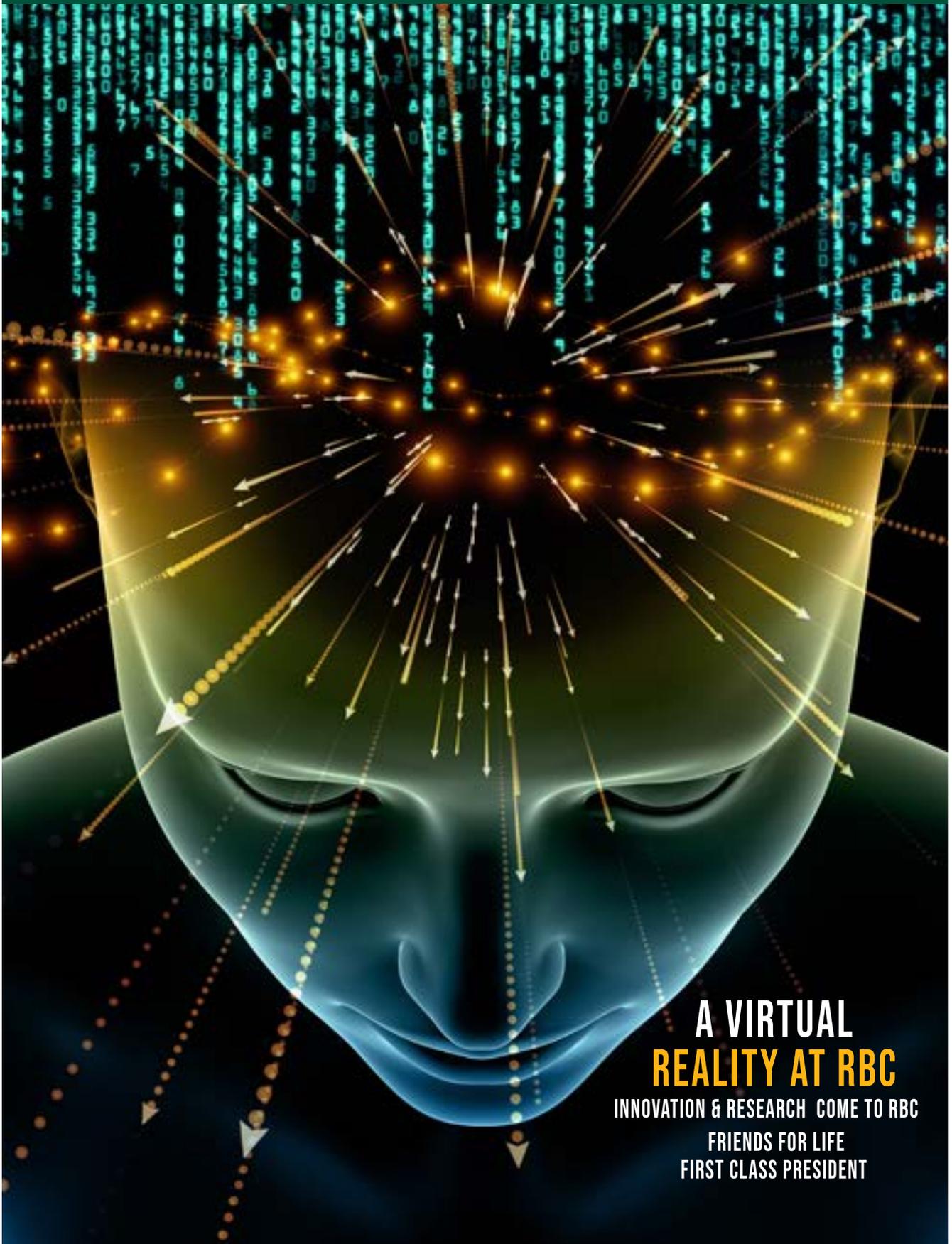


The Official Magazine of Richard Bland College of William & Mary
SPRING 2023



A VIRTUAL REALITY AT RBC

INNOVATION & RESEARCH COME TO RBC

FRIENDS FOR LIFE
FIRST CLASS PRESIDENT



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Message from
PRESIDENT DEBBIE L. SYDOW

As the utilization of technology for teaching and learning continues to expand in higher education, Richard Bland College is on the forefront of both innovation and research among two-year colleges. This past year, our newly formed Research & Innovation unit, led by Kim Boyd, Ph.D., has secured more than \$3 million dollars in grants, with another \$6 million pending. The College has far surpassed

expectations, and we are optimistic about future opportunities for state and federal grants that support STEM, campus safety as it relates to violence prevention, reengagement of COVID Traumatized Students, and the newly formed RBC Global Gateway.

