

# Rhode Island Promise Policy Manual

Community College of Rhode Island



Version 1.3.2

Updated January 1, 2025



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## **I. Rhode Island Promise Overview**

In August 2017, the State of Rhode Island created the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship (RI Promise) program. The three purposes of the RI Promise legislation are:

- 1) To encourage more young people to develop their talents through higher education;
- 2) To improve the Rhode Island economy by increasing the education and skills levels of the Rhode Island workforce;
- 3) To ensure the future prosperity of the state by extending the opportunity to receive a free public education beyond high school and into college.

Through the RI Promise program, eligible students are able to attend the Community College of Rhode Island for up to two years free of tuition and mandatory student fees. The current RI Promise legislation provides this scholarship to current and future CCRI students.

Under the legislation creating the program, the [Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner \(OPC\)](#) is responsible for crafting Policies and Procedures that govern RI Promise. OPC issued the [Policies and Procedures policy document](#) on October 10, 2017 with the intent to “...provide guidance to college administrators, parents, and students regarding the provisions and requirements of the Rhode Island Promise scholarship program...”.

The purpose of this CCRI RI Promise Policy Manual is to further clarify CCRI’s interpretation of the RI Promise legislation and the OPC Policies and Procedures. This document describes the policies and processes that CCRI uses in its administration of the RI Promise program.

## **II. Benefits of RI Promise to Students**

The RI Promise program allows Rhode Island residents who meet program eligibility criteria to attend CCRI for up to two years free of tuition and mandatory fees. These are costs and fees that every CCRI student is required to pay to enroll in classes. RI Promise funding is available to eligible students regardless of family income.

Any additional costs are not covered by RI Promise funding. Costs that are excluded from RI Promise funding are:

- 1) Textbooks
- 2) Fees associated with particular academic programs (for example, nursing or dental fees);
- 3) Fees associated with particular courses (for example, materials fees); and,
- 4) Travel costs associated with attendance at CCRI.

RI Promise funds are applied after all other sources of federal aid (e.g. Pell grants, Supplementary Educational Opportunity Grants, etc.), scholarships, and any additional financial aid funding are applied to the student's cost of attendance. For purposes of RI Promise, available student loans are not considered as part of the student's financial aid award. CCRI encourages students to consider RI Promise funding before pursuing student loans.

## **III. Academic Program Requirements**

RI Promise funding may be applied to any associate degree program at CCRI. Students may use RI Promise funding to cover the cost of both developmental and college-level coursework in pursuit of their degree. RI Promise funding may not be used for certificate or non-credit academic programs available at CCRI.

## IV. RI Promise Eligibility Requirements

### A. Incoming Students

The RI Promise program is available to Rhode Island residents who meet the following criteria:

- 1) **Apply to and attend CCRI.** RI Promise covers mandatory tuition and fees for up to two years of enrollment at CCRI. More information on the CCRI application process can be found on the CCRI Admissions page at <https://ccri.edu/onestop/admissions/apply/>.
- 2) **Qualify for in-state tuition and fees** pursuant to the Residency Policy adopted by the Council of Postsecondary Education, as amended, supplemented, restated, or otherwise modified from time to time. (Please refer to [riopc.edu/policies/residency-policy/](http://riopc.edu/policies/residency-policy/)).
- 3) **Recent Graduate.** Students must have graduated from high school (public, private, or home schooled) or earned their High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED, formerly known as the GED).
- 4) **Immediate Enrollment.** Students must be admitted to and enroll at CCRI in the semester immediately following high school graduation or receipt of a HSED/GED.
- 5) **Age Restrictions.** Students must have graduated from high school or earned their HSED/GED before reaching nineteen (19) years of age
  - a. Students who graduated from high school at ages 19, 20, or 21 may be eligible for RI Promise funding if they can provide a documented reason (e.g. started K-12 education late, repeated a grade, had an individual education plan) for late graduation.
- 6) **Complete the FAFSA** and any required FAFSA verification or other financial aid forms by the federal deadline for each year in which the student seeks to receive funding under the scholarship program; provided that, persons who are legally unable to complete the FAFSA must complete the RI Alternative Application for Postsecondary Student Financial Assistance form.
- 7) **Full-time.** Students must be enrolled as “full-time” college students. “Full-time enrollment” means enrolling in at least 24 credits within all terms in an academic year toward an associate degree program. Developmental credits (for non-college level courses) may be applied toward the “full-time” requirement. CCRI strongly encourages students to pursue 30 credits per academic year to be able to remain on track to graduate with an associate degree in two years.
- 8) **Commit to Live and Work in Rhode Island.** The RI Promise program is an investment in Rhode Island residents and the state economy. RI Promise recipients must acknowledge their commitment to live, work or continue their education in Rhode Island after graduation through acceptance of the RI Promise Scholarship as part of their RI Promise application.

