Senate Finance Committee Hearing

March 25, 2025

President Jack R. Warner

Driving toward five strategic goals at RIC

Rhode Island College's strategic plan was developed by our campus community to provide a guide for institutional decision making. Our actions focus on driving toward five major goals:

1. Build and support a **Student-Centered Ecosystem** that improves pathways for student success

2. Increase our capacity for institutional transformation by investing in **Professional Development**

3. Modernize our systems and processes to become a more **High-Performing & Effective Organization**

4. Embrace our **Hispanic-Serving Institution** status with a focus on a culture of serving students

5. Engage more fully in **Connections Beyond the Campus** to drive greater change and success

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STRATEGIC COMPASS

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Growing momentum across the College

- **Continuing an enrollment turnaround**
  - After a 15-year decline in enrollment, the College experienced enrollment growth this year
  - Enrollment is projected to increase 3.1% for the upcoming 2025-2026 academic year
- **Focusing the budget on key priorities**
  - After reversing daunting projected deficits, RIC balanced the budget in FY 2024 and FY 2025.
  - The focus is now on maintaining a balanced budget while investing in student supports and our business systems to improve outcomes.
- **Investing in student success**
  - Student success investments are focused squarely on ensuring that students are on track to graduate in four years and are graduating with the skills needed for careers.
  - The Hope Scholarship is showing early indicators of success in its first two-years
- **Innovating and investing in the College's future**
  - The College has launched five new degree programs in high-demand fields
  - The Institute for Cybersecurity & Emerging Technologies continues to grow
  - RIC's ongoing capital projects are producing noticeable improvements to the campus

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Continuing an enrollment turnaround

Fall Enrollment Trends
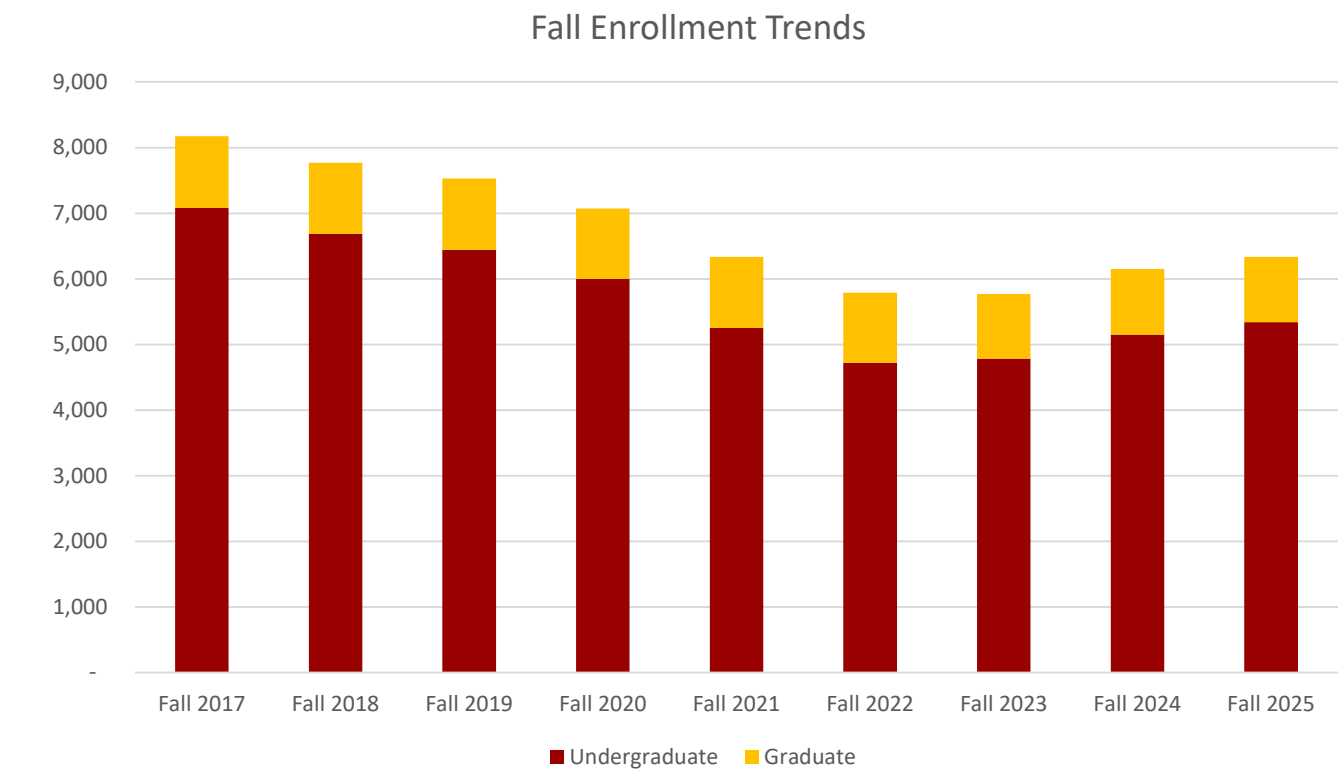
Student Enrollment	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023	Fall 2024	Fall 2025 Projection
Undergraduate	7,080	6,688	6,440	5,998	5,255	4,719	4,786	5,151	5,342
Graduate	1,094	1,083	1,091	1,074	1,079	1,068	982	999	994
Total	8,174	7,771	7,531	7,072	6,334	5,787	5,768	6,150	6,336