At Richard Bland College, we value research, and we promote innovation. This third edition of Inside RBC Magazine is dedicated to

that focus. As you read about newly formed community partnerships and grant program initiatives, also take a moment to learn about the incredible accomplishments of RBC alumni and athletes. The RBC family is incredibly proud of this year's accomplishments. Drone technology and aviation have become more than a virtual reality at RBC. Research and innovation have literally taken off!



Inside RBC Magazine

Official publication of Richard Bland College of William & Mary
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Inside Alumni Relations

RICHARD BLAND'S FIRST CLASS PRESIDENT

BY ABIGAIL HOLMES

Founded in 1960, Richard Bland College's first student assembly voted John Radcliffe student body president, making him the first class president in RBC history.

The college opened its doors to students in 1961, kicking off the fall semester with student assembly elections. John Radcliffe enrolled as one of about three hundred students in RBC's first class. Previously a student at the Medical College of Virginia (MCV), now Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), Radcliffe transferred from a pharmaceutical program to work for AT&T while pursuing an associate's degree at RBC.

"The difference between MCV and RBC was their vastly different student populations. I was a number at MCV and became a person at RBC," reflects Radcliffe. "I liked the closeness

of the small school and the chance I had to befriend the president, Colonel Jim Carson. That relationship would have been impossible at a larger school."

Radcliffe ran for Student Assembly president and was elected within a month. His position gave him close access to the president, Col. Carson, who regularly met with him to discuss student affairs. The first school dance was held by the Student Assembly in the barn, back when it was cluttered with hay and manure, and Radcliffe remembers fixing it up for the occasion, themed Moon River. In time, Barn dances would become a tradition at RBC, though the conditions are much pleasanter now. Speaking at assemblies and the first class graduation, Radcliffe rallied his peers and encouraged them in their pursuits.

He shares a favorite school memory: "Col. Carson came from a military background, so he ran the school with discipline and expected as much from his students. A bunch of the boys snuck on campus, climbed the flagpole, and hung a flag at the top that read, 'Ye Old Kid Carson's Kindergarten.' No one knows who they were, but Col. Carson was beside himself. The school had to get a ladder truck to retrieve it, and they greased the pole on the way down."

During Radcliffe's time in office, he was invited by the United States Department of State to join President Lyndon B. Johnson, the first family, and other college student body presidents in the White House to discuss the Vietnam war. "The war wasn't going well for us, and they wanted to persuade students to support what was happening overseas. Amidst the war talk, I sat right between Lady Bird and Luci Bird Johnson to hear a presentation on Mark Twain by Hal Holbrook." Radcliffe says this was one of the most amazing experiences of his life.

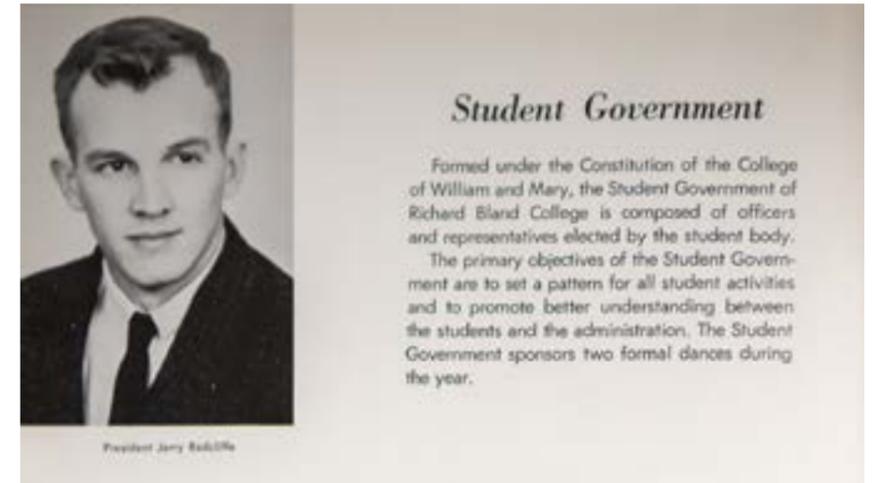
Radcliffe earned a two-year degree from RBC in 1963 as part of the first graduating class. Upon transferring to VCU, Radcliffe found that he was better prepared by his education at RBC than many transfer students from other schools.

