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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2013

SENATE RESOLUTION

RESPECTFULLY REQUESTING THE RHODE ISLAND OFFICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
TO ASSIST IN THE COORDINATION AND EXPANSION OF PROGRAMS WITHIN
RHODE ISLAND'S PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduced By: Senators Gallo, Pichardo, Satchell, DiPalma, and Lombardi

Date Introduced: February 28, 2013

Referred To: Senate Education

1 WHEREAS, the January 2013 "Moving the Needle" report released by the Senate Policy
2 Office and the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council, found that the educational attainment of
3 Rhode Island's workforce was a critical strength to the state's economic competitiveness and that
4 the potential for even further growth remained; and

5 WHEREAS, Median lifetime earnings increase significantly with increased educational
6 attainment;

7 WHEREAS, According to census data, by 2020 over 50 percent of Rhode Island jobs will
8 require some form of postsecondary training; and

9 WHEREAS Census data, as recently as 2011, indicated that 42.7 percent of the Rhode
10 Island's working-age adults held at least a two-year degree; and

11 WHEREAS, Among those Rhode Islanders without a postsecondary degree, 19.7 percent
12 had at least some college but did not receive a degree; and

13 WHEREAS, Many students do not finish college due to financial or time constraints or
14 new family or professional commitments, despite being a year or less away from completing their
15 degree; and

16 WHEREAS, Helping these former students return to school and finish their remaining
17 classes is a low-risk, high-reward opportunity in increasing the overall educational attainment of
18 Rhode Island's workforce; and

19 WHEREAS, Several other states and nonprofit organizations have focused on getting so-

1 called 'ready adults' – former students with most of their college credit requirements completed –
2 back on track for some form of postsecondary degree; and

3 WHEREAS, In one instance, the state of South Dakota identified over 2,000 adults with
4 90 or more completed credits, many within disciplines that were critical to the state's workforce
5 needs; and

6 WHEREAS, In recent years, Rhode Island's public institutions of higher education have
7 developed outreach and recruitment programs directed at former students who were unable to
8 finish school and get their degree; and

9 WHEREAS, These programs review the institutions' records of former students and
10 target those who were near completion at the time they left school by contacting them through
11 mail, phone call, and electronically, and providing information on the schools' websites; and

12 WHEREAS, In some instances, the outreach programs provide these students with a
13 direct academic plan to finish school, and assist students with enrollment, financial aid, and
14 support services; and

15 WHEREAS, Expanding and fully-resourcing these programs across all three Rhode
16 Island public institutions of higher education represents an opportunity to leverage a successful
17 program that is already in place, which can potentially help hundreds of former students in
18 obtaining a post-secondary degree at little cost to the state; now, therefore be it;

19 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
20 respectfully requests the Office of Higher Education, in cooperation with the University of Rhode
21 Island, Rhode Island College, and the Community College of Rhode Island, to assist in the
22 coordination and expansion of programs within Rhode Island's public institutions of higher
23 education to proactively identify and reach out to all former students that were near completion at
24 the time they left school; to connect these students with the academic, financial, and support
25 services they may need; and to aid these students in the process of completing a postsecondary
26 degree; and be it further

27 RESOLVED, That the Senate hereby requests that the Office of Higher Education report
28 back to the General Assembly by January 1, 2014, on the progress of these coordinated programs,
29 including the number of former students identified, the number of students re-enrolled, the
30 number of students who successfully completed their degree, and any other information the
31 Office may deem relevant including recommendations for further expansion; and be it further

32 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
33 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education,
34 and the Presidents of the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the Community

1 College of Rhode Island.

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