

Joint Admissions Agreement:

The Community College of Rhode Island Rhode Island College University of Rhode Island

Approved August 19, 2003 by RIBGHE

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES

A primary goal of the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education (RIBGHE) is to increase the baccalaureate attainment rate of Rhode Island's residents. The University of Rhode Island (URI), Rhode Island College (RIC) and the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) have agreed to support a joint admissions agreement (JAA) in order to achieve this overarching goal by meeting four supporting goals:

- to facilitate students' transition from an associate's to a bachelor's degree program. The JAA will have achieved this goal if the system can demonstrate a significant upward trend in transfer enrollment and persistence to graduation. The trend is expected to begin in the second and third years following implementation of the JAA.
- to increase access to further education by underrepresented groups as evidenced by increased graduation rates of those groups in the second and third years following implementation of the JAA.
- to strengthen cooperation among the institutions as evidenced by the joint development of a core of balanced general education that meets specified competencies. These competencies will provide a common set of skills and knowledge that help prepare students to pursue study in their majors at the senior institutions.
- to reduce the cost of higher education for students through an improved rate of transfer credit acceptance.

The data warehouse being established systemwide will allow the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education (RIOHE) to track students as they move through the system of Rhode Island public higher education, thereby allowing measurement of the system's success in achieving the above objectives.

Eight principles serve as the underpinnings of the Joint Admissions Agreement:

1. Institutional and Program Admission
Once students are admitted to the JAA, they are considered students of CCRI and the senior institution and begin to receive advisement from the community college and

from the senior institution. The transition from the community college to the senior institution should be seamless and transparent. Students with a 2.4 (cumulative) grade point average will continue enrollment at RIC or URI, in keeping with systemwide board policy. The A.S. or A.A. degree will serve as the first two years of a four-year program.

The senior college or university will determine admission and transfer of credits to a specific curriculum based upon the same established criteria implemented with native students. For example, specific programs of study may restrict enrollment of JAA and native students due to limited capacity. Transfer students who have met all conditions of the JAA will not have to take a higher number of credits for the baccalaureate degree than native students of the senior institution enrolled in the same program, nor will they be required to meet any other conditions uniquely applied to JAA students.

2. Acceptance of General Education

Students who take general education as part of an approved JAA Transition Plan will have those credits accepted toward general education requirements of the participating colleges and universities. Students who have completed the general education requirements for an associate's degree, but have not attained the degree, will be afforded the same acceptance of credits.

3. Interinstitutional Curriculum Coordination and Oversight of the JAA

The RIOHE convenes the academic department chairs from the three institutions for the purpose of coordinating curricula. The institutions must also notify RIOHE of potential curricular and/or organizational changes no later than July 1st annually, in keeping with the *Regulations Governing Academic Changes in Rhode Island Institutions of Higher Education* (approved January 27, 2003, II.1., p. 6). Such information will be shared amongst the vice presidents for academic affairs and also amongst the presidents through their management letters.

4. New Programs

To be part of the JAA, new degree programs under development will establish an articulation agreement as part of the RIOHE program approval process.

RIOHE also convenes the Interinstitutional Articulation/Transfer Committee, whose duties will be expanded to include continuous monitoring and improvement of the JAA.

5. Students' Rights and Responsibilities

A statement of student rights and responsibilities is described in the JAA as well as in a student guide to the JAA. Students will have clear descriptions of the responsibilities of institutions participating in the system, the students' responsibilities in the system, and the students' rights. Notable among these rights and responsibilities is the right to ongoing, regular advisement from the sending and receiving institutions and the students' responsibility to seek such advice as well as to consult the publications of the senior institution and follow the JAA Transition Plans.

6. Institutional Coordination
A contact person will be identified within each participating institution to manage the articulation and transfer process internally and to facilitate external communication.
7. Automated System
The policies and associated procedures for the articulation system will be the core elements for a publicly accessible, computer-based information system linking URI, RIC and CCRI. The system will provide electronic transmission and automated assessment of transcript services.
8. Assessment
Annually, a statewide assessment of the system and its effectiveness will be undertaken by the Interinstitutional Articulation/Transfer Committee. Included in the assessment will be feedback from JAA students to ensure the process is meeting their needs.

JOINT ADMISSIONS AGREEMENT

The Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), Rhode Island College (RIC) and the University of Rhode Island (URI), Rhode Island's three public institutions, have traditionally sought to provide access to higher education to qualified students. To expand this mutual commitment and to facilitate students' progression from the associate's degree to the completion of the baccalaureate degree, the institutions agree to establish the Joint Admissions Agreement (JAA) in keeping with the following terms:

I. JOINT ADMISSIONS PROCESS AND CONDITIONS

The JAA, which will be in effect as of the signing of this agreement, is available to CCRI students who, prior to earning 30 credits, matriculate into one of the JAA Transition Plans recognized by the JAA. Each JAA Transition Plan specifies at least 32 credits that transfer to the receiving institution in fulfillment of requirements usually known as general education. Although the receiving institution may require some additional general education courses, the core ensures that transferring and native students have common knowledge across a broad spectrum of the liberal arts and sciences:

- three credits of writing/communications,
- three credits of literature,
- three credits of fine arts,
- three credits of mathematics,
- eight credits of science,
- nine credits of social science, and
- three credits of additional general education that can be applied toward graduation.