There, he studied business and was recruited by E. I. DuPont after earning his Bachelor's degree.

Soon after, Radcliffe worked at Brenco, Inc., and climbed to Vice President of the company within three years. He worked in the railroad-bearing business for 15 years before investing in his own successful business ventures. In addition, Radcliffe served as Mayor of Colonial Heights and has a park on the Appomattox River in his namesake. "I owe it all to Richard Bland—all of it," says Radcliffe. "It provided me with a good college education, the attention of individual professors, Col. Carson's influence, and career opportunities."

As a supporter of RBC, Radcliffe has donated both time and money to the college. His involvement with the school has stretched from advising on presidential candidates to establishing the alumni to serving on the Foundation Board. Radcliffe has attended almost every graduation ceremony since his own and is a firm believer in RBC and its mission.

He reckons, "The most pleasant thing that has happened at RBC is Dr. Debbie Sydow. If RBC is going to be independent, it will be through her efforts. We've all dreamed of it—McNeer, past classmates, but Dr. Sydow will do it because of her ingenuity and business outlook. She increased housing capacity, developed the athletics program, and attracts talented people."



Radcliffe ran for Student Assembly President and was elected within a month.



John Radcliffe - First Class President of RBC.

Inside Admissions

FROM HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL TO DIRECTOR OF DUAL ENROLLMENT

BY ABIGAIL HOLMES

In spring 2022, Christie Clarke, former teacher and high school principal, joined RBC as the Director of Dual Enrollment. Her experience preparing PK-12 students for higher education continues through her work for RBC.

Clarke earned her associate degree at Southside Virginia Community College, her bachelor's degree in Liberal Studies and Elementary Education at Longwood University, and her master's degree in Administration and Supervision at Virginia State University. The latter she completed while teaching and serving as Summer School

Principal and Principal Designee at Sunnyside Elementary School.

"When I was in high school, you had to say what you wanted to be in 10 years, and I would always say, 'principal.' I knew I liked learning, leading, and helping people and kids," says Clarke. "The many leadership opportunities I had at Sunnyside as a newer teacher led to my becoming a principal."

Serving as principal at Dinwiddie from 2003-2005, Clarke's former teaching experience of organizing a classroom broadened into supervising a staff of

60 people. Many of the teachers Clarke hired remain teaching at the school today.

In 2005, Clarke was promoted to work in Dinwiddie County Public School's (DCPS) central office as the Coordinator of Instructional Technology. "I ensured teachers were integrating technology and taught many trainings, which developed into my next position as Director of Staff Development," says Clarke.

Throughout her 25 years with the DCPS, Clarke was well-suited for numerous leadership roles. During her last role with

DCPS as the Director of School and Community Relations, she managed the Staff Development Program, federal and state grants, health services, and the Homeschool Instruction Program, to name a few.

"When the school division needed someone to take on duties, I would fill them. I am not one to say 'no,' and I am not afraid to explore new areas of work and figure things out," says Clarke. "I've done everything but drive the bus, and thinking back, I should have tried that too."

Clarke hopes her move from DCPS to RBC will help to bridge the gap between K-12 and higher education. She currently oversees the dual enrollment and homeschool programs at RBC, which provide ways for students to earn college credit before graduating high school. She says, "My number one goal is still to help students earn high school diplomas, but it's also to help them get an early start on college."

She adds, "Helping students enroll in college has a different feel than K-12. As a teacher, I prepared elementary students for middle and high school, and now, I feel like I am watching students really begin their lives."

