

# Annual Report 2024-2025



Science and Math Investigative  
Learning Experiences

**The SMILE Program** seeks to improve the educational outcomes of Rhode Island public school students by giving them confidence in their academic and life skills in order to pursue the college and career opportunities of their choice. Our work supports the University of Rhode Island’s initiatives to achieve the enrollment of a talented and diverse community of students, as well as increase first-year retention of freshmen by focusing on college preparedness of pre-college students who are in grades 4 – 12. Our success is thanks to our dedicated team of SMILE staff members, club teachers/leaders, school administrators, college faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and community members.

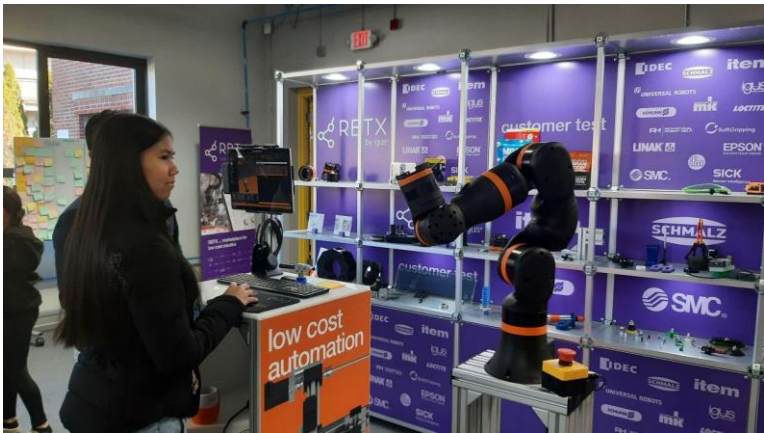


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## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

***Carol M. Englander***  
***Executive Director***

Dear Friends and Supporters of The SMILE Program,

The SMILE Program had a very successful 31 st year and increased its reach by adding the Johnston School District, including the elementary, middle, and high school clubs. Two additional elementary clubs were added to Central Falls which now has 3 elementary clubs, and one club each at the middle school and high school. We have 472 Rhode Island students participating in the program this year at the elementary, middle and high school levels from seven school districts: Central Falls, Johnston, Newport, South Kingstown, Westerly, West Warwick, and Woonsocket. Parents and administrators enjoyed the fall and spring district Family Science Nights led by students and organized by teachers. The students were the teachers of activities, and parents, impressed with their children's learning, became more committed to their students' aim for higher education. It has been a most rewarding year, culminating in the graduation of 41 SMILE high school seniors, most of whom are planning to attend college this fall. Many of our graduating seniors, including 426 more who've previously enrolled, are eligible for our \$500 Saul Nulman SMILE Scholarship which aims to support college-bound SMILE students who have been in the program for 3+ years. The SMILE Program continues to be Rhode Island's only STEM pipeline for helping diverse students develop their identity and competence as scientists in preparation for college. SMILE alumni students select STEM majors at the University of Rhode Island at a 70% rate, well above the national average of 14%.

Thanks to the University of Rhode Island, our middle school students had the opportunity to explore engineering and technology through a rapid deployment bridge-building challenge, and SMILE high school students designed, built and tested solar hybrid vehicles. Elementary students were engaged in environmental activities: 4th and 5th grade elementary students came to URI Kingston campus for an Ecology Field Day mentored by URI students. For students who will be first in their family to go to college, these are wonderful first university experiences. Through stewardship projects, SMILE students have even greater positive connections to their community and environment. These include making school yard bird houses, making cloth bags to replace plastic ones, mosquito traps, gifts from recycled materials, removing invasive plants from a local park, and designing, digging and planting school and community gardens. Your support and efforts on behalf of all our SMILE students have an incredible positive effect. We appreciate and thank all of you for promoting The SMILE Program and look forward to our 32nd year bringing STEM activities to Rhode Island's deserving and enthusiastic children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol Englander".

