

# THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND



# TALENT DEVELOPMENT

ACCESS | OPPORTUNITY | AFFORDABILITY | COMPLETION



  
TALENT  
DEVELOPMENT

TENTH EDITION

# TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Opportunity & Activism

# UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

TENTH EDITION, 2024

VERSION BY KRISTY EMBRACK SEARLES '24

& CONTRIBUTIONS BY TD STAFF AND URI COMMUNITY



# LAND USE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*"The University of Rhode Island occupies the traditional stomping ground of the Narragansett Nation and the Niantic People. We honor and respect the enduring and continuing relationship between the Indigenous people and this land by teaching and learning more about their history and present-day communities, and by becoming stewards of the land we, too, inhabit."*

*The University of Rhode Island Land Acknowledgment is a statement written by members of the University community in close partnership with members of the Narragansett Tribe.*

**The Talent Development Program also recognizes the painful history of violence experienced by Black and Indigenous communities in their "stomping grounds" we now utilize at URI, including acts of dispossession, genocide and enslavement they endured.**

**As a land-grant and sea-grant institution, we must acknowledge these truths and advocate for these communities as they navigate the challenges inherited by colonialism and the continued imperialism that exists today...**



*"Whispering Giant" Sculpture By: Peter Toth*



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# TALENT DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

## GERALD R. WILLIAMS

### Foreword

*It is with a great sense of honor that we invite you to become better acquainted with the Talent Development (TD) Program at the University of Rhode Island (URI). We are proud to share the history of our program, our institutional successes, Scholar highlights, and the legacy of the TD Program.*

*Moreover, we want you to have the opportunity to take a journey with us through our moments of joy, trials, and more importantly, the activism of our Scholars and TD staff that have had a lasting impact on the infrastructure and diversity of community at URI today.*

*At TD, we center our R.A.M.S. Values - Respect, Academic Excellence, Mental Health & Wellness, and Scholar Success. We are dedicated to a holistic approach to lift our Scholars to the height of their potential so that they are equipped to successfully navigate life at the university and beyond.*

*We hope this narrative sheds light on our 55 year journey thus far and encourages you to support and champion our future efforts at URI.*

*Welcome to TD Nation!*

*Gerald R. Williams, Director  
Better Known as, "G"*



**GERALD R. WILLIAMS**  
**TD CLASS OF '92, M.Ed '00**

# TALENT DEVELOPMENT MISSION STATEMENT

Talent Development recruits and serves Rhode Island high school graduates with college potential who come from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, a majority of whom are Scholars of color.

Talent Development's core values are grounded in the University's mission of enriching students' lives through its land, sea, and urban grant traditions. This is reflected in our ongoing commitment to Respect, Academic Excellence, Mental Health & Wellness, and Scholar Success.

We are invested in cultivating the intellectual, social, and cultural development of our Scholars. We inspire Scholars to discover, create, and innovate while fostering leadership and personal growth to build a foundation for persistence.



TAFT HALL



# HISTORY IN THE MAKING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND



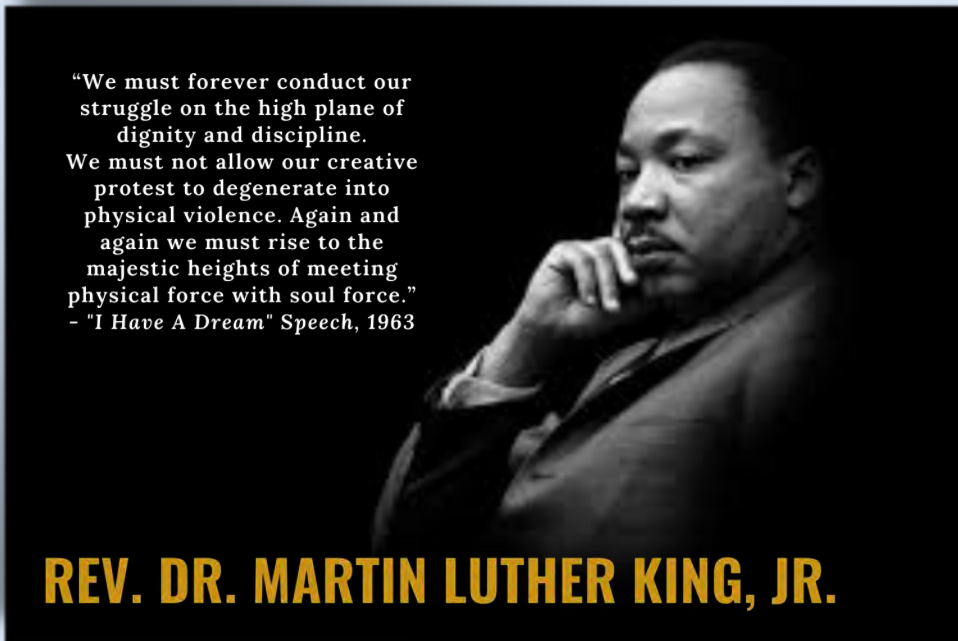
*“The appalling silence of the good people is as serious as the vitriolic words of the bad people.”  
- An Excerpt from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech at URI*

There he stood, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at the podium in Keaney Gymnasium in the fall of 1966. Over 5,000 members of the URI community had come to hear the young civil rights activist speak.