Trying new things has been at the center of Clarke's career. She says, "I have gotten to teach all of the subjects and work in many parts of a public school, but even now I'm not satisfied. I want to keep learning." Clarke would like to go back to school and become a college professor, so she can continue advancing students.

"When I was in high school, you had to say what you wanted to be in 10 years, and I would always say, 'Principal.' I knew I liked learning, leading, and helping people and kids."

Christie Clarke



RBC Dual Enrollment allows students to transition to a less expensive college life.



Christie Clarke enjoys her day working alongside her Dual Enrollment partners.

HOW TO APPLY to RBC

A step-by-step guide to applying for college and an overview of programs from Justin May, the director of admissions.

BY ABIGAIL HOLMES

Richard Bland College's free application can be found online at rbc.edu by clicking the "Apply" button. No essay is required, and it only takes a few minutes to complete. Applicants must have graduated from an accredited high school, have earned a standard or advanced diploma, or have earned their GED.

Official SAT or ACT scores and a letter of recommendation are advised but not required. Students are

evaluated based on their high school coursework and GPA. Justin May, director of admissions, adds, "We may reach out to learn more about the student applying since a high school transcript does not always tell a complete story."

Once a student completes the application and submits their official high school transcript, they will receive an acceptance decision within 48 hours. Admissions cares for prospective students

by prioritizing their applications with a quick response time.

Applicants who apply and get accepted before the first of the year receive an Early Action Scholarship with a varied amount based on need and merit. "We understand paying for college is the biggest concern for most families. Our staff is dedicated to offsetting tuition and making education affordable for any student looking to attend," says May. Students may also



be eligible to receive aid through The Statesman Scholars Fund, which can cover up to 80% of out-of-pocket costs.

The Honors program, Promise Scholars Program, and Virginia FAME program require additional applications or steps. "Each specialty program has different requirements," says May.

Honors and Promise Scholars are merit-based programs designed to challenge students to "participate in campus-run events, take some honors level courses, and maintain a minimum GPA and credit hour load," says May. Moreover, Promise Scholars take William and Mary courses at RBC, are placed on a track specific to transferring to W&M, and get 80% of their tuition, room, and board covered.

The VA FAME program allows students to gain

hands-on work experience while they are in school. May says, "This work-based model helps students learn how to apply what they are learning to the real world, earn money to pay for college, and gain valuable experience within their desired industry." Students interested in FAME should submit a traditional application and contact Thomas Midgettte at tmidgettte@rbc.edu to be connected with an industry partner for an interview.

Students may speak to admissions counselors for direction concerning the admissions process or general questions about the college. Apply now using the QR code and receive an acceptance decision within 48 hours.



At a GLANCE

- 1960 ESTABLISHED AS A DIVISION OF WILLIAM & MARY
- 26:1 STUDENT TO FACULTY RATIO
- 76% CLASSES TAUGHT BY FULL-TIME PROFESSORS
- 60% ADMISSION RATE
- 1,935 2021 STUDENT POPULATION INCLUDING DUAL ENROLLMENT
- \$7M FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AWARDED IN SCHOLARSHIPS, GRANTS, & LOANS
- 18,000 ALUMNI WORLDWIDE

AFFORDABLE FOR BOTH RESIDENTIAL & COMMUTER STUDENTS

COURSES ACCEPTED THROUGHOUT THE U.S.

TRANSFER AGREEMENTS 35+ WITH VIRGINIA COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

CLUBS & STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

NJCAA DIVISION I ATHLETICS

- MEN'S BASKETBALL
- WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
- MEN'S BASEBALL
- WOMEN'S SOCCER
- WOMEN'S BEACH VOLLEYBALL
- WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL
- WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY
- WOMEN'S TRACK AND FIELD

2022-23 COSTS PER YEAR

	TUITION & FEES	ROOM & BOARD	TOTAL
IN STATE	\$8,250	\$10,039	\$18,289
OUT OF STATE	\$14,040	\$10,039	\$24,079
INTERNATIONAL	\$21,980	\$10,039	\$31,999

2022-23 STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

- 32% Full generation college students
- 70% classes with less than 20 students
- 45% White
- 55% Non-white
- 41% Male students
- 59% Female students

