



## A statewide incentive-based program to help low-income, high-achieving students on the path to college

June 2020

### Overview

Every child deserves an equal opportunity to succeed. Rhode2College (R2C) is a step-by-step, achievement-focused pilot program designed to motivate high-achieving students from low- and moderate-income households to take the steps necessary to prepare for and enroll in college. **Over their last two years of high school, participating R2C Scholars can earn up to \$1,000 in short- and long-term payments to help towards college as they complete key college preparation milestones.**

R2C is a partnership between College Board, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Governor Gina M. Raimondo, the Rhode Island Department of Education, and Research Improving People's Lives (RIPL). RIPL is a non-profit social impact tech organization with faculty affiliates at top research universities across the country that works with governments to help them use data, science, and technology to improve policy and lives.

### Designed for Impact

R2C is currently in its second pilot year, serving over 60 public schools across Rhode Island and nearly 1,400 juniors and seniors who scored in the top 25% of all low- and moderate-income students in the state on the PSAT™ 10. Here's how it works:

- 1. R2C rewards students for completing college-readiness milestones.** R2C is supported by an AI texting chatbot, "Rhody." Each month, Rhody sends students information about an important college preparation milestone to complete. Milestones include crucial steps such as completing the FAFSA, preparing for the SAT® on Khan Academy®, and submitting a college application. Then it rewards them for completing each milestone.
- 2. Immediate and long-term rewards help students stay on track for higher education.** R2C motivates students to complete both short- and long-term progress on college goals by giving some money to students immediately, and some in a savings account they can access upon matriculating at college. Students can earn approximately \$500 between the start of their junior year and high school graduation and \$500 once they enroll in college.
- 3. R2C is low-cost, light-touch, and high-impact.** Rhody provides 24/7 texting support for students, answering college-related questions and providing milestone information. Rhody informs students of their progress and total amount earned in R2C, reminds students of important upcoming deadlines, and forwards any questions it cannot answer to R2C staff.

### Key Successes

College Board and Rhode Island partnered with experts from RIPL, who will measure the effects of R2C on college readiness, enrollment, and success relative to demographically similar non-R2C students. The program pilot is part of a partnership between the College Board and CZI to provide personalized pathways to college success for millions of students. **R2C has already helped students stay focused and motivated on taking steps to college and the education they dream about:**

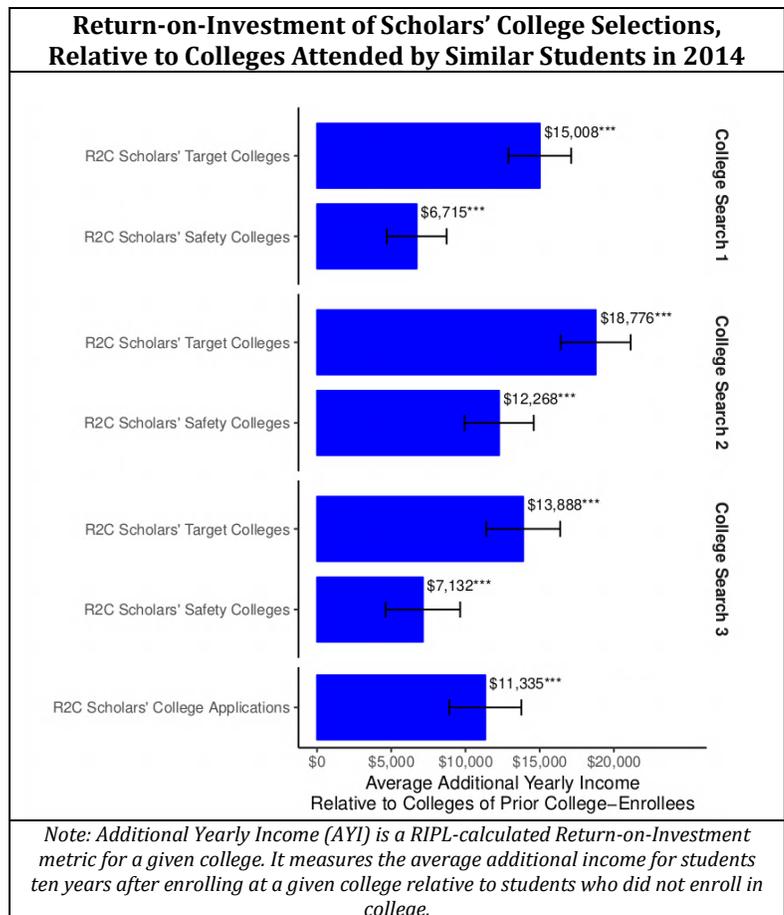
- **R2C is in high demand and appeals to minority students.** R2C averages a 60% take-up rate and 68% Milestone completion. 98% of Scholars have texted with the AI chatbot. Minority and female Scholars are more likely to enroll in R2C and complete Milestones.
- **R2C helps students complete crucial steps for getting to college.** By June 2020, 60% of R2C seniors had committed to college in the Fall, 70% had submitted at least one college application, and 63% had submitted their FAFSA. Comparatively, only 44% of demographically similar Rhode Island students enroll in college immediately after high school.

- **R2C Scholars study smarter and harder for the SAT:** R2C asked Scholars to prepare for the SAT using Official SAT<sup>®</sup> Practice (OSP) on Khan Academy<sup>®</sup>. Scholars completed the College Board-recommended number of SAT<sup>®</sup> hours at 4.5x the national average.

- **Scholars applied to higher-value colleges (+\$11,335 to income).** We built a web- and mobile-supported search tool specifically for R2C, which provides key information about college options such as expected income relative to student loan costs. Scholars are making wise financial choices for their education and future careers.

- **R2C helps students feel supported and prepared for their futures.** 90% of Scholars would recommend Rhode2College to their friends “highly” or “extremely highly.” One student summed it up: “This restored my hope that I am actually going to go to college.”

- **R2C teaches students important financial management skills.** Scholars earn some money immediately on gift cards, and some money in an account they can access upon college. Scholars choose whether to redeem their gift cards immediately or pool them for a larger payout down the line, empowering them to flexibly use funds in accordance with their individual financial situation.



### Finding What Works for Low-Income Students

R2C is designed for impact. RIPL will measure the impact on SAT<sup>®</sup> scores, high school graduation, and college enrollment. If the promising early results of R2C hold, R2C could potentially scale to more students in Rhode Island and across the country, providing a proven, innovative way to increase equality and opportunity in education, and ensuring that millions of American students have access to the economic opportunities they deserve.