



Rhode Island College: Meeting the State's Needs Through Time

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Providence, Rhode Island

No. of 100

This history is dedicated to all those included herein as well as all those who are not cited, but who also were a part of the fabric of the college and played a role in the college becoming a positive influence on many lives through many generations.

ABOUT THE SEAL

The cover design represents the Rhode Island College seal. Designed by Professor Emerita Edith Becker in 1960, the college seal features the flame from the Holbrook murals in the lobby of Roberts Hall.

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Foreword

The history of Rhode Island College, stretching from 1854 to the present, could easily fill several thick volumes. This history, in contrast, aims to engage the reader for an hour or two and leave the reader with a sense of the college's evolution and its major accomplishments set in the context of each successive administration of the college.

A major donor who did not attend Rhode Island College asked for just such a history. That inquiry was followed by several others. As a result, I asked Dr. Erik Christiansen, associate professor of History, to research and write the history as a service to the college. In spring 2014, a four-page version of the history was produced as a brochure. In fall 2015, Erik met me with the first complete draft of the history, with contributions from current RIC student Charles Quigley, alums Don Deignan and Susan Shea, and Head of Special Collections in Adams Library Marlene Lopes. The history then passed to others for review, editing and formatting. The reviewers were all faculty and/or administrators with long association with the college: Dr. Deborah Siegel (Professor, School of Social Work), Dr. Jeffrey Blais (Professor, Economics and Finance, and RIC Council president), Dr. Scott Kane (Interim VP for Student Affairs), Dr. Madeline Nixon (Professor, Elementary Education), Dr. Anne Carty (Professor,

Nursing), and Dr. Vivian La Ferla (Professor, Mathematics and Computer Science, and jointly appointed to Department of Educational Studies). They were asked to check for readability and to note any major omissions or errors. VPAA Ron Pitt, Interim VP Clark Greene, and Associate VP Jen Giroux also read the final draft. Staff member Ryan Marsh added the last 13 years of major accomplishments to a timeline originally developed as part of the college's sesquicentennial. Marlene Lopes, archivist, provided documents. The college is indebted to Gita Brown for the initial editing, to Chad Minnich for final review of citations, editing, and production management, and to Jennifer Bell-Cole for the book's design. I am grateful to all those who helped.

This history has been printed in a special, limited edition. However, the history will also appear online. My hope is that the college will update the online version of the history periodically, even if only with an annual listing of accomplishments.

We hope that you enjoy reading the history of our truly special college.

Nancy Carriuolo

Dr. Nancy Carriuolo
Ninth President of RIC, 2008-2016

The Beginning: Rhode Island Normal School

Nestled on a 180-acre wooded parcel between Providence and North Providence is the modern campus of Rhode Island College (RIC). This institution is built upon a legacy vital not only to the state of Rhode Island but also to the development of modern American education. Rhode Island College came from humble origins, as an untested idea that was championed by a few truly visionary leaders, but its founding also inaugurated an unmatched commitment to self-transformation in order to meet the changing educational needs of the people of Rhode Island—a commitment that continues to this day.

The college's history begins in the 1840s, when textile mills operated throughout the Blackstone Valley, and industrial enterprises increasingly dominated Rhode Island's economy. Industrialization also brought a demand for labor, and the state's population grew by forty thousand people from 1800 to 1840. Providence was no longer one of the ten largest American cities, but as the nation's twelfth largest city it was still expanding rapidly. The need to provide education for this growing and increasingly immigrant population soon became apparent, as did the corresponding need to prepare teachers capable of providing that education.



Henry Barnard. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893" (1893). *Columbian Exposition Scrapbook*, 1893. Book 3.

The Vision of Henry Barnard

Henry Barnard, appointed as Rhode Island's first education commissioner in 1842, understood the emerging educational requirements of the time. Barnard had studied the theories of Swiss educator Johann Pestalozzi at Yale (which advocated a holistic and nurturing approach to educating every child, of every economic background) and observed his and several other European educational institutions in the 1830s. He

returned to Connecticut to organize the state's first public school system, which he led from 1838 to 1842. In 1838 Massachusetts' new education commissioner, reformer Horace Mann, journeyed to Hartford to consult with Barnard and Thomas H. Gallaudet, the renowned educator of the deaf, about his plan to open the first "Normal School" in Lexington, Massachusetts.¹ The idea derived from the French concept of the *école normale*, whose purpose was to improve and standardize the methods used for teacher education. Mann and Barnard thus sought to expand access and also to standardize education for American children. Normal schools initially struggled in America, and Mann's pioneering attempts in Massachusetts relied heavily on private donations to supplement insufficient public funding.² In fact, within a few years, Mann would have to ask Barnard to travel to Boston to persuade legislators to retain the normal school and the

¹ Bernard C. Steiner, *Life of Henry Barnard: The First United States Commissioner of Education, 1867-1870*. Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, 1919: 48.

² Hector Richard Carbone, "The History of the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction and the Rhode Island Normal School as Agencies and Institutions of Teacher Education, 1845-1920," Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 1971, 173.

state's Board of Education (a feat he accomplished).³

However, these early difficulties did not dissuade Barnard or Mann from the belief that improved teacher training was imperative. During the 1840s Mann forcefully articulated this stance in his influential argument that quality universal public education offered the best hope of preserving and further developing American democracy. The nation, whose ideals demanded that every individual have an opportunity to succeed, was facing increasing signs of inequality; Mann's solution of making education accessible to all represented a moderate approach that contrasted with more radical contemporary visions of communal property or wealth redistribution. Mann believed that, through education, every American would start an adult life in possession of the skills necessary to prosper.

When Barnard accepted his position in Rhode Island, he immediately began to campaign for a state-supported normal school and public school system. A significant part of his plan was his notion that the normal school should have attached to it a model school in which prospective teachers could apply what they had learned in the classroom—a method currently in practice at the Henry Barnard School at RIC. Unable to immediately establish the normal school, Barnard, nevertheless, managed to greatly improve public education. Among other achievements, he introduced uniform textbooks to schools across the state and persuaded Rhode Islanders to pay higher school taxes in order to build new schoolhouses and hire more qualified teachers. Mann later wrote that Barnard's work in establishing Rhode Island's public education system "was the greatest legacy he had left to American educators, the best working model of school agitation and legal organization for the schools of the whole country."⁴ Barnard also established a professional journal for teachers and helped create a body of professional literature designed to improve teacher quality. During his first two years

³ Steiner, *Life of Henry Barnard*, 48.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

in Rhode Island, his office oversaw more than 1,100 public meetings held to discuss public education in the state (hundreds of which lasted for two or more days), published and distributed thousands of pamphlets, and organized hundreds of instructional workshops for teachers.⁵ Through all this activity, he never ceased to champion the cause of a public normal school.

Meanwhile, Providence had established its own superintendent of schools in 1838 (becoming the first city in New England to do so) and, following the Dorr Rebellion, the state's new 1842 constitution explicitly vested the state government with responsibility for public education.⁶ Barnard's labors bore fruit eventually, and in 1845 the state of Rhode Island invested him with the authority to found a normal school. However, the state offered neither financial nor other resources. Barnard, through his passion and dedication, was able to gather private supporters who offered property and funds to be matched by public ones. Unfortunately, Barnard's efforts had exhausted him, and he suffered increasingly poor health, which forced him to resign his position in 1849. His departure meant that the driving force behind the cause for a normal school also disappeared.⁷ Fortunately, nineteenth-century Rhode Island was blessed with more than just one exceptional education leader. Brown University created a small normal department in 1851, led by Professor Samuel Stillman Greene, and in the following year, a private normal school opened in Providence. The success of Brown's normal school (average attendance was 75 students

⁵ *Memoir of Dana Pond Colburn: First Principal of the R.I. Normal School, with a Sketch of the History of the Institution* (Republished, with a foreword by Henry Barnard, Hartford: Barnard's American Journal of Education, 1862), 25.

⁶ Michael Smith and Jane Fusco, "150 Years of Rhode Island College: Looking Back on the Making and Makers of History," *What's News at Rhode Island College XXIII, No. 12 Special Sesquicentennial Issue*, August 18, 2003: 1.

⁷ Carbone, "The History of the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction," 180-187.

from 1852 to 1853 and 60 from 1853 to 1854) was due, in large part, to the activism of Greene, who served as its head while also acting as superintendent of Providence Public Schools and continuing to teach didactics at Brown. Brown's success spurred the city to reopen the Rhode Island Normal School in 1854. However, before reopening the school as a municipally supported institution, the Rhode Island General Assembly voted for a \$3,000 appropriation to transform the school into a state school—the first fully state-funded normal school in the nation. Thirty-one-year-old Dana P. Colburn, faculty member of the private normal school since its founding two years prior, became the first and the youngest principal of the Rhode Island Normal School, the institution that would evolve into Rhode Island College.



Dana P. Colburn. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893."

The Leadership of Dana P. Colburn

Colburn was "discovered" by Horace Mann in 1847, when the great educator saw him lecture on arithmetic and hired him on the spot to help train teachers in Massachusetts. Earlier, Colburn had labored on a family farm in West Dedham and then learned boot- and shoemaking in Lynn. A severe illness at age seventeen inflicted permanent damage on his body, which encouraged his pursuit of a life of intellectual rather than physical labor. He studied at the Bridgewater Normal School and shone as a lecturer in various subjects, especially mathematics. After his selection by Mann, Colburn joined a core group of eminent scholars, including professors Louis Agassiz, William Russell, and Samuel S. Greene, who travelled the commonwealth instructing teachers and others. Colburn would eventually write several well-regarded mathematics textbooks, one of which was later described in the *Hartford Post* as "the best textbook on arithmetic that has

ever been published in this or any other country.”⁸

As a teacher, Colburn apparently had few peers. His classes were “like play—full of joy and laughter,” yet he demanded complete thoroughness in every student’s response as he taught using the Socratic Method. Following “normal theory,” Colburn frequently asked a student to conduct either a teaching exercise



Rhode Island Normal School, housed in the Second Universalist Society in Providence, circa 1854. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, “The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893.”

or an examination exercise during class. Teaching exercises assumed a class composed of beginners, and the “teacher” was asked to teach a particular subject as effectively as possible. In the examination exercises the “teacher” was told to discover what students had learned previously. Following either of these exercises, Colburn’s students submitted their criticisms of their peer’s performance, always tempered by their professor’s amiable nature. Although the school’s function was to prepare teachers, Colburn emphasized the study

of broad cultural knowledge and discouraged “practical studies.” The early curriculum at the school reflects his enthusiasm for general learning, with students required to study geography, orthography, English grammar and literature, composition, rhetoric, the history of language, logic, writing, American history, Rhode Island history, world history, natural history, biology, zoology, anatomy, chemistry, philosophy, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, music, and, of course, educational theory and methods.⁹

On May 29, 1854, the entering class totaled twenty-seven students, four of whom were male.¹⁰ Faculty at the school,

⁸ “Death of Dana P. Colburn,” *The Rhode Island Schoolmaster* VI, No. 1 (January 1860): 27.

⁹ *Memoir of Dana Pond Colburn*, 28.

¹⁰ Thomas Williams Bicknell, *A History of the Rhode Island Normal School*. Providence: printed by author, 1911, 12-15, 124.

housed at first in the hall of the Second Universalist Society in Providence, soon discovered that often the applicants to the school lacked the fundamentals necessary to begin their formal preparation; many had not attended any school at all. This challenge was met by Principal Colburn, who constantly revised and improved the curriculum to meet the needs of his students and the state—perhaps the fundamental, ongoing characteristic of Rhode Island College. In order to provide already practicing teachers an opportunity to refine their craft, Colburn and his staff also devised lectures and classes, thereby creating an early program of continuing professional development.¹¹

Under Colburn's leadership, enrollment quickly reached a peak of ninety-seven students.¹² However, in 1857 the state moved the Rhode Island Normal School to a new, less-expensive location in



Rhode Island Normal School, located in Bristol, circa 1857. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893."

Bristol and cut the appropriation to \$2,500.¹³ Unfortunately, the migration proved disruptive. Bristol was practically inaccessible from much of the state, at least compared to Providence. That inaccessibility was one of the reasons that the College of Rhode Island, later renamed Brown University, moved from Warren to Providence in 1770. In Bristol the school was only able to retain Colburn and one of the original staff members. The school's attendance also declined, and state support subsequently fell as well.¹⁴

¹¹ Carbone, "The History of the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction," 225-226; *Memoir of Dana Pond Colburn*, 27.

¹² *Ibid.*, 226.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 227; *Memoir of Dana Pond Colburn*, 27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 229.

The move to Bristol did benefit a few people, however, including Fannie M. Jackson of Newport. Born a slave in Washington, DC, in 1837, her aunt purchased her freedom in 1849. Twelve-year-old Fannie ended up in Newport, where she worked for George Henry Calvert, a descendant of the proprietary founder of Maryland, Lord Baltimore. She used her salary to pay for private tutoring during her teenage years and in 1859 enrolled at the school. A year later she matriculated at Oberlin College, where she earned honors as the class poet and became the second African American woman in the nation to earn an AB degree.

After graduation, Jackson accepted a position as principal of the female department of the celebrated Institute for Colored Youth, a Quaker school in Philadelphia. Her normal school students there achieved special success, and by the end of her career, three-fourths of the African American teachers in Philadelphia and Camden, New Jersey, were graduates of the institute. In 1869 she was selected to head the whole school—the first time a woman served as head of school at an institution with male and female faculty. Though she married AME minister Levi Jenkins Coppin in 1881, she continued her career as an educator until retirement in 1896.¹⁵

A devastating blow to the Rhode Island Normal School occurred on December 15, 1859, when Dana Colburn was tragically killed at the age of thirty-six, just a week before his wedding day. He had been working at the school in Bristol and went out “on his usual afternoon ride in a light carriage.” Losing control of his “young and spirited” horse, he barely managed to avoid being thrown from his seat while rounding a corner, “but scarcely had he gained the straight road, when he lost his balance, and falling forward, was dragged for several rods [a unit of measure] over the frozen ground, and finally

¹⁵ Linda M. Perkins. “Coppin, Fanny Jackson,” *American National Biography Online*, Oxford University Press, February 2000, <http://www.anb.org>

disengaged most fearfully mangled and quite lifeless.”¹⁶ His strong and vital leadership as a “noble champion in the cause of public education”¹⁷ was sorely missed to such a degree that the school was nearly closed. However, actions taken by State School Commissioner J.B. Chapin, plus a considerable showing of private support, prevented closure.¹⁸



Principal Joshua Kendall. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, “The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893.”

The Civil War Years and Declining Enrollment

Joshua Kendall took over as principal of the Rhode Island Normal School in 1860. Coincidentally, just a few years earlier in Washington, DC, a distant cousin of his named Amos Kendall opened a school for blind and deaf children that would serve as the foundation for Gallaudet University, after President Lincoln signed the college’s charter in 1864.