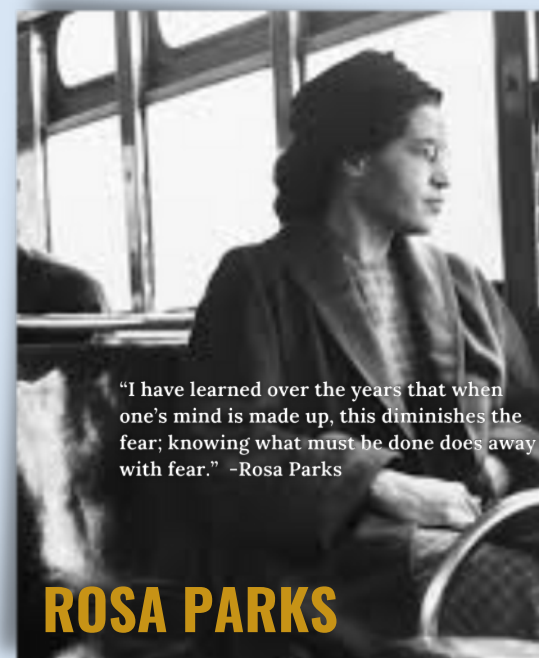
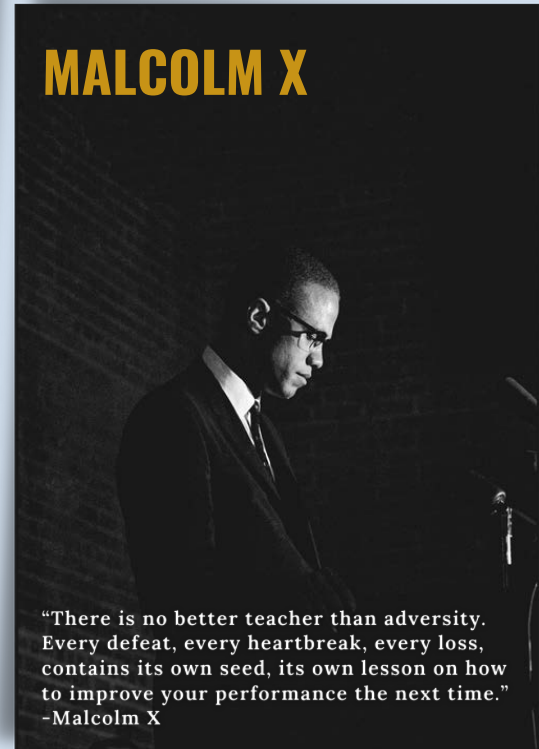
It was a moment in the history of URI that would inspire hearts and effect change. The words of Dr. King set a new tone. Students, faculty and staff alike began to mobilize to fight against injustice and inequality. There was a renewed energy and many would discover their calling to lead in the movement towards social justice and freedom.



# ANTECEDENTS TO TALENT DEVELOPMENT



Talent Development is a higher education opportunity program at the University of Rhode Island. It was founded in 1968 following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The foundations of TD can be attributed to the enduring legacy of the Civil Rights Movement, a historic chapter characterized by activism and valiant struggles. Pioneering Black activists such as Dr. King, Rosa Parks, and Malcolm X paved the way, guiding us through the transformative journey from Selma to Montgomery, while imparting powerful messages like "I Have a Dream" and "I May Not Get There With You." We draw unceasing inspiration from the sacrifices made by these extraordinary figures, as well as the countless significant moments and locations that weave together the tapestry of our collective history. Their unwavering commitment to justice and opportunity remains an enduring beacon for us all.



# UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF TALENT DEVELOPMENT'S CREATION



**Just two short months before his own assassination, Senator Robert F. Kennedy delivered the eulogy at Dr. King's funeral. Dr. King and Senator Kennedy were at the forefront as leaders and supporters of the Civil Rights Movement. The bond they created with one another was just as strong as their commitment to justice and equality.**

In April 1968, when Dr. King was tragically assassinated, the outcry of protest reverberated across the nation, with the inner-cities witnessing the most powerful response. These protests ranged from expressions of anger to violent acts, resulting in some cities being consumed by flames. Just a few months later, in June 1968, Senator Robert F. Kennedy, a staunch advocate for the Civil Rights movement and a critic of the Vietnam War, was also assassinated during his presidential campaign. This double blow meant that the youth of that era lost two remarkable leaders in a short span of time.