FY26 budget: Focusing on key priorities

The Governor's FY 2026 Recommended Budget allows RIC to maintain momentum and continue investing in critical programs for our students. With a $2.6 million increase in general revenue (vs. FY25 enacted), RIC can maintain current service levels and address rising costs. Key areas of focus include:

Investing in student success and career readiness

o A key focus of this budget is career readiness. With $464,377 dedicated to expanding programs in career placement, internships, and work-based learning, RIC will strengthen pathways that prepare students for success beyond the classroom.

Managing rising costs

o To keep pace with cost increases, including collective bargaining agreements, fringe benefit rate changes and inflation, the budget includes an additional $2.3 million in State general revenue to help offset these growing costs, ensuring we can continue to provide high-quality education and support services.

Balancing revenue streams

o The College expects to generate $4.6 million in additional tuition and fee revenue through 3.1% enrollment growth and a 3.6% tuition and fee increase for the 25-26 academic year. This modest adjustment ensures we can continue offering a strong academic experience while managing rising costs.

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FY26 budget: Improving auxiliaries

- **Residential Life now has balanced budget -** Increases to Residence Hall occupancy have yielded significant results, including balancing the budget in FY 2025. Fall 2024 occupancy was 866, up 20% from last fall, and continued growth is expected this fall.

- **Dining will be balanced in FY26** - Donovan Dining has benefited from new leadership and an increase in residential students. It is now projected to have a balanced budget in FY 2026.

- **Student Union will take more time -** Balancing the budget for the Student Union will take successive fee increases and continued enrollment increases. Each year, the budget gap is getting smaller.

	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Projected	FY 2026 Projected
Residential Life				
Revenue	$ 4,700,527	$ 5,654,114	$ 6,696,971	$ 7,341,527
Expenditures	$ 6,240,603	$ 5,897,549	$ 6,379,656	$ 6,961,234
Variance	$ (1,540,076)	$ (243,435)	$ 317,315	$ 380,293
Donovan Dining				
Revenue	$ 5,750,263	$ 6,948,987	$ 7,644,177	$ 8,399,386
Expenditures	$ 6,423,986	$ 7,112,664	$ 7,810,523	$ 8,214,129
Variance	$ (673,723)	$ (163,677)	$ (166,346)	$ 185,257
Student Union				
Revenue	$ 1,385,795	$ 1,430,971	$ 1,544,733	$ 1,785,221
Expenditures	$ 1,843,320	$ 1,820,091	$ 1,915,330	$ 1,958,428
Variance	$ (457,525)	$ (389,120)	$ (370,597)	$ (173,207)
Total				
Revenue	$ 11,836,585	$ 14,034,072	$ 15,885,881	$ 17,526,134
Expenditures	$ 14,507,909	$ 14,830,304	$ 16,105,509	$ 17,133,791
Variance	$ (2,671,324)	$ (796,232)	$ (219,628)	$ 392,343