ADMISSIONS

- 11301 Johnson Road, South Prince George, VA 23805
- (804) 862-6249
- Apply.rbc.edu

CAMPUS VISIT

- Apply.rbc.edu/visitcampus

APPLY

- Apply.rbc.edu/apply
- Apply.rbc.edu/upload

FINANCIAL AID

- (804) 862-6260
- Financialaid@rbc.edu
- Apply.rbc.edu/financialaid

SOCIAL

- facebook.com/richardblandcollege (College)
- facebook.com/rbcstatesmen (Athletics)
- @rbcstatesmen (College)
- @gorbcstatesmen (Athletics)
- @rbcstatesmen (College)
- @rbc_reslife (Residence Life)

APPLY NOW!

SAT CODE: 5574
ACT CODE: 4346
FAFSA CODE: 003707

Get started today!

SCHEDULE In person, available by phone call with an admissions counselor.

TAKE THE VIRTUAL 360° CAMPUS TOUR

Richard Bland College at a Glance..



GPS 101 builds connections with both faculty and students.

Inside Academic Success

THE GUIDED PATHWAY MODEL OF ADVISING *at* RBC

A supportive and inclusive environment for students.

BY HANNAH HENSLEY

Richard Bland College is proud to implement a new program to support students in their academic pursuits. The Guided Pathways model of advising provides specialized and individualized degree advising to students based on their specific degree track and career goals, while Student Success programs offer group registration, academic programming, and outreach efforts.

The Guided Pathways model of advising is designed to help students stay focused and on-track to graduation, while also ensuring that they are taking the courses they need to achieve their career goals. This approach provides students

with specialized and individualized degree advising based on their specific degree track. By offering personalized attention, Learner Mentors can help students navigate the world of higher education and create a plan that works for their interests and career aspirations.

The Student Success team has organized a variety of programming to help students stay on track and succeed academically. Group advising events have been held for students in Athletics, Residential Life, and other groups, making it easy for students to get the classes they need while also connecting with their peers.



Helping students stay on track to a timely graduation.

In addition to these programs, the Learner Mentors on campus have been conducting outreach efforts to connect students with the resources available to them. By reaching out to students who may need additional support, the Learner Mentors are helping to create a supportive and inclusive campus community.

“This model will leverage one of RBC’s hallmarks - its friendly, family environment – and ensure that students choose, remain on track, and graduate successfully from a clear and impactful academic pathway,” said Ben Thoreson, Student Success Manager. “We believe that grounding our approach to student advising in the Guided Pathways framework will help students stay on track to a timely graduation, succeed academically while enrolled, and build the skills they need to succeed in the workforce.”

Beginning Fall 2023, students will also be able to register for RBC’s Guided Pathways to Success (GPS 101) course. This course is designed primarily to give students the tools to identify the right academic and career pathways for them. However, GPS 101 will also enable students to develop competencies for success outside of the classroom, such as fiscal awareness and conflict management. GPS 101 will allow students to build connections with faculty and fellow students as they develop strategies to be used across their academic journey.

Richard Bland College’s commitment to student success is further demonstrated by the recent implementation of these programs. By offering specialized and individualized degree advising, group advising events, academic programming, and outreach efforts, RBC is creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all students.



The Guided Pathways model of advising provides specialized and individualized degree advising to students



RBC RESIDENTIAL LIFE

Living on-campus provides you many advantages, among them, easy accessibility to class and campus activities. We are committed to making your home away from home both enjoyable, and safe.

Inside Research & Innovation

RESEARCH at RBC IS NOW

BY AMY LACEY



In the rural areas of Dinwiddie and Prince George Counties that make up the Richard Bland College of William & Mary (RBC) campus, students may soon be bound for one of the largest island nations in the world and professional opportunities as limitless as the skies.

RBC is allowing students to interact with new environments while preparing them for emerging careers through the increased use of computer-generated simulations known as virtual reality.

"In polling our students, RBC learned they were interested in the future of virtual reality, job opportunities and training with our industry partners and connections with four-year colleges and universities," said Kimberly Boyd, Ph.D., vice president and chief research and innovation officer at RBC. "This, in turn, offers support to our communities with a skilled workforce to fill positions."