Carol Englander



## SMILE SCHOOL LIST

## OUR REACH



### Central Falls

Ella Risk Elementary School  
RAICES Dual Language Academy  
Veterans Memorial Elementary School  
Calcutt Middle School  
Central Falls High School

### Johnson

Winsor Hill Elementary School  
Nicholas A. Ferri Middle School  
Johnston Senior High School

### Newport

Claiborne Pell Elementary School  
Thompson Middle School  
Rogers High School

### South Kingstown

Peace Dale Elementary School  
Broad Rock Middle School  
South Kingstown High School

### Westerly

Westerly Middle School  
Westerly High School

### West Warwick

Horgan Elementary School  
Deering Middle School  
West Warwick High School

### Woonsocket

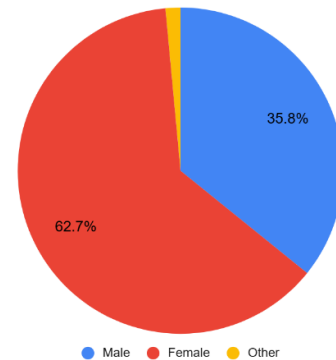
Coleman Elementary School  
Globe Park Elementary School  
Pothier-Citizens Elementary School  
Hamlet Middle School  
Villa Nova Middle School  
Woonsocket High School

## Out of 472 Students 24-25 School Year:

## PARTICIPANTS

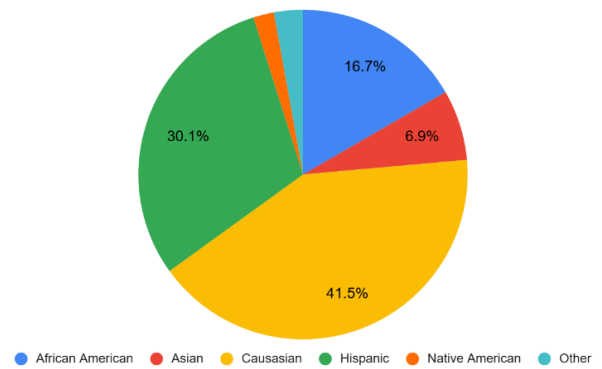
### Gender

Male	169	36%
Female	296	63%
Other	7	1%



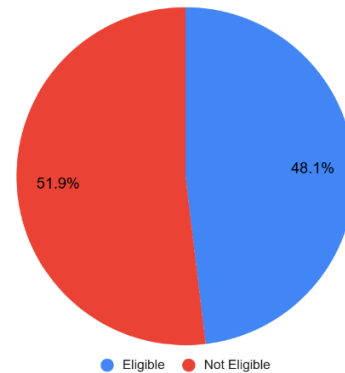
### Students By Ethnicity

African American	82	17%
Asian	34	7%
Caucasian	204	43%
Hispanic	128	27%
Native American	10	2%
Other	14	3%



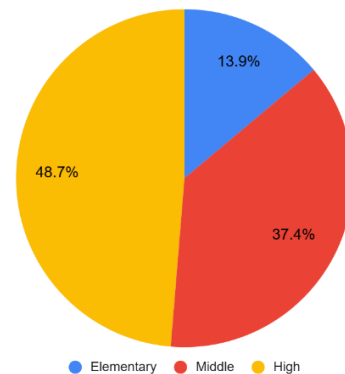
### Free/Reduced Price Lunch

Eligible	227	48%
Not Eligible	245	52%



### Returning Students (230) By Grade Level

Elementary	32	14%
Middle	86	37%
High	112	49%





## YEAR IN REVIEW



### Teachers' Workshops

There were two teachers' workshops that happened in the year, one in August and the other in January of 2024. In the August workshop, teachers were given presentations as well as supplies to practice the club activities for the fall. The January Workshop focused on the spring curriculum. There were three sessions held for elementary, middle, and high school. Each included hands-on activities that the teachers participated in in order to best prepare for the upcoming events.



### Career Exploration Field Trips 2024-2025

SMILE Career Exploration Field Trips 2024-25 Field trips this year included URI's East Farm Apple Orchard, the Norman Bird Sanctuary, igus, Inc. (bearing supplier), and the Roger Williams Zoo and Botanical Gardens. Students were able to learn about a variety of STEM topics including ecosystems, as well as STEM careers.