Much like his predecessor, Joshua Kendall approached the job with vigor and effectively shared the pedagogy he had developed while working at the Bridgewater Normal School and serving as headmaster of the Heidekoper Academy for Young Ladies in Meadville, Pennsylvania. He met with considerable success in improving the school’s relationship with the community of Bristol, which shared with the state the financial burden of supporting the school. Tuition remained an insignificant source of revenue, since there was none required of any student intending to teach in Rhode Island’s public schools. Even those intending to teach elsewhere paid a mere five dollars in tuition (equivalent to about \$130 in 2015).

¹⁶ *Memoir of Dana Pond Colburn*, 18.

¹⁷ H. R. Pierce et al., eds., *The R.I. Schoolmaster*, Volume 6. (Providence: Cooke & Danielson, 1860).

¹⁸ Carbone, “The History of the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction,” 231.

The arrival of the Civil War set the Normal School back again. The war drew potential students into military service and caused a decline in teachers' salaries and an increase in the cost of living.¹⁹ Twenty-one Normal School students served in the Union Army, with many others directly involved in the war effort in other ways. By 1864 more students had fought for the Union than were enrolled in the school. With enrollment down to just twenty students, Kendall relinquished his position at the Rhode Island Normal School and took a more secure position at a Harvard preparatory school.²⁰ Combined with the geographic remoteness of the school and the preexisting financial issues, this development led the school's board of trustees to suspend the school's operations in July 1865.²¹

However, by this time the Rhode Island Normal School had proven its effectiveness and had successfully educated 630 students: 115 men and 515 women. This tally excludes an additional 260 students who attended two "special" sessions from 1856 to 1857.²² Though few at the time would have believed it, this success was merely the beginning of a long history.

Resurrection and Permanence

The movement to build the Rhode Island Normal School did not disappear completely. Soon it was led by a new education reformer—Thomas W. Bicknell. Bicknell was a larger-than-life character who became the Rhode Island school commissioner in 1869 at the age of thirty-five. From the moment of his appointment, Bicknell began to campaign actively for

¹⁹ Ibid., 232.

²⁰ Thomas B. Stockwell, *A History of Public Education in Rhode Island, from 1636 to 1876: Embracing an account of the rise and progress of the present school system of the state; the various city and town systems; together with sketches of Brown University and many of the academies, libraries and literary associations of Rhode Island*. Providence: RI Board of Education and Providence Press Co. 1876: 303.

²¹ Bicknell, *A History of the Rhode Island Normal School*, 16.

²² Carbone, "The History of the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction," 236.



Thomas W. Bicknell. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893."

reinstitution of the Rhode Island Normal School. He wrote frequently on the topic and also used his tremendous personal flair to help achieve his goal. In one instance, he farmed corn alongside a legislator he would eventually persuade.²³

The state recognized the value of the institution and Bicknell's dedication paid off on March 15, 1871, when the General Assembly brought the Rhode Island Normal School back from its suspension and

allocated \$10,000.²⁴ Even in that first year, there were more applicants than could be accommodated, which demonstrated the vacuum that the school would successfully fill. In the fall of 1871, 108 women and 8 men enrolled as students; the lucky 116 were accepted from a pool of 200 applicants.²⁵

Bicknell and an appointed committee were given the task of finding suitable leadership for the revitalized school. They found a new location at the former Congregational Meeting House at Hoyle Square in Providence, and James Carruthers Greenough was hired as the school's third principal.²⁶ Arriving with valuable experience gained as associate principal of the Massachusetts Normal School at Westfield, he proved to be an excellent choice. Greenough reopened the Rhode Island Normal School at Hoyle Square and then, in 1878, secured the former Providence High School building on Benefit Street. On January 3, 1879, Governor Charles C. Van Zandt presided over the opening of the school's new home. The school remained on Benefit Street

²³ Ibid., 260-266.

²⁴ Bicknell, *A History of the Rhode Island Normal School*, 30.

²⁵ Patricia Marzacco, "Feminism without Fanfare: Women of the Rhode Island State Normal School 1854-1920," MA thesis, Rhode Island College, 1994, 31.

²⁶ Bicknell, *A History of the Rhode Island Normal School*, 37.



The home of the Normal School from 1879 to 1898.
Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The
Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893."

until a new building was constructed in 1898 on Smith Hill in Providence.

Greenough also developed and improved the curriculum, and the school re-earned its reputation for producing high-quality teachers. Around the state, school

administrators expressed a clear preference for hiring alumni of the institution. Greenough made his most visible contribution to the school through his passionate arguments before the General Assembly, supported by Mayor Thomas Doyle and other education reformers, all of whom secured more state support for the state's normal school.²⁷

The legislation that reopened the school empowered the trustees to grant certificates to those whom the school recognized as qualified to teach. This legislation was to set the precedent for an act in 1889 that made the state the sole authority in certifying teachers.²⁸ Another notable development during the Greenough years was an adjustment to tailor the curriculum to meet the specific needs of the people of Rhode Island. For example, courses were added to help prepare teachers to educate students in skills that would assist them in working in Rhode Island's major industries of the time.²⁹

In addition to Greenough's leadership, the success of the school also rested on the skill and dedication of key faculty members. In

²⁷ Carbone, "The History of the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction," 291-299.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 267-270.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 279.

particular, Westfield Normal School graduates Susan C. Bancroft (later Mrs. Leonard Tillinghast) and Mary L. Jewett (later Mrs. Charles F. Taylor) formed, with Greenough, the core of the institution. Joining them upon her graduation from the Rhode



Sarah Marble. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893."

Island Normal School in 1872 was Sarah Marble, who would continue as a teacher at the school for three decades, until her marriage to J.H. Shedd in 1905. Marble's continuing commitment to her own education and that of others was impressive. In 1873 she studied chemistry at Harvard College under Prof. Charles E. Munroe. In the ensuing years she took courses in mineralogy and chemistry at Bowdoin College, another mineralogy course at the Institute of Technology, and a course in rhetoric at Harvard. Since she also taught literature, in 1885 she took leave to visit the "major literary

shrines of Europe." Until 1900 Miss Marble trained every Rhode Island Normal School graduate for the public reading of her or his graduation essay (a requirement in those days). Upon her marriage and retirement in 1905, the trustees of the Rhode Island Normal School declared, "A member of the first graduating class and since that time an indefatigable and beloved teacher, she has held a high place in the esteem of all the friends of the school. In her the pupils have ever found a well-equipped instructor, a wise counsellor, a true and sympathetic friend. To them she has taught more than textbook, viz., the beauty and wisdom of a true life."³⁰

The class of 1872 had other impressive members besides Sarah Marble. Annie Smith Peck, who later graduated first in her class at the University of Michigan and taught classical languages at Purdue University and Smith College, gained notoriety as a

³⁰ Bicknell, *A History of the Rhode Island Normal School*.

mountain climber and adventurer. She conquered several of Latin America's highest peaks; when she summited Mt. Coropuna in Peru, she planted a banner that read, "Votes for Women." She advocated for women's rights through her actions as well as her extensive published writings, which included memoirs, travel guides, and many magazine and newspaper articles. Rosa E. G. Hazard, who entered the school in September 1871 at the age of nineteen, was the first African American woman to graduate from the reconstituted Rhode Island Normal School. In 1866, while the school was entering its hibernation period, the state of Rhode Island desegregated its public schools, but for women of color who wanted to teach, this change was a mixed blessing. Graduates found that Rhode Island school administrators were rarely open to hiring African Americans to teach white children; consequently, some travelled very far from home to find a teaching position or resigned themselves to other occupations.³¹

Among the men of the class of '72, Arthur W. Brown became a teacher, principal, and business manager who cofounded the Alumni Association and became its first president. And within a year of their graduation, classmate Lester A. Freeman became principal of Watchemoket School in Pawtucket, earning a salary of \$1,000. Freeman later became the superintendent of schools in Seekonk, Swansea, and Somerset, Massachusetts.

Of the many accomplished students of the 1870s, one stands out for her achievements in nursing, a field that today is strongly associated with RIC but at that time was far in the institution's future. Clara Weeks, who matriculated in 1875, was part of the third cohort of students at the reopened Rhode Island Normal School. Ten years later she published the first textbook by an American nurse, the "Textbook of Nursing for the use of Training Schools, Families, and Private Students." By then she was the founding superintendent of Paterson, New Jersey's General Hospital Nursing School and a leading educator in the field.

³¹ Marlene Lopes, "Women of Color at RIC—A Look at the Early Years," *What's News at Rhode Island College* XXV, No. 8, February 14, 2005: 14.



General Thomas J. Morgan. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893."

Advancing the Cause of Higher Education

Greenough resigned in 1883 to take a position as principal of the Massachusetts Agricultural College (now the University of Massachusetts Amherst) and General Thomas J. Morgan took over the administration of the school. A Civil War veteran who received commendation for his command of two infantry brigades (one composed of African Americans, which Morgan himself had helped

to organize) at the Battle of Nashville, Morgan held a Doctor of Divinity degree from the University of Chicago and had served as principal of the Nebraska State Normal School. Accepting the position at the Rhode Island Normal School, Morgan quickly began to reshape how the school trained its students, a task that would not be completed until many years after his tenure as principal had ended. The school had traditionally been forced to focus much of its teaching on preparatory work. Morgan wished to shift the focus to the theoretical study of education, which he believed would improve the professional standing of Rhode Island Normal School graduates and would push all normal schools to prepare new teachers to teach at every educational level.³²

For the Rhode Island Normal School to advance the cause of higher education in the state, the facilities needed to be addressed. The existing facility only allowed for 150 students to be enrolled (although quite a few more students were, indeed, enrolled) and was unable to accommodate classrooms in which future teachers could practice teaching. During this time the Rhode Island Normal School was also having trouble gaining access

³² Carbone, "The History of the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction," 299-301.



Normal School faculty circa 1888, with General Morgan at front, center. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893."

to local classrooms due to the feelings of competition the institution elicited in local administrators, particularly in the school's hometown of Providence. This difficulty stemmed from a fear that the Rhode Island Normal School was attempting to supplant Providence High School as the institution given the primary responsibility for training new teachers (which, of course, was true). To some outside observers, the two institutions appeared to overlap in function during the 1880s (a concern that would arise again with Rhode Island College and the University of Rhode Island in the mid-twentieth century). While Morgan did attempt to petition for a larger facility, this petition was not successful during his period of leadership at the school, and he was frustrated by his lack of progress. When U.S. President Benjamin Harrison offered him the position of Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in 1889, he accepted it.³³ Unsurprisingly, Morgan's tenure there focused on education and the reform of the chaotic system of BIA-affiliated mission schools.

Growth in Student and Alumni Involvement

Shortly before George A. Littlefield was selected to fill Morgan's position in 1888, the growing number of Normal School alumni established the institution's second and much longer-lasting alumni organization, the Rhode Island State Normal School Alumni Association. Arthur W. Brown (1872) served as its first president and Sarah Marble (1872) as its vice president.³⁴ This

³³ Ibid., 305-306.

³⁴ Smith and Fusco, 14.

new leadership marks the formal beginning of the rich history of student and alumni activity at RIC. Prior to his appointment, Littlefield had been superintendent of schools in Newport since 1882, and in Malden and Lawrence, Massachusetts, before that. Littlefield was faced with a rapidly growing school and, consequently, expended significant effort trying to obtain a new facility or an expansion of the existing one. But, like Morgan before him, Littlefield was unsuccessful in this pursuit. He was, however, able to create a program that allowed Providence High School graduates an opportunity to undergo a period of instruction at the school and to gain hands-on training in a classroom before being placed in positions as professional teachers. This change proved to be a major step forward in the relationship between the two institutions. He also extended the course of study to three-and-a-half years (it had been extended from two years to three just a few years before).³⁵ Littlefield's brief administration came to a close in 1892, after just three years, when he resigned to begin practicing law.³⁶ Twice elected as Providence's representative to the General Assembly, Littlefield was welcomed far and wide as a sought-after orator on the subjects of Abraham Lincoln and Daniel Webster.



Senior Class B, Spring Term, 1889. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrap-book, 1893."

³⁵ *World's Fair Album of Chicago 1893*. Portland, ME: Chrisholm Bros, 1893. Exhibition catalog.

³⁶ Carbone, "The History of the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction," 307-313.



Principal William E. Wilson. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893."

Pedagogy of Practical Experience

By the time of Littlefield's departure the city of Providence required all teachers to study at the Rhode Island Normal School, and the pressure created by increased enrollments demanded attention and increased funding. Littlefield's successor, William E. Wilson, had taught physical and biological sciences at the school since 1884, when Gen. Morgan recruited him

to come to Providence. Wilson hailed from Pennsylvania; served in varied academic positions, from elementary schools to colleges; and taught in normal schools in three different states. This high level of experience (along with an affable nature) assisted him greatly in his effort to achieve the ideal set down by Barnard almost fifty years before. Wilson, with support from various civic and academic leaders, was able to convince the state's officials to fund a grammar school in Providence for the express purpose of training Rhode Island Normal School students.³⁷

The Observation and Training school was opened in 1893 and soon became emblematic of the school's pedagogical method.³⁸ The first



Senior A Class, Spring Term, 1893. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893."

³⁷ Bicknell, *A History of the Rhode Island Normal School*, 227.

³⁸ Carbone, "The History of the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction," 323-330.

principal of the training school was Sara F. Bliss, who came from the faculty of the Albany Normal School (now SUNY's University at Albany). Clara E. Craig, who would become an institution at the school in her own right, and Edith Goodyear, who would later return as the wife of Rhode Island Normal School President John Alger, were the training supervisors. Phebe Wilbur, Alice W. Case, and Mary Bosworth were selected to be observation teachers. Later, Mary Eastburn of Trenton, New Jersey's state normal school, and Alice E. Reynolds of Norwich, Connecticut, were hired as teacher trainers, and Ada B. Bragg, Grace E. Mowry, and Marion A. Puffer as observation teachers. Principal Wilson also introduced student teaching, placing the school's students in urban classrooms around the state in order to provide young teachers-in-training with valuable practical experience.

The teachers at the school during the Wilson years included Sarah Marble, Charlotte E. Deming, Emma E. Brown, Inez L. Whipple, and author Mabel C. Bragg. The popular Ms. Bragg (class of 1889) emphasized public speaking and narrative in her classes. She would later serve as assistant superintendent of schools in Newton, Massachusetts, and write for popular magazines. One of the stories that she wrote was called "The Pony Engine," published in 1916 and retold by the pseudonymous "Watty Piper" as *The Little Engine That Could* in 1930. One is easily tempted to believe that "I think I can" derives from the atmosphere of the Rhode Island Normal School.



