

Member Profile: The College Crusade of Rhode Island

The economy is on everyone's minds these days. Bob Oberg, Director of Development for **The College Crusade of Rhode Island**, is no exception. "These are extraordinarily difficult times," says Oberg. "The College Crusade, like many programs around the country, is working hard to sustain the critical services it is providing to the state's disadvantaged students." The College Crusade provides services to sixth through twelfth graders from thirty-three middle and high schools from across the state of Rhode Island. These students are mostly from low income families, racial or ethnic minority groups, and single parent homes.

The mission of College Crusade is to increase educational and career success for youth in the state's low-income communities, and for students to experience the steady, nurturing presence of caring adults and participate in activities that focus on academic enrichment, social and personal development, career awareness and exploration, and readiness for college.

The main components to the College Crusade program include caring adult advisors, innovative college-readiness programming, and a scholarship incentive for those admitted to postsecondary degree programs, apprenticeships, and other certified higher education programs. The college-readiness programming includes college-prep coursework, preparing for standardized college-entrance tests, exploring career and college choices, and developing their leadership skills. This program continues for seven straight years including summers.

The College Crusade has both requirements for entrance and continuation in the program including event attendance, afterschool and Saturday program participation, and amount of time per year spent with advisor.

Mr. Oberg says, "Within this crisis, there is an opportunity. Now, more than ever, people in the public and private sector are seeking to invest in programs that work. Now more than ever, programs cannot attempt to go at it alone." Practicing this philosophy, College Crusade partners with many other organizations. First, they partner closely with four urban school districts in the state: Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls, and Woonsocket. The advisors are located directly within the schools. College Crusade also partners with local colleges to host programs and 64 colleges and universities nationwide as members of their Scholarship Collaborative. These institutions donate scholarships to financially eligible Crusaders who gain acceptance. Community organizations are important partners as well.

The College Crusade also participated in the new FAFSA on the Phone program by sharing this resource with its students. College Crusade offers in-person FAFSA help to students and distributed this additional resource it received as an NCAN member. The National College Access Network partnered with the U.S. Department of Education to disseminate information about the FAFSA on the Phone program in the Department's three focus states, one of which is Rhode Island.

One positive of the field of college access is the ability to look ahead. Bob Oberg and The College Crusade of Rhode Island have this vision. Mr. Oberg states that, "what is required of leadership in these times is to not only demonstrate their value in the difficult day-to-day advocacy work that is needed to get through the current budget cycle, to but to be strategic, inventive and persistent in reaching out to those who have a common interest and developing a framework for new partnerships that will position them to grow to new heights once the economy recovers."

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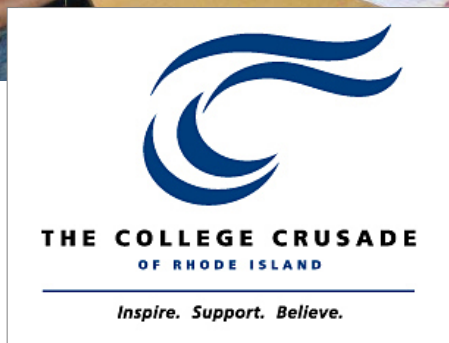


Bob Oberg
The College Crusade
of Rhode Island
Director of Development

College Crusade continues to move forward, developing new programs and working with their students in a holistic manner. This year is the 20th anniversary of the College Crusade program. Since 2001, The College Crusade has awarded over \$18 million in college scholarships to more than 2,500 graduates from Rhode Island high schools. They follow the college progress of the Crusaders who are recipients of their scholarship awards, but they are working to develop a broader system of college retention tracking and plan to launch it this year. In May 2008, the high school graduation and college-going rates for Crusaders were much higher than their peers in the state's urban school districts. In addition, 2008 added financial literacy workshops for high school students, afterschool science workshops for middle school students, and an expanded schedule for their Saturday programs.

College Crusade uses an in-depth advisory system and a comprehensive network of out-of-school programs to support the academic, personal, career development, and college readiness needs of disadvantaged students. This puts College Crusade ahead of the Rhode Island reform agenda that includes personalized advisory services for every student and shows that they are an example that this agenda works. Because of the success of their work, College Crusade is currently working with the RI Department of Education and school district leaders to identify ways to expand and deepen their partnerships so that more students are able to benefit.

<http://www.thecollegecrusade.org/main/>



High school **Crusaders** (left) participate in the week long Crusade Summer Experience Program. Here students put finishing touches on leadership presentations that they developed on youth-related topics such as teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, and school attendance.

Two **Crusaders** at the Wheeler Summer Camp (right) in Providence learn how to collect clues and analyze a simulated crime scene. Here they are examining hairs to determine if they are human or animal.