RWU and East Providence form innovative partnership - by Roberto DaSilva

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Roger Williams University (RWU) and the city of East Providence have formed an innovative partnership to provide a special discounted rate for city residents and municipal employees on all of RWU's University College (UC) degree programs, as well as specialized workforce and professional development opportunities on professional certificates.

"This new partnership between RWU's University College and the city of East Providence is an exceptional opportunity to provide innovative educational programs that broaden access to job and skills training and spur vital economic growth in Rhode Island," said RWU president Ioannis Miaoulis. "I want to especially recognize UC dean Gena Bianco, East Providence mayor Bob DaSilva, and city officials William Fazioli, director of planning and Napolean Gonsalves, director of administration for their commitment to this partnership."

The impact on job losses suffered as a result of COVID 19 is substantial. Many of the jobs that were temporarily lost during the pandemic will most likely be permanently gone. This is a critical time for communities and individuals to invest in skill development in order to fully participate in the economy. A vast majority of new employment opportunities in thriving industries will require a post high school education or a professional credential.

A primary goal of this partnership is to create a clear pathway for persons to access affordable and high quality education to acquire valuable employment skills. This is especially important for lower wage job holders who have suffered the harshest effects. Over the long term this will promote inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth for our community.

Through this unique partnership, East Providence residents and municipal employees will have access to 18 associate and bachelor degree programs and a wide-ranging portfolio of certificates to advance their educational and professional development. Training options include college degree

programs in areas such as community development, cybersecurity and paralegal studies. In addition, there are training opportunities in certificate programs such as health services administration, social media marketing and digital forensics.

These are just a few examples of UC's award-winning programming, which recently ranked No. 7 in the nation for 2021 Best Online Colleges for Return on Investment by OnlineU. Courses are delivered in-person, online and hybrid format through UC's Providence Campus at 1 Empire Plaza.

Building a skilled labor force is a vital part of our city's future and thanks to RWU and our collaboration with the many employers in our community, we will have additional resources in which to continue to build a skilled workforce.

RWU's University College and the city of East Providence are also working on a range of workforce and professional development programs designed to meet the needs of local businesses. This includes programs in the construction trades, business, medical and legal fields and more.

Providing customized workforce development training to the city's employers will continue to make East Providence an attractive choice to start and grow a business. Maintaining and further developing a talented labor force will strengthen the city's economic foundation.

Roberto DaSilva is the mayor of the city of East Providence.