Mabel C. Bragg. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893."

Charlotte Deming, who served on the faculty for nearly three decades from 1879 to 1908, was another important figure in the institution's evolution. After graduating from Westfield's Normal School, Deming continued her studies at Harvard, Oxford, and the University of Michigan and brought the latest educational



Ms. Deming's geography class, 1893. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893."

methodologies back to Rhode Island. Other teachers in this period included B. W. Hood, Alexander Bevan, Emory P. Russell, Alexander Seaverns, Clara F. Robinson, Bertha Bass, Fannie E. Woods, Hattie Hunt, and Mary Dickerson.³⁹

When the World's Columbian Exhibition was held in Chicago in 1893, the school submitted a scrapbook that contained a history of the school and photographs of the people most important to the school's existence. Janitor William H. Gross is



Normal School faculty, circa 1890. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893."

featured twice in the book—in a solo portrait and in the center of a group faculty photograph. An African American man from Baltimore, Maryland, born in February 1860,

³⁹ Bicknell, *A History of the Rhode Island Normal School*.



William H. Gross. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893."

Gross was an amateur historian who owned his own home on Thayer Street and later on Olney Street. He earned \$70 per month as janitor, and the school paid his wife about \$7 to \$10 each month for laundry services. (In comparison, faculty earned around \$100 per month, and the teachers in the observation school earned only \$30 to \$50 per month). Gross's son, Carl R. Gross, who helped tend to the gardening for a time, earned some money to pay for school

and excelled at his studies. By his mid-twenties he became a medical doctor and one of the most prominent African American doctors of the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1960s he compiled "Notes on the 'Negro' in Rhode Island Medicine," a history rediscovered and published in 2005.⁴⁰

A New Campus

In January 1892 the Wilson administration was able to win approval from the state to build a new and more appropriate facility for the Rhode Island Normal School. The following year, the General Assembly created and authorized a special commission "to select and purchase a site and erect thereon a building for the State Normal School."⁴¹ A location was obtained near the site of the future State House on Smith Hill in Providence in 1894, and architectural plans were accepted the same year.⁴² Explicitly designed to set the standard for all other normal schools, at a cost of \$540,739.84 (about \$15.2 million today), the building opened in 1898, just after the end of the

⁴⁰ Lopes, "Women of Color at RIC."

⁴¹ Bicknell, *A History of the Rhode Island Normal School*, 64.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 65.

Spanish American War. The new building could accommodate 300 students plus 400 pupils in the lab school, now internally housed. The three floors (plus basement) included a kindergarten, primary school observation rooms, classrooms, laboratories, a library, and a study hall.⁴³

With the new campus secured, Wilson resigned his position to become principal of the Washington State Normal School. Fred Gowing, New Hampshire commissioner of education, filled the vacancy. Gowing continued to guide the school in a direction designed to improve teacher practices and increase



Students singing in chorus, 1893. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, "The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893."

the professional prestige of the occupation.

A particular development was the creation of a program for a kindergarten training class.

Also during this time the school's curriculum

expanded to include domestic science and physical training. Most significantly, Gowing presided over the dedication of the new campus on September 7, 1898. He introduced the U.S. Commissioner of Education William A. Harris as the keynote speaker that day, but it was a former commissioner, eighty-seven-year-old Henry Barnard, who stole the show with his dedicatory speech. Since his first retirement due to health problems in 1849, Barnard had served as chancellor of the University of Wisconsin, president of St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, and as the

⁴³ Carbone, "The History of the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction," 340-343; Thomas Francis Lavery, "Factors Related to the Development of Curricula for the Preparation of Secondary School Teachers at Rhode Island College, 1952-1972," PhD diss., University of Connecticut, 1973: 18.



Students in class, circa 1893. Source: Rhode Island State Normal School, “The Columbian Exposition Normal School Scrapbook, 1893.”

first U.S. commissioner of education.⁴⁴ Sadly, when he died in his native Hartford two years later, Barnard was living in poverty.

The Changes of Charles S. Chapin When Gowing resigned to work for a textbook publisher in

1901, Charles S. Chapin, a graduate of Wesleyan and Brown Universities and the principal of the prestigious Westfield State Normal School, was offered the open position. Chapin assumed leadership of the Rhode Island Normal School at a high point in the school’s early history. At that time the school was located in a facility valued at \$750,000, which made it the most valuable normal school in the country. The school was also considered to possess one of the nation’s finest teaching staffs.⁴⁵

Faced with increasing student enrollment—more than forty percent growth during his tenure—and yet also concerned about a teacher shortage across the state, Chapin was able to convince the Providence Schools to provide the Rhode Island Normal School with more training classrooms. Eventually, the city of Cranston would contribute as well. This agreement brought to an end the practice of the state’s cities and towns conducting teacher training independent of the Rhode Island State Normal School. By this time, a Rhode Island Normal School education had become a near-requirement for employment as a teacher in the state. Out-of-state students were enrolling, too; however, if they planned to teach afterwards in another state, they were now

⁴⁴ Carbone, “The History of the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction,” 345-355.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 355-358.

asked to pay \$150 tuition. Tuition remained free, though, for those who would teach in state. Chapin was also able to eliminate the preparatory program after deciding that incoming students no longer needed it. Students were now enrolling at the school after completing earlier schooling, thanks in no small part to the earlier generations of graduates!

Chapin's actions allowed the school to be able to meet the changing needs of Rhode Islanders. These actions also succeeded in making the Rhode Island Normal School the largest institution of its kind in New England at the beginning of the twentieth century. Despite the trustees' best efforts to keep Chapin at the school, in 1907 Chapin left after being offered the chance to start a new normal school in Montclair, New Jersey (now Montclair State University).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 359-370.

The Early Twentieth Century: Rapid Expansion in Limited Space

In 1904, twenty million people flocked to St. Louis, Missouri, for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. This world's fair featured exhibits (including people) from America's latest territorial acquisition, the Philippines, as well as sixty-one other foreign nations and forty-three states, Rhode Island among them. The exhibits, housed in more than 1,500 buildings, offered both edification and entertainment. The Rhode Island Normal School exhibited volumes of documentation on its educational methods, and those methods were demonstrated before interested educators. The exhibit earned the college a gold medal and reinforced its position at the start of a new century as a national leader in the rapidly evolving field of public higher education.

A National Reputation

The Rhode Island Normal School gained a national reputation early in its history, and “educators from across the country visited the school to observe for themselves the advanced program that it offered.” Soon it would again set the new standard by becoming the first New England normal school to transform itself into a public college of education. By the turn of the century, the school was also attracting its share of more famous visitors, including John Dewey, Alice Freeman Palmer (second president of Wellesley

College), Maria Montessori, and Julia Ward Howe.⁴⁷

The student body remained predominantly female, and the campus environment was described as a “delightful and



Turn-of-the-century postcard depicting the Rhode Island Normal School. Source: Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs.

harmonious” social scene. Students established a glee club, a student-run government, and two literary societies; they organized gymnastics meets and lectures; and they put on theatrical productions and musicals. At the new

campus in downtown Providence, the students created elaborate May pageants each spring, replete with balls and banquets, which were faithfully documented by the local newspapers. By the end of the century the alumni association was meeting annually at commencement and actively engaged in the school’s expanding sphere of activity.⁴⁸



Students studying in library, circa 1900. Source: Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs.

Addressing Evolving Educational Needs

Though the Rhode Island Normal School had, by 1900, achieved a high status and level of authority, the educational needs of Rhode Islanders continued to evolve. The school underwent a number of significant

⁴⁷ Marzacco, “Feminism without Fanfare,” 32.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

changes, perhaps best illustrated by the stories of two graduates who were members of the Clark family. Minnie L. Clark graduated from the Normal School in 1874. Her daughter Annie Church graduated from the school's kindergarten teaching preparation program in 1905. When Minnie was a student, the school was located on Westminster Street in a building called the Music Hall. Students journeyed to Providence by train and then walked from the station to the school. Like all students then, Minnie had to pass an oral examination and a written examination administered by the Board of Examiners prior to admission to the Normal School. By the time Annie enrolled in 1902, the Normal School was housed in a state-of-the-art building, and the entrance exams had disappeared—but, then again, Annie had graduated from high school (unlike her mother and most of the rest of her mother's class, who often had not received any formal schooling prior to their admission to the Normal School).⁴⁹

The Clark family illustrates the impact the Rhode Island Normal School had on education in the state in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Gone were the days of haphazard teacher training by the various high schools, and gone, too, were the days when students arrived with no previous schooling. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the school had successfully created a standard program for training Rhode Island's next generation of educators, hence the name normal, meaning the setting of standards or norms.

Almost 4,000 teachers had been trained by the school by the beginning of the 1920s. Interestingly, even though many people continued to claim that women's primary role was that of homemaker, the state spent significantly more to educate its women than its men during the early twentieth century—and most of those female graduates stayed in the workforce for decades after graduation. From 1894 to 1920 the combined

⁴⁹ Shelly Murphy, "The Century in Retrospect—The 1910s: The War Years," *What's News at Rhode Island College*, Monday, March 15, 1999.

number of graduates from the Rhode Island Normal School and from the state's College of Agriculture and Mechanics Arts (URI) was 2,246 women and 369 men. Of course, most of the women graduated from the normal school and most of the men graduated from the agricultural college. Crucially, tuition at both institutions was free for Rhode Island residents (the normal school even provided a transportation stipend), which meant that the state greatly assisted in the creation of individual educational opportunity for its citizens, male and female.⁵⁰

By 1910 students directly participated in campus governance. Every student at the school was a member of a society, and every society was governed democratically. The student body was governed by the Students' League of the Rhode Island Normal School, which consisted of a president, vice president, and secretary, as well as an executive committee comprised of representatives elected from the various classes. The league concerned itself with general policy issues and was also responsible for maintaining order and academic discipline. The league created the laws of the school, subject only to the approval of the principal.⁵¹ Today RIC's Student Community Government, Inc., formed in the early 1970s, continues the tradition of student participation in campus governance.

John L. Alger, Principal and President

The departure of Charles Chapin at the end of 1907 led to the hiring of John L. Alger as principal of the Rhode Island Normal School. Alger had married Edith Goodyear, one of the original teachers at the Observation and Training School, in 1895, so he was at least indirectly acquainted with the school before his arrival in Providence. As had been the case with earlier decisions (in particular, Barnard's appointment as commissioner in 1842, Colburn's selection as founding principal in 1854, and Greenough's selection as the principal of the revived school in

⁵⁰ Marzacco, "Feminism without Fanfare," 34, 40.

⁵¹ Bicknell, *A History of the Rhode Island Normal School*, 201-202.

1871), the choice of John Alger to lead the transformation of the institution from a normal school to the Rhode Island College of Education, proved extraordinarily wise. Alger had the unique distinction of being the only man to be both principal and president, and he held those positions for a total of thirty years, making him the longest-serving leader in the school's history.

John L. Alger was born to American parents in Eaton, Quebec, on November 20, 1864, and spent his childhood in Stratford, New Hampshire. He graduated from the Vermont Academy



John Lincoln Alger. Source: Rhode Island College Archives. P31 "Principals and Presidents."

with honors and matriculated at Brown University. He performed just as well there, funding much of his own education by providing tutoring to his peers, and he graduated as a member of Phi Beta Kappa. Demonstrating great promise as an educator, Alger secured himself a teaching position at Rutland High School in Vermont prior to his graduation from Brown in 1890. He would go on to receive a Master of Arts degree from Brown University, a Doctor of Science

degree from the Rhode Island College of Pharmacy and Allied Sciences, and a Doctor of Education degree from Rhode Island State College (now the University of Rhode Island).

Building on the legacy created by his predecessors, Alger expanded the continuing education lectures and extension courses for already practicing teachers in September 1909. While this program had been something the school had managed to facilitate from time to time, at this point it became a regular feature. With the support of the trustees, Alger also attempted to provide similar programs in the summer and then added a three-year course of study to provide specialization in a certain area, but these plans were threatened by the continued lack of enough

space to provide for the student body.⁵²

As pressure grew to ameliorate the space problem, Chapin's first step was to raise the age requirement for entry into the school. Alger further limited enrollment by instituting a tuition rate of \$150 for out-of-state students, who had previously been allowed to attend for free provided they worked in Rhode Island. More rigorous academic standards for admission, including receipt of a diploma from a state-approved high school and successful completion of an entrance examination, were also implemented. The combination of the above restrictive actions helped but did not provide a solution, and the demand for teachers continued to grow.⁵³

The school's building in downtown Providence remained in good condition during the prewar years. In June 1913, ninety-eight women graduated and received their diplomas directly from Governor Aram J. Pothier. That evening a reception was held, followed by the annual graduation ball; both events were held in a building still said to be the "finest of its kind in the country, and with its beautiful gardens and approaches . . . one of the most attractive spots in the center of the city."⁵⁴ While unquestionably attractive, the facility had been built too small for a rapidly expanding student body.

⁵² Carbone, "The History of the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction," 372-373.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 374-377; John J. Alger (unpublished letter, July 29, 1914). Dr. Alger's changes to entry requirements did meet with at least some resistance. The change was challenged in a letter to the *Sunday Providence Journal* and called for an "investigation" into the methods the RINS was using to examine candidates attempting to enter the school. Dr. Alger took it upon himself to assuage any concerns that may have risen among the Board of Trustees. This letter is very revealing of John Alger's resolute belief in what he was doing as well as his eloquence in explaining his position and supporting his actions with sound reasoning borne from his firsthand experience at the school. His letter also demonstrates his dedication to the school and its future.

⁵⁴ "Graduation Exercises Held at Rhode Island State Normal School," from "Providence, Rhode Island," *Board of Trade Journal* XXV, No. 6, June 1913.

Temporary relief from the over-enrollment problem came during the United States' entry into World War I in 1917. The school saw a drop of enrollment from 414 students in 1917 to 277 students in 1920 due to wartime service, the need for many students to fulfill duties at home, and the proliferation of lucrative job opportunities in war-related industries.⁵⁵ The arrival of the war halted efforts to change the curriculum and also introduced the teacher loyalty oath that would remain in place for forty-six years. Among other promises, all Rhode Island teachers swore to “neglect no opportunity to teach the children committed to my care loyalty to Nation and State.” Further, as teachers of the “public’s children,” teachers had to relinquish their rights to “express opinions that conflict with honor to country, loyalty to American ideals, and obedience to and respect for the laws of Nation and State.” The constraints on free speech remained until revoked by the state, following a public protest by twenty RIC graduating seniors in 1964.⁵⁶

Creating “A Real College”

Peacetime brought renewed pressure on existing facilities and faculty. A movement to change the Rhode Island Normal School into a full-fledged college had been talked about for some time. During the school’s fortieth anniversary celebration, the movement began to gather momentum and a number of the event’s speakers alluded to this change. Rhode Island Normal School’s most ardent champion, Thomas Bicknell, was among the speakers. His words on the matter, perhaps, best capture the reasoning and spirit behind the desire for the change:

Change the name of our Normal School to Normal College
and you place it, nominally, on the same plane as other

⁵⁵ Carbone, “The History of the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction,” 375, 377.