### Family Science Night

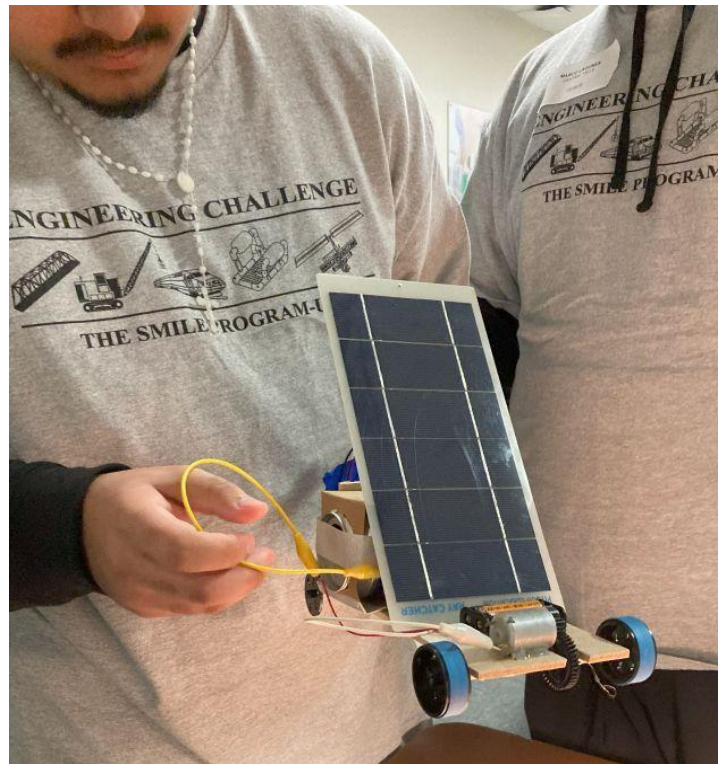
In November-March, SMILE clubs across the state held their district-wide Family Science Nights. These events let students show families, friends, teachers, and administrators what they have learned from their clubs. There were potluck dinners and activities taught by SMILE students. Parents were proud of the accomplishments of the students and delighted to see each station. The evening event is a great way for students to show their passion for STEM topics, as well as build their confidence in presenting their topics.



## High School Engineering Challenge

High school students from seven RI districts came to URI for the yearly high school engineering challenge on March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025. They worked together in 20 teams total, split in two, each with different objectives. Group A designed and built the chassis for a hybrid solar vehicle. Group B built the vehicle's transmission using gears and a toy motor. The students tested their vehicles' speed and ability to go straight.

The solar cell provided electricity for vehicle lights and two AA batteries provided electricity for the motor. Gretchen Macht, a URI engineering Professor, presented an excellent overview of the challenges of solar energy to our students. Students also toured the Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering, the Center for Biotechnology and Life Science, and the Avedisian Hall for Pharmacy.



## Middle School Engineering Challenge

On April 4, 2025, around 120 students from 8 schools across Rhode Island made the trip to URI to participate in the Middle School Engineering Challenge. The challenge presented was to design and build rapid deployment bridges. Josh Harrison from the RI Department of Transportation (DOT) presented on the critical role of bridge infrastructure, highlighting engineering's everyday importance.

Following the ice breaker, students began designing their blueprints. They then took a well-deserved break to eat lunch, and it was right back into making a laying out their designs. Students used balsa wood pieces and hot glue to make the bridge. Students got to explore URI's campus, visiting the STEM buildings: Beupre Chemistry, CBLS, and Fascitelli Engineering.





## Elementary Ecology Field Day

On April 25<sup>th</sup>, SMILE welcomed 143 students in grades 4 and 5 from 10 elementary schools across Rhode Island to URI for our annual Outdoor Ecology Field Day. For many students, this was their first visit to a college campus and will help to foster their belief that higher education is a realistic goal. SMILE students were introduced to the wonders of the Forest, Vernal Pool, Pond, Stream, and Greenhouse & Garden environments through hands-on experiments, scavenger hunts, and technical learning, recording their observations in their field guides.

Four of our field stations were run by URI student mentors who had spent the semester learning to present environmental education to school children. The last station hosted staff from the United States Geological Survey (USGS), who taught students about the stream habitat. With their instructions, students collected data related to the pH, temperature, and oxygen levels of the stream habitat.





## PARTNERSHIPS

### SMILE Facilitated the Engagement of Industry, University Faculty, and College Student Mentors

#### **SMILE Teachers' Professional Development Workshops**

URI faculty and industry experts presented at the Teachers' Professional Development Workshops.