The impact of these events was also keenly felt at the University of Rhode Island, where the urgent demand for recognition and respect became undeniable.

***“All or most of the progress that has been made on campus has come, if not immediately, in the years subsequent to student protests,”***

***- Abu Bakr '73, M.S. '84, M.B.A. '88.***

# THE FIRST TALENT DEVELOPMENT SUMMER PROGRAM

In Rhode Island, a transformative initiative called the "Program for Disadvantaged Youth" was established at URI through the collaborative efforts of the Board of Regents and then-Governor John Chafee. This program, spearheaded by Dr. Harold Langlois, welcomed 42 students, primarily from South Providence, Fox Point and Newport to the URI campus for a summer program. Notably, the student body represented diverse backgrounds, including African-American, Native American, Latino, and Caucasian, as other ethnicities had yet to populate Rhode Island significantly in 1968.

At the program's end, 13 out of the 42 students were selected to continue their education at URI that fall, the remaining students attended RIC or Rhode Island Junior College (now CCRI). Despite initial skepticism from supposed "experts" who predicted limited success for these students. Beating the odds stacked against them, 11 of these students not only graduated from URI but few even went on to earn their Ph.Ds, proving the naysayers wrong.

These pioneering students brought a fresh wave of activism and consciousness to the university community. Initially, they were required by URI to wear badges that labeled them as participants in the "Program for Disadvantaged Youth." In a powerful display of dissent, the students protested against the isolating, humiliating, and disrespectful nature of such identification, urging faculty and staff to acknowledge their individuality. As a result, the badges were eliminated, marking the beginning of the impact these students would have on the URI campus. The winds of change were imminent.



## SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR TALENT DEVELOPMENT

**"Have You Considered College?"** reads the headline from one of Talent Development's first recruitment brochures



**RIGHT: A model of the badges the original 13 TD students had to wear**



# AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. HAROLD LANGLOIS

## The founding Director of TD, Dr. Harold V. Langlois

When one thinks of the Talent Development Program, one often thinks of it the way it is today—the advisors, Taft Hall, the PREP and Pre-Mat Programs. Some even remember the days when Reverend Hardge and Mr. D. directed the program and walked the campus as one. But few know how the program came to be what it is today, and even fewer know about the man who made it all possible.

Dr. Harold V. Langlois is that man. Graduating from URI in 1967 and completing his masters at the University of Indiana, 24-year-old Dr. Langlois returned to URI in 1968 with an idea, a dream and ambition.

According to Dr. Langlois, the story of how TD started is a story about leadership, anxiety, risk-taking and learning.

Without any experience and a budget of only \$56,000, Dr. Langlois set out to start a six-week summer program at URI.



DR. HAROLD V. LANGLOIS

The program, originally named Programs for Disadvantaged Students, targeted individuals ages 24-25 who wanted to pursue a college education but were in some way disadvantaged and unable to attend a college or university.

*"It didn't have to do with color. It didn't have to do with what was right. It had to do with justice."*

- Dr. Harold V. Langlois

The program was undefined in what it wanted to accomplish and started as an unformed idea, Dr. Langlois said. It did not require high school transcripts and it did not have any admissions requirements. The only thing the program required was students who wanted to learn.

Fifty-three students, primarily from South Providence, Fox Point and Newport, were recruited to begin the first TD summer program in 1968.

"These were good, solid people who wanted to go to school but were very unprepared," Dr. Langlois said.

The program brought great change to URI, and the experience was new to both the university and the students.

"With change rises anxiety," Dr. Langlois said. "It is important to understand the student's anxiety about moving from inner city environments to a college campus."

To deal with the anxiety felt by the university, faculty and students, Dr. Langlois created sensitivity programs for the faculty, which included two courses, Urban Education and Building Sensitivity. The courses dealt with understanding issues of race, sex, age and socio-economic influence on culture.

"I was about understanding pluralism," Dr. Langlois said. "There was no vehicle for minorities. No minority representation in politics or higher education."

According to Dr. Langlois, 42 of the students made it through the summer.

### LANGLOIS continued

program, 13 of whom attended URI in the fall. The remaining students attended RIC or Rhode Island Junior College (CERI).

"Each student added a unique commitment of their own, not a minority commitment, but a personal commitment to do well. The students took the program and made it really work," Dr. Langlois said.