⁵⁶ Michael Smith, “Sesquicentennial Memories: RIC Takes Lead in Abolition of Teacher Loyalty Oath,” *Rhode Island College Sesquicentennial* (website), December 12, 2003, <http://www.ric.edu/ric150/memories/archv12.html>.

colleges; and of a truth the teaching fraternity has a right to all the advantages that an underpaid profession can possibly be entitled to or that the governing powers can bestow.

It follows, of course, that the titles of the Normal teachers shall correspond with those of the regular college; a matter of great importance, in that it establishes a rank above the titles of the regular common-school teachers, whom they prepare for their work.⁵⁷

However, due to the disruption caused by World War I, the school would not evolve into a college until 1920. In April of that year, the Rhode Island General Assembly voted to change the name to the Rhode Island College of Education (RICE). The college immediately expanded its program from the existing two-and-a-half-year teaching certificate program to a four-year college degree program. Commissioner of Public Schools Walter E. Ranger explained to the *Providence Journal* that “There is a growing desire among teachers for higher education. Many who leave high school have to think about earning their living and have to give up the college education they yearn for. They have to start right in training for their life work. Those to whom this is a necessity go to the Normal School. But now they will have a real college where they can get the equivalent of a college education presented from a teacher’s viewpoint.”⁵⁸

Unfortunately, the physical plant remained that of a late nineteenth-century normal school, albeit a stunningly attractive one, rather than a twentieth-century teachers college, so the ability of the college to meet the higher education needs of aspiring middle-class Rhode Islanders remained limited. Alger annually requested funds to improve the campus—stating that the building’s roof was leaking, the gymnasium was unusable, and classroom space was inadequate for the size of the student body. With increased enrollment in the new century, by the 1923-24

⁵⁷ Bicknell, *A History of the Rhode Island Normal School*, 82.

⁵⁸ Murphy, “The Century in Retrospect.”

school year the facility held 607 regular students, roughly double what the original building was designed to hold. The Rhode Island General Assembly funded the construction of a new laboratory school building in 1928, which increased facilities for observation and demonstration and also opened up eleven classrooms in the school. The new facility opened just before the stock market crashed in October 1929, and the extra space proved adequate for a while, as enrollment stayed steady through the depression years. In the 1937-38 school year only 536 regular students were enrolled, but this figure would increase rapidly after WWII.⁵⁹

RICE began offering seven courses of study: a four-year course of study at the College of Education in cooperation with Rhode Island State College (RISC, now URI) and three distinct two-and-one-half-year general courses of study for kindergarten, primary teachers, and librarians. Lastly, two curricula were offered that were two years in length for college graduates and teachers who had already been practicing in the field.⁶⁰ State appropriations remained high enough that tuition at RICE continued to be free, even for nonresidents, provided they taught in Rhode Island schools for at least two years after graduation.

Alger and the long-serving director of training, Clara Craig, continued to expand and redefine the curriculum. The Master of Education program was introduced in 1925. The next year saw the streamlining of programs with a single four-year course of study that culminated in a Bachelor of Education degree. The focus of these programs was still to prepare teachers to work at the elementary school level; however, the understanding, particularly by Craig, was that RICE needed a program more distinctly intended to prepare students for positions in high schools. Her efforts led to the Rhode Island commissioner of education providing four “Critic” teachers at four schools to

⁵⁹ Lavery, “Factors Related to the Development of Curricula,” 18-19.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

facilitate improved classroom experience.⁶¹

Craig's theory and methods course brought the Italian educator Maria Montessori's ideas into Rhode Island education. In fact, it was Craig who first introduced the Montessori Method, a child-centered approach to education, to the United States. Born and educated in Providence, Craig earned her degrees from the Colleges of Education at Brown and Clark Universities. She then went to Italy for four months in 1913 to study with Montessori, who visited the Rhode Island Normal School later that year. The methodology spread quickly after Craig reorganized the Henry Barnard School, which re-opened in 1928 with classroom labs for teacher training. Craig lectured extensively across the United States and wrote many articles on the subject. After the school was renamed Rhode Island College of Education, Craig became its first dean.

In his 1935 report to the trustees, Alger noted the new higher standards for admission, for graduation, and for the Master of Education degree. From 1930 to 1931, sixty-four percent of applicants were admitted. That figure dropped to twenty-eight percent from 1933 to 1934 and to around twenty percent from 1934 to 1935. The college also offered free courses "in education and in most of the regular college subjects" in the afternoons and on Saturdays, "as well as during the recent Summer Sessions." But by the mid-1930s, these free classes had grown to have sometimes 200 or more students and were unworkable.⁶² This growth demonstrates the high demand for further education as well as the insufficient space and resources that existed before the college's expansion. In the 1937-38 school year, about one-half of all public school teachers in Rhode Island attended one or more of the free twenty-to-forty-hour courses at the college, with an

⁶¹ Ibid., 16.

⁶² "Annual Report to the Trustees," *Rhode Island College of Education Bulletin*, No. 65, January 1935, Providence, RI. Public Relations and Alumni Affairs, Series I. Office Files, 1922-1979. Archives 1/5/1.

average attendance of approximately fifty total hours.⁶³ Clearly, an immediate need for expansion existed.

Alger retired from his position in June 1939 after thirty-one years as either principal of the Rhode Island Normal School or president of RICE. He passed away on January 11, 1943, and was remembered as an excellent administrator, a progressive educator, and a fundamentally good person.⁶⁴

Lucius A. Whipple: Cultivation of Curriculum and Campus Culture

In 1939, as World War II began in Europe, Alger was replaced by a man of equal passion and talent, Lucius A. Whipple. Whipple was born in Harmony, Rhode Island, January 29, 1887. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree at RICE, and by the time he was selected to become RICE's second president in 1939, he had already enjoyed a long and successful career in education as a teacher of mathematics and as an administrator and school district superintendent. In 1922 he accepted the position of Director of Surveys and Research for the State Department of Education, where he worked until 1935. He was then employed by the Pawtucket and Blackstone Valley Community Chest, Inc., the only job he would ever have outside of education.



Lucius A. Whipple. Source: Rhode Island College Archives. P31 "Principals and Presidents."

⁶³ "Annual Report to the Board of Regents Rhode Island College of Education 1937-1938," *Rhode Island College of Education Bulletin*, No. 70, January 1939, Providence, RI.

⁶⁴ *Providence Journal*, January 12, 1943, Scrapbooks, Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs, 1/5/10.2.

Three years later he would accept the position of president of RICE.⁶⁵

One of Whipple's first actions upon taking office was to continue the ongoing revision of the college's curriculum. He appointed a committee of faculty members to look at options and gave students a chance to offer suggestions. In November 1942, Whipple announced a revised curriculum that offered one course of study for prospective elementary teachers and two separate courses of study for future high school teachers (focusing on either English and social studies or mathematics and science). Graduates had taken positions in high schools before, but these programs offered the first specific curricula for secondary education training.⁶⁶

World War II brought years of intense activity to the college. Over the summer of 1943 Whipple co-sponsored, with James F. Rockette from the State Department of Education, a collection of summer sessions to prepare and equip teachers for their jobs during the war and after. Emphases included the geography of the ongoing war, mathematics, physics, general science and physical education. The new curriculum illustrates how RICE supported the war effort while continuing to serve the needs of its students, many of whom also served in the armed forces during the war.⁶⁷ Helen Osley, a 1941 graduate, was typical of that generation. While she taught at Narragansett Elementary School and her husband served overseas, Helen sat on the local rationing board, acted as an air raid warden, manned a switchboard at the Narragansett headquarters for civilian defense, monitored blackouts, grew a victory garden, and bore a child that her

⁶⁵ *Providence Journal*, April 21, 1952, Scrapbooks, Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs, 1/5/10.2.

⁶⁶ Lavery, "Factors Related to the Development of Curricula," 23-24.

⁶⁷ *Providence Journal*, May 30, 1942, Scrapbooks, Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs, 1/5/10.2.

husband did not see for its first two years of life.⁶⁸

At a Rhode Island radio broadcast, “Meeting of the Air,” Whipple spoke his mind about what he believed to be the cause of the current conflict. He felt that economic issues were at its root and that until such issues were addressed worldwide, no lasting peace would ever be attained. He also went on to express the changes he felt were needed in American education in the postwar years:

If we are to maintain our position of international leadership as the whole world expects us, our educational program must attain heights, which many people in the past, and unfortunately in the present, too, in their isolationist smugness, might term idealistic dreaming.

He also urged students to “break down barriers caused by the distinctions in class, race, creed, and nationality.”⁶⁹ Similarly, in his commencement address in June of 1940, Whipple urged the class of 1940 not to let preconceived notions impact their work, noting, “Your thinking cannot be confused by your prejudices, because prejudice steals our common sense and causes instability of thought.”⁷⁰

The campus culture at RICE also continued to develop during the Whipple years. The *Providence Journal* covered many of the student activities. The basketball team frequently engaged in games against other area colleges as well as against naval personnel

⁶⁸ Aileen Keenan, “A Schoolteacher Minds the Front,” Interview with Helen Osley, in *What Did You Do in the War Grandma: An Oral History of Rhode Island Women during World War II* (Coventry, RI: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1989), http://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/WWII_Women/SchoolTeacherMindsFront.html.

⁶⁹ *Providence Journal*, February 12, 1942, Scrapbooks, Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs, 1/5/10.2.

⁷⁰ *Providence Journal*, June 17, 1940, Scrapbooks, Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs, 1/5/10.2.

from Newport. During the Battle of Britain, students recycled clothing made of yarn to produce blankets for air-raid shelters in England, and they held a yearly “Pan-American” event intended to promote a better understanding of South American cultures. RICE also produced a number of theatrical performances during this time, continuing a student tradition.⁷¹

Whipple retired from the presidency and ended his career in education in 1951 due to poor health. A year later, on April 20, 1952, he passed away at his home in Greenville, Rhode Island.⁷² During his tenure he led the college through the difficult war years and positioned RICE for unprecedented success in the early postwar era. He led the effort to modernize the curriculum, most notably in the establishment of programs dedicated to the training of secondary school teachers. He consistently displayed passion, not just for the college he oversaw but also for the future of education. And his progressive views regarding class and race are a reminder of the optimism with which many people faced the challenges that began to disrupt American society in the early postwar years.

⁷¹ *Providence Journal* Scrapbook, 1939-41, Scrapbooks, Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs, 1/5/10.2.

⁷² *Providence Journal*, April 21, 1952.

From RICE to RIC: Becoming Rhode Island's Public Liberal Arts College

In April 1959 Rhode Island Governor Christopher Del Sesto signed legislation to expand the college's mission and to change its name to Rhode Island College (RIC). The mid-1950s through the mid-1960s were especially active ones—a time of tremendous change and growth. Budgets grew dramatically—by more than fifty percent from 1959 to 1962—which allowed the college to expand the opportunities it offered to a broader cross-section of students.⁷³ The college continued to serve as the college of opportunity and social mobility but now offered many more avenues to success.

The postwar world brought new challenges for Rhode Island's economy, and the college responded by expanding existing programs and broadening its mission. In order to continue to meet the needs of the Ocean State, Rhode Island College became a public four-year liberal arts college. Like many institutions of higher learning, RIC benefitted from the postwar surge in enrollment that followed from the GI Bill and other government largesse for education. Budgets exploded to levels never seen before or since, and RIC again paved the way for similar

⁷³ "President's Report: 1962-63," in Rhode Island College Public Relations and Alumni Affairs: Series I. Office Files 1922-1979. Archives 1/5/1.

institutions across the nation as it transformed itself from the state's teachers college to the state's public liberal arts college by 1959. In 1954 the college celebrated its centennial by breaking ground on its new campus in the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood of Providence, where it grew from an initial six buildings to more than two dozen. Continuing to attract admirers and imitators, especially in the field of education, RICE also hosted a number of prominent figures during the decade and awarded honorary degrees to such contemporary luminaries as Henry Steele Commager ('55), Norman Cousins ('58), and David Reisman ('59), as well as every prominent state political and educational leader.

Meeting immediate needs came first, however, and the most pressing issue was again teacher training. More educators were needed for the baby-boomer generation. The public school population in Rhode Island had increased by sixty percent in only fifteen years, from 97,120 students in 1950 to 154,501 in 1965, and the demand for more teachers put pressure on the state's preeminent institution for teacher training—still innovative after a century.⁷⁴ With the premier of television's *Romper Room* program in the mid-1950s, RICE became associated with a new medium of education. RICE graduate Gloria Flood was the first host of New York City's *Romper Room* franchise beginning in 1955, teaching kindergarten on the air five mornings a week. While perhaps not as groundbreaking as the introduction of the Montessori Method in the 1920s, the college was again a part of a transformative moment in early childhood education. Flood's experiences learning to teach in the college's lab classrooms prepared her well for the television studio "lab," where she demonstrated her teaching skills and methods for a much larger audience.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Lavery, "Factors Related to the Development of Curricula," 120.

⁷⁵ *Providence Sunday Journal*, Scrapbooks, January 1954–June 1960, Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs, 1/5/10.2.

Meeting Postwar Challenges: Under the Leadership of William C. Gaige



William C. Gaige. Photo: Fabian Bachrach. Source: Rhode Island College Archives. P31 "Principals and Presidents."

RICE President William C. Gaige led the college through these developments, providing a vision for RIC to follow for decades to come and working successfully to see the first stages of that vision implemented during his tenure. Born into a family of teachers in Mayville, Pennsylvania, Gaige graduated in 1932 from Oberlin College and went on to earn a Master of Education degree at the University of Chicago in 1935, a Doctor of Education degree from Harvard University in 1955, and several honorary degrees.⁷⁶ His career began with a job teaching in Quincy, Massachusetts, during the 1930s. He then served as principal of a high school in Pembroke, Massachusetts, before joining the Navy during World War II as a training officer for amphibious forces. After the war he taught graduate courses at Boston University and was principal of another high school in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Moving to the Pacific coast, he served as superintendent of schools in Claremont, California, while teaching graduate courses at Claremont College.⁷⁷

Following the brief interim presidency of long-time administrator Fred Donovan, Gaige was inaugurated as president of RICE in November 1952. Like his predecessors, Gaige quickly became concerned about the limitations of RICE's physical plant and the high (20:1) student-to-teacher ratio. He sought a ratio of 10:1 through either extensive renovations to the downtown

⁷⁶ *Providence Journal*, September 15, 1998, Scrapbooks, Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs, 1/5/10.2.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*



Students celebrating May Pageant, circa 1952. Source: Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs.

building or entirely new buildings.⁷⁸ The 10:1 ratio proved to be unattainable (though the school did reach an impressive 15:1 ratio, which it maintained into the twenty-first century), but the new campus would be even greater than expected.