According to Boyd, virtual re-

ality is at the core of various research projects launching or in development at RBC.

VIRTUAL REALITY IS TAKING OFF

Through a new partnership with Richmond International Airport (RIC), RBC is helping to build a workforce of aircraft technicians, pilots and other positions in the aviation industry. It is designed to build interest among high school and college students to meet employment needs. RBC plans to utilize virtual reality workshops with flight simulations to engage students on campus.

Boyd explained that RBC, as a two-year institution with on-campus housing, offers the ideal setting to enroll a diverse body of students.

"High school students can stay for the summer to participate in this program and use technology to imagine themselves in one of these roles," said Boyd. "We also have college students on campus who may choose

to work at the airport while taking classes two days a week. The future goal of this program is to offer classes in associate of science degrees related to the program."

"We are excited about working with RBC through our Aviation Reaching Communities (ARC) project," said Perry Miller, chief executive officer at RIC. "This partnership will offer dual enrollment, summer programs, research, certifications and stackable credentials that lead to viable pathways in the aviation industry."

FROM RBC TO BACHELOR'S DEGREE

The RBC Virtual Reality program is scheduled to begin in 2024 with a new Mental Health Internship under its umbrella.

Through the internship, 20 students will work alongside both RBC psychology professors linked to mental health research and off campus partners at Virginia Wesleyan University (VWU) and Virginia State University (VSU).

A large promotional banner for Richard Bland College of William & Mary. The top section features the college's logo and name in white text on a dark blue background, with the website 'rbc.edu' in orange below it. The middle section has a green background with the text '48 HOUR ACCEPTANCE DECISION' in large white letters. Below this, it says 'Apply Now!' in green. The bottom section shows a collage of images: a student in a lab, a student in a graduation cap, and a student in a VR headset, all set against a background of a modern building at night.

Richard Bland College
of WILLIAM & MARY

rbc.edu

48
HOUR
ACCEPTANCE
DECISION

Apply
Now!



Beautiful Madagascar is on the RBC Research agenda for its students to conduct research.

“The internship will utilize virtual reality for mindfulness training and meditation to assist individuals with reducing stress and anxiety,” Boyd said. “The pandemic created COVID-traumatized students (CTS) who need support to get back on track with their schooling. Interns will put them in a soothing environment to calm their minds in an effort ultimately to improve academic performance.”

Mental Health First Aid, a course that teaches individuals how to address mental health and substance-use issues in crisis and non-crisis situations, will also be a part of the curriculum.

RBC Mental Health Interns will then have the option to continue their education at VWU or VSU.

“Once they complete the RBC Mental Health Internship, the students can work towards their bachelor’s degree in psychology and continue as mental health interns at VWU or VSU,” explained Boyd. “We are excited to offer students this new pathway from RBC.”

PATHWAY TO GLOBAL RESEARCH

RBC is working on phase two of a proposal under the U.S. Department of State’s Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students (IDEAS) program with the international nonprofit, World Learning.

If selected for the grant funding, RBC students would travel to Madagascar to conduct research in collaboration with Sadabe, a

non-governmental organization that manages the protected forest area of the Tsinjoarivo-Ambalaomby.

“Students would develop their project on RBC’s campus with virtual reality and then travel to Madagascar to work with the team there,” said Boyd. “Our students would help to strategize sustainable development and limiting threats to natural ecosystems and biodiversity.”

Boyd added, “While RBC already hosts international students on our campus, we are looking forward to offering opportunities for our students to study abroad.”

GROWTH OF STEM PROGRAMS

RBC is in preliminary proposal discussions with the National Science Foundation (NSF) Enabling Partnerships to Increase Innovation Capacity (EPIIC) program. The grant would fund capacity building around STEM and provide students with opportunities in high-tech and innovative fields through career exploration, development and the translation of research to practice.

“We want to grow STEM programs at RBC that produce a continuing cadre of underrepresented students qualified to enter four-year educational institutions and the workforce,” Boyd said.

The NSF funding would assist with building capacity and engaging partners from local school districts. The program would complement one RBC will offer during the summer of 2023 for Petersburg City Public Schools (PCPS) in partnership with RIC, Amazon and DroneUp, a company establishing drone delivery services for clients.

