

Technology Education



Bridge Technical Solutions, as an Information Technology Staffing Agency in Rhode Island, is well-positioned to see the need for Information Technology Professionals to help local companies grow and prosper. Many companies have IT positions that have been open for months, and, in some cases, years, due to the lack of qualified Information Technology Professionals available for hire. These positions are, on average, some of the best paying and most rewarding positions available.

The scarcity of Information Technology Professionals can be traced back to the low number of graduates from Rhode Island's higher educational IT programs. These same programs have sufficient capacity but unfortunately are not attracting enough qualified applicants to fill the available seats.

As a partner to Rhode Island-based higher education institutions, BRIDGE is working, in collaboration with others, to help attract more qualified applicants to these institutions' technical programs. We are developing both short-term and long-term approaches as follow:

Short-Term – Develop a strategy and tactical plans to entice current RI high school upperclassmen to apply to existing Information Technology programs at RI-based higher education institutions by enlightening students, parents and guidance counselors about the career opportunities in computer science and inspiring students to become enthusiastic about IT careers.

Plans include:

- Producing a video that features IT professionals and employers sharing insight on the real-world rewards of careers in technology and delivering a unified message about IT careers and the need for skilled professionals;
- Creating a PowerPoint, in conjunction with the video, that highlights relevant facts, statistics, and profiles of success to be used during presentations made at high school Career Nights, Parent Nights, and similar events to students, parents, and other audiences that influence students' post-secondary decision-making
- Trying to present at the September meeting of the Rhode Island School Counselor Association (RISCA) to work with RI-based guidance counselors.

Long-Term – Develop a strategy and tactical plans to improve the available K-12 curriculum with regard to information technology. We must move beyond the basic "how to use technology" classes to offer introductory "how to create technology" classes that get students excited about careers in computing and prepare young minds for the challenges of more advanced technology study.

Plans include:

- Engaging guidance counselors, superintendents, curriculum directors and state government resources to enhance K-12 curriculum;
- Targeting participation in annual conferences or regular meetings of some of the following organizations:
 - Rhode Island School Superintendents' Association (RISSA)

- New England Association of School Superintendents
- Rhode Island Middle Level Educators (RIMLE)
- New England Secondary School Consortium (NESSC)
- Rhode Island Society of Technology Educators (RISTE)
- Rhode Island Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (RIASCD)
- Rhode Island State Leadership Team (RISLT) for the Development of Next Generation Science Standards, and other groups;
- Partnering with local groups and national organizations that are successfully spearheading similar efforts, establishing similar programs and implementing similar changes (i.e. Computing in the Core, Project Lead the Way)

Changing the Perception of Computer Science Careers

Communicate that IT graduates:

- come away with a valuable and varied skill set
- are getting good jobs with great starting salaries (and even better compensation with experience)

Emphasize:

- that there are more technical internships available than can be filled by appropriate students
- that there are more IT jobs out there, just in RI, than can be filled by qualified graduates
- the forecast of continued need in the IT industry for skilled professionals
- that in IT, there *are* opportunities to work with people
 - There is a breadth of career options in IT, with a focus on soft skills, communication, leadership, working in groups or teams, and working independently
- the satisfaction of accomplishment in IT careers – the work is engaging and challenging
- the impact you can have on a business/company
- the variety of work environments and cultures of IT
- the opportunity to work in a variety of industries – an IT graduate can work in nearly any vertical
- IT is an enabling science – these are tools and technologies needed in almost every industry, including healthcare, human and social services, education, and non-profits
 - In other words, these tools help others and enhance our society

Ad Hoc Committee Members (*currently under development*):

Erik van Renselaar, Information Technology Department Chair, New England Institute of Technology

Janet Prichard, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Computer Information Science, Bryant University

Joan Peckham, Ph.D., Professor and Chair, Department of Computer Science and Statistics, University of Rhode Island

Francis X. Tweedie, Dean, School of Technology, Johnson & Wales University, Providence

Kate Sanders, Ph.D., Professor of Math and Computer Science, Rhode Island College

Ann Moskol, Ph.D., Professor of Math and Computer Science, Rhode Island College