When Gaige

assumed the presidency, RICE's Board of Trustees guaranteed support for his effort to expand the school's space.⁷⁹ Before the state budget committee in November 1952, Gaige pleaded for \$100,000 in funds devoted to improving RICE, including hiring new teaching staff and administrators. He also stressed the need for newer equipment (noting that the blackboards dated back to 1890 and lighting to 1910) and the need for a significantly larger library.⁸⁰ This argument gained traction the following year, when the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools rejected RICE's initial accreditation bid "on the grounds of inadequate plant and insufficient library resources." In 1958, when the college applied for accreditation on the new campus, accreditation was granted.⁸¹

⁷⁸ *Providence Journal*, December 17, 1952, 11/1. 1952-53 Scrapbook, Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs, 1/5/10.2.

⁷⁹ *Providence Journal*, November 15, 1952. 1952-53 Scrapbook, Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs, 1/5/10.2.

⁸⁰ George F. Troy Jr., "New RICE President Begins Attack on College Problems," *Sunday Journal*, Nov 23, 1952 ('52-'53 Scrapbook).

⁸¹ "The President's Report: 1952-1962, Resurgent Years," Spring 1963 (1962/53): 6. Note that in 1953 RICE's teacher education programs, both graduate and undergraduate, were reaccredited by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

All of these improvements were necessary for Gaige to implement the vision for RICE he had unveiled in November and December 1952. Gaige pledged to improve the profession of teaching—and he knew that RICE’s position as a leader in education could give him the visibility and platform he needed to accomplish change. He argued that to become better teachers, students needed a better understanding of the so-called ethical principles of democracy; more background in communication, arts, and literature; a better grasp of how science affects our lives; and more experience with child psychology and pedagogy.⁸² In short, fostering the development of well-rounded human beings through a broader curriculum would also create better teachers.

Even without Gaige’s challenge, RICE faced a moment of decision in the early 1950s. Should it continue as a college of education? Should it be merged with the newly created University of Rhode Island (URI)? Should it evolve into something new? At the end of 1951, the Rhode Island Board of Education declared its position that “if any change is to be made it is much more natural, more educationally sound, and more practical that the College of Education be placed under the Board of Education where its identity would be preserved as a single purpose college and as a strong right arm of the board, than to be swallowed up in a university organization over which the board has no control.”⁸³ The press, state legislators, educators, students, and the public all debated the college’s future. Students held a number of rallies in downtown Providence. They hoisted onto their school’s façade giant banners that advocated for a bond issue to fund a larger campus for RICE and sat attentive in the state senate’s gallery as several votes that would decide the college’s future were taken. In early 1953 the Board of Trustees of State

⁸² *Providence Bulletin*, December 15, 1952, Scrapbook 1952-53, Scrapbooks, Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs, 1/5/10.2.

⁸³ “New Board Seeks Control of RICE,” *Providence Sunday Journal*, Dec 23, 1951, in Rhode Island College Archives (Scrapbook 1952-53, 12).

Colleges decided that RICE would be maintained, but greatly strengthened and expanded. Driving the decision were the ever-increasing demand for teachers and the exciting possibility of bringing to Rhode Islanders “a four-year college education at relatively low expense.”⁸⁴ Many public figures supported a new campus, notably Governor Dennis J. Roberts and Senator John O. Pastore. At one of the pro-bond issue rallies at the downtown campus, Senator Pastore drew sustained applause when he demanded a new campus be built. With RICE students forming motorcades that drove all over the state to promote the bond issue, and then electioneering at every polling place in the state on Election Day, voters supported it by a wide margin.⁸⁵ Throughout the early twentieth century, applications for enrollment and attendance at the college’s free courses had greatly exceeded available space, and part of what drove the support for the expansion of the college was the sense of a golden opportunity to meet the higher education needs of the whole population.

Another New Campus

In 1953 Gaige joined a study committee that would find a new location for RICE. Governor Roberts bravely halted the extensive remodeling of the old downtown building that was already underway and announced his support for the move. He publicly estimated the cost of the move at about \$2.5 million, which proved to be a significant underestimate. Initially, twenty acres on Mt. Pleasant Avenue, adjacent to the Dr. Patrick I. O’Rourke Center (formerly the State Home for Dependent and Neglected Children), were found for the new campus.⁸⁶ This space quickly grew larger through subsequent land acquisitions, including a

⁸⁴ “The President’s Report: 1952-1962,” 5.

⁸⁵ Marlene Lopes, ed., *Rhode Island College: On the Move, A Fiftieth Anniversary Collective Memoir* (Providence: Rhode Island College, 2008), 14-16.

⁸⁶ “History of the Home,” Rhode Island State home and School Project, Rhode Island College, last modified 2004, <http://www.ric.edu/statehomeandschool/historyHome.html>

substantial parcel added after the children's center closed its doors in 1979.⁸⁷

Construction of the first six buildings on the new campus began in 1956 and was completed in 1958 at a cost of \$3.5 million. Then, as now, the Henry Barnard School served as a



Proposed design of RICE's Mount Pleasant campus, circa 1956. Source: Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs.

laboratory school for students in education. Alger Hall housed the departments of mathematics, science, social sciences, and art. Craig-Lee Hall served mainly as classroom space.

Roberts Hall housed the school's auditorium, meeting rooms and administrative offices. The student center contained the library, bookstore, cafeteria, and lounge. Finally, Whipple Gymnasium held the gym and exercise rooms, facilities for athletic events, and some classrooms.⁸⁸ All of these buildings were designed by the firm of Howe, Prout, and Ekman Architects and were constructed



Mount Pleasant campus construction, 1956-58. Source: Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs.

⁸⁷ *Pawtucket Times*, Sep 30, 1953, Scrapbooks, Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs, 1/5/10.2.

⁸⁸ Elizabeth D. Warburton, *A History of Named Places: Rhode Island College, 1958-2012*, ed. Marlene L. Lopes (Providence: Digital Initiatives Press, 2012), 4-10.

by the E. Turgeon Construction Company.⁸⁹

Several more buildings were constructed during Gaige's tenure, including two residence halls. The first, the 144-bed Mary Tucker Thorp Residence Hall, was completed in 1963 and brought to an end RIC's period as solely a commuter school. A graduate of the institution, Mary Thorp later taught at RIC as a professor of education for forty years. The Thorp Professorship, awarded to an outstanding faculty member, continues to honor her extraordinary service and scholarship. In 1965 one of Thorp's professors of the early 1920s, Mary A. Weber, was memorialized with her own residence hall, which accommodated another 180 male and female students. Weber taught mathematics at the college for twenty-eight years, and when she died in 1965, she left RIC more than \$125,000—the first large legacy gift to RIC.⁹⁰

Beginning in 1962 Donovan Dining Center offered food service, banquet rooms, seating for 1,000, and also a sleeping



Donovan Dining Center, winter 1964-65. Source: Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs.

room for up to twenty overnight male students (Fred Donovan served RIC as a faculty member for twenty-six years, vice president and dean of men from 1940 to 1966, director of the graduate

program for twenty years, and acting president during the 1951-52 school year). Next, fulfilling one of the basic needs that Gaige had emphasized from the start of his administration, the James P. Adams Library opened in February 1963. Adams was chair of the Board of Trustees of State Colleges from 1955 to 1960 and was instrumental in finding the resources for the move to Mount

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

Pleasant. Three months after the opening of Donovan, the John Clarke Science Building, named for the minister and statesman who worked for thirteen long years to secure the Rhode Island charter of 1663, was dedicated. In 1965 the Michael F. Walsh



James P. Adams Library, winter 1962-63. Source: Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs.

Health and Physical Education Center opened, containing a basketball court, offices, and classrooms. Walsh had been the state's education commissioner from 1947 to 1963. Unfortunately, the Walsh Center was destroyed by fire on January 5, 1992. The last of the buildings to

be built during the Gaige administration was Horace Mann Hall, dedicated in 1966 and later renamed Gaige Hall.

In 1958 the new campus was little more than an expansive construction site and a “sea of mud.” Gaige moved into a new president's house, erected on the site of the home of Hugo Bruel, one of Rhode Island's most famous portrait artists. Bruel's house had been utterly destroyed by local firefighters who had used its remains for practice. A swamp and a grove of roses occupied the site where Adams Library now stands. Faculty members who were used to working downtown now enjoyed watching a family of pheasants parade around campus. Professor Clement Hasenfus later recalled, “I remember when we first moved to this campus, Helen Murphy, who was a teacher at Henry Barnard, stepped in a hole outside of the school and broke her leg. There were no sidewalks then.”⁹¹ Thankfully, pavement soon followed.

⁹¹ Laurence J. Sasso Jr., ed., “25 Years: Celebrating the Silver Anniversary, Rhode Island College: A Special Report,” *What's News at Rhode Island College*, 1983.

Expanding Function and Enrollment

With construction nearing completion, in 1958 the Rhode Island General Assembly's independent Commission to Study Higher Education "recommended that the function of Rhode Island College be expanded to include programs in the arts and sciences." The commission also suggested that the college increase in size to accommodate 2,000 undergraduates by 1965, 3,000 by 1970, and 4,000 by 1980, putting the school well on the road to the 8,500 students studying at the campus in 2015. The larger plan proposed by the commission called for the establishment of a distinct community college system, which, together with RIC and URI, forms the state's tripartite higher education system to this day. With the approval of the legislature, in April 1959 Governor Del Sesto signed into law the name change from the Rhode Island College of Education to Rhode Island College, which signified a dramatic expansion of affordable public higher education in Rhode Island.⁹²

Though now greatly expanded in size and academic offerings, RIC continued the RICE tradition of preparing the state's most effective teachers. Through the end of the 1960s, most RIC students studied education, but under Gaige the undergraduate curriculum developed to include forty-eight general education credits required of both liberal arts and education majors.⁹³ In 1960 the faculty revised the curriculum, increased the general education requirements, and offered six courses of study to undergraduates as the new decade began:

1. Early childhood and elementary education
2. Junior high school education (combined majors)
3. Secondary education (majors and cognates)
4. Industrial arts education
5. Special education (children with disabilities)
6. Liberal arts

⁹² "The President's Report: 1952-1962," 5.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

All liberal arts majors consisted of at least 30 subject-specific credits, with majors offered in biology, English, French, history, mathematics, general science, physical sciences, and social science. A minor was offered in each of these areas and also in physics, art, geography, music, psychology, and speech. Whether students earned a BA or BS, they all completed 48 general education credits.

As part of the newly created, intimate liberal arts college experience, in their upper-level English and history classes, students met in small seminars, which provided “an experience in intensive academic work subjected to sharp scrutiny and encouraged by much individual criticism.” A number of interdisciplinary courses offered explorations of “specific cultural areas of the world,” and faculty from three departments collaborated in developing an intensive course in the culture of Africa—very rare in the United States at the time.⁹⁴

The creation of RIC required some clarification regarding the institution’s role relative to URI. Following the adopted recommendations of the Committee to Study Higher Education, in 1959 the Board of Trustees adopted a statement of governing policy that stated:

It is essential that each institution should have an identifiable character of its own. It is also essential that each should have at least one major educational province in which it holds the pre-eminent position. And, finally, it is essential that their operations be cooperative rather than competing operations [...] Only at the undergraduate level in the arts and sciences will there be an appreciable overlapping and, because of the basic nature of these fields and the large number of students involved, this will be convenient cooperation rather than uneconomical duplication.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 14-16.

Both institutions were thus assigned programs in the arts and sciences and given responsibility for preparing elementary and secondary school teachers. RIC was given sole responsibility for preparing industrial arts teachers and both RIC and URI were assigned the education of art and music teachers. While both schools were required to offer master's degree programs in education, the college was not to offer a doctoral program.⁹⁵

Graduate studies became one of the first areas to blossom at the new campus. In 1963 alone, about one hundred MAs were awarded at RIC. RIC's Graduate Division not only offered several degree programs (dating to RIC's first two MAs granted in 1924), but in every year in the early 1960s nearly 2,000 of the state's public school teachers took one or more graduate courses at the college. It was estimated that more than seventy-five percent of all public school teachers in Rhode Island at the time had taken a course in the graduate program at RIC.⁹⁶

Increasing Student, Faculty, and Alumni Engagement

As the college changed, so did the students. Gaige noticed this change and described the thriving student newspaper, the *Anchor*, as “a stimulating factor” in student life. He believed that by the beginning of the 1960s “students’ activities [were] more interesting, varied and sophisticated.” However, Gaige also reflected that most students were still “service and vocationally, rather than intellectually oriented.” In each year of Gaige’s tenure, between eighty and ninety-five percent of the graduating class accepted teaching positions in Rhode Island, but a growing number went on to graduate study, and in 1962 Miss Jeannine Cote became the college’s first Fulbright Scholar. The campus also enrolled more male students. In 1952, one out of six students was male, in 1962, one out of three. The men’s basketball team even won the Southern Division Championship in the New England State College Conference in the 1962-63 school year.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Ibid., 6-8.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 14.

Despite the new campus, Gaige remarked in 1963 that the “strongest element of the College is the faculty.” Others noticed, too. In a feature on the college, the *Providence Sunday Journal* noted that, “the direction in which the College of Education is pointed is plain. How far it will go depends apparently only on the energies and imagination of its faculty, staff and students. At the moment there does not seem to be any limits to these.” In 1952 there were just 30 faculty members; in 1963 there were 125, 49 of whom held doctorates. Much of the increase occurred in the mid-1950s. From 1953 to 1958 the faculty increased by 117 percent, while the student body increased by fifty-eight percent, which reduced the student-to-faculty ratio to 15:1. Still, RIC needed to fill twenty-three positions for the 1963-64 school year, which is a testament to the school’s rapid growth following the state’s increased funding. By the time Gaige retired in 1966, the faculty numbered 205 and students 2,900. Thankfully, the college had little difficulty attracting talented professors. As Gaige explained, “The resilience of the faculty salary schedule, with its provision for merit increments, helps to make it possible to attract good faculty members. Moreover, it makes it feasible to retain the most able faculty members through more rapid upward adjustments in their salaries.”⁹⁸ Asked years later about the evolution of the college since his administration, Gaige replied that it had evolved much as he hoped it would, and “the idea of a general state college (university) developing programs to meet the needs of the state” was exactly what he had envisioned.⁹⁹ He also noted that “we were able to attract such an excellent faculty in relation to other state colleges around us, because we were not part of a bureaucracy; we had almost complete freedom to use the funds we had.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Laurence J. Sasso, ed., “Former Leaders Interviewed for the 25th,” in “25 Years: Celebrating the Silver Anniversary, Rhode Island College: A Special Report,” *What’s News at Rhode Island College*, 7.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 6.