“I’m delighted that PCPS students will have the opportunity to learn and grow with the support of RBC,” said Tamara Sterling, Ed.D, superintendent of PCPS.

The NSF funding would also allow RBC to evaluate the success of a consortium to address STEM performance issues, develop intervention modules to increase performance and attempt to create a new community culture regarding STEM.

In addition to Boyd, Tiffany-Birdsong, Ph.D., chief academic officer; and Scott Farnham, M.S., M.B.A., project manager, would comprise the RBC consortium leadership team.



The newly formed RBC Research & Innovation team has garnered \$3-million plus in grants with \$6-million pending.

“We are excited to offer students this new pathway from RBC.” Kimberly Boyd, Ph.D.

Inside Alumni Relations

RBC's \$694K GRANT

RBC secured one-time funding of \$694,309 from Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) and the Department of Labor: Employment and Training Administration (ETA)

BY AMY LACEY

When the novel coronavirus pandemic shut down education in March 2020, Tori McArtis could never have predicted just how off course she would get in her pursuit of a psychology degree.

"COVID impacted me in many ways," recalled McArtis, who was then a freshman at Virginia State University (VSU). "I had to go home in the middle of my spring semester. I had to quit my summer job to protect myself and my family from getting sick. Even though I felt like I did everything I could, I still ended up contracting COVID that year."

Kim Boyd, Ph.D., vice president and chief research and innovation officer at Richard Bland College of William & Mary (RBC), heard similar stories from individuals who wrestled with the pandemic while con-

tinuing their studies at institutions of higher learning.

"These are traumatized students," described Boyd. "Because of COVID, some couldn't return to school. They had a death in the family or caught COVID themselves. If their grades went down or they failed, they couldn't apply for financial aid. No financial aid means you can't afford college anymore."

Knowing COVID posed unprecedented educational and emotional challenges, Boyd anticipated there would be a massive call for help. Boyd was a sounding board for students on the RBC campus and had regular conversations with leaders at VSU, Virginia Commonwealth University, Hampton University and the College of William & Mary.

Using insight from her communication with them and encouragement from RBC president Debbie L. Sydow, Ph.D., Boyd developed RBC Guided Pathways to Success (RBC-GPS), a program offering recruitment, engagement and support services, along with educational and training pathways to COVID traumatized students (CTS).

To be identified as CTS, individuals must be unable to continue with school based on their lack of performance, low functions, failing grades and/or a COVID-related event, like a personal illness or the death of a family member.

This past winter, RBC secured one-time funding of \$694,309 from Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) and the Department of Labor: Employment and Training Administration.



CTS STEM Program Coordinator Mandy Allen with Dr. Debbie L. Sydow and Dr. Kimberly Boyd

"A lot of schools kept a COVID withdrawal form, but now students are in the predicament that they cannot go back because they lost their financial aid," Boyd relayed. "If students decide after their classes with us that they do not want to go back to their first school, they can stay at RBC."

The second RBC-GPS path gives individuals an opportunity to enroll in RBC's Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME); it combines coursework to earn an associate's degree with paid, on-the-job training and experience.

On the third path, RBC faculty, staff and students work on job readiness and attainment through a partnership with Job Corps, the country's largest residential career training program.

Each path also addresses mental health needs triggered by the pandemic: the isolation of remote learning and social distancing created high levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

"That part of the program is so important to me," Boyd explained. "When students come into the program, we use positive psychology, mental health first aid, to make sure we are helping them, truly helping them. Think about it, the world is turned upside down. Some of them still don't know how to get back up. All of the upperclassmen have been affected by COVID in some way." Boyd recognized this as very challenging, "Especially when the professors are not used to having their classes online."

RBC-GPS will support a minimum of 100 individuals. Participants will leave the program trained for jobs that need specific skills, which will positively impact the workforce, according to Boyd.

"These are manufacturing jobs through FAME," Boyd said. "Also, DroneUp is coming to RBC to teach students how to fly unmanned systems. These are tomorrow's aerial jobs available to GPS students today. Walmart and DroneUp will deliver packages, and students can get an education on our campus to operate the drones."

