

Hassenfeld Institute for Public Leadership: Five Years of Making a Difference

BY TATIANA PINA

Rhode Island's first female governor, Gina Raimondo '12H, seen here with Bryant President Ronald K. Machtle, is one of many state officials who have participated in programs at the Hassenfeld Institute for Public Leadership.

IN THE FIVE YEARS since its inception, Bryant University's Hassenfeld Institute for Public Leadership has become the go-to source for Rhode Island's public officials to acquire the skills, training, and research to help them become more effective leaders.



Rhode Island Lt. Gov. Daniel McKee talks with Alan G. Hassenfeld '85 H.

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ALAN G. HASSENFELD '85H

Launched in 2010 with support from Alan G. Hassenfeld, '85H, the Institute was renamed the Hassenfeld Institute for Public Leadership in 2012. A former Bryant Trustee and chairman of the Executive Committee of Hasbro, Inc., Hassenfeld has a long-standing interest in helping state and local officials prepare effectively and ethically for the challenges of public policy governance and management. Impressed by the mission and goals of Bryant's program, he offered generous ongoing support from Hassenfeld Family Initiatives LLC in support of the Institute's work.

"The Institute is a perfect fit for Bryant," says Hassenfeld. "President Ronald K. Machtle, who has served in Congress, understands the pressing need for visionary, effective leadership. Bryant's faculty and the Institute's founding director, Gary Sasse, have created a world-class program that can make a tremendous difference in Rhode Island's future."

PROVIDING EXPERT RESOURCES TO HELP NAVIGATE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES

The Hassenfeld Institute's programs match Bryant faculty experts in leadership, management, strategic thinking, team building, political science, and other fields with public officials to help strengthen their leadership and management skills and enable them to make informed decisions, implement public policy, and lead responsibly. More than 1,500 attendees from Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts have participated in the programs of the Hassenfeld institute.

For newly elected officials—ranging from mayors, to state officers, to local school committee members—the Institute is recognized for the leadership it provides as they transition from campaigning to governance. Those leaders and policy makers are connected with Bryant's expert faculty who provide leadership development, problem-solving skills, and research assistance.

Warwick Mayor Scott Avedisian, who serves on the Hassenfeld Institute for Public Leadership Advisory Board, said the Institute has been a great fit for the hundreds of officials who have participated. They receive advice that helps prepare them for policy making and governing, notes Avedisian.

"Governance has changed a lot," Avedisian explains. "It's become a lot more technical. It's no longer you run and you govern. It's a very different scene now," he continues. "The biggest challenge is

being prepared for what you can't be prepared for. I don't think anyone who has run for office expected to confront school closings and threats to schoolchildren."

POLICY LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The Institute's inaugural program in 2010 was offered to mayors, including Donald Grebian who had just been elected to office in Pawtucket. The mayor was facing a massive city budget deficit.

Grebian, who was elected in November 2014 to his third, two-year term, notes that the work he and Pawtucket city officials did with the Institute helped establish a relationship that brought them together to address the city's challenges.

"What I found very valuable in my four years as mayor has been a real connection between our leadership team and Bryant," Grebian says. "They continuously bring us to the table. Sometimes, as an elected official, you get into this bubble. You forget

"The critical role of the Hassenfeld Institute for Public Leadership is providing public officials with the skills and tools to be visionary and effective leaders."

GARY SASSE

that other people have previously been through what you are dealing with."

Rhode Island State Court Administrator J. Joseph Baxter Jr. says that work that judges, court administrators, court supervisors, and staff did with the Institute has helped greatly over the past 15 months as they have planned and prepared to modernize the way they do business by implementing a new case management system featuring electronic

files in the Superior, Family, and Districts courts. The project will make the court system's case management paperless, he says. The advantages of the system include easier tracking of people involved with the courts.

Working on leadership, communication, and team building with the Institute helped to successfully kick off the project, Baxter says.

"We were able to do it because we looked within each part of the courts, not just the highest level, but those on the ground level who know the nuts and bolts. We tapped into the institutional knowledge of all employees. It really does promote ownership, and we are seeing the results," he says.

"Other than a new court building, this is the most massive project we have taken on," Baxter notes.

Bryant's commitment to engaging and impacting civic leadership at all levels has caught the attention of the media. GoLocalProv listed the Hassenfeld Institute for Public Leadership among its "15 to Watch in RI" for 2015. The Institute's 2014 initiatives included policy leadership to provide public officials with the information they need to make effective decisions on topics such as adequate school funding and infrastructure financing. The Institute also hosted a Constitutional Convention Forum in February, participating in voter education initiative Job One: Leadership, and providing leadership communications for candidates and the electorate.

"With a new Governor—and General Assembly—there is certainly plenty of opportunity for the Hassenfeld Institute," the GoLocalProv news team noted. "We are staying tuned to see what policy leadership initiatives the Hassenfeld Institute will put forth in 2015."

Tatiana Pina is a freelance writer.

December 2010 Bryant Institute for Public Leadership is founded.

Winter 2010 Gary Sasse is named founding director.

Winter 2011 The Institute conducts first programs for newly elected mayors and school committee members.

March 2012 Forty school committee members and municipal leaders from seven Rhode Island communities gather for a special program on collaborative leadership.

May 2012 The Institute releases nine leadership guidelines that offer Rhode Island a clear vision of public leadership and how it can operate effectively.

October 2012 Alan G. Hassenfeld, chairman of the Executive Committee of Hasbro, Inc., the Rhode Island-based multibillion-dollar international toy company, announces that Hassenfeld Family Initiatives, LLC, has donated \$1 million to the University to support the work of the Bryant Institute for Public Leadership. In recognition of the gift, the University renames the center the Hassenfeld Institute for Public Leadership.

October 2012 More than 150 leaders from throughout Rhode Island discuss crisis management at the Institute's annual conference.

October 2013 Dozens of local, regional, and state leaders discuss strategies for innovation and organizational change in the public sector at the Institute's annual conference.

April 2014 The Institute launches an election-year initiative focusing on the central issue facing the state: public leadership. It assists voters as they consider which candidates have the potential to provide visionary, critical, and effective leadership.

October 2014 "Job One: Leadership" culminates at the Institute's annual leadership conference that featured leadership laboratories and a keynote presentation by Vice Admiral Walter E. "Ted" Carter, Jr., superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy.

November 2014 As part of the public service initiative to educate and inform voters, the Hassenfeld Institute for Public Leadership at Bryant University releases statements from each of the Providence mayoral candidates on their leadership style and experience.

Faculty

Gary Sasse, *Founding Director, pictured at left*

Lori Coakley, Ph.D., *Associate Professor of Management*

Rich Holtzman, Ph.D., *Associate Professor of Political Science*

Michael Roberto, Ph.D., *Trustee Professor of Management*

James Segovis, Ph.D., *Bryant Executive in Residence, Associate Professor of Management*

Edinaldo Tebaldi, Ph.D., *Assistant Professor of Economics*

Angela Wicks, Ph.D., *Associate Professor and Chair of Management*