## B. Continuing Students

The RI Promise Scholarship will automatically renew for a second year for students who meet the eligibility criteria. Returning CCRI students seeking a second year of RI Promise funding must meet the following criteria to remain eligible:

1. **Complete the FAFSA** and any required FAFSA verification or other financial aid forms. Students must file the FAFSA before the federal deadline in advance of their second year of study at CCRI. Students must submit all required financial aid verification documents to the CCRI Financial Aid Office.
2. **Full-time enrollment.** Students must continue to be enrolled full-time at CCRI.
  - a. "Full-time enrollment" means enrolling in at least 24 credits within all terms in an academic year toward an associate degree program. CCRI strongly encourages all students to complete 30 credits in the first academic year to remain on track to graduate in two years.
3. **Minimum Credits.** Students must earn a minimum of 24 credits by the end of their first year. For example, a student who completes 9 credits in his/her fall semester, 12 credits in his/her spring semester, and 3 credits in the summer semester will remain eligible for a second year of RI Promise funding.
4. **Minimum GPA.** Students must maintain a grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 or higher by the end of their first year. For example, a student who begins at CCRI in the fall semester must have a GPA of at least 2.5 by the end of the following summer.
5. **Continuous enrollment.** Students must enroll in each fall and spring semester to remain eligible for RI Promise funding.
  - a. Under extenuating circumstances, a student may request an approved leave of absence and remain eligible for RI Promise. Extenuating circumstances may include:
    - i. Documented medical or personal emergency; or
    - ii. Documented military deployment or transfer.
  - b. For more information on circumstances that may allow an exception to this policy and how to apply for an exception to policy, please see Section V of this document.

## C. Reasons Students May Be Removed from the RI Promise Program

Students who do not meet the eligibility requirements for the RI Promise program will no longer receive funding. Students may be removed for failing to file the FAFSA, failing to enroll full-time (24 credits within all terms in an academic year), earning fewer than the 24 credits per year minimum, falling below the GPA minimum, and/or not enrolling in continuous or sequential fall and spring semesters.

## **V. Exceptions to Standard Eligibility Criteria (Special Circumstances)**

In some cases, students may be able to return to and/or retain RI Promise eligibility when they do not meet the criteria described in Section IV of this policy manual. Students who believe they may be eligible for the special circumstances described in this section must complete the RI Promise Appeal Process found at [ccri.edu/doss/deanstudents/ripromiselo.html](http://ccri.edu/doss/deanstudents/ripromiselo.html).

### **A. Exceptions to Standard Eligibility (Special Circumstances)**

#### **1. Leave of Absence**

RI Promise requires students to maintain continuous enrollment to completion of degree. Under certain extenuating circumstances, RI Promise students may request an approved leave to extend eligibility. Extenuating circumstances may include:

1. Documented medical or personal emergency; or
2. Documented military deployment or transfer.

As soon as possible after learning of the disruption to their educational plan, RI Promise students must complete the RI Promise Appeal Process found at [ccri.edu/doss/deanstudents/ripromiselo.html](http://ccri.edu/doss/deanstudents/ripromiselo.html). A leave of absence may be approved for students who:

1. Meet all RI Promise requirements;
2. Present proper documentation such as:
  - a. A signed and dated note from a physician or psychologist stating the necessity of the leave inclusive of a time span;
  - b. Hospital discharge papers;
  - c. Obituary or death certificate;
  - d. Title 10 or Title 32 documents for military deployments or transfers; and/or,
  - e. Other documentation may be accepted depending on the particular circumstances of each individual case; and,
3. Be willing to develop an educational plan that will allow the student to achieve degree completion within one (1) year of the original graduation date.
  - a. Failure to adhere to the approved educational plan can result in loss of eligibility.

Leave of absences may be approved for up to one (1) year.