It was after the first summer that TD obtained the name it has today. According to Dr. Langlois, the name Programs for Disadvantaged Students was a terrible name for the program because the word "disadvantaged" seemed to be synonymous with minority groups and therefore portrayed a negative connotation.

Dr. Langlois said he came up with the name Special Programs for Talent Development while walking across campus one afternoon. Ultimately, the program's name was structured around the word "talent."

"I liked the idea of 'talent' and the program essentially was aimed at developing talent," Dr. Langlois said.

And so the program became SPTD.

The once - unformed idea of starting a college program for minority and disadvantaged individuals was beginning to expand and take form.

The second year of the program the number of students doubled, and 50 entered URI in the fall.

During this time, URI experienced a bad budget crunch and was planning to cut TD funding.

According to Dr. Langlois, the URI Faculty Senate stepped forward in defense of TD and stated, "Even if we do not get our raises, we want the Talent Development Program to go untouched."

As a result of the faculty's efforts, Talent Development was able to continue. With university and federal funds, the program received a budget of \$150,000.

With the program reaching new heights, Dr. Langlois brought in the services of Leo F. DiMaio and Reverend Arthur L. Hardge.

The connection between Dr. Langlois and Mr. D. dates back to their childhood when the two played basketball at the Providence Community Center.

Having worked at the ACI with Dr. Langlois' father, Dr. Langlois believed that Mr. D. had the "kind of spirit, ethic and dedication to get something done and that his skill sets would be better used for pursuing positive gains."

Looking for someone who could take the program to the next level, Dr. Langlois introduced Reverend Hardge who was not only well known politically, but also had a

strong hold on the Providence community and according to Dr. Langlois, could "represent the program in a meaningful way."

"A 24-year-old white male going into black communities was not effective," Dr. Langlois said.

And so goes the story of Talent Development.

"We learned from going and what we learned we implemented," Dr. Langlois said. "TD came about as a need to produce something that needed to get done. It didn't have to do with color, it didn't have to do with what was right, it had to do with justice. It was a responsibility to represent the unrepresented." **TD**

### TD News Talent Development Newsletter

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TD NEWS is published by Special Programs for Talent Development, a program established at the University of Rhode Island in 1968 for disadvantaged students and students of color. TD NEWS is published during the fall and spring semesters and is intended to inform and update Talent Development students and alumni on news and progress related to the program.

# ARRIVAL OF REVEREND ARTHUR L. HARDGE & MR. LEO F. DIMAIO, JR.

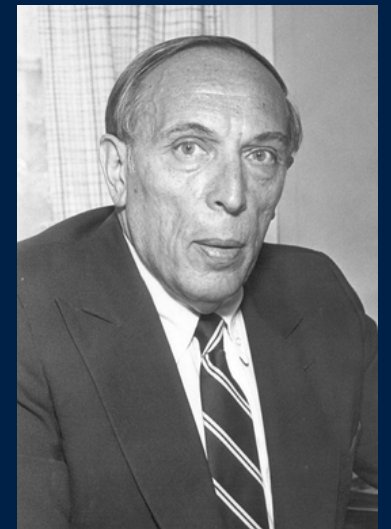
The summer of 1969 brought together the legendary team that created *Special Programs for Talent Development*, the Reverend Arthur L. Hardge and Mr. Leo F. DiMaio, Jr. Reverend Hardge, a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. (a historically Black organization rooted in scholarship, perseverance and upliftment) was a Freedom Rider and an esteemed colleague of Dr. King, who had a profound connection to the Civil Rights movement. In Rhode Island, he stood as the foremost leader of his time, becoming the first African-American to be appointed to a state-wide, cabinet-level position. To honor his legacy, a statue was erected in front of the URI Multicultural Student Services Center. Serving as the founding Director of TD, Reverend Hardge dedicated himself to this role until 1980.

Alongside Reverend Hardge, Mr. DiMaio played a pivotal role as the founding Assistant Director of TD. Later, he assumed the position of director from 1980 to 1998. Both men were indispensable, representing the very essence of TD's establishment. Without Reverend Hardge, Mr. DiMaio, and the pioneering students who embraced TD, this remarkable program would not exist today. Their contributions were truly *sine qua non*, in other words, absolutely essential, and the vital components without which TD could not have come to fruition.

In addition to the visionary leadership of Reverend Hardge and Mr. DiMaio, it is essential to recognize the significant contributions of Laura DiSano, the student services coordinator, and the late John Wills, the recruiter and field coordinator. These individuals served as key early core staff members of TD, playing an instrumental role in shaping the program's foundation.