Currently, RBC enrolls approximately 2,400 students, with 59% considered low-income and Pell Grant recipients. Of those individuals, 42% identify as African American; another 30% of RBC students as Caucasian, while 26% as Native American or Asian.

Most RBC students are from the cities of Petersburg, Colonial Heights, and Hopewell or the counties of Chesterfield, Dinwiddie and Prince George. These rural

communities, which have fewer options for mental health services, will benefit from the resources provided by RBC-GPS, said Boyd.

"Where would some of these students otherwise go for mental health support? This program provides it," she explained. "So many times during COVID, I would talk to them and realize this one lost a mother or they had COVID themselves. Just think about the trauma behind it all."

As RBC-GPS prepares to welcome its first students in January, Boyd already envisions it as a model for other schools.

"As they realize the benefits of this program, others can start their own. I can see it moving around the state of Virginia with various tracks to jumpstart education post-COVID," predicted Boyd. "In my career, I have always worked to give students what each individual needs to move forward. Not just focus on the academics but the person. Hopefully now RBC-GPS will do just that."



RBC Research & Innovation

"RBC-GPS will support a minimum of 100 individuals."

NJCAA DIVISION II NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

RBC WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL



NJCAA NATIONAL CHAMPS!

Led by husband and wife coaches Stephanie Champine and Shaun Dryden Richard Bland College's women's volleyball team wins 2022 National Championship title.



Governor Glenn Youngkin recognizes RBC Women's Volleyball on behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The college brought on a husband and wife coaching team, Stephanie Champine and Shaun Dryden, at the beginning of 2022 to build a women's volleyball team capable of winning nationals. In the recent NJCAA Division II National Championship, the team won four matches, taking home the National Championship title. Before the arrival of Champine, Dryden and the 2022 tournament, RBC had never won a match in the volleyball competition before.

Scott Newton, Director of Student Life and Athletics at RBC, observes, "Bringing on Stephanie and Shaun has majorly benefited the pro-

gram because of the amount of attention they can put towards the development of the student-athlete holistically. They make each player better athletically and push them to reach their full potential on the court."

The coaches spent the last year recruiting and training athletes in mindset and skill to accomplish this feat. They moved from Ohio, where they formally coached several volleyball seasons at Terra State Community College, "We were looking for an opportunity to coach beach in addition to indoor volleyball, and Richard Bland needed both," says Champine.

"Moving from snowstorm territory to near beach terrain has



Hailey Hopkins named as 1st Team NJCAA Women's Volleyball All-American

been awesome, and our players are amazing," adds Dryden. Having coached athletes through high-level sand and indoor volleyball tournaments, the duo moved to Virginia to surround themselves with both versions of their beloved sport. Champine serves as Head Coach of Women's Indoor and Beach Volleyball at RBC, with Dryden assisting as Associate Head Coach.

Champine reminisces, "We had a volleyball court at my parent's house growing up, and I always loved the sport. In fact, I enjoyed it so much in high school that I dropped other sports to get serious and play more. Coaching during the week and playing on the weekends has never tired."

An Owen's Community College coach approached Champine in high school after seeing her play and offered the young athlete a place on the team. After two years at Owen's, Champine transferred to Austin Peay State University (APSU), where she earned her bachelor's degree

in psychology in 2010. She was inducted into Owen's Hall of Fame as the first female and APSU's Hall of Fame as well. Moreover, she was voted All-American NCAA Division I for APSU and Newcomer of the Year in 2008, qualified for All-American in 2008 and 2009, and was named Conference Player of the Year in 2009. Her jersey #11 was retired in 2012 and resides at Owen's.

Likewise, Dryden also devoted his time to volleyball beginning in high school, saying, "I started out randomly playing as a club sport, but it quickly became my number one. Stephanie and I have always played and competed hard, so coaching is second nature."

Dryden played Division I after graduating with an associate degree from Los Angeles Pierce College and earning a bachelor's degree in marketing from Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW) in 2013. He was twice named MIVA Defensive Player of the Week and holds the Single Season Dig Record

for the university. While earning his MBA from IPFW, Dryden trained with the Swedish volleyball club Falkenberg in 2014. In 2015, he participated in the USA Tour in Slovenia and Italy and played for Team Blizzard in Serbia during the following season.