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Maintaining affordability for students

Undergraduate Tuition and Fees for 2024/2025 Academic Year	State	In-State
University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth*	MA	$ 15,612
Plymouth State University	NH	$ 14,626
Eastern Connecticut State University	CT	$ 13,928
Southern Connecticut State University	CT	$ 13,438
Central Connecticut State University	CT	$ 13,050
Fitchburg State University*	MA	$ 12,846
Westfield State University*	MA	$ 12,364
Salem State University*	MA	$ 12,338
University of Southern Maine	ME	$ 12,090
Framingham State University*	MA	$ 11,920
Worcester State University*	MA	$ 11,786
Bridgewater State University*	MA	$ 11,734
Rhode Island College	RI	$ 11,300

*Note: Through the MASSGrant Plus program, MA public college and universities now offer free tuition and up to $1,200 for books for families earning $85,000 or less

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Investing in student success

Pathways	To ensure that students have **a path to graduate in four years**, RIC has streamlined all degree programs and **reduced the "credit creep"** issues that frequently elongated students' RIC journeys.
Advising	To provide students with additional support navigating the transition to college, RIC has **increased the number of professional advisors four-fold** over the last two years. Nearly all incoming students now have a dedicated professional advisor.
Student Supports	To **support students inside and outside the classroom**, RIC has enhanced a range of services, including peer tutoring and career services. Basic needs are being addressed through focused efforts (e.g. food pantry, former foster youth program).
Scheduling and Orientation	To ensure that students have **the right schedules to start their academic pathways**, RIC has moved to a model of pre-registration for all entering students. To support students in graduating in four years, RIC has **normed year-round learning.**

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Enhancing transfer access and ease

- **Joint Admissions Agreement (JAA) program review and expansion**
  - Worked with URI, CCRI and OPC to update the State's JAA policy
  - Worked in partnership with CCRI to review and approve 31 JAA plans
  - Adding 14 more 2+2 articulation agreements to the JAA programs this year
  - Revised the RIC general education program, which ensures that students' credits transfer more seamlessly
  - Partnering closely with the CCRI Transfer Center to improve the student transfer experience