**REVEREND  
ARTHUR L. HARDGE**



**MR. LEO F. DIMAIO, JR.**

**The bond that existed between Reverend Arthur Hardge and Mr. Leo DiMaio was unbreakable. When receiving his Lifetime Achievement Award at URI's 10th Annual Diversity Awards Banquet, DiMaio stated, "No one could tear us asunder. We were brothers. We are brothers."**



# AN OVERVIEW OF THE LIFE OF REVEREND ARTHUR L. HARDGE

Talent Development Student / Alumni Newsletter



## TD NEWS



Special Commemorative Edition - BSLG Celebrates its 10 year Anniversary

Fall 2002 Vol. 2 No. 1

### Rev. Hardge - the struggle for justice



REV. ARTHUR L. HARDGE

The Reverend Arthur L. Hardge, a noted civil rights leader, was born in Indianapolis, Indiana on April 8, 1927. He was a son of the late Rev. Elias and Clara Edith (Smith) Hardge.

In 1929, the Hardge family moved to Jersey City, New Jersey where Rev. Hardge received his elementary and secondary education. Later, Rev. Hardge earned a bachelor of arts degree from Morgan State.

Rev. Hardge was baptized at 10 years of age as a member of the Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church in Jersey City. At age 17, he answered God's call to the Christian ministry. He was ordained shortly thereafter.

Rev. Hardge's journey, which connected his life to countless other lives, began with service in Zion churches he pastored in the states of New York, Oklahoma, Connecticut and Rhode Island.

In the early 1960's, Rev. Hardge's faith, courage, activism and leadership took him

into the forefront of the civil rights struggle.

An early colleague of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Rev. Hardge was in the vanguard of change. He took part in the Freedom Rides for civil rights in the Deep South. He was arrested for civil disobedience several times, along with other religious leaders, including Dr. King.

Rev. Hardge was especially active in efforts to integrate the Tallahassee Municipal Airport. As a result of his arrest and conviction in the Tallahassee Freedom Ride, Rev. Hardge was sentenced to 60 days on a Florida chain gang. Fortunately, a judge reversed the sentence after 10 days and Rev. Hardge went free.

In later years, Rev. Hardge recounted that the Freedom Rides were a time when faith overcame fear. The philosophy of faith over fear endured for Rev. Hardge throughout his storied life.

In 1968, Rev. Hardge accepted the call to the pastorate of Hood Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church in Rhode Island. Under his leadership, Hood Memorial expanded its congregation and built a new church structure.

Rev. Hardge served as the first Chairman of the RI Chapter, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Through his leadership, he is considered to be the father of the RI Fair Housing Law.

Applying the principles of non-violent civil disobedience, Rev. Hardge led a successful movement to focus the attention of the General Assembly and the Executive Branch on passing this historic measure.

He also served as the executive secretary of the RI Commission Against Discrimination from 1965-1968.

In 1968, Reverend Hardge became the first African American gubernatorial cabinet appointment when former Gov. John H. Chafee named him as the Director of the RI Department of Community Affairs.

Rev. Hardge's commitment to Civil Rights and justice led to his appointment as Special Assistant to the President and Director of Special Programs for Talent Development at the University of Rhode Island.

At URI Rev. Hardge was the first African American administrator, first among voices advancing justice through education.

In the wake of Dr. King's assassination, Rev. Hardge assumed leadership of SPTD, a recruitment and retention program for students of color and disadvantaged persons. With his valued friend and colleague Leo DiMaio, Rev. Hardge fostered growth in SPTD from an initial seed of 13 students to the most successful

see HARDGE, page 2

#### Inside TD News

• BSLG - celebrates its 10th year anniversary

• Learn how to get scholarships online.



**HARGE continued**

program of its kind in the country, with over 1100 graduates and a current enrollment of 700 students.

Besides his involvement at URI, Rev. Hardge was also a founding member of Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) of RI. He became Chairman of OIC in 1967 and guided OIC from a storefront existence in South Providence to a multi-faceted job-training and human resource center that provided services to thousands of people of color and other disadvantaged persons.

Under his chairmanship, a \$6 million, 80,000 square foot complex in South Providence was planned and completed. He also served as a member of the Executive Committee for the National OIC under the leadership of Rev. Leon Sullivan, OIC Founder.

Throughout his life, Rev. Hardge was a prayerful man. His faith guided him toward the path of the struggle for justice. Rev. Hardge's work in the last years of his life (SPTD and OIC) are twin testaments to his commitment to opening doors for others.

He was a man of faith and a man who understood the need for education and jobs. With all his strength, even as his strength was failing, he held open the door of opportunity. He taught us that even great individual strength could fail, that every individual struggle reaches an end, but he left us an open door and a path to follow.