Since the requirements of specific degree programs vary among institutions and even within institutions, students must be guided in selecting courses within these broad areas of general education.

To aid students and their advisors in making appropriate selections, JAA Transition Plans will be available on the *RI Transfers* Web site (www.ribghe.org/ritransfers.htm) and in the *Transfer Guide for Students*, which is available in print and also online at www.ribghe.org/transferguide.htm. Only programs specified on the *RI Transfers* Web site and in the *Transfer Guide for Students* as JAA programs with accompanying JAA Transition Plans are included in this agreement. Through mutual agreement of the sending and receiving institutions, additional program plans may be added to the JAA annually, following the spring meeting of department chairs convened by the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education (RIOHE). Any such additions will be advertised widely at CCRI and will be cited as new plans on the *RI Transfers* Web site and in the transfer guide.

- A. Admissions officers at CCRI and at the appropriate senior institution will jointly provide an offer of admission and a JAA acceptance agreement to incoming CCRI freshmen who have completed the intent-to-enroll form. CCRI students who complete the form prior to completion of 30 credits will also receive an offer of admission from the senior institution and an acceptance agreement. The offer of admission will be contingent upon the student's fulfillment of the provisions of paragraph B (below). The acceptance agreement will explain the requirements for continuation at RIC or URI. The agreement will also include a waiver allowing the institutions to share student information specified in this agreement. (See Section III below.) Students will be required to sign and return the agreement to CCRI. The agreement will include contact information for the individual responsible for administering the JAA at the senior institution.
- B. To be guaranteed admission to RIC or URI under the JAA, a CCRI student must: (1) enroll under the JAA prior to earning 30 credits by completing an intent-to-enroll form and a JAA acceptance agreement as described above, (2) select an associate's degree program included in this agreement [as defined above in Section I] and earn an A.A. or A.S. degree in the prescribed curriculum within five years from officially enrolling in the JAA, (3) have a cumulative grade point average of 2.40 or higher, and (4) meet any specified requirements applicable to all students for specific degree programs at RIC or URI (see also Section II.A.).
- C. Courses taken by students at CCRI will satisfy course requirements in accordance with the *Transfer Guide for Students* published by the RIOHE. Transfer credit for any CCRI course not listed in the *Transfer Guide* will be granted at the discretion of the appropriate academic dean (or designee) at the receiving senior institution.
- D. The RIC or URI catalog in effect when a student enrolls under the JAA will be specified on the acceptance agreement (see Section I.B. above) and will govern the terms of admission and the baccalaureate requirements for a degree from RIC or URI, as appropriate. If the program at the senior institution substantially changes during the five years following a student's matriculation at CCRI, the senior institution may not be able to deliver the program as originally expected. In these cases, the senior institution is responsible for advising JAA students in a timely manner regarding specific program changes that may affect their baccalaureate degree plans. The senior institution will do

its utmost to find suitable substitution or other accommodations so as to not delay the student's progress. If a transfer student fails to maintain continuous enrollment for one or more semesters at the senior institution, the requirements for a baccalaureate degree will be governed by the catalog in place in the year of re-entry.

- E. JAA students will be governed by the regulations, requirements and procedures of CCRI until such time as they are granted the A.A. or A.S. degree. At such time as they matriculate at RIC or URI, they will be governed by the regulations, requirements, and procedures of the senior institution.

II. STUDENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Students successfully completing the requirements of the JAA will be guaranteed admission to RIC or URI, as appropriate. JAA students will have the same rights and responsibilities regarding access to specific programs, majors, and services as continuing students at the senior institution. Senior institutions publish requirements (which pertain equally to continuing and transfer students) relating to grades that must be earned or prerequisite courses required for entry into specific majors. In addition to using these publications, students are responsible for seeking regular, ongoing advisement from the sending and receiving institutions.
- B. JAA students, after having earned an A.A. or A.S. degree at CCRI in one of the JAA Transition Plans agreed to by the sending and receiving institutions, are guaranteed that a minimum of 32 credits will transfer to fulfill general education requirements at the receiving institution. Additional credits, in combination with the 32 general education credits, will total at least 60 transfer credits applicable to degree requirements at the senior institution in a specified program. To guarantee transfer of at least 60 credits, JAA students must remain enrolled in a specified JAA Transition Plan and must seek regular, ongoing advisement from the sending and receiving institutions.
- C. Each semester, URI and RIC will notify JAA students of deadlines by which students must indicate their plans to enroll at the senior institution in order to maintain eligibility for pre-registration and other enrollment guarantees. Students who pay an enrollment deposit at the senior institution by the specified date will be given the same registration priority as continuing students.