#### **2. Performance-based Health Science (PBHS) Academic Programs**

CCRI offers several PBHS programs that require students to meet or exceed academic requirements to gain admittance to the program. In some cases, certain PBHS programs may include fewer than 12 credits per semester.

RI Promise students who are admitted to a PBHS program that includes fewer than 12 credits per semester will be eligible to retain RI Promise funding. Further, RI Promise students in qualifying PBHS programs may be exempted from the “24 credits per year” requirement of RI Promise eligibility provided the student remains on track to meet the requirements of his/her PBHS program. RI Promise students who wish to pursue a PBHS degree must meet all other eligibility criteria as outlined in Section IV.C of this policy. Regardless of PBHS status, the RI Promise program and any RI Promise funding is available to students for a maximum of four (4) semesters per student.



### 3. Part-time Enrollment in Final Semester

RI Promise students may retain eligibility to receive Promise funding in their final semester while enrolled part-time at CCRI. Students will be able to enroll part-time and receive Promise funding if the student requires fewer than 9 credits to complete their degree that semester. For example, should a student earn 57 credits after three semesters, that student will be able to enroll in the 3 credits needed to complete their degree in his/her fourth semester while retaining Promise funding.

### 4. RI Promise for Students with Disabilities

The [CCRI Office of Disability Accessibility for Students](#) (DAS) Office is responsible for working with students to make disability accommodations. In some cases, RI Promise students with a documented disability will be able to remain eligible for RI Promise funding while taking 6 credits per semester.

Students with an approved reduced course load accommodation may complete no fewer than 12 credits per academic year while retaining their status in the RI Promise program. However, the RI Promise program will only cover tuition and mandatory fees for up to 60 attempted credit hours inclusive of any necessary developmental courses. Students with an approved reduced course load will not be eligible to receive additional RI Promise funding after 60 credit hours have been attempted. Students must meet all other RI Promise program requirements.

#### *How to Request a Reduced Course Load Accommodation*

Students requesting full-time status with a reduced course load must take the steps below:

1. Visit the [ccri.edu/das/](http://ccri.edu/das/) website and review the requirements for taking a reduced course load;
2. Contact the DAS Office at [dss@ccri.edu](mailto:dss@ccri.edu) for an intake appointment with the DAS Coordinator to review the [disability documentation](#) and determine eligibility for the reduced course load accommodation.
  - a. If the DAS Coordinator recommends the accommodation, the information will be forwarded to the DAS Director for final approval.
  - b. Students who receive approval of their must remain registered for no fewer than 6 credits per semester.
  - c. Requests for reduced course load accommodations are available only for the fall and spring semesters. Students may not receive an approved reduced course load for courses taken during summer sessions.
3. Upon final approval, DAS will notify the Office of Financial Aid of its decisions for all students approved for the accommodation.
4. Students are encouraged to confirm their status with the Office of Financial Aid before registering for fewer than 9 credits or withdrawing from courses that will reduce their number of registered credits each semester.

Please note: Students do not need to re-apply for the reduced course load accommodation every semester as it is approved for the duration of a student's eligibility for RI Promise funding. If a student applies and is approved for a reduced course load after their first year RI promise funding, the accommodation would apply to that academic year and future semesters until the 60 attempted credit hour limit is reached.

## 5. Appeals Processes

### *Disability Accessibility Services*

Any student who has provided documentation and appropriate forms to Disability Accessibility Services for accommodations may appeal a denial of disability accessibility accommodation in writing. Students may submit an appeal to [deanofstudents@ccri.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@ccri.edu).

### *Leave of Absence*

Students who apply for a leave of absence and are denied may submit their appeal in writing to the Vice President for Student Affairs at [studentaffairs@ccri.edu](mailto:studentaffairs@ccri.edu).

### *Residency*

Students who are denied RI residency status may submit a written appeal. Students must provide documentation and appropriate forms as part of their appeal. Students may submit an appeal to [deanofstudents@ccri.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@ccri.edu).

## B. Return to RI Promise Eligibility

### 1. GPA Improvement

A student who is removed from the RI Promise program due to falling below a 2.5 GPA after his/her first year may be able to return to RI Promise eligibility for their fourth RI Promise semester. A student may return to eligibility if, after the semester removed from RI Promise, he/she returns to CCRI for his/her fourth semester of eligibility and he/she earns a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher. CCRI will conduct a review of students who may be eligible to return to RI Promise eligibility once final grades are available for each fall and spring semester.