Rev. Hardge was a giant who walked among us and moved on. We still, in this historic moment, feel his presence and his leadership. Rev. Hardge's achievements, his understanding of relationships, his great love of life, his powerful sense of humor, his intelligence and eloquence, are all there before us on the road, marking the way home to a more just world.

Even after his death in 1983, the life and work of Rev. Hardge is still honored by the University.

In 1984, TD established a financial aid award in his memory. The Arthur L. Hardge Grant provides TD students with

\$4,600 each year.

On Sept. 12, 2000, URI dedicated a memorial statue in the Reverend's name. The statute, designed by Arnold Prince, father of Joshua Prince '91, is located in front of the Multicultural Center and stands approximately 9 feet tall.

The memorial statue was dedicated with this statement written by URI President Robert L. Carothers:

"This memorial honors the life and work of the Reverend Arthur L. Hardge, born in 1927, a man who led by serving his brothers and sisters until his death in 1983, he was a child of many cultures: Africa, Europe and those first Americans who lived on this land.

The great grandson of a man who had his fingers lopped off for teaching and preaching, Arthur Hardge had a passion for learning that could not be easily quelled. Rev. Hardge was a minister from the age of seventeen. He was a leader of the Civil

Rights Movement, jailed in Florida for refusing to leave a restaurant reserved for whites and later becoming the first black man in Rhode Island to head a state agency, creating jobs and hope for those who had little of either.

Building on a program established by Harold Langlois and assisted by Leo DiMaio, Reverend Hardge later founded the Special Programs for Talent Development at the University of Rhode Island, in which 'the Rev' and 'Mr. D' changed the lives of thousands of young men and women.

From those whom others gave no chance to succeed, Rev. Hardge built a new generation of doctors and lawyers, teachers and nurses, leaders of business and government, music and theater - the pride of this University. It was, he liked to say, 'always a pleasure.' **TD**

Article written by **Frank L. Forleo**

**TD News**

*The Talent Development  
Student/Alumni Newsletter*

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- Roberta C. Durrington - Academic Advisor
- Edward S. Shear - Academic Advisor
- Domingo E. Morel - Interim Academic Advisor
- Carla N. Benoist - Office Manager
- Marc D. Hardge - Interim Computer Lab Coordinator
- Melissa Petrocelli Macedo - Newsletter Editor

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# THE EARLY STRUGGLE FOR TALENT DEVELOPMENT'S SURVIVAL

In 1971, the University of Rhode Island proposed a budget that aimed to eliminate the Talent Development Program, despite its initial success. This action sparked the proactive response of the student organization known as Uhuru Sasa, also recognized as the Afro-American Society (AAS). They carried out an exceptionally bold act of civil disobedience by chaining the door and occupying the URI Administrative Building. Through their resolute protest, predominantly led by TD students from Uhuru Sasa/AAS, they brought the URI administration to a dramatic standstill.

During the occupation, the students articulated a list of demands that encompassed the restoration of TD's budget, an augmentation in the representation of Black faculty and staff, and the establishment of a Black Studies Program. Eventually, the state police, fully clad in riot gear, were summoned to evict the students, effectively concluding the takeover. However, one immensely significant request was fulfilled—TD's funding was reinstated.

The experience of Uhuru Sasa/AAS served as a paradigm for future endeavors and activism. Notable students who spearheaded the takeover and the movement included Daniel Price, Jr., Thomas Braxton, Thomas Ellison, Louis Francis, Walter Morgan, Nelson Lopes, Dave Petty, Nancy Perry, David Petty, James Pina, Rebecca Rocha, Carolyn Senna, the late James Snead, Valerie Southern, Cora Watkins, and Tom Varella. These students worked closely with supportive faculty and staff advisors, such as Reverend Hardge, Mr. DiMaio, and Judge Alton Wiley, to effectively communicate their plea for change.

Daniel Price, Jr., one of the leaders, offers insight into the Takeover experience, which is described below. Since 1971, Uhuru Sasa, which translates to "Freedom Now" in Swahili, has remained an influential and active presence on the URI campus.



