



College Unbound approved to grant undergraduate degrees

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WARWICK – At its Wednesday meeting the R.I. Council on Postsecondary Education unanimously approved College Unbound’s proposal to turn its nonprofit higher education program for underserved adults into a degree-granting program.

All nine commissioners approved the proposal, with Commissioner of Postsecondary Education Jim Purcell saying College Unbound, based in Providence, has a strong track record to build upon, according to emailed comments provided by Robin McGill, his interim communications officer. The meeting was held at the Community College of Rhode Island’s Knight campus.

“Education is about creating pathways for students to fulfill their potential and contribute to our collective prosperity, and the College Unbound program has a history of success working with adult learners who are motivated to finish their degrees,” Purcell said.

College Unbound Director Dennis Littky will become president of the institution.

“The council’s approval represents a tremendous step for the future of College Unbound,” Littky said. “We will continue to be talent finders and developers for Rhode Island, but under our own umbrella. When our students come to us, many are stuck - unable to advance in their careers without a degree. We help them build the skills they need and support them through completion so they can be leaders in Rhode Island.”

The vote gives College Unbound the ability to grant Bachelor of Arts degrees in organizational leadership and change for an initial-approval period of five years. The course of study would be a hybrid of online and on-the-ground coursework, some it customized based on a working students’ skills gained through employment. Evening classes would be held at the Metropolitan Regional and Technical Center in Providence.

Since 2009, College Unbound has been offering college credit through affiliation with other institutions of higher learning, most recently Charter Oak State College based in Connecticut. That partnership will continue while College Unbound pursues accreditation through the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

Littky estimates as many as 110,000 Rhode Islanders, many of whom only have some college credits completed, fall into the population the new institution would serve. The first crop of students could number about 100 and begin coursework in 2016, or possibly as soon as this fall, he said.