In April 1965 the Rhode Island College Foundation was established with \$3,000 in donations. Incorporated by alumni Catherine M. Casserly ('31), Elena Calabro Leonelli ('42), Albert E. Mink ('54), Edward Travers ('51), and Grace Monaco, and former Governor Christopher T. DelSesto, the foundation was authorized by the Rhode Island General Assembly to collect and manage private funds for the college. Over the years the foundation has solicited and dispersed millions of dollars in donations. Among the largest single gifts were \$250,000 given by Helen Forman ('34) in 1994 (her cumulative donations total \$5 million), \$1 million given by Alan Shawn Feinstein in 1996, \$750,000 given by the Murray family in 2004, and \$1 million given by Carolyn Rafaelian in 2012. From the initial \$3,000, the foundation currently holds approximately \$25 million in assets and awards more than \$500,000 in scholarships to RIC students annually.

Beyond RIC, Gaige helped found the American Association of State Colleges and Universities in 1961. After retiring, he served as director of the Massachusetts Advisory Council on Education—a study group for elementary education. He also served in many civic positions in Rhode Island and was a deacon of the First Unitarian Church.¹⁰¹ His involvement in the state's civic life led him to urge political leaders to reduce the “groupism” that had been created by local politicians who exploited ethnic and cultural differences to enhance their own power at the expense of the general welfare.¹⁰²

Gaige returned to RIC in 1983 for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Mt. Pleasant campus. He was named President Emeritus and received a heartfelt three-minute standing ovation. Gaige Hall, formerly Horace Mann Hall, memorializes him on campus. Thanks to the people of Rhode Island, who overwhelmingly supported a bond issue in 2012, it is now undergoing extensive renovations.

¹⁰¹ *Providence Journal*, September 15, 1998.

¹⁰² *Providence Journal*, November 7, 1958, Scrapbooks, Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs, 1/5/10.2.

The Sixties Come to RIC: A Liberal Vision for Public Higher Education

“Our society is severely racked these days. I can think of nothing more significant in the long run than the mission of the college, and I am glad to be involved.”¹⁰³

Joseph F. Kauffman, 1968

Joseph F. Kauffman

As RIC continued to grow rapidly in the 1960s, the college looked to Joseph F. Kauffman for leadership. A man for the times, Kauffman had answered John F. Kennedy’s call to service by helping to launch the Peace Corps in 1961. As the first director of training, Kauffman set up more than seventy Peace Corps training programs in American colleges and universities and travelled the world to help get the programs up and running. Before Kennedy’s election, and even before Kauffman earned his doctorate at Boston University, he was involved in the Civil Rights Movement, working for the Anti-Defamation League



Joseph F. Kauffman. Source: Rhode Island College Archives. P31 “Principals and Presidents.”

¹⁰³ Joseph F. Kauffman, “A Sense of Purpose: Observations by the Next President,” *Folio: The Newsletter of Rhode Island College*, No. 11, March 1968. Rhode Island College Archives 11/1. “Kauffman, Joseph F. (Pres.)”

and for a fair employment act in collaboration with Whitney Young of the Urban League between 1950 and 1951. When he accepted a teaching position at Brandeis in the early 1950s, part of the appeal was the school's early and explicit policy of nondiscrimination.¹⁰⁴

After a stint as dean of student affairs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Kauffman brought his strong sense of inclusiveness to RIC in 1968, pushing hard for greater diversity and lowering many barriers to admission in order to expand "access to educational opportunity for non-traditional and disadvantaged citizens." Kauffman was himself a veteran of World War II, having served as an infantry sergeant in the army in campaigns in North Africa and Italy. He was also a Providence native, though he attended public schools in Norwood, Massachusetts, before heading west for his undergraduate work at the University of Denver and a master's degree in sociology from Northwestern University.

The late 1960s were years when college campuses were sites of intense political activity. RIC students participated in the national protests on Moratorium Day in October 1969 and again in the aftermath of the violence at Kent State and Jackson State in May 1970. For the dedication of the new Student Union on February 28, 1968, about 1,700 students staged a protest focused on the recent denial of tenure to a popular professor. RIC hosted the first statewide Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) conference on November 9, 1969, bringing the SDS chapters from Brown and URI to the Mt. Pleasant campus for a day of debate and planning that led to a trip to Washington, DC, on the date of the Vietnam War Moratorium demonstration.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Susan E. Smith, "The Presidents' Wives—No. 1: New College Family Settles," *Providence Journal*, Oct 30, 1968, clipping in Rhode Island College Archives 11/1.

¹⁰⁵ J. Stanley Lemons, "Flashes of the New Left: Student Protest at Rhode Island College," Unpublished manuscript courtesy of the author.



Student protest on February 28, 1968. Source: Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs.

Kauffman welcomed the new student activism. Deeply engaged in contemporary social and political issues, Kauffman stressed the need for higher education to make itself “relevant.” In his first address to the opening

convocation on September 18, 1968, Kauffman asked that the whole college community “search together for ways to re-sanctify life—to heal the wounds of the divisiveness that rips our land.” He continued, “If we are to increase our sense of vitality, as individuals and as a college, we must see this campus then as being front and center, not as a refuge.”¹⁰⁶ Student members were added to the Council of Rhode Island College (est. 1963) and the Department of Student Advisory Committees was established. Freshman hazing came to an end, as did the wearing of class beanies. Kauffman’s emphasis was on promoting direct student involvement in institutional governance. Student engagement also affected campus culture as well. The Kauffman years witnessed visits and performances by Jethro Tull, John Sebastian, Arlo Guthrie, actor and activist Theodore Bikel, folksinger Tom Rush, Isaac Asimov, Rev. Ralph Abernathy, Dr. Barry Commoner, Sen. Birch Bayh, Ralph Nader, and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., among other prominent figures of the time.

¹⁰⁶ “Joseph F. Kauffman bio,” September 1971, in folder “Kauffman, Joseph F.,” Rhode Island College Archives 11/1.

As part of Kauffman's push to expand programs for part-time students, the college created the Office of Part-Time Undergraduate Programs. He created a more flexible admissions process that allowed students to begin at RIC as non-matriculating students. In line with his mission to make education relevant to contemporary society, the faculty reformed the general education program to open up the curriculum to problem-oriented courses.¹⁰⁷ These colloquia were "concerned with in depth examinations of ideas and themes, of problems and concepts, in particular disciplines," and addressed "vital problems" in contemporary society.¹⁰⁸

During Kauffman's administration RIC added new majors in art education, economics, nursing, political science, speech communication, and theatre. Most notably, in 1969, Rhode Island College received approval to create and offer a baccalaureate degree in nursing through the Department of Nursing. The department (which later became a school in 2007) was established in response to a state need promoted by Senator J. Joseph Garrahy (later governor).¹⁰⁹ New graduate programs included an MA in English, an MA in psychology, an MAT in physical science, and an urban education specialization in the MEd and MAT programs. Economics was recreated as a distinct department, separate from social science, and the first student-designed curricula and the first student exchange program were implemented.¹¹⁰

New facilities on the campus included the Rose Butler Browne Residence Hall. Browne graduated in the class of 1919. She was the first African American woman to earn a doctorate from Harvard (1939) and was an author, educator, and activist for

¹⁰⁷ Laurence J. Sasso, ed., "Former Leaders Interviewed for the 25th," 6.

¹⁰⁸ Rhode Island College, *Bulletin of Rhode Island College*, No. 5, 1971/73 Catalog (Providence: Rhode Island College, April 15, 1971), 37.

¹⁰⁹ Oskey V. Cascone, "Historical Perspective" Rhode Island College School of Nursing, Providence, March 1990, 10-20.

¹¹⁰ "Joseph F. Kauffman bio."

civil rights. Other new facilities were the administration wing of Roberts Hall, a Faculty Center, Horace Mann Hall, the Tower addition to Craig-Lee, the Charles B. Willard Residence Hall, the purchase of 6.5 acres on the west side of campus, and the conversion of the former Student Center to the Art Center. RIC was also planning and securing a bond issue for the Fogarty Life Science and Physical Plant buildings.

Student enrollment increased by a remarkable fifty-nine percent during the four years of Kauffman's presidency and the faculty increased by thirty-three percent, so when the state appropriation for RIC was slashed for the 1971-72 school year, Kauffman was aghast. He addressed the faculty on February 9, 1971:

It was not so long ago that our political leaders advocated education for all, to the limits of their ability. Are we really saying that we cannot afford this now or have we changed priorities the minute the going gets rough. What are our priorities—as a nation, as a state, and as individual citizens? How can we afford to continue a multi-billion dollar military tragedy in Indo-China, but not afford to support the fullest development of the potential of our citizens? How can we afford to develop a nuclear capacity so great that it can only be described in multiples of “overkill,” and not afford to give our youth the means, the courage, the skills to live, and want to live, and achieve peace in their generation?

Never shy to express his opinion when it came to education, Kauffman wrote a number of columns that addressed some of the most pressing issues in the field. He supported the movement to unionize faculty in the late 1960s because “such action may even protect college presidents who will then be free from demands that they guide or lead in matters outside formal contractual obligations.” He worried a great deal about the new “twin watchwords of accountability and assessment” that seemed to be pushing for centralization of control and a view of students

as “products” and “units analyzed in cost-benefit and production terms.” It would lead to a situation where the faculty would have to justify its every move and “faculty can increase its benefits only by increasing output of production or decreasing costs per unit.” It would inevitably lead to “the attempted measurement of ‘outputs,’” by some outside entity other than the school’s faculty, which to Kauffman signaled the demise of the liberal arts education.¹¹¹

Joseph Kauffman left RIC in the summer of 1973. In 1978 RIC awarded Kauffman an honorary Doctor of Pedagogy degree. He was named President Emeritus (with William Gaige) at the 1983 ceremony that commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Mt. Pleasant campus. A prize continues to be awarded in Kauffman’s honor each year to a graduating senior committed to a career in public school teaching or administration. And in 2004 RIC named the East Campus building that houses the Division of Development and College Relations the Kauffman Center.

¹¹¹ Joseph F. Kauffman, “Who Turned Off Faculty Power?,” reprinted from *College and University Business*, March 1972. Rhode Island College Archives 11/1, “Kauffman, Joseph F. (Pres.).”

RIC Grows Up in the 1970s

“Rhode Island College is] the best of its kind.”

– Charles Borromeo Willard, 1966 ¹¹²



Charles Borromeo Willard. Source: Rhode Island College Archives. P31 “Principals and Presidents.”

Charles Borromeo Willard
When Normal School President John Alger addressed the graduating class of 1934, a sharp young graduate named Charles Borromeo Willard gave the “Class Day Oration.”¹¹³ Four decades later Willard would address the graduating class of 1974 as president of Rhode Island College. At age sixty-one Willard was the oldest president to be sworn in at RIC and the first alumnus to serve as president (1973-1977). Born in Massachusetts, Willard moved with his family to Rhode Island at

¹¹² “The Acting President: An Alumnus Takes Over the College’s Top Job,” *Folio: The Newsletter of Rhode Island College*, No. 4, November 1966.

¹¹³ Charles B. Willard, “Rhode Island College of Education ‘Class Day,’” Friday, June 22, 1934, Rhode Island College Archives 11/1, Box 6, “Willard, Dr. Charles.”

the age of eight, where he attended LaSalle Academy and then Providence College for a year before enrolling at RICE.

Willard and his wife, Helen French (class of 1935), met as students when both served as editors of the *Anchor* in the early 1930s. French went on to teach junior high school after graduating from RIC, while Willard (class of 1934) taught debate and business English at Central Evening High School upon graduating from RIC. Eventually he earned a master's degree in English (1939) and a doctorate (1948) at Brown University and taught English, social studies, and French in the Providence school system.

For most of the 1950s, Willard taught English as an associate professor at Southern Illinois University until he was hired at RIC in 1958 as dean of professional studies. In 1959 he was made dean of the college, and in 1966 he was named vice president for academic affairs.¹¹⁴ Throughout his administrative tenure, Willard continued to teach courses in literature—a practice he recommended for all academic administrators because it allowed them to maintain close contact with students.¹¹⁵

In 1966, after Gaige retired, Willard served as acting president until Kauffman was hired in 1968. Upon Kauffman's resignation in 1973, Willard once more became acting president before he was inaugurated as president later that year.¹¹⁶ As a RIC alumnus who twice served as interim president when his alma mater needed him, Willard personified RIC's ability to adapt to Rhode Island's evolving educational system. What makes RIC especially valuable to Rhode Island, Willard said, is its adaptability and "responsiveness to the curriculum needs of our increasingly varied body of students. The curriculum is comprehensive, sophisticated,

¹¹⁴ Charles B. Willard, "The Three Decades after 1910 Emerge as a Golden Age in American Letters," *The Faculty Speaks*, 1962-1963, Rhode Island College Archives 11/1 Box 6, "Willard, Dr. Charles."

¹¹⁵ "Dr. Willard: Changing Hats Again," *Folio: The Newsletter of Rhode Island College*, No. 45, March 1977.

¹¹⁶ "Dr. Willard is Acting President," *Folio, Newsletter of Rhode Island College*, No. 30, March 1973.

flexible and living, in the sense that it is changing.”¹¹⁷

For his November 1973 inauguration, the Alumni Association created the Willard Medallion, still displayed today at graduation ceremonies. RIC assistant professor Curtis K. LaFollette designed the medallion and spent more than 250 hours making the piece (after fifty hours of design work and thirty hours crafting special tools).¹¹⁸

As president, Willard maintained close ties with the campus community and was often seen walking across campus, striking up conversations with faculty and students. He was known as a man of humor, who “never failed to lighten even the most tedious of meetings...”¹¹⁹ Willard voiced his aspirations for RIC students and faculty when he said, “I’d like students to be able to read Stendhal in the original and understand Stendhal; to read Whitman and not dismiss him; to read history and not just peruse history; to analyze scientific discoveries and perhaps become scientists—or at least understand what they do; to know that to teach is to learn, and that to learn is to teach. And you do not do it only for yourself.”¹²⁰

As president, Willard oversaw the establishment of the School of Social Work (1979), the Bachelor of General Studies degree, the management program and the film studies major. He oversaw construction of the Fogarty Life Sciences building, repurposing of the old Student Center into the Art Center, and major renovations to Donovan Dining Center and Adams Library. His presidency ended in 1977. In recognition of his decades of service

¹¹⁷ “Dr. Willard Inaugurated as President of R.I.C.,” *The Observer*, Thursday, November 1, 1973: 4. Rhode Island College Archives 11/1 Box 6, “Willard, Dr. Charles.”

