

RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

DIVISION OF STUDENT SUCCESS

SITUATION

Established in 1854, Rhode Island College is the state's first public institution of higher education. Although originally founded to provide teacher preparation for the young people of Rhode Island, the institution has evolved into a comprehensive institution of higher education. Rhode Island College is a four-year public institution located in suburban Rhode Island.

In alignment with the College's mission, the Division of Student Success provides services to nearly 8,500 students through the following programs: Undergraduate Admissions, the Career Development Center, Residential Life and Housing, the Counseling Center, Health Services, Intercollegiate Athletics and Recreation, the Preparatory Enrollment Program, Upward Bound, the Student Union, and Student Activities.

APPROACH

Upon his arrival to the institution, the president of Rhode Island College was interested in reorganizing student affairs into a more comprehensive Division of Student Success. He engaged NASPA Advisory Services to conduct an external review of the division while concurrently conducting a national search for the

position of vice president for student success. The goal of the external review with NASPA Advisory Services was to provide the new vice president with an extensive report of the division to serve as both an orienting resource and roadmap.

NASPA worked directly with the president and interim vice president to conduct a guided self-assessment using P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. The interim vice president identified 18 Rhode Island College members to complete the P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. self-assessment. NASPA administered the self-assessment over a three-week period and compiled the responses into nine reports for each of the P.R.A.C.T.I.C.E.S. components.

NASPA identified two reviewers that had significant experience with four-year, public institutions with student affairs programs and services similar to Rhode Island College. In tandem with NASPA staff, the reviewers conducted telephone interviews with eight direct reports to the interim vice president. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insights on the different areas of the division prior to the campus visit. During the campus visit, the NASPA Review Team conducted eleven meetings with over 50 members of the Rhode Island College community. Following the campus visit, the Review Team compiled a comprehensive report detailing findings, analysis, and recommendations that were presented to the interim vice president.

RESULTS

NASPA's report was shared with the incoming and inaugural vice president for student success in May of 2017 as part of planning and on-boarding materials. Upon his arrival in July of 2017, NASPA's recommendations provided guidance for setting early targets for year one around staffing challenges, inequities, and opportunities to clarify roles. The vice president shared the report with the University's executive team, academic leadership, and entire Division of Student Success as a framework for some of the goals and measurable objectives for the first year of the newly reorganized Division's work. It was not collecting dust. "To be 100% clear, I have never had a better on-boarding document than the NASPA report. This is not my first vice presidency, and this transition was made much

smoother than my start in any prior role due to the insight provided by the review,” noted vice president for student success, Dr. Jason Meriwether.

The report also exists as a living and breathing foundation for the Division’s three-year strategic plan. The guidance from NASPA framed a number of departmental plans, and was the basis of a discussion during the Division’s leadership retreat. The report was also used as an orientation tool as part of the on-boarding of two new assistant vice presidents who began working in July and August 2018.

The report provided an important record of the optimism, fears, and concerns associated with the merging of enrollment management, student affairs, athletics, and the academic support areas to become the Division of Student Success. Most of all, the report provided a tangible place from which the Division could measure its work and chart progress.