"Transferring to RIC was seamless," says RIC senior Frederick Torres. Torres came to RIC as a JAA student and will graduate in May 2025 with a degree in Computer Information Systems.
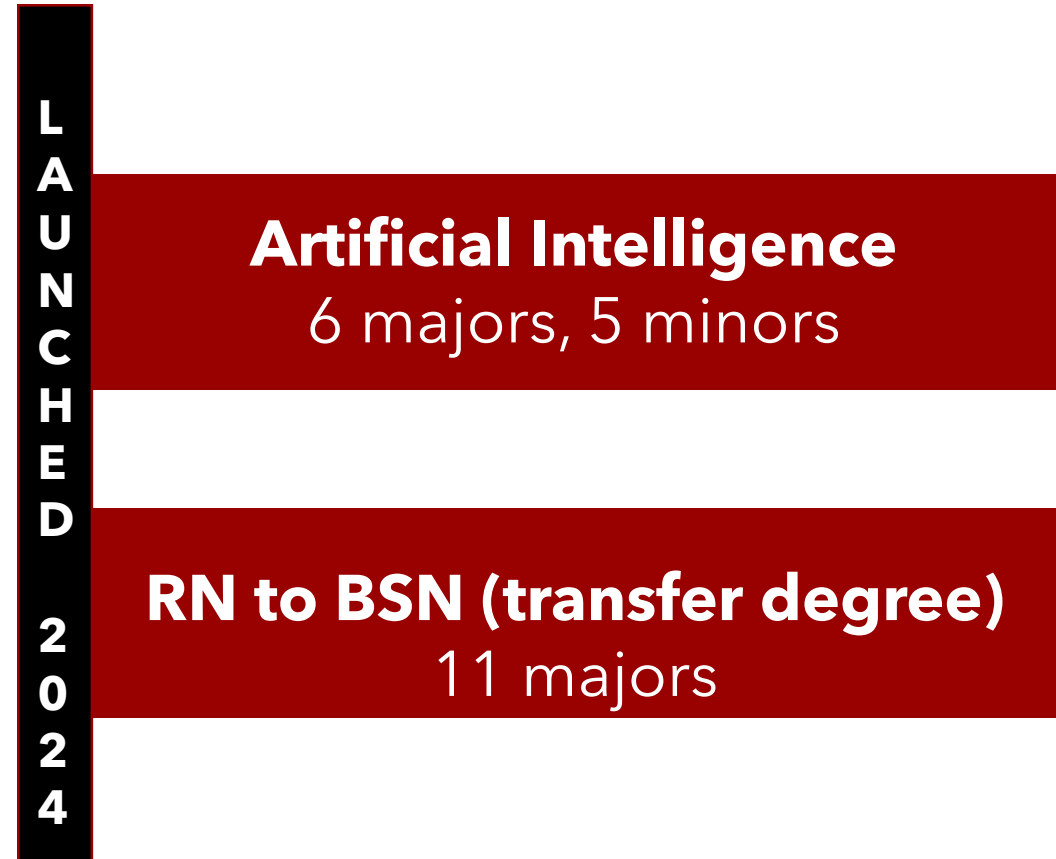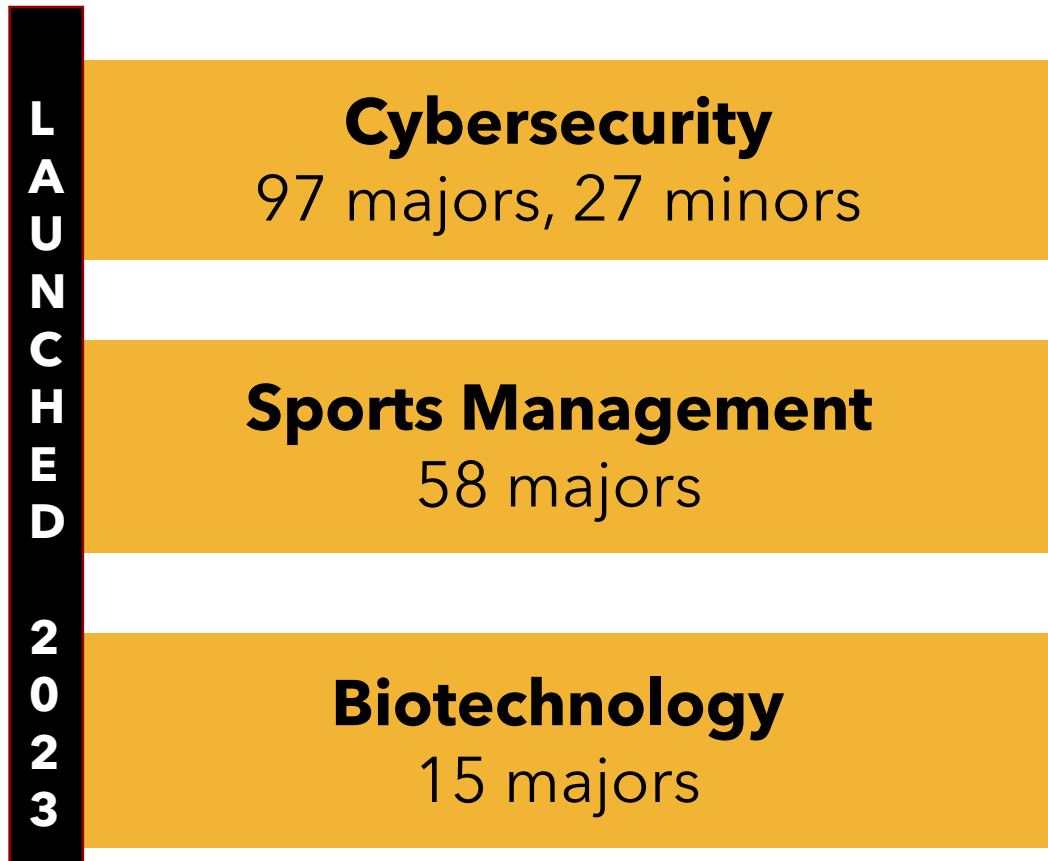
Improving productivity and efficiency

- **RIC is conducting its first Program Productivity & Efficiency review in several years**
  - Based on OPC policy, College is reviewing programs with <11 undergrad or <6 grad degrees awarded for three consecutive years
  - 40 programs (and 35 concentrations within those programs) have been selected for this review:
    - 10 graduate and 30 undergraduate programs

- **Purpose of this work**
  - Evaluate opportunities for greater program productivity, efficiency, and impact
  - Ensure alignment with RIC's mission and Strategic Compass
  - Enhance overall institutional effectiveness
  - Reallocate resources over time to allow new program development where need and demand are demonstrated.