¹¹⁸ Gina Macris, “RIC Installs Willard as Fifth President,” *Providence Journal*, November 1, 1973: 14.

¹¹⁹ Council of Rhode Island College, “Memorial Resolution,” *Rhode Island College*, January 31, 1986.

¹²⁰ Annette Ducey, “Charles B. Willard: A personal memoir,” *RIC/AFT Newsletter*, Vol. XX, No. 15, January 1986. Rhode Island College Archives 11/1, Box 6, “Willard, Dr. Charles.”

and leadership, the college's fourth residence hall was named after Willard, and he received an honorary doctorate from RIC in 1979. The citation he received read, "...for your leadership of the College at a critical time in its history, for your articulate and emphatic call to increase options for students, and for the good grace, the style, the wit, and the wisdom of your Presidency..."¹²¹

¹²¹ Ridgway F. Shinn Jr., "Charles Borromeo Willard: An Appreciation," *Perspectives*, Spring 1986: 10-11.

Building the Twenty-First-Century College of Opportunity

“Education is not gimmickry, reorganization, or new structures. I want people to learn, and mostly, I want people to learn how to learn for the rest of their lives.”¹²²

David Sweet, on his first day as RIC’s president, 1977.

David Sweet: Growing the Liberal Arts



David Sweet. Source: Rhode Island College Archives. P31 “Principals and Presidents.”

The tumult of the late 1960s and early 1970s was felt at RIC in a number of ways, and lengthy presidential terms would not have been in keeping with the spirit of radical transformation in American society. As Jimmy Carter prepared to assume the nation’s presidency in January 1977, political scientist David Sweet became the sixth president of Rhode Island College. By the time he arrived at RIC, Sweet had travelled to forty-nine states and eight countries; he was founding president of Metropolitan State College in St. Paul, Minnesota; and a professor of political science at Metropolitan

¹²² Carol J. Young, “RIC’s New President Makes Rounds,” *The Providence Evening Bulletin*, June 2, 1977, A-12.

State (1971-1977).¹²³ In 1974 Sweet was selected by a national panel of authorities on higher education as one of the fifty most effective university and college presidents in the United States, and his decision to leave the school he founded to come to RIC speaks volumes about the quality and reputation of Rhode Island College.

On July 9, 1933, David Sweet was born in Holyoke, Massachusetts. His family moved south, and Sweet graduated from Central High School in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1951. Four years later he graduated magna cum laude with an AB in political science from Drury College in Missouri. He earned an AM in political science from Duke in 1958 and a PhD from Duke in 1967.

Sweet was not only a celebrated administrator but published extensively in the fields of political science and education. He won numerous grants and fellowships before and during his time at RIC, sat on many professional boards and committees in Rhode Island, and played an active role in the civic life of the community.¹²⁴

Continuing to teach political science while serving as president, Sweet emphasized the growing liberal arts program in his "Strategic Plan of RIC." He advocated for a successful honors program and helped to fund it with money from the president's office. James Turley, dean of the School of Education and Human Development, later described him as "a creative administrator, energetic and dynamic." Sweet oversaw the creation of the School

¹²³ Before his bold venture at "Metro," Sweet served as vice chancellor for academic affairs, Minnesota State University system (1969-71), prior to which he was associate professor of political science, assistant to the vice president for academic affairs, executive vice president of the University Foundation, and special assistant to the president at Illinois State University (1960-69). He began his professional career as an instructor in the Department of Government at Ohio University in 1959.

¹²⁴ David Sweet, *Résumé*, 1984, Rhode Island College Archives 11/1 Box 6, "Sweet, Dr. David," Adams Library Special Collections.

of Education as a separate school within RIC, he gained approval for the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, and he was instrumental in starting the Master of Social Work program in the School of Social Work and a new program in business management.¹²⁵ He oversaw the implementation of RIC's first email system. Enrollment at the college grew by almost fifteen percent during Sweet's seven-year tenure, and many of the new students enrolled in the new pre-professional programs and in the reenergized liberal arts majors. Edward Eddy, president of URI, called Sweet a "champion for higher education in Rhode Island."

Sadly, David Sweet died in 1984 at age fifty-one after a brief illness for which he declined medical treatment. He is memorialized by the eponymous \$3.9 million, 210-bed residence hall built in 1994. The tribute is fitting because Sweet had initiated the idea of a new residence hall and had made on-campus housing a key part of his vision for the school.¹²⁶ The Alumni Association of Leadership Rhode Island established the David E. Sweet Leadership Award, and RIC's Center for Public Policy was renamed the David E. Sweet Center for Public Policy in 2007.

¹²⁵ Scott Desjarlais, "President Sweet Dies at 51," *Anchor*, Vol. LVIII, No. 4, Wednesday, September 19, 1984. Rhode Island College Archives 11/1 Box 6, "Sweet, Dr. David."

¹²⁶ George LaTour, "New Residence Hall Dedicated in 'Kind Remembrance of a Good Man,'" *What's News at Rhode Island College*, Vol 12, No. 6, November 11, 1991. Rhode Island College Archives 11/1 Box 6, "Sweet, Dr. David."



Carol Guardo. Source: Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs. "Past Presidents."

Carol Guardo: Improving Campus, Enrollment, and Image

Carol Guardo, the first female president in Rhode Island's system of public higher education, was inaugurated as the college's seventh president in 1986. Originally from Hartford, Connecticut, Guardo earned her degrees at Saint Joseph College, the University of Detroit, and the University of Denver. A psychologist, she came to RIC after serving as provost at the

University of Hartford. Several new majors were created at the college during her tenure as president, including justice studies, accounting, marketing, and computer information systems.

During Guardo's presidency, life on campus was greatly improved by the construction of the recreation center and physical plant facility. Guardo also created the Committee on Human Relations to enhance and encourage collegial interactions at RIC, and she initiated the first manufacturing center at RIC—the Center for Industrial Technology. The center laid the foundation for what, in fall 2015, became the James R. Langevin Center for Design, Innovation and Advanced Manufacturing—recently the recipient of \$1.2 million in gifts secured by the college's second female president, Nancy Carriuolo.

Among the top achievements from her tenure at RIC, Guardo cites "turning the enrollment situation around in the college" and helping "to refine the image of RIC as one of the leading comprehensive public colleges in the country."¹²⁷ "Not only have

¹²⁷ Donald D. Breed, "President of RIC Resigns: Guardo to Become Head of 12-college Consortium in Michigan," *Providence-Bulletin*, August 24, 1989.

qualitative enhancements taken place in many of our academic programs,” she said, “but we have also enhanced the presentation of the college to its many publics so that there might be a growing appreciation of its quality and strength as an institution of higher education.”¹²⁸ When Guardo left RIC in 1990 to become president of the Great Lakes College Association, the college was slated to admit the largest freshman class in the college’s history to date. After her retirement she served as interim president of two colleges for a year’s duration.



John Nazarian. Source: Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs. “Past Presidents.”

John Nazarian: Nearly Six Decades of Service

During the 1980s and 1990s RIC saw the introduction of several professional schools and programs, in addition to a number of new degrees in key fields like public administration and accounting. The campus expanded physically as well, and a number of older buildings were renovated to make them usable for another generation of students. Having served as

interim president from 1984 to 1985, and again following the departure of Carol Guardo, John Nazarian was inaugurated president in 1990.

Born September 6, 1932 in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, John Nazarian was raised and educated in the Rhode Island public school system.¹²⁹ Following graduation from Pawtucket’s East High School (now William E. Tolman High School) in 1950,

¹²⁸ Carol J. Guardo, “Announcement to the Rhode Island College Community,” *Rhode Island College*, August 23, 1989.

¹²⁹ “A Tribute to John Nazarian,” *Rhode Island College*, last modified June 2, 2008, <http://www.ric.edu/nazarianTribute/Bio.php>.

Nazarian entered Rhode Island College, graduating in 1954 with a Bachelor of Education, concentration in Mathematics and Science.¹³⁰ He earned an AM in Mathematics and Education from Brown University in 1956, an MA in Mathematics from the University of Illinois 1961, and a PhD in Mathematics from New York University in 1967.¹³¹ Just after commencement in 1954, President William C. Gaige appointed Nazarian instructor



John Nazarian teaching mathematics, circa 1968. Source: Rhode Island College Archives, Records of the Office of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs. "Past Presidents."

of mathematics and physics; Nazarian went on to become chair of the Mathematics Department in 1969, the college's first associate dean of Arts and Sciences in 1970, full professor in 1971, and vice president for administration

and finance in 1981.¹³² By the time of his retirement in June of 2008, Nazarian had been associated with RIC for 58 continuous years.

As interim leader, Nazarian acquired land for the school from the former state children's center. Less popularly, he initiated a new "dry campus" policy after Rhode Island adopted the age limit of 21 for alcohol consumption, and the Rathskellar, which had operated in the lower level of the Student Union, was closed.

Under Nazarian's leadership, the 1990s brought further expansion and improvements to the Rhode Island College campus. Two new schools were established from departments—the School of Management (2002) and the School of Nursing

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

(2007), the latter offering its first graduate program, the Master's of Science in Nursing (MSN), in 2006.¹³³ New programs were instituted across the college, including finance, dance, media studies, operations management, chemical dependence/addiction studies, a widely-acclaimed general studies program, and the college's first PhD program in education, which is a collaboration between Rhode Island College and the University of Rhode Island. Renovations to existing structures, in particular the neglected East Campus, and new buildings such as the Murray Center, Sweet Hall, and the performing arts complex now known as the Nazarian Center, greatly enhanced the campus. The Nazarian Center incorporates columns from the earlier downtown Providence campus that was located where Providence Place Mall now stands.

The Paul V. Sherlock Center was established in 1993 as a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. The mission of the Center is to promote membership in school, work and community. The Center has a national reputation as an advocate for individuals with disabilities, their families and those who support them and has implemented several statewide initiatives that have improved quality of life for both individuals and families. Each year more than 20,000 people participate in the Sherlock Center's interdisciplinary training, community outreach and research activities.¹³⁴

Nazarian's presidency has also been noted for its strong financial stewardship, shepherding the college through the credit union crisis and related budget cuts of the early 1990s; advocacy for programs to support opportunity and access to higher education; creation of a Presidential Scholars program; major improvements in academic and administrative technology;

¹³³ Jane Williams and Ronald Pitt, *Notice of Change by Rhode Island College to Create an Expanded Organizational Structure for the School of Nursing*. Providence: Rhode Island College, February 23, 2016.

¹³⁴ Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities, *2012 Annual Report, Celebrating Twenty Years of Service: Promoting Membership in School, Work, and Community*. Providence: Rhode Island College, 2012.

and the successful completion of the college's first-ever capital campaign.¹³⁵ Continuing RIC's long tradition of extensive public service, Nazarian also served on countless boards and committees and as the Rhode Island representative of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and other national educational organizations.

Like their predecessors, RIC graduates of the late twentieth century have achieved much success in their chosen fields. U.S. Congressman Jim Langevin ('90), Cranston Mayor Allen Fung ('92), and many members of the state general assembly represent achievement in the political sphere. Actress Viola Davis ('88) has accomplished so much in her acting and producing career, including garnering two Academy Award nominations, that TIME magazine named her one of the 100 most influential people in 2012. Other successful RIC graduates in the arts include Danny Smith ('81), executive producer, writer, and voice actor, best known for his work on the *Family Guy*; and screenwriter Carl V. Dupré ('90), who appeared in *Detroit Rock City* and two sequels of *Hellraiser*, as well as in other films. Artist Ann Gale ('88), best known for her portrait paintings comprised of small patches of color, has received many awards for her work, including the prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship in 2007. She is matched in achievement only by her contemporary Patricia Cronin ('86), whose photography and painting have earned her numerous prizes, including the "Rome Prize" from the American Academy of Art in Rome. Composer Peter Boyer ('91) has had his works performed by major symphony orchestras in the United States and Europe, including the 2001 recording of his work by the London Symphony Orchestra. Christopher Reddy ('92), director of the Coastal Ocean Institute at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, is among many successful graduates in the sciences.

¹³⁵ Ibid.; Jeffrey Blais (Professor School of Management, Rhode Island College), e-mail message to author, March 9, 2016.



Nancy Carriuolo. Source: Rhode Island College, Office of College Communications and Marketing.

Expansion in an Age of Austerity: Nancy Carriuolo Moves RIC Beyond the Great Recession

In 2008, as the housing market crashed and the global economy began to shrink, Nancy Carriuolo was inaugurated as RIC's ninth president and faced a financial situation similar to that which was encountered by RIC's mid-nineteenth century leaders. With reduced allocations for higher education, Carriuolo managed to do more with less, which resulted in

RIC's continued expansion during the Great Recession years.

Nancy Carriuolo (née Munzert) is a native of Hilton, New York. She graduated from Brockport State College with bachelor's and master's degrees and earned her PhD from SUNY Buffalo. She has served on numerous education, community, and economic development boards, including CommerceRI, the Commodores, and as twice-elected executive officer of the Board of Trustees of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

Firmly rooted in RIC's "I-think-I-can" tradition, Carriuolo's presidency was marked by a flurry of renovations and improvements, most notably the construction of ALEX AND ANI Hall, the new Art



ALEX AND ANI Hall. Source: Rhode Island College, Office of College Communications and Marketing.

Department, funded in large part by an \$18 million bond issue. In addition, a \$50 million bond funded large-scale renovations of



Construction of new Nursing wing in Fogarty Life Science, spring 2016. Source: Rhode Island College, Office of College Communications and Marketing.

Gaige Hall and Craig-Lee Hall, as well as a new wing in the School of Nursing. Separate state funding supported a joint nursing education center (NEC) in downtown Providence to be shared by the RIC and URI nursing programs.

Extensive reconstruction, and modernization of the Recreation Center resulted in an almost-new facility. At the same time, widespread improvements were made to parking lots, campus roads, HVAC systems, and electrical systems. Carriuolo also secured gifts from donors to fund the James R. Langevin Center for Design, Innovation, and Advanced Manufacturing, named for the RI congressman who graduated from RIC in 1990. In 2012 the Yellow Cottage was renovated, the Keefe Transportation Center was built (with donated funds and labor secured by President Carriuolo), shuttle service was established, and a master signage plan was developed. On October 16, 2015, the high-rise residence hall was dedicated to Dr. Gary Penfield, retired VP for Student Affairs; and the social work building was dedicated to Dr. Carol Guardo, the college's first



RIC student Jillian Ward in the James R. Langevin Center for Design, Innovation, and Advanced Manufacturing, 2015. Source: Rhode Island College, Office of College Communications and Marketing.

female president.