**STUDENT TAKEOVER OF THE CARLOTTI BUILDING**



**PROVIDENCE JOURNAL HEADLINE READS, "LAWMEN WADE INTO THRONG OF STUDENTS; CLEAR URI BUILDING"**



**Excerpts from Primary Source: Daniel Price, Jr.  
One of the Uhuru Sasa/Takeover Leaders**

“One final but very significant point that needs to be included in any discussion of the events that took place at the Administration Building is what Mr. D did when the State Police in full riot gear smashed down the door to the registrar’s office that we were barricaded behind. I remember it well because it was terrifying. We were all lying on the floor with our arms interlocked and just when the police hit the door with a battering ram (or whatever they used), a photographer’s flash bulb went through the door—very scary. The first person to enter the room was Mr. D, scurrying over the file cabinets and desks we had used for the barricade, shouting to the State Police Captain by name— “Don’t lay a hand on any one of my students in this room!!” As a result, not one of us was struck by the police that poured into the room wielding those long batons. It was total chaos but the TD students came out of it totally unscathed. Unlike the white students who supported our cause and were surrounded the outside of the building in a show of solidarity. Several of them got beaten up pretty badly.

My point in writing this is twofold. One—it is important that the facts surrounding this significant event in TD’s history are accurate, and two, with the recent passing of Mr. D. we need to be sure that his legacy reflects just how much he loved and protected his students from the very beginning. He was a unique individual who had a positive impact on so many TD students, and his contributions should never be forgotten.”

**Daniel Price Jr. '73 passed away just weeks after reflecting on the takeover of the administrative building.**

**Price was a proud member of the first graduating Talent Development class at the University of Rhode Island.**





## THE '70S: SLOW AND INCREMENTAL GROWTH

Despite maintaining a commendable graduation and retention rate, TD faced difficulties in expanding its reach. Rhode Island witnessed an influx of Latin Americans and Southeast Asians, yet URI appeared reluctant to embrace the notion of a larger and, consequently, more costly TD Program. Nevertheless, as the decade drew to a close, TD made a groundbreaking decision by accepting seventy students, a seemingly modest figure by today's standards, but a monumental achievement at that time. This expansion opened doors to a significantly larger pool of students, extending educational opportunities far beyond what had been previously possible. Once again, TD found itself at the forefront of catalyzing change.

## UNIVERSITY YEAR FOR ACTION (UYA)



**DR. NOREEN COACHMAN**

During the Nixon administration, just before the end of the Vietnam War, Reverend Hardge and Mr. DiMaio wrote a successful federal grant in 1975 to fund University Year for Action (UYA). UYA formalized internships in the community providing TD students and others with a means to “give back.” The late Dr. Noreen Coachman was the first UYA director. Alexa Grant served as the UYA field coordinator and assistant director. UYA was the first opportunity for URI students to spend an entire semester earning full academic credit at an internship. Many of the early internships were located in urban areas and gave special meaning to the experience for activist TD students. When the federal grant expired, URI wisely adopted funding of UYA and it became the seed for current **Center for Career and Experiential Education (CCEE)** at URI, a source of significant educational and service opportunities for URI students. By creating UYA, TD was again a catalyst for change!



### *Bakr: Racist attitudes of 70s still causing anger, frustration*

By JOANN MULLER  
Op-Ed News Staff

In 1971, a group of angry URI students entered the Administration building and staged a sit-in to protest the administration's racist attitudes and policies and a lack of minority representation on campus. Looking back on that event 12 years later, Abu Bakr, URI's special assistant to the director and vice chairman of the Minority Affairs Committee, says not much has changed. "The University is playing out a script someone else wrote years ago. There are 700 Black people here and that won't change for diversity. If that wasn't true, then the environment would have changed a long time ago."

Bakr, who was a student at URI in the late 1970s and a

member of the Black Student Union, said that one day he was sitting in a classroom and he noticed that nothing had changed since then. "It's rare that there are no incidents of outright racism on campus," Bakr said, but "what you get here is institutional racism." "The university is not acting in a favorable way" toward minorities, he said, and UYA leaders should be developing programs to get more minority students and faculty here, particularly during the time of economic hardship. "You do what you need to do to get them here. If that takes a considerable amount of money, then okay. But if you're not going to do it, say it."

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## FRANK & SHARON FORLEO

Frank Forleo, a graduate of the Class of 1974, dedicated his career to URI as Assistant Director for TD. He served the program from 1975, initially as a tutor/instructor and later as an advisor, until his retirement in 2016. Sharon Forleo, who graduated in '72 and earned her M.A. in '94, also contributed to the leadership of TD as Associate Director. Recognizing their remarkable commitment, the Forleos were honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2019 URI Diversity and Inclusive Excellence Awards, acknowledging their 40 plus years of service.

Then URI President David M. Dooley expressed his admiration for their unwavering devotion, stating, "The impact you have made throughout your extensive tenure at the University of Rhode Island, particularly among students who have faced marginalization, neglect, underappreciation, and disrespect, is truly extraordinary."

