

**Roger Williams University
School of Continuing Studies
Executive Summary
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Roger Williams University's School of Continuing Studies is poised to become a thriving school that:

- is rooted in entrepreneurial spirit and practice;
- leads the way in postsecondary and adult education;
- demonstrates best-practice pedagogies that serve students, the community, and the institution;
- generates revenue that will aid the overall institution in its goals and allow the School of Continuing Studies (SCS) to further grow and prosper.

Overview

Over the last several decades the School of Continuing Studies has undergone many changes. Programs were established, lost or moved; the Center for Professional Development opened and then was closed; and a robust partnership with the military was formed. Through all of this SCS remained a leader in its philosophical approach to educating adult learners, even during the times in which it has struggled with implementation. One of its hallmarks has been—and continues to be—offering up to 90 credits for a student's professional, travel, and volunteer experiences (through credit documentation) and for formal education experiences through transfer credit, CLEP, and military credit.

This has left SCS holding on to many fewer programs than it used to offer, and with current programs that have stagnant enrollments and outdated pedagogies. And, it has left the external community in Rhode Island and beyond with no real awareness that RWU has a continuing education program—an especially attractive one, in fact, because it assesses prior formal and informal learning and offers up to 90 transfer credits.

Great opportunities are available to SCS—and therefore to Roger Williams University—because of (not despite) the fact that there are forces at play that are transforming education: technology, MOOCs, badges, shifting demographics, great numbers of non-traditional students seeking a degree or certificate (credit and non-credit), and the demand for skilled and knowledgeable workers and professionals.

In addition to these larger forces, students themselves are demanding flexible and customized programs that work with their lives. That quest has begun to drive many adult learners to online colleges because students in this demographic often will sacrifice quality for flexibility and affordability. Rather than offer either high quality or flexibility and affordability—SCS is poised to offer both to an expanded student population. It will do so by offering programs in six areas:

- 1) Bachelors' degrees in General Studies for postsecondary students who are "nontraditional" because they are often older, live off campus, and because and/or balance part-time engagement in school with full-time commitments to work and family;
- 2) Low-residency hybrid programs for Bachelors' and Master's degrees in high demand fields.
- 3) Distance learners in the military
- 4) Non-credit bearing programs for students interested in developing their skills or for corporations, governments, and non-profit organizations with particular goals for workforce development.

Phase I: Fixing SCS's Operational Difficulties

Our steps ahead are not only predicated on our ability to put big visions like those mentioned above into action. As part of this planning process, I have divided SCS's work into seven overall functions that we as a School must undertake and improve all at once. While some of these functions have more visible initial outcomes than others, I have been engaging and believe we must continue to engage in all at once.

- 1) Academics, learning and teaching;
- 2) Finances and operations;
- 3) Staffing and procedures;
- 4) Recruitment and marketing;
- 5) Admissions and enrollment;
- 6) Student services, engagement, and support; and
- 7) Community engagement and partnerships.

In continually improving all seven of these functions, we must keep an eye on what our peer campuses and competitors are doing in best practices and innovations. Doing so will make it possible to increase Fall 2013 student enrollments by approximately 300 students (with an average of two course registration per enrollment). These student can be accommodated with existing course offerings, thus maximizing net revenue.

Phase II: Building new Programs/Tapping New Markets

In addition to serving our core audience by improving SCS's current work and adding to the initiatives we offer, as I stated earlier, I believe SCS can also grow to serve learners who are "nontraditional" for SCS and for RWU not as much because of their age as because of their:

- 1) struggles with financing the RWU education they want to pursue; and/or
- 2) readiness to begin RWU Main Campus coursework without additional academic preparation.