III. INFORMATION SHARING AND EXCHANGE

The institutions agree to share certain information about students enrolled in the JAA. Data will be prepared in the aggregate, whenever possible, and in instances when individual information is shared, the data will be treated as confidential. The purpose of this exchange is to monitor the progress of students pursuing a degree under the JAA, to educate students about the range of academic choices at RIC or URI, to provide students with information conducive to academic success at the senior institution, and to evaluate the success of the program. To that end, each student will be asked to sign a release authorizing CCRI and RIC or URI, as appropriate, to share the following individual student data:

- A. Each semester CCRI will provide representatives of RIC or URI, as appropriate, with information regarding students who during that semester returned the signed JAA acceptance agreement. The information will include current name, address, date of birth, identification number, telephone number, e-mail address, choice of degree program and academic record.
- B. The senior institution will provide CCRI with annual reports regarding former JAA students who enroll at RIC or URI. The reports will include credit hours accepted and lost in movement to the senior institution, student retention rates and graduation rates as well as grade point averages earned and financial aid received by these students. Feedback from RIC and URI will be used to improve the JAA.
- C. If Rhode Island students are denied admission to RIC or URI as freshmen for academic reasons, the respective admissions offices will inform the students about the JAA as an alternative enrollment option to entering RIC and URI. Lists of these potential JAA students will be provided to CCRI.

IV. ADVISEMENT AND COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

The institutions recognize that the JAA must emphasize collaborative communication, including joint academic advisement for JAA students. Advisement must be readily available at the sending and receiving institutions, and the JAA students must actively seek advisement.

- A. Each semester at a date and time mutually agreed upon by the institutions, representatives from RIC and URI will hold information sessions at CCRI about the JAA.

The institutions will also make available on their respective campuses advising materials and information about degree completion and the JAA.

- B. The institutions will provide academic advisement to students participating in the JAA to assist them in choosing courses that satisfy the course requirements of RIC or URI, as appropriate. At CCRI and the senior institutions, students will have access to advising center staff and to department/college advisors designated to counsel transfer students.
- C. The institutions will include information regarding the JAA in official undergraduate catalogs and admissions publications.
- D. The institutions will cooperate with the RI Board of Governors for Higher Education (RIBGHE) to develop JAA recruitment publications. The primary purpose of these materials will be to raise students' aspirations and awareness of an alternative route to a baccalaureate degree.

- E. Information regarding the JAA will be included on the institutions' admissions Web sites, on the *RI Transfers* Web site and on the Web sites of other relevant organizations such as the RI Higher Education Assistance Authority (RIHEAA). The sites will include frequently asked questions (FAQs) and an e-mail address dedicated to responding to other questions regarding the JAA.
- F. The institutions will provide JAA students with information regarding the inter-institutional exchange program. In addition to providing the opportunity to complete up to seven credits of coursework, participation in the exchange program will familiarize JAA students with advising services at the senior institution.

V. COORDINATION OF CURRICULA

The institutions are committed to coordinating continually their respective curricula, developing opportunities for faculty collaboration, and discussing curricular changes. The institutions will engage in the following activities:

- A. Institutions will appoint an individual responsible for transmitting timely information about significant proposed and adopted changes in curricula. Each institution will promptly notify the other institutions, the RIOHE, and the Interinstitutional Articulation/Transfer Committee in writing when its contact person has changed.
- B. Faculty at the institutions will collaborate on the development of curricula and course syllabi to ensure that students will be prepared for their courses of study at RIC or URI.
- C. The institutions will provide feedback to one another regarding specific areas where curricula appear to be misaligned.
- D. New degree programs under development wishing to be included in the JAA will establish an articulation agreement as part of the RIOHE program approval process.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION AND OVERSIGHT

Implementation and oversight of this agreement will be provided by the Interinstitutional Articulation/Transfer Committee. The committee has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to working together to facilitate transfer for students within the public system of higher education in Rhode Island. The committee's work will include the following responsibilities:

- A. Fostering a spirit of collaboration.
- B. Monitoring, evaluating, and updating the JAA.
- C. Reviewing guidelines for and addressing concerns with such issues as:
 - Advising and enrollment processes (including pre-registration);
 - Exchange of information among institutions; and
 - Evaluation and assessment of the program.

- D. Coordinating and overseeing the implementation of Section V (*Coordination of Curricula*) of this agreement.
- E. Coordinating an annual report to RIBGHE's Academic and Student Affairs Committee regarding the status of the JAA.
- F. Publicizing the JAA.
- G. Enhancing the upward educational mobility of students by increasing the level of transfer credit acceptance.

VII. TERMS OF AGREEMENT

This agreement becomes effective upon signing.

This agreement is signed by:

Thomas D. Sepe
President
Community College of Rhode Island

date

John Nazarian
President
Rhode Island College

date

Robert L. Carothers
President
University of Rhode Island

date

Note: The Rhode Island Office of Higher Education (RIOHE) wishes to acknowledge that the best practices of Maryland, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, New Jersey, New York, and Oregon were used in developing the JAA and its companion documents and to express appreciation to those states for sharing their materials.