#### **Engineering Challenge Events and Ecology Field Mentors**

American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA)

Marine Technology Society

Institute Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)

Society of Women Engineers (SWE)

Tau Beta Pi

Theta Tau

College of the Environment and Life Sciences Undergraduate Students

Industrious Labs

Naval Underseas Warfare Center

Schneider Electric

#### **SMILE URI Partners in Pre-College STEM Outreach Activities**

Steere Engineering

URI Center for Student Leadership

URI College of Engineering

URI Talent Development

URI Graduate School of Oceanography

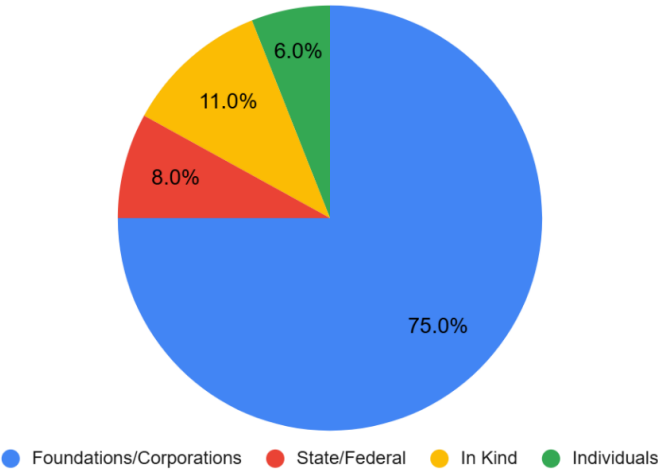
SPONSORS

We thank the following funders that have allowed SMILE to grow and continue to provide high-quality, after-school STEM programming to our Rhode Island students:

AAUW	KVH	Toray Plastics, America, Inc.
Alletta Morris McBean Charitable Trust	Navy STEM & ANCHOR contract	University of Rhode Island
Amgen Foundation	National Science Foundation	Van Beuren Charitable Foundation
Arnold Lumber	Nordson Corporation Foundation	Verizon Foundation
The Champlin Foundation	Ocean State Charities Trust	Walmart Foundation
Connecting for Children and Families	Pfizer	Central Falls School Department
Constellation Exelon Company	Ramsey McCluskey Family Foundation	Johnston School Department
Cox Charities Trust	Red Sox Foundation	Newport School Department
Dassault Systèmes	Rhode Island Energy – PPL Foundation	South Kingstown School Department
Delta Dental of RI	Rhode Island Foundation	Westerly School Department
Dominion	Schneider Electric	West Warwick School Department
The Gerald Claude Kirby Trust	SPIE	Woonsocket School Department
Graphic Expressions	Staples, Wakefield	
June Rockwell Levy Foundation		

FUNDING SOURCES

Funding Sources 2024-25





## STAFF AND EXECUTIVE BOARD

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## PROGRAM SUCCESS



### COLLEGE ENROLLMENT DATA 1994-2024

Source: College Enrollment by Participants in The SMILE Program

1998-2024 URI Office of Institutional Research

1. Since its founding in 1994, about 5,200 students have participated in The SMILE Program.
2. The high school graduation rate for students who participated in SMILE for 1+ years is 90-100%.
3. The college enrollment rate of SMILE students tracked using the National Student Clearinghouse is 67%. In 2024, 85% of all SMILE students who graduated immediately enrolled in college. Among low-income students (not participating in SMILE), 44% immediately enroll in college (2014 RI Kids Count Factbook).
4. Since 1998, SMILE high school graduates have attended 379 different colleges and universities with locations in 36 different states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.
5. Between 1998 and 2024, 607 SMILE alumni have enrolled at URI, and 73% pursued STEM majors.
6. In 2024, 247 SMILE alumni enrolled at URI, and 89% of them are in STEM majors (Note: only 20% of all US college undergraduates are enrolled in STEM according to a US Dept. of Education Report).
7. For students in SMILE for three or more years, the ratio of students attending college versus those who did not attend college is approximately 2:1.
8. 100% of the students in SMILE for 7+ years attended college.
9. In 2024, 145 SMILE students graduated from high school.

**The SMILE Program congratulates the graduating class of 2025. We thank those for their support in fostering brilliant learners capable of success in their academic and professional careers!**