

2022 -- S 2591

LC005461

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2022

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- RHODE ISLAND PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP

Introduced By: Senators Lawson, Cano, Goodwin, McCaffrey, Ruggerio, DiMario, Euer,  
Murray, Sosnowski, and Gallo

Date Introduced: March 10, 2022

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.

2 (c) The scholarship program is limited to one award per student ~~as required by § 16-107-~~  
3 ~~6(a)(7)~~, except in the case of a student that applies one scholarship to the cost of an associate's  
4 degree at the community college of Rhode Island and then enrolls at Rhode Island college to  
5 complete a degree in a qualifying program of study.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 (b) Notwithstanding the eligibility requirements under subsection (a) of this section  
2 ("specified conditions"):

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

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

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

20 **16-107-7. Reporting and disbursement.**

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

34 (b) On or before July 1, 2020, ~~the community college of Rhode Island~~ and annually

1 [thereafter, all eligible postsecondary institutions](#) and the commissioner of postsecondary education  
2 shall submit a report evaluating the program ~~based on the first two cohorts~~ to the governor, speaker  
3 of the house, and the president of the senate. This evaluation shall include the following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

21 **16-107-8. Rules and procedures.**

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

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

29 **16-107-9. Eligibility for scholarship at Rhode Island college.**

30 [\(a\) Beginning with the students who enrolled at Rhode Island college in the fall of 2019, a](#)  
31 [student shall:](#)

32 [\(1\) Qualify for in-state tuition and fees pursuant to the residency policy adopted by the](#)  
33 [council on postsecondary education, as amended, supplemented, restated or otherwise modified](#)  
34 [from time to time \("residency policy"\);](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20           (b) Notwithstanding the eligibility requirements under subsection (a) of this section  
21 ("specified conditions"):

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

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

33           (3) Any student with a disability, otherwise eligible for a scholarship pursuant to the  
34 provisions of this section, shall be entitled to access this program and shall be afforded all

1 reasonable accommodations, as required by the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, including,  
2 but not limited to, enrolling on a part-time basis, attaining a high school diploma/GED by age  
3 twenty-one (21), and taking longer than four (4) years to graduate with a bachelor's degree.

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

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LC005461  
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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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