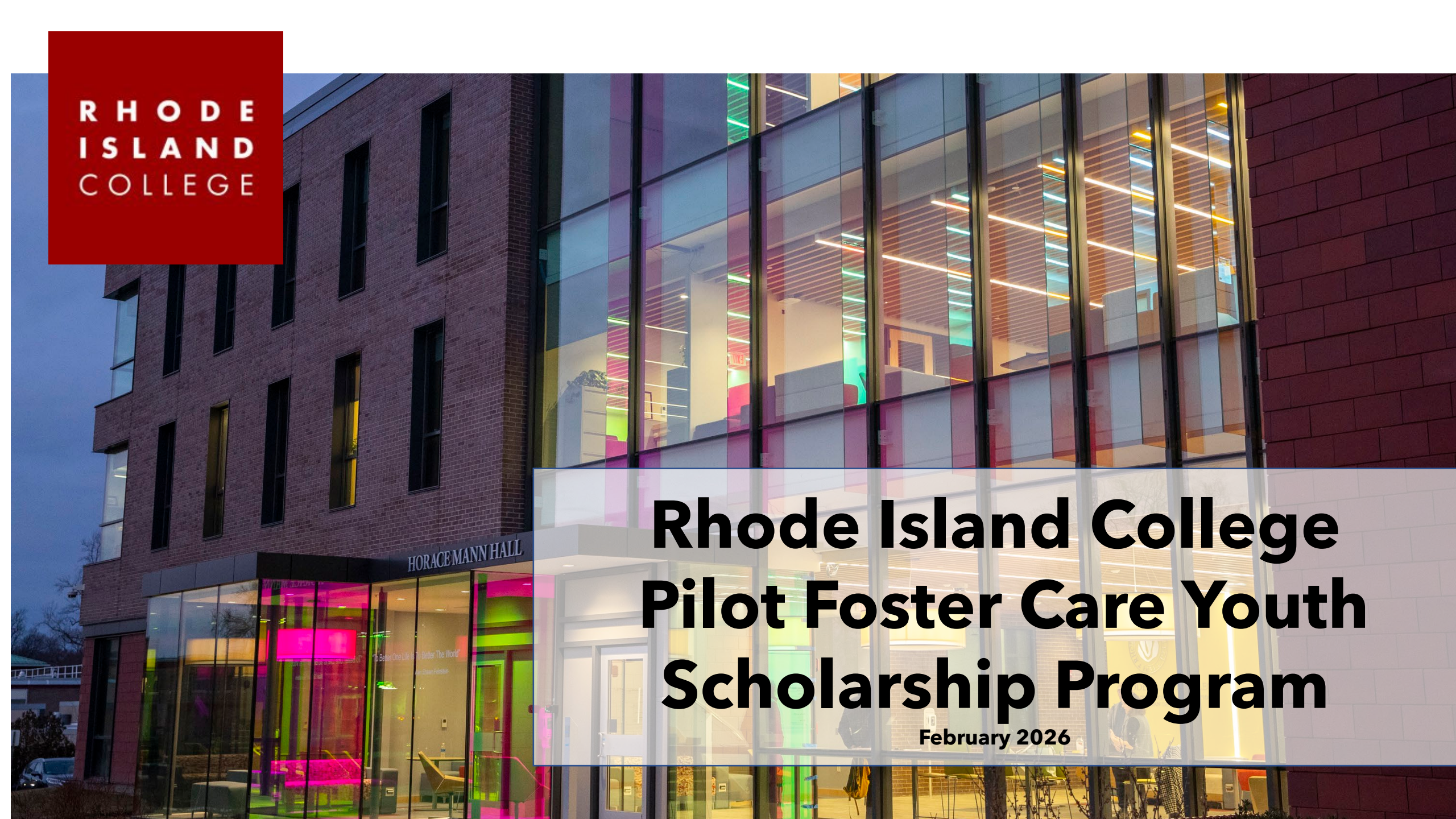


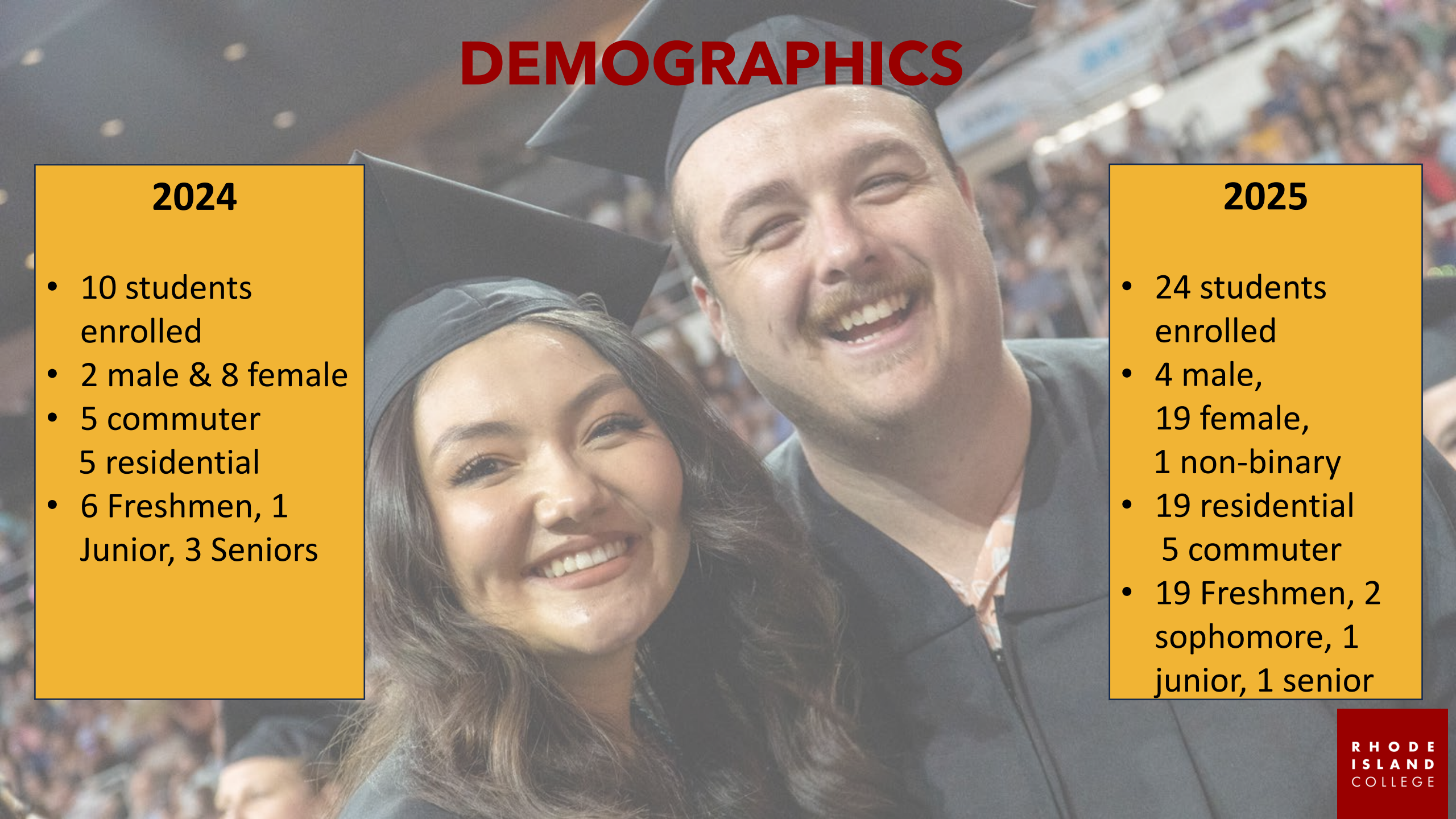
A photograph of a modern brick building with large glass windows at dusk. The building is illuminated from within, showing colorful interior lights. The text "RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE" is overlaid in a red box in the top left corner.

**RHODE
ISLAND
COLLEGE**

Rhode Island College Pilot Foster Care Youth Scholarship Program

February 2026

DEMOGRAPHICS



2024

- 10 students enrolled
- 2 male & 8 female
- 5 commuter
5 residential
- 6 Freshmen, 1 Junior, 3 Seniors

2025

- 24 students enrolled
- 4 male,
19 female,
1 non-binary
- 19 residential
5 commuter
- 19 Freshmen, 2 sophomore, 1 junior, 1 senior

Scholarship Benefits

- Free tuition & fees for undergraduate programs
- Year-round residential housing including meal plans for summer and all breaks.
- Educational supplies needed for coursework (including textbooks)
- Support services team working with the students including Success Coach, Learning 4 Life, OPC Navigators, Academic Advising, mentoring, campus resources and wrap-around services.