- **Potential program outcomes**
  - <u>Invest</u>: Expand programs with high growth potential
  - <u>Improve</u>: Maintain programs while implementing a Program Improvement Plan
  - <u>Consolidate</u>: Restructure by merging majors, programs, or concentrations
  - <u>Suspend</u>: Cease new enrollments and develop a teach-out plan

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Launching innovative new programs

LAUNCHED 2023

Cybersecurity
97 majors, 27 minors

Sports Management
58 majors

Biotechnology
15 majors

LAUNCHED 2024

Artificial Intelligence
6 majors, 5 minors

RN to BSN (transfer degree)
11 majors

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Growing the Cybersecurity Institute

Expanding Cyber Training & Policy Leadership

- Alger Hall Cyber Range opens June 2025, featuring live cyberattack simulations and specialized training

- Public Sector 24/7 Security Operations Center (SOC) will enhance real-time cyber defense for Rhode Island

- Governor's AI Task Force will release its report in Summer '25

- AI & Cyber Briefings continue for RI Judiciary, Senate, DHS, and Elder Info.

Whipple Hall: Future Cybersecurity Hub

- $73.5M transformation funded by GO Bond and RICAP

- New Cybersecurity Institute will feature 2 cyber ranges, SOC, STEAM Center, and high-tech classrooms

- Design beginning this spring, with construction starting mid-to-late 2026

Seeing initial Hope Scholarship success

The **Hope Scholarship** is designed to increase enrollment and 4-year graduation rates at RIC. Early indicators of success are emerging in the program's second year. To date, 642 students have received Hope Scholarship funding (245 in 2024; 397 in 2025).

Enrollment

RIC's has reversed its enrollment decline over the past two years, with **in-state students accounting 68%** of the undergraduate enrollment increase.

Retention

The **fall-to-spring retention rate has increased** from 86% with the Fall 2023 cohort to 89% with the Fall 2024 cohort.

Hope Eligibility

Junior year **Hope eligibility increasing** with each successive cohort:
- Fall 2021: 30%
- Fall 2022: 36%
- **Fall 2023: 50%+ (est.)**

Note: Items reflect first-year cohorts (full-time, first-time degree-seeking undergraduate students who started during the fall semester)

Modernizing and maintaining our campus

Across campus, **four major capital projects are underway**. Additional small and mid-sized projects will commence this summer, including ADA improvements, parking lot resurfacing, roof replacements, and other critical infrastructure and asset protection work.

- **The Clarke Science** building renovation is nearing completion and on track for summer 2025 opening. Ribbon cutting ceremony to be scheduled for the fall.

- **The Whipple Hall renovation** is progressing as the Capital Projects team reviews architectural and engineering proposals for Spring 2025.

- **The Campus Master Plan** is launching this spring to drive comprehensive modernization and improvement. RIC's first master plan since 2018, this project will be completed in 12 months.

- **The Athletic Track and Soccer Turf Field** projects are complete. Bleachers and a concession/bathroom facility will be constructed this summer/fall for the track.

Clarke Science is on track for a Summer 2025 opening

Developing Rhode Island's future leaders

Nick Garvey '22
Major: Computer Science
Minors: Cybersecurity,
Web Design
**Now: Cybersecurity
Analyst at Axiotrop**

Maria Santonastaso '14, '19
Majors: Early Childhood Ed,
Elementary Ed
Master's: M.Ed. in Reading
**Now: Teacher at Glen Hills
Elementary; 24-25 Milken
Educator Award Recipient**

Jonathan Robinson '13
Major: Communication
**Now: Group Sales
Manager with the
Boston Celtics**

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Thank you for your continued support