Recipient student” means a student attending the community college of Rhode  
20 Island who qualifies to receive the Rhode Island promise scholarship pursuant to § 16-107-6;

21           ~~(7)~~(8) “Scholarship program” means the Rhode Island promise scholarship program that is  
22 established pursuant to § 16-107-3;

23           ~~(8)~~(9) “State” means the state of Rhode Island; and

24           ~~(9)~~(10) “Student with a disability” means any student otherwise eligible pursuant to § 16-  
25 107-6 who has a physical, developmental, or hidden disability or disabilities, as defined in § 42-  
26 87-1, that would create a hardship or other functional obstacles preventing participation in this  
27 program.

28           **16-107-5. Administration of scholarship program.**

29           (a) The financial aid office, in conjunction with the office of enrollment management or  
30 their respective equivalent offices, at ~~the community college of Rhode Island~~ an eligible  
31 postsecondary institution, shall administer the scholarship program for state residents seeking  
32 associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, or certificates who meet the eligibility requirements in this  
33 chapter.

34           (b) An award of the scholarship program shall cover the cost of two (2) years of tuition and

1 mandatory fees, less federal and all other financial aid monies available to the recipient student. No  
2 grant received by students from the College Crusade Scholarship Act as established in chapter 70  
3 of this title shall be considered federal or financial aid for the purposes of this chapter.

4 (c) The scholarship program is limited to one award per student ~~as required by § 16-107-~~  
5 ~~6(a)(7),~~ except in the case of a student that applies one scholarship to the cost of an associate's  
6 degree at the community college of Rhode Island and then enrolls at Rhode Island college to  
7 complete a degree in a qualifying program of study.

8 **16-107-6. Eligibility for scholarship. Eligibility for scholarship at the community**  
9 **college of Rhode Island.**

10 (a) Beginning with the students who enroll at the community college of Rhode Island in  
11 the fall of 2017, to be considered for the scholarship, a student:

12 (1) Must qualify for in-state tuition and fees pursuant to the residency policy adopted by  
13 the council on postsecondary education, as amended, supplemented, restated, or otherwise modified  
14 from time to time (“residency policy”); provided, that, the student must have satisfied the high  
15 school graduation/equivalency diploma condition prior to reaching nineteen (19) years of age;  
16 provided, further, that in addition to the option of meeting the requirement by receiving a high  
17 school equivalency diploma as described in the residency policy, the student can satisfy the  
18 condition by receiving other certificates or documents of equivalent nature from the state or its  
19 municipalities as recognized by applicable regulations promulgated by the council on elementary  
20 and secondary education;

21 (2) Must be admitted to, and must enroll and attend the community college of Rhode Island  
22 on a full-time basis by the semester immediately following high school graduation or the semester  
23 immediately following receipt of a high school equivalency diploma;

24 (3) Must complete the FAFSA and any required FAFSA verification, or for persons who  
25 are legally unable to complete the FAFSA must complete a comparable form created by the  
26 community college of Rhode Island, by the deadline prescribed by the community college of Rhode  
27 Island for each year in which the student seeks to receive funding under the scholarship program;

28 (4) Must continue to be enrolled on a full-time basis;

29 (5) Must maintain an average annual cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or  
30 greater, as determined by the community college of Rhode Island;

31 (6) Must remain on track to graduate on time as determined by the community college of  
32 Rhode Island;

33 (7) Must not have already received an award under this scholarship program; and

34 (8) Must commit to live, work, or continue their education in Rhode Island after graduation.

1 The community college of Rhode Island shall develop a policy that will secure this  
2 commitment from recipient students.

3 (b) Notwithstanding the eligibility requirements under subsection (a) of this section  
4 (“specified conditions”):

5 (1) In the case of a recipient student who has an approved medical or personal leave of  
6 absence or is unable to satisfy one or more specified conditions because of the student’s medical  
7 or personal circumstances, the student may continue to receive an award under the scholarship  
8 program upon resuming the student’s education so long as the student continues to meet all other  
9 applicable eligibility requirements;

10 (2) In the case of a recipient student who is a member of the national guard or a member  
11 of a reserve unit of a branch of the United States military and is unable to satisfy one or more  
12 specified conditions because the student is or will be in basic or special military training, or is or  
13 will be participating in a deployment of the student’s guard or reserve unit, the student may continue  
14 to receive an award under the scholarship program upon completion of the student’s basic or special  
15 military training or deployment; and

16 (3) Any student with a disability, otherwise eligible for a scholarship pursuant to the  
17 provisions of this section, as of May 15, 2021, shall be entitled to access this program and shall be  
18 afforded all reasonable accommodations, as required by the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act of  
19 1973, including, but not limited to, enrolling on a part-time basis, attaining a high school  
20 diploma/GED by age twenty-one (21), and taking longer than two (2) years to graduate with an  
21 associate’s degree.