*After all federal, state and/or institutional grant scholarship/aid has been applied.

Eligibility

- Youth between the ages of 13-21 currently or were in foster care for 6 months or more, regardless of whether that time was consecutive or non-consecutive; or
- Youth who left foster care at age 13 or older for guardianship or adoption, until they reach the age of 26;
- Must be a resident of Rhode Island and currently or were formerly in the Rhode Island foster care system;
- Must have graduated high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma;
- Must maintain satisfactory academic progress as defined by Rhode Island College;
- Must demonstrate financial need based on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or state-alternative Financial Aid Application

Who is not eligible?

- Guardianship (unofficial kinship)
- Students who were from foster care from another state
- Students who do not use a RI address to apply
- Kinship/adopted before 13th birthday
- Students in foster care before their 13th birthday
- Students over 26
- Students seeking graduate level degrees
- Students who did not complete FASFA

Challenges

Academic

- Gaps in academic preparation due to disrupted K-12 schooling
- Time Management Skills
- Managing Competing Priorities
- Unrealistic Expectations
- Attendance
- Communication
- Academic Aspirations
- Completing Coursework
- Difficulty navigating college systems without consistent guidance
- Using accommodations

Non- academic

- Medical
- Mental health and trauma-related barriers affecting focus and performance
- Poor Habits
- Transition
- Self-care & Responsibility
- Clear understanding of the demands of college beyond free housing
- Limited awareness or use of support services (tutoring, advising, resources)
- Challenges building relationship with faculty and mentors
- Transportation

Outcomes

- 4-year Foster Care Youth Scholarship pilot program, currently in year 2.
- Retention, graduation and post-graduation rates outcomes take 2- 4 years depending if the students enrolled in the program are new or transfer students. Therefore, it is too early for outcomes.
- First year of program: 3 students graduated (they got scholarship last year). 5 out of 6 new students returned for second year.
- Second year of program: 22 out of 24 completed fall semester. 22 currently enrolled (1 dismissed and 1 on medical leave)
- Overall student performance is varied. Coping and resiliency is varied as well.
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RIC and community-based support

- Monthly life skills sessions with guests
- Weekly texts and emails with resources and events
- Scholarship orientation on move-in weekend
- RI Reconnect-connections to a navigator and access to funds
- Connection to VEC or Foster Forward
- Meet and greet events with various departments and agencies
- Connection to mentors and assistance finding jobs
- Adoption RI-holiday gifts
- Dining Services-holiday gifts and dinner

Assessing Funding Adequacy for Foster Youth

- Insufficient funding to meet the needs of foster youth interested in the program.
- To serve the students enrolled in the program, RIC is drawing on state-allocated pilot funds and supplementing them with more than \$1 million in institutional financial and in-kind contributions.
- We are unable to accept any additional students at this time.
- The priority is to collaborate with all students in the program to complete and evaluate outcomes, guiding decisions about the program's future.

Strengthening Higher Education Success for Foster Youth

- Child welfare professionals can report which youth are transitioning out of care, allowing us to determine the number involved in the handoff.
- Expand funding to ensure that all students formerly in RI foster care have the opportunity to attend college
- Increase the age to allow older youth to return to school
- Statewide programming to allow those in the RI foster care program to attend any college throughout the state.

Outreach and Awareness

- No clear count of scholarship-eligible foster youth in the state
- Uncertainty about youth educational goals after aging out
- Limited data on youth not attending school
- Unknown number of youth aging out while pregnant; re-engagement opportunities unclear
- Need a designated staff member at each high school to connect foster youth to resources
- Program and application process not widely known among youth, DCYF, or school staff
- RIC outreach via flyers, webpage, and community meetings

Questions/Comments



A photograph of a large, two-story stone building with a green roof and dormer windows, surrounded by trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of orange, red, and yellow. The building is set on a grassy lawn with fallen leaves.

**R H O D E
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