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Pell Center receives RI Foundation Grant to Support Innovation in RI Cities and Towns

Newport, RI—Investing in the human capital so important to Rhode Island’s cities and towns, the RI Foundation awarded a \$45,000 grant to the Pell Center at Salve Regina University to support Leadership Matters—a multi-community leadership development initiative in its first year.

Leadership Matters is a three-phase program for public leaders in Rhode Island. In the first phase, teams from Middletown, Newport, and Pawtucket, as well as one from Salve Regina University, received 64 hours of professional development training in facilitation practices for public

leaders; systems thinking; negotiation; and strategic alignment for high performance. In the second phase, the three participating communities are adopting innovation projects with mentored support made possible by the RI Foundation’s grant. In the third phase, participants will gather at the end of this year for a lessons-learned conference—an important step in creating a culture of shared learning across communities.

“The Rhode Island Foundation is a vital institutional pillar in Rhode Island,” said Pell Center Executive Director Dr. Jim Ludes. “We’re grateful for the support and the confidence they’ve placed in us to deliver a program that will help some of the state’s most dedicated public servants achieve more for their constituents.”

In developing Leadership Matters, the Pell Center has partnered with the Public Sector Consortium (PSC), a Cambridge, Massachusetts non-profit with an extensive track-record in providing leadership programs to public-sector audiences. The PSC’s president, Georgianna Bishop, praised the Rhode Island leaders already involved in the program. “I’ve worked with



Cohort 1 of Leadership Matters includes leaders from Middletown, Newport, and Pawtucket, as well as Salve Regina University

public leaders across the United States,” said Bishop, “and the people we’re working with in Rhode Island are truly exceptional for their talent and their desire to serve the public’s interest. We are thrilled to be a part of this effort and grateful to the Rhode Island Foundation for their support.”

“The fiscal challenges facing Rhode Island municipalities make it more important than ever to invest in developing public sector leaders who can do more with less,” said Jessica David, the Rhode Island Foundation’s vice president for strategy and community investments. “We hope the Pell Center will be able to leverage our support to expand the circle of sponsors as the program delivers innovation in our cities and towns.”

Pawtucket Mayor Don Grebien said, “The mentored support, made possible by the grant from the Rhode Island Foundation, is helping my team work better in Pawtucket. That’s why we all signed up for this program—to help us serve our communities better—and we’re doing just that.”

“This is real work,” said Jane Howington City Manager in Newport. “My team has taken this and begun to apply the lessons to the way the city delivers services. It’s investing everyone in the outcome, and we’re beginning to see results.”

“This second phase is critical to the design of the program,” continued Dr. Ludes. “We built it to provide communities with support so they could tackle big issues. It’s the practical application of theory—and it would not have been possible without the support of the Rhode Island Foundation.”

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