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CPC Feasibility Study Lauded as Bristol Lands Funds for Maritime Center

R.I. Sen. Jack Reed announces \$861,000 Boating Infrastructure Grant to convert Bristol's historic Naval Armory into a destination for transient boaters



Members of the Bristol Maritime Project team were on hand for the awarding of an \$861,000 grant to the Town of Bristol to complete the project. Pictured with Senator Jack Reed are: Mike Lefebvre '12, graduate student Lauren Bombana, Jen Hall '13, Reed and RWU senior Darci Lake.

September 10, 2013 | By Melissa A. Patricio

BRISTOL, R.I. – Just six months after a team of students from Roger Williams University presented their findings from an [economic feasibility study to transform a historic Naval Armory on Bristol Harbor into a welcome center](#) for visiting boaters, [Sen. Jack Reed](#) (D-R.I.) announced an \$861,000 Boating Infrastructure Grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that will bring the Bristol Maritime Welcome Center to life and boost the local economy.

Citing the collaborative efforts of the Town of Bristol, the Department of Environmental Management and Roger Williams University, Reed noted that Bristol was one of just six recipients of the federal grant nationwide. The [Boating Infrastructure Grant](#) is a nationally competitive funding program that awards funds to states specifically seeking to enhance their waterfront accommodations for transient boaters. In addition to building 16 new moorings and a dinghy dock for eligible boaters, the maritime center will include laundry facilities, restrooms with showers, social spaces and information about downtown shops and restaurants.

“All of this is going to improve the quality of maritime service here in Bristol,” Reed said. “This is going to be something we’re going to look back on as a real boost to the economy in Bristol, and all of Narragansett Bay and Rhode Island.”

Access to the ocean via the bay is a critical component of the state’s economic viability, from generating jobs and income to serving as a reflection of the quality of life, Reed said. With this maritime center, Director of Environmental Management Director [Janet Coit](#) – whose team at the DEM worked in tandem with the Town of Bristol to facilitate the

grant application – said she is confident that Bristol will become a buzzed-about destination.

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“Investing in these types of local projects is what puts you on the map,” Coit said. “It’s high leverage, it’s a big multiplier – you’ll have transient boaters coming to join this place. As a destination, you will find that this boating center will attract people who will come back many times and tell people about it.”

Helping to facilitate economic growth in local communities is an undercurrent of the Community Partnerships Center at RWU, and emerged as a key indicator of the feasibility study conducted by students from the Mario J. Gabelli School of Business alongside students from the architecture and construction management programs. Sen. Reed directly referenced the study in his announcement, citing the potential for an annual economic impact of \$700,000 when the harbor is fully utilized.

The cross-disciplinary demographic of the RWU research team, working under the advisement of faculty members Hank Kniskern and John McQuilken, was critical to producing a thorough report and providing rich materials for the DEM grant team to include in the application, said CPC Director Arnold Robinson. In addition to benefitting the town and the state, however, Robinson pointed out what he considers a veritable edge for the students who worked on this project entering the workforce:

“Think about these students walking into a job interview,” he asked the audience. “Students from other schools are going to say, ‘Here was my project from Accounting 401.’ These guys are going to walk in and say, ‘Here’s a picture of me with Sen. Reed at the announcement of the grant my team got, which was over three-quarters of a million dollars.’ Who is going to get the job?”

It’s a win-win, Robinson said: the once-hypothetical project becomes reality and the students take away practical experience.

Senator Reed echoed Robinson’s remarks in his kudos to the University and the work the CPC has done for more than 50 community projects in just two years:

“One of the things about Roger Williams University is that President Farish has committed himself not only to this particular community, but also to making college affordable and making the experience very practical – that students will not graduate from Roger Williams without being engaged in a real world project that helps make things happen.”

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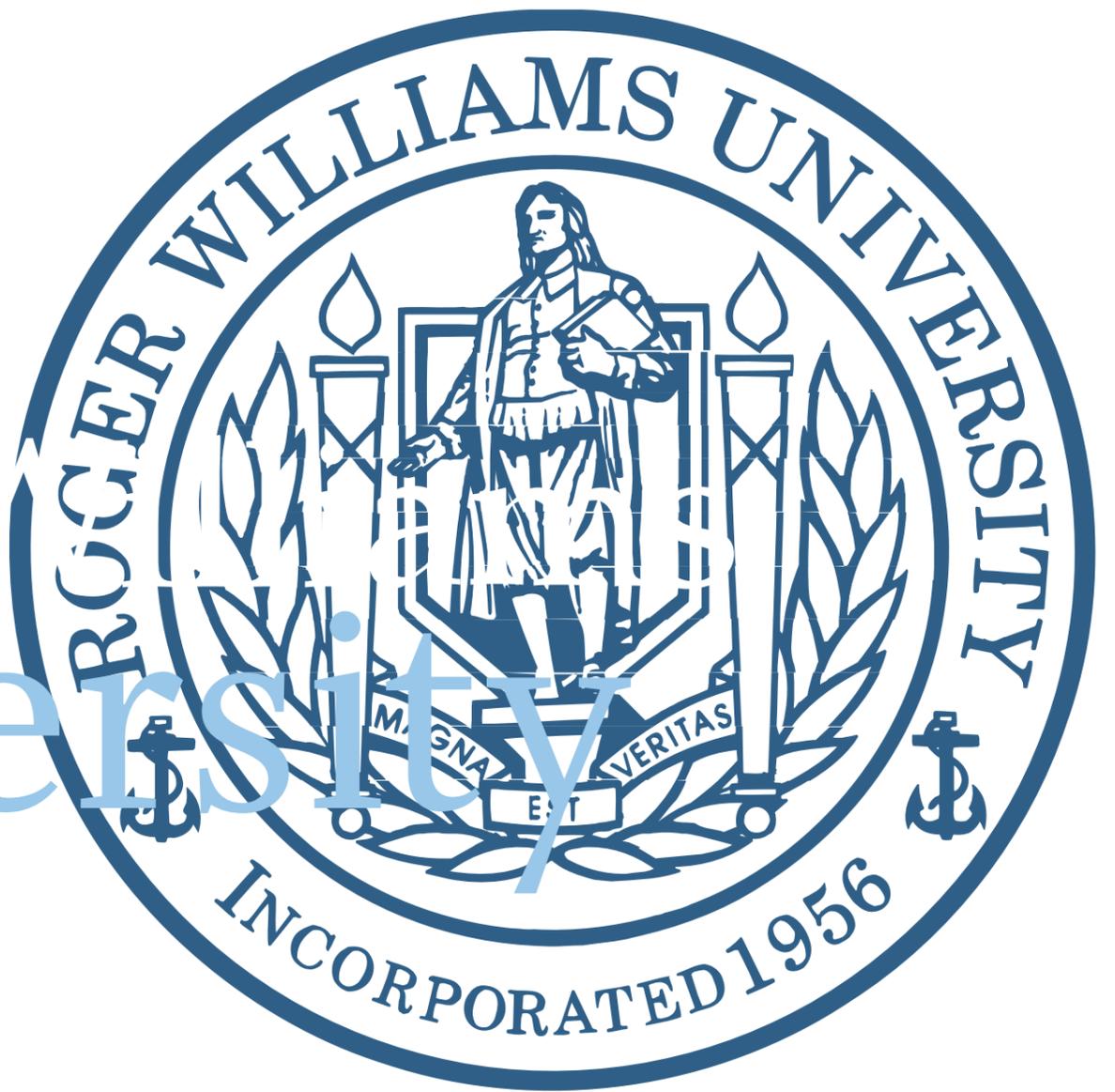
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