Three of Carriuolo's key visions for the college were improvements in campus safety, sustainability, and community partnerships. Through funds raised for her inauguration, Carriuolo initiated the Illuminated Walkway, which involved the installation of blue light emergency phones throughout the campus to increase the visibility of walkways, building entrances and exits, and parking lots. The college's first sustainability coordinator was hired to oversee RIC's efforts to protect the environment and promote sustainable living. The college introduced a bee education center, a farmer's market, the Keefe transportation center/car charging station, and a community garden. And in 2011 Carriuolo initiated an inter-institutional partnership with RIC and two colleges in Israel—Beit Berl and Oranim colleges of education. Faculty from the three institutions, under the leadership of Professor Ezra Stieglitz, held a joint international conference in Israel. In 2015 Carriuolo signed an academic exchange agreement with Chengdu University of Technology in China, and she signed agreements with several Portuguese entities including the Pro Dignitate Foundation (Sept. 23, 2010), the University of the Azores (Feb. 22, 2012) and the Instituto Camões (Dec. 3, 2011 and Feb. 5, 2016). More locally, she and Superintendent Fran Gallo initiated conversations (2013) that led to the Central Falls/Rhode Island College Innovation Lab, and conversations with CEO Steve Coan resulted in a partnership with Mystic Aquarium (2015). The aquarium provided ten paid internships and participated in a spring 2016 panel discussion that grew from the award-winning Publick Occurrences (2013), an annual fall series of public discussions on controversial topics jointly initiated and developed by the leadership of the *Providence Journal*, RIC, and LeadershipRI.

New academic programs established under Carriuolo focused on the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) disciplines, including the college's first solo doctoral program, the Doctor of Nursing Practice (2015). In 2012 a new general education program was launched, with

emphasis on the development of critical thinking, quantitative, and communication skills. The program's first-year seminar consists of a class of no more than 20 students who focus their collective attention on a topic derived from a faculty member's scholarly interest. Two grants from the Davis Educational Foundation supported the establishment of the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (2010) and the Center for Research and Creative Activity (2014). New degree programs established during Carriuolo's tenure include global studies, health care administration, neuroscience, medical imaging, youth development, and environmental studies. Several recently created programs are now ranked in the top twenty nationally. Under Carriuolo's leadership, RIC received \$9 million in grants for teaching, research, and outreach projects in 2014-15, and she left the institution with \$1.7M in unrestricted foundation funds, largely from new major donors she cultivated to support the college's ongoing needs and priorities.

In recent years, the college has expanded educational opportunities for a new generation of Rhode Islanders. In 2015 sixty-five percent of RIC's senior class (1,500 undergraduates) said that they represented the first generation in their families to graduate from college. At the beginning of the century only one in ten RIC students identified as an ethnic minority; today the number is one in four, and the Education Trust recently ranked RIC tenth in the United States among public institutions for improvement in the Hispanic student graduation rate.

In 2015 the college also hosted the first visit by a sitting U.S. president, Barack Obama, who selected RIC as the venue for a speech about the importance of equal education for women in the twenty-first-century economy. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also spoke at the campus that year.

Carriuolo defined her role as president as "a seeker of opportunities for the RIC community." At RIC her opportunity-seeking ventures crisscrossed cities, states, and continents. As the college emerged from the Great Recession, Carriuolo stepped down on May 21, 2016, and a new president took office.

Looking Back Over a Proud History

RIC President Willard's apt observation that the college is so valuable to the state because of its extraordinary adaptability has long been the de facto governing principle of Rhode Island College. As in the past, the deeply committed faculty and administrators at RIC continue to find new ways to blend quality liberal arts education in an intimate, supportive classroom environment with more specialized professional training. RIC's popular Outreach Programs, as well as its curricula in professional development, green and sustainability studies, and leadership and economic development, offer opportunities for adults seeking employment training and students seeking a number of professionally recognized undergraduate and graduate certificates. RIC's mission of educating Rhode Island's workforce of tomorrow also means continued development of longstanding programs like the Early Enrollment Program (EEP), begun in 1980, which involves almost fifty high schools and 1,400 students annually. Similarly, through the Henry Barnard School, one of the few remaining laboratory schools in the nation, the college has continued to educate future teachers as well as provide a fine early education to some of the state's future leaders.

From the visionary 19th-century institution to the innovative 21st-century college, Rhode Island College's responsive, forward-looking approach to education has continued to meet the ever-changing needs of the greater Rhode Island community and the increasingly integrated global economy and society. Persevering through times of great economic, social and political change, RIC's mission of educating Rhode Island's workforce of tomorrow has created a legacy of transformation, opportunity and leadership.

Rhode Island College Timeline

- 1854 Rhode Island State Normal School Opens
- 1857 Normal School Moves to Bristol
- 1859 Dana P. Colburn, First Principal, Dies in Accident
- 1860 Joshua Kendall Named Principal
- 1865 General Assembly Ends Funding, Normal School in Hiatus
- 1866 Teacher Instruction Held at Providence Conference Seminary and Lapham Institute
- 1869 Education Commissioner Thomas Bicknell Campaigns to Reopen Normal School
- 1870 State's First Board of Education Established
- 1871 James C. Greenough Named Principal
- 1871 Normal School Reopens on Hoyle Square in Providence
- 1878 First Permanent Home of Normal School, on Benefit St.
- 1884 Thomas J. Morgan Begins Serving as Principal

- 1887 Rhode Island Normal School Alumni Association Established
- 1889 George Abner Littlefield Named Principal
- 1892 William E. Wilson Named Principal
- 1892 General Assembly Approves New Normal School Building
- 1893 First Model and Training School Opens
- 1894 Old State Prison Property Chosen as Site for New Normal School
- 1895 Alumni Association Establishes First Endowment
- 1898 Frederick Gowing Named Principal
- 1898 New Normal School Dedicated on Smith Hill
- 1898 First Contribution to School from Endowment
- 1899 Former Normal Hall on Hoyle Square Destroyed by Fire
- 1900 Henry Barnard Dies at Age 89
- 1900 More than Half of All Public School Teachers Now Possess Normal School Diplomas
- 1901 Charles S. Chapin Named Principal
- 1907 State Retirement for Teachers Established
- 1908 John Lincoln Alger Named Principal
- 1908 Admission Now Limited to High School Graduates
- 1909 Saturday Classes for Teachers Begin
- 1910 First Student Government Established
- 1911 Thomas Bicknell's *History of the RI Normal School* Published
- 1913 Entrance Tests First Required
- 1914 Clara E. Craig Experiments with Montessori Methods

- 1918 First Summer School for Teachers Held
- 1920 Intuition Becomes Rhode Island College of Education
- 1920 Observation and Training School Named to Honor Henry Barnard
- 1922 First Baccalaureate Degree Awarded
- 1925 First Graduate Degree Awarded (M.Ed.)
- 1926 Ground Broken for New \$660,000 Henry Barnard School
- 1927 Class of '27 Establishes Anchor as School Symbol
- 1927 *Anchor* Publishes First Edition
- 1928 Associated Alumni of RICE Organized
- 1929 First Yearbook, "RiColed," Published
- 1929 Men's Basketball First Intercollegiate Sport
- 1934 Bristol Home of Normal School Destroyed by Fire
- 1934 First "May Queen" Selected
- 1937 "Long Black Stockings for Women" Requirement Dropped
- 1939 Men's Athletic Association Organizes "Stunt Night"
- 1939 First College Store Opens in Former Closet
- 1940 Lucius Albert Whipple Inaugurated as Institution's Second President
- 1942 Secondary School Curriculum Established
- 1943 Accreditation by American Association of Teachers Colleges
- 1944 At the Height of WWII, Only One Male Student Remains Enrolled
- 1944 Frederick J. Donovan Named College's First Vice President

- 1948 Student Activity Fee Set at \$22 per Year
- 1949 Freshman Hazing Tradition Begins
- 1949 Tuition for Graduate Students Established
- 1951 President Whipple Resigns, Fred Donovan Named Acting President
- 1952 College's Future under Fire; "Siege Of Troy"
- 1952 William C. Gaige Named Third President
- 1954 College Centennial Observed
- 1954 Successful Bond Issue for New Campus
- 1956 Gov. Roberts Leads Groundbreaking for New Campus
- 1957 RIC Dance Company Organized
- 1958 New \$5.6 Million Mount Pleasant Campus Opens
- 1958 College Accredited by New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools
- 1959 \$25 General Fee Established
- 1959 Undergraduate Enrollment Tops 1,000 for First Time
- 1960 Name Changed to "Rhode Island College"
- 1960 New College Seal Adopted, Incorporating Holbrook Flame
- 1960 "Chalktones" Organized
- 1961 First Residence Hall Opens, Named for Mary Tucker Thorp
- 1962 Mandatory Chapel Discontinued
- 1962 37 Acres Purchased to Expand Campus to West
- 1962 Donovan Dining Center Dedicated
- 1963 Council of Rhode Island College Established
- 1963 First Bachelor of Arts Degrees Awarded

- 1963 Adams Library, Clarke Science Dedicated
- 1964 Departmental Honors Program Established
- 1965 Rhode Island College Foundation Established
- 1965 RIC Goes to the G.E. College Bowl
- 1965 Women First Allowed to Wear Slacks
- 1965 President's House Completed; Weber Hall, Walsh Center Dedicated
- 1966 WSBE Begins Broadcasting from Studios in Adams Library
- 1966 Horace Mann Hall Dedicated
- 1966 Upward Bound Program Established
- 1967 AFT Local 1819 Chartered
- 1968 Joseph Kauffman Named Fourth President
- 1968 Student Union Dedicated; "Student Power" Demonstrations Emerge
- 1968 Doorley Properties Acquired
- 1968 Master of Arts Degree Introduced
- 1969 Rose Butler Browne Residence Hall Opens
- 1969 Nursing Program Approved
- 1970 Administration Wing of Roberts, Faculty Center Opens
- 1970 Student Unrest; Classes Temporarily Suspended
- 1970 New Curriculum and General Studies Program Inaugurated
- 1970 Earth Day
- 1971 Freshman Hazing Tradition Ends
- 1971 Mann Hall Rededicated as Gaige Hall
- 1971 New Mann Hall Dedicated, Tower Addition to Craig-Lee Completed

- 1971 First Separate Graduate Commencement
- 1971 First Student-Designed Courses
- 1972 Faculty Vote AFT for Collective Bargaining
- 1972 First Student Exchange and Study Abroad Programs
- 1972 Age of Majority Lowered to 18
- 1973 Charles B. Willard Named Fifth President
- 1974 Rathskellar Opens
- 1975 Fogarty Life Science Dedicated
- 1976 RIC Student Community Government, Inc. Established
- 1976 Old Student Center Snack Bar Closed
- 1976 Women's Center Established
- 1976 First Nursing Pinning Ceremony
- 1976 Fall Semester Finals Held before Christmas Break for First Time
- 1977 David E. Sweet Named Sixth President
- 1978 Art Gallery Named to Honor Edward M. Bannister
- 1978 Debut of "The Chanchor"
- 1978 50,000 sq. ft. Addition to Adams Library Opens
- 1979 School of Social Work Officially Established
- 1982 First Winter Commencement Held since 1894
- 1982 College Begins to Receive ADA Funding for Disability Improvements
- 1984 President Sweet Passes Away Unexpectedly
- 1984 First College E-Mail System Established
- 1985 State Drinking Age Raised to 21; College Goes Dry
- 1985 Surdut Pool and Children's Center Activities Building Acquired

- 1986 Carol J. Guardo Inaugurated as Seventh President
- 1986 RIC Foundation Surpasses \$1 Million in Assets
- 1987 Burgundy Chosen to Accent Official School Colors of Gold and White
- 1987 RIC Becomes Charter Member of NCAA Division III's Little East Conference
- 1989 Recreation Center and Reconstruction of Former Whipple Gym Completed
- 1990 John Nazarian Named Eighth President
- 1992 Walsh Center Destroyed by Fire
- 1992 Gov. Sundlun Transfers Remainder of Children's Center Property to College
- 1993 Smoking Prohibited in or around College Buildings and Vehicles
- 1994 Forman Center Dedicated
- 1994 Donovan Dining Center Expansion/Renovation Completed
- 1995 New Health, Physical Education, and Athletic Complex Opens
- 1995 Dialogue on Diversity Established
- 1996 Alan Shawn Feinstein: First Private Gift of One Million Dollars
- 1996 General Education 2000
- 1997 1898 Normal School Building Demolished
- 1997 Technology Center at Horace Mann Hall
- 1999 First PhD Program, in Education, Launches
- 1999 College Converts to PeopleSoft for Y2K
- 1999 www.RIC.edu Goes Live
- 2000 Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts Dedicated

- 2001 Buildings 4 and 5 Completed; Mt. Pleasant Avenue Entrance Renovated
- 2002 Name Change: School of Management and Technology
- 2002 Obediah Brown Field Acquired Through Lease with City
- 2002 Building 10 New Home to Development and College Relations
- 2003 Murray Center Dedicated
- 2004 Center for Public Policy at RIC Approved by BOG
- 2005 Groundbreaking for Restoration of Yellow Cottage
- 2006 Groundbreaking for New High-Rise Residence Hall
- 2006 Department of Nursing Elevated to School of Nursing, Jane Williams First Dean of Nursing School
- 2007 Creation of the Adjunct Faculty Union, Richard Walton First President
- 2008 Nancy Carriuolo Named Ninth President
- 2009 Sherlock Center on Disabilities Opens
- 2009 Reach-Inspire-Connect Tagline Adopted
- 2009 Building 3 Renovations: Financial-Aid, Classrooms, and Café
- 2010 VetSuccess Pilot Program Adopted
- 2010 Voters Approve Bond for New Art Center
- 2010 RIC Finance Lab Established

- 2012 Interior Renovation of Yellow Cottage, Labor Donated by Gilbane Building Company, and Architect Charles Hagenah, Roger Williams University
- 2012 Keefe Transportation Center Dedicated, with Significant Support from John J. Smith and NEIT
- 2012 Recreation Center Dedicated
- 2012 Voters Approve Bond for Gaige, Craig Lee, and Fogarty Halls
- 2013 First Electric Vehicle Charging Station Installed
- 2014 Grand Opening of ALEX AND ANI Hall
- 2014 U.S. President Barack Obama Visits Campus
- 2014 Bee Education Center Opens
- 2015 Feasibility Study for Residence Halls, Adams Library, and Horace Mann
- 2015 Guardo Hall, School of Social Work Building Dedicated
- 2015 Penfield Hall, High-Rise Residence Hall Dedicated
- 2015 Langevin Center for Design, Innovation, and Advanced Manufacturing Dedicated
- 2016 Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Program, Scheduled to Launch in Fall 2016
- 2016 Career Development Center Opens in Roberts Hall



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