



INSTITUTE FOR CYBERSECURITY
AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

Wednesday, February 14, 2024

Representative Marvin L. Abney, Chair
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairman Abney and members of the committee,

I am writing today in support of Rhode Island College's request for \$73.5 million in general obligation bond funding for the renovation of Whipple Hall and the creation of a dedicated space for the Institute for Cybersecurity and Emerging Technologies. As Distinguished Chair of the institute, I firmly believe that this is the right project at the right time for both the college and the state. We have an opportunity to transform one of the college's "Original Six" buildings, constructed as a gymnasium in 1958, into a strategic hub for the future and a regional center of excellence for one of the nation's fast-growing, most vital industries.

There is a moment of great opportunity before us. The cybersecurity industry is expected to grow by more than 30 percent in the next five years and there are currently more than 700,000 unfilled jobs nationwide. Thousands of those jobs, many of which start at six-figure salaries, are located in Rhode Island and employers are struggling to find workers in-state with the skills and experiences necessary to fill them.

At the same, the Institute for Cybersecurity and Emerging Technologies is already showing tremendous growth potential for the college. There are approximately 35 students pursuing Cybersecurity degrees in its first year as a major, and interest in the program is up more than 25 percent among high school seniors who have applied to RIC for Fall 2024. We'll also be adding an Artificial Intelligence major in the fall.

An investment in Whipple Hall right now will enable us to develop a true home for institute, outfitted with two cyber ranges and a security operations center (SOC) that will provide immersive and virtual environments for training and simulation, which will set our students apart with employable skills before they even graduate. It will also add 20,000 square feet of space to the building, with new classrooms and labs outfitted for hybrid (in-person and asynchronous online) learning, as well as office space for the Department of Computer Science and Information Systems, which includes Cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence, Data Analytics.

This will not only benefit the students enrolled in these programs; it will create a hub of cyber activity for the entire state. The SOC, in particular, has huge potential as a community resource. Similar to the SOC at Bridgewater State University, which provides cyber resources for Massachusetts communities, the new SOC at RIC can serve Rhode Island communities and institutions that lack cyber infrastructure, helping municipalities, nonprofits, companies, and government agencies monitor, detect and respond to threats.

A dedicated home for the Cyber Institute will also enable us to add programs and initiatives that serve the state, such as certificate programs (i.e. Mobile Forensics), job training and upskilling opportunities for working professionals, and professional development, consultative services and workshops for employers. We are also developing an MBA with focus on technology and business analytics to provide more high skill employees. The new Whipple Hall will be a job training hub for the state's cyber workforce.

I am confident that this investment at this specific moment will pay dividends for the state for years to come, helping us achieve the Governor's goal of raising wages for Rhode Island workers, and establishing Rhode Island College as a regional leader in this vital industry. I humbly ask for your consideration of the funding being requested.

Sincerely,

James R. Langevin

Distinguished Chair
Institute for Cybersecurity & Emerging Technologies
Rhode Island College

CC: Members of the House Finance Committee