22 **16-107-7. Reporting and disbursement.**

23 (a) On or before November 10 and May 10 of each fiscal year following fiscal year 2017,  
24 the ~~community college of Rhode Island~~ eligible postsecondary institutions shall each submit a  
25 report to the director of the office of management and budget, the state budget officer, the house  
26 fiscal advisor, the senate fiscal advisor, the commissioner of postsecondary education, and the chair  
27 of the council on postsecondary education detailing the number of students eligible to participate  
28 in the scholarship program, the amount of federal and institutional financial aid anticipated to be  
29 received by recipient students, the aggregate tuition and mandatory fee costs attributable to  
30 recipient students, and the resulting total cost of the scholarship program to the state. The report  
31 shall contain such data for both the current fiscal year and the most up-to-date forecast for the  
32 following fiscal year. Data reported shall be subdivided by student-year cohort and shall be  
33 accompanied by a written explanation detailing the estimating methodology utilized and any  
34 impact(s) the forecasted data may present to institutional capacity, operational costs, and the

1 tuition/fee revenue base of the institution.

2 (b) On or before July 1, 2020, ~~the community college of Rhode Island~~ and annually  
3 thereafter, all eligible postsecondary institutions and the commissioner of postsecondary education  
4 shall submit a report evaluating the program based on the first two cohorts to the governor, speaker  
5 of the house, and the president of the senate. This evaluation shall include the following:

6 (1) The number of students who started in each cohort;

7 (2) The number of students in each cohort who have attained a degree or certification in an  
8 on-time manner;

9 (3) The number of students in each cohort who have not attained a degree or certification  
10 in an on-time manner and an analysis of why that has happened;

11 (4) The number of students in each cohort who began the program but have been unable to  
12 continue or complete the program and an analysis of why that has happened;

13 (5) The costs of the program and the costs of continuing the program;

14 (6) Suggestions for ways to increase the success of the program;

15 (7) Recommendations as to modifying, continuing, expanding, curtailing, or discontinuing  
16 the program; and

17 (8) Any such other recommendations or information as the ~~community college of Rhode~~  
18 ~~Island~~ eligible postsecondary institutions and the commissioner of postsecondary education deem  
19 appropriate to include in the evaluation.

20 (c) The office of management and budget, in consultation with the office of the  
21 postsecondary commissioner, shall oversee the apportionment and disbursement of all funds  
22 appropriated for the purpose of the scholarship program.

23 **16-107-8. Rules and procedures.**

24 The council on postsecondary education is hereby authorized to promulgate rules to  
25 effectuate the purposes of this chapter and the ~~community college of Rhode Island~~ eligible  
26 postsecondary institutions shall each establish appeal procedures for the award, denial, or  
27 revocation of funding under the scholarship program. The rules shall be promulgated in accordance  
28 with § 16-59-4.

29 SECTION 2. Chapter 16-107 of the General Laws entitled "Rhode Island Promise  
30 Scholarship" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

31 **16-107-9. Eligibility for scholarship at Rhode Island college.**

32 (a) Beginning with the students who enrolled at Rhode Island college in the fall of 2019, a  
33 student shall:

34 (1) Qualify for in-state tuition and fees pursuant to the residency policy adopted by the

1 council on postsecondary education, as amended, supplemented, restated or otherwise modified  
2 from time to time ("residency policy");

3 (2)(i) Enroll as a full-time student, declare a major and have earned a minimum of sixty  
4 (60) credit hours towards an eligible program of study;

5 (ii) For the purpose of this section, an eligible program of study includes chemical  
6 dependency/addiction studies, community and public health promotion, early childhood education,  
7 elementary education, elementary education with concentration in special education, health care  
8 administration, health sciences, medical imaging, nursing, secondary education, social work,  
9 special education, and youth development;

10 (3) Complete the FAFSA and any required FAFSA verification by the deadline prescribed  
11 by Rhode Island college for each year in which the student seeks to receive funding under the  
12 scholarship program;

13 (4) Enroll full-time as a freshman first-time student, except in the case of students enrolling  
14 after completing an associate's degree at the community college of Rhode Island, and continue to  
15 be enrolled on a full-time basis;

16 (5) Maintain an average annual cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or greater, as  
17 determined by Rhode Island college;

18 (6) Remain on track to graduate on time as determined by Rhode Island college; and

19 (7) Commit to live, work, or continue their education in Rhode Island after graduation.  
20 Rhode Island college shall develop a policy that will secure this commitment from recipient  
21 students.

22 (b) Notwithstanding the eligibility requirements under subsection (a) of this section  
23 ("specified conditions");

24 (1) In the case of a recipient student who has an approved medical or personal leave of  
25 absence or is unable to satisfy one or more specified conditions because of the student's medical or  
26 personal circumstances, the student may continue to receive an award under the scholarship  
27 program upon resuming the student's education as long as the student continues to meet all other  
28 applicable eligibility requirements; and

29 (2) In the case of a recipient who is a member of the national guard or a member of a  
30 reserve unit of a branch of the United States military and is unable to satisfy one or more specified  
31 conditions because the student is or will be in basic or special military training, or is or will be  
32 participating in a deployment of the student's guard or reserve unit, the student may continue to  
33 receive an award under the scholarship program upon the completion of the student's basic or  
34 special military training or deployment.

1           (3) Any student with a disability, otherwise eligible for a scholarship pursuant to the  
2 provisions of this section, shall be entitled to access this program and shall be afforded all  
3 reasonable accommodations, as required by the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, including,  
4 but not limited to, enrolling on a part-time basis, attaining a high school diploma/GED by age  
5 twenty-one (21), and taking longer than four (4) years to graduate with a bachelor's degree.

6           SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP

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1           This act would expand the Rhode Island promise scholarship program to include students  
2 at Rhode Island college as well as students with medical, personal leave, military obligations or  
3 disabilities.

4           This act would take effect upon passage.

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