*"It would be a great benefit to the students today to understand how we have arrived where we are —at what young people call 'the moment.'"*

—Frank Forleo '74

*"I'm so fortunate because what I do and what I believe are the same. Not everyone can say that about their job. Talent Development is such a unique program. Look at the longevity of it. Similar programs that began at the same time are all gone because the intent and funding have all dried up. TD just keeps getting stronger."*

—Sharon Forleo '72, '94



Husband and wife duo, Frank and Sharon Forleo, served the TD Program for over 40 years and on November 10, 2016, they began their retirement. Their work and legacy will forever live on, not only in TD and URI, but in the lives of all of those they advised, mentored and nurtured over the years.

## THE '80S: CONTINUED GROWTH IN TALENT DEVELOPMENT

In the summer of 1980, Reverend Hardge retired, making way for Mr. DiMaio to assume the role of his successor. URI introduced academic advising for student-athletes, and the responsibility for this important service was given to TD. In the mid-1980s, Edward Givens took on the role of academic advisor for student-athletes. He later transitioned to become the Assistant Director for Campus Life within TD, a position he holds to this day. Susan Weitzner joined TD as the office manager in 1981 and served with distinction until 1998.

During this period, the dedicated core staff at TD faced challenging circumstances while striving to solidify and build upon the progress made by the program. The early 1980s were marked by severe budgetary issues across the entire campus, which compelled TD to accept the existing conditions as a means of survival. Priorities shifted, and the era of the Civil Rights movement seemed to have come to a close.

Nevertheless, TD managed to achieve a point of equilibrium and demonstrated sustainability, albeit at a gradual pace. The program slowly but steadily progressed, reaching an annual admission rate of 90-100 students per year.



**A PHOTO FROM A 1980S  
TD BROCHURE**



# AN INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD GIVENS

## A REFLECTION FROM THE 1980S TO 2023

**Q: You joined TD in the 80s during a period marked as one of "continued growth". What you believe are the main areas of "continued growth" of the TD Program from then until now?**

*A: One of the main areas of growth is the size of the program and its staff. When I was an undergrad there were five people on staff and approximately 250 students in the program. My class had 75 students. When I became employed we thought accepting a class of 200 was huge. We were staffed by a clerk stenographer, the director and three advisors. Our staff has grown to the point where we have had 11 people on staff. We now accept 600 Scholars. TD Scholars are represented in every degree granting college. TD staff have earned post graduate degrees, MA, MS, PhD, certifications and micro-credentials. More of our Scholars are attending grad school, med school and law school. Our Scholars are now taking advantage of study abroad opportunities and internships. The Hardge/Forleo Grant continues to assist Scholars with financing their education and continues to increase with tuition increases. Our partnerships and collaborations are all over campus and throughout the state.*

**Q: What have been some of the most meaningful or special moments in TD's history?**

*A: Every graduation since 1968 has been special. Every time a Scholar has left the university and returns to earn his/her degree is special. Every time a scholar returns to campus as faculty, professional staff, or graduate student is special. The history of TD and how it has bettered URI is special. Accepting 600 Scholars every year and seeing the proud smiling faces of Scholars and families during PREP and Move In of the Summer Success Program is special. TD in itself is special there is no other program like it.*

**Q: What are you most proud of about your work in the TD Program?**

*A: I'm proud to say that I am the first TD/URI graduate to be employed by TD. I'm proud to say that I have almost 40 years of service to TD and URI. My work in TD has provided me opportunity and taught me life lessons.*

**Q: What are your hopes for the future of the Talent Development Program?**

*A: I hope that TD will be in existence and continue to assist Scholars for another 50 plus years. I hope that TD will be the national model for other institutions of higher education, maybe even become a K-12 model.*

**Q: What message/challenge do you have/task for TD Alumni?**

*A: I would ask TD Alumni to be mentors to Scholars, provide internship and job opportunities where possible, develop Scholarship opportunities for Scholars in need, be visible on campus and express opinions and ideas to increase and support DEI efforts on campus. Assist in branding, marketing, celebrating the successes of TD Alumni worldwide.*



### TO THE CURRENT TD SCHOLARS...

*"It is important for Scholars to understand that when it pertains to diversity, multiculturalism, access and opportunity for students of color, that TD has had a hand in it. TD has been a catalyst for change on campus since TD was founded. TD has and continues to change the optics on campus. The work is not done. Scholars need to continue to be successful. They need to participate in changing the climate on campus and accept URI Kingston campus as theirs.*

*No legacy is as rich as honesty. Legacy isn't what you did for yourself but what you have left behind for others. Who would have ever imagined how TD would turn out 55 years later? I would advise Scholars to leave a positive impact and ask themselves what large or small things have they done to leave their mark. Legacies are etched in the minds of those that come after you and the stories that they will share."*

**-Ed Givens**

**Assistant Director for Campus Life**