### 2. Credit Accumulation Improvement

A student who is removed from the RI Promise program because he/she does not earn 24 credits after their first year (i.e. fall, spring, and summer semesters) may be able to return to RI Promise eligibility for their second spring semester. A student may return to eligibility if, after the semester removed from RI Promise, he/she returns to CCRI for his/her fourth semester of eligibility and he/she earns 45 or more credits. CCRI will conduct a review of students who may be eligible to return to RI Promise eligibility once final grades are available for each fall and spring semester.

### 3. Return to Eligibility for Students with Reduced Course Load Accommodation

Students with an approved reduced course load accommodation who are removed from the RI Promise program due to falling below a 2.5 GPA after their first year may be able to return to RI Promise eligibility for their fourth or subsequent RI Promise semesters. A student may return to eligibility if, after the semester removed from RI Promise, he/she returns to CCRI for his/her fourth or subsequent semester of eligibility and has earned a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher. CCRI will conduct a review of students who may be eligible to return to RI Promise eligibility once final grades are available for each fall and spring semester.

Students with disabilities who have an approved reduced course load accommodation must earn at least 12 credits in their first year to maintain RI Promise eligibility. These students may be able to return to RI Promise eligibility if they return to CCRI for their fourth or subsequent semester and have earned 18 or more credits. Students with disabilities must continue to earn no less than 12 credits per year in subsequent years until the limit of 60 attempted credits is reached. CCRI will conduct a review of students who may be eligible to return to RI Promise eligibility once final grades are available for each fall and spring semester.

#### 4. Incomplete Assignments

RI Promise students who do not complete 24 credits within the first year of the program or RI Promise students with an approved reduced course load accommodation who do not complete 12 credits within the first year of the program due to an outstanding incomplete assignment(s) may be able to continue to receive RI Promise funding. Students must have written approval from a professor for all incomplete assignment(s). Students with incomplete assignments are responsible for all tuition and fees with no RI Promise funding for the first semester of their second year at CCRI.

Upon submission of outstanding assignments, students may be eligible to resume receipt of RI Promise funding for the first semester of their second year if:

1. Students must have written approval from their professor(s) before the end of the previous semester to submit the assignment after the due date;
2. Late assignments must be submitted no later than the first day of the following semester;
  - a. For example, an incomplete assignment from the spring semester must be submitted on or before the first day of the fall semester;
3. Late assignments are graded by the professor or his/her designee;
4. Graded late assignments leave the student with a passing grade for the course; and,
5. Earning a passing grade for the course brings the student's overall credit count for year one to 24 or more credits.

Should a student satisfy the above criteria, students will be able to resume receive RI Promise funding for their first semester of year two. Any tuition and mandatory fees already paid by the student that are covered by RI Promise will be refunded by CCRI. Refunds are scheduled to begin no later than the third Tuesday of October each year.

#### VI. Mistakenly Paid Out-of-Pocket Tuition

Students who pay tuition and mandatory fees and then receive RI Promise funding will receive a refund of their payment once RI Promise scholarships are officially disbursed. Refunds are scheduled to begin no later than the third Tuesday of October each fall and no later than the second Tuesday of March each spring.

#### VII. Previous College Credit

For students who may have earned college credit(s) prior to full-time enrollment ("Full-time enrollment" means enrolling in at least 24 credits within all terms in an academic year toward an associate degree program) at CCRI, those credits may be applied to the 24 credits per year RI Promise eligibility requirement. Under no circumstances may a student use credits earned prior to full-time enrollment at CCRI toward the "full-time enrollment" program requirement.

CCRI credit earned through dual and/or concurrent enrollment programs with partnering Rhode Island high schools will be counted toward the 24 credits students must earn in their first year to maintain RI Promise eligibility.

College credits earned through 1) Advanced Placement courses and/or 2) International Baccalaureate courses must be considered as part of an incoming student's Credit for Prior Learning [ccri.edu/priorlearning/](http://ccri.edu/priorlearning/). Credits that are approved through the CPL will be applied toward the 24 credits per year eligibility requirement.

Students who earned credits at a college or university other than CCRI prior to high school graduation or passing the HSED/GED must have their college transcript evaluated by the CCRI Records office through the transfer review process. More information on the transfer review process is available on the website at [ccri.edu/onestop/records/transfers/tran\\_info.html](http://ccri.edu/onestop/records/transfers/tran_info.html).



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