



Affordable
EXCELLENCE

at ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY

**Nine Things
You Need to Know**

2013–2014



Affordable Excellence at Roger Williams University

When Roger Williams University President Donald J. Farish shared details on the Affordable Excellence initiative in October 2012, he promised an approach that would address the three major issues facing higher education: cost, debt and jobs. The plan capitalized on long-term strengths inherent to the University – diversity in academic disciplines, stellar opportunities for one-on-one faculty/student interactions, and a focus on real-world experiences that engaged the community beyond our campus borders – and complemented them with a bold tuition freeze and guarantee to address the rising cost of a college education.

Over the course of the year, as the University community worked across campus to create even more opportunities reflective of these values, faculty and students illustrated time and again how Roger Williams is ideally positioned to tackle these

challenges head on. Whether via project-based experiences through our Community Partnerships Center or one of our growing roster of short-term, curriculum-based study abroad programs, we offer hands-on learning opportunities and the ability to personalize a college education. For students, this means engaging with communities to solve real-world problems and building the skills that will position them for jobs after graduation.

And while faculty and students are busy demonstrating the value of an RWU education, the Admissions staff has extolled the virtues of Affordable Excellence at Open House and Accepted Students Day events, a message reinforced in all interactions with prospective students.

So with one year of Affordable Excellence under our belt, what has happened? First, despite an increasingly competitive market where many schools failed to meet their Fall 2013 admissions targets for new students, Roger Williams brought in an incoming class that not only exceeded our target, but is one of the academically strongest in years. Second, at 84 percent, the freshman-to-sophomore year retention rate is the highest in the institution's history and a significant uptick from last year's rate of 78 percent.

And while it might be impossible to attribute those facts *solely* to Affordable Excellence, there's no denying the connection – both anecdotally and through formal market research, students and their families are pointing to the University's focus on both affordability measures and academic excellence as primary factors in the decision to attend (or remain at) Roger Williams.

While all indicators signal a great deal of momentum behind Affordable Excellence, our collective efforts are far from complete. Not only are we doubling down on affordability measures to limit student debt, but we will continue to unveil programs and initiatives to further build on the portfolio of educational opportunities we offer students – new majors and minors, faculty-led Living Learning Communities, the RWU XP program for first-year students, enhancements to technology and more.

To thrive in a higher education marketplace in which students can and should demand more, colleges and universities must evolve. As we look toward year two of Affordable Excellence, all of us at Roger Williams are positioning the University for a leap forward in the years to come.

1. We are addressing affordability.

Central to the challenges facing higher education are cost and debt. While the cost of a college education has been increasing faster than the cost of living, median family income has been on a steady decline, in inflation-adjusted dollars.

In October 2012, when Affordable Excellence launched, the University committed to two measures intended to mitigate tuition costs for students and families and minimize long-term debt:

- A **tuition freeze**, which means that undergraduate day students enrolled in Fall 2013 (including the incoming class) are paying the same tuition (\$29,976) as last year's students;
- A **tuition guarantee**, which means that for all undergraduate day students enrolled in Fall 2013, the tuition rate is guaranteed not to increase for four years, for all students who remain continuously enrolled.

In kicking off year two of Affordable Excellence, the University has furthered its pledge to address student cost and debt:

- First, for the 2014-15 academic year, the tuition freeze has been extended at that very same rate of \$29,976 – two full years with no tuition increase!
- What's more, the University will continue the four-year tuition guarantee for the 2014-15 academic year and for subsequent years, meaning no year-to-year cost increases for current, continuously enrolled students.
- And recognizing the importance that affordability plays in the college selection process, Roger Williams has committed to freezing tuition for as long as it is financially feasible, keeping any potential increases low, and to publishing the following year's tuition rate as early as possible. This will allow high school seniors the ability to undertake their college search knowing not only what RWU has to offer from the academic and campus life perspective, but what four years will cost, as well.

Significant Savings – Guaranteed

How much money does the RWU four-year tuition guarantee save students? Tuition for students first enrolling in 2012, 2013 or 2014 is \$29,976 each year. Here's how much the guarantee saves those students, over four years at Roger Williams, compared with schools that start at the same price but raise tuition by 3 to 5 percent per year (the national average):

Annual Tuition Increase	Dollars saved via RWU tuition guarantee
3%	\$9,267
4%	\$12,480
5%	\$15,756



2. Opportunities abound.

As a student, Lorin Richardson '09 (above) worked as a producer and anchor for RWU's news program, "The Feed," created sustainability videos for former CNN anchor Frank Sesno's "Planet Forward," landed an internship with a local television station and even took freelance gigs. Today, you can find her putting her experience to great use on News 12 Connecticut. Beginning this year, students who, like Lorin, have tremendous on- and off-campus experiences will be able to formalize their work, leadership and extracurricular activities through an innovative co-curricular transcript. Just one more way RWU is preparing students for the future.



3. Community partnerships are thriving.

Fifty projects, 35 partner organizations, 39 faculty members, 529 students and some 23,000 hours of student and faculty work – those numbers offer a glimpse at the total impact that the Community Partnerships Center boasts to date, even as it begins just its third year. The CPC connects students and faculty with local nonprofits and municipalities to tackle community projects that require specialized expertise. Its hallmarks to date? Hands-on, collaborative, cross-disciplinary experiences that land students jobs after graduation – and creative solutions to real-world problems facing local communities, on projects that range everywhere from Mathewson Street United Methodist Church in Providence (above) to a proposed Maritime Center in Bristol.

9. Diversity matters.

With a commitment to inclusive excellence on campus, the University welcomes the most diverse class in school history this fall. The increase is due, in part, to programs designed to foster a sense of community within the larger campus – efforts such as the Diversity Leadership Program, Intercultural Leadership Ambassadors and Unity Day. These programs encourage students like recent graduate and ILA scholar Tracy Smith '13 to reach new heights. A secondary education and English double major, Tracy immersed herself in the School of Education's mission to engage with underserved populations, and upon graduation landed a prestigious and highly sought-after fellowship at The Learning Community, a public charter school in Central Falls.

4. Technology equals collaboration and cost savings.

What if new technology could reduce costs for students and the University, boost computing capacity across campus and allow computer labs to become collaborative learning spaces? As one of the first universities to implement the Virtual Desktop Infrastructure system from Samsung – and with a new partnership and Case Study status from Samsung to assist – RWU is implementing just that. This fall, rCloud makes its debut, as Samsung computing studio spaces and labs in the School of Architecture, Art and Historic Preservation and the School of Continuing Studies open their doors, bringing enhanced hardware and software, cost savings all around and a more collaborative student experience. And as Phase I kicks off, the University will explore expansion to other areas of the campus.



5. We impact the local environment and economy.

As the University's marine biology program celebrates 40 years of teaching and research, the Center for Economic and Environmental Development (CEED) promotes the environmentally sustainable development of marine industries with a particular emphasis on aquaculture. Signature programs focus on ornamental fish, aquatic animal health – and, of course, oyster restoration – where students such as Fall River, Mass., native Ryan Rezendes '14 (above) tackle real-world challenges at the intersection of economic development and environmental stewardship. For external partners, working with CEED means the combined expertise of students and faculty; for RWU students, it means hands-on research, hours in the field and an experience that is ultimately reflective of the professional roles that await them.



6. At RWU Law, experience is guaranteed.

When the School of Law launched two decades ago, skills training was the latest trend in legal education – so while other schools scrambled to adjust, RWU Law simply built it into its curriculum. Today, hands-on practical opportunities still define a legal education at Roger Williams. So much so that the School explicitly guarantees a substantial clinical experience to every qualified student. For many alumni – such as Ashley Ham Pong '10 (above), who worked with the Immigration Law Clinic and is now an attorney with Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition – the experiences are formative enough to inspire career choices. Now, every RWU Law student has that opportunity.

7. Students abroad are not just tourists.

Most schools can boast that they offer students the chance to study abroad and to travel and learn about another culture, but not many provide a multitude of experiential learning opportunities around the world. Whether it's architecture students with internship placements in Istanbul, psychology students advising on autism issues in Jamaican classrooms, or a joint venture between journalism and anthropology + sociology students and faculty to report on the impact of jobs and the economy on social justice in the Brazilian rainforest, study abroad at RWU combines culture, classes and hands-on opportunities.



8. Our undergraduates are researchers.

What do small classes, access to faculty members and research opportunities for undergraduates really mean on campus? That a student like Samantha Gildersleeve '14 (above), a member of the Society of Women Engineers, finds mentorship through faculty members Janet Baldwin and Koray Ozer. With Ozer's encouragement, Sam earned a National Science Foundation undergraduate research experience that took her to Texas A&M to study aerospace technology. Through conversations with Baldwin, Sam was compelled to found the University's chapter of Engineers Without Borders to take on challenges in developing nations. RWU is providing yet another pathway for students to establish themselves in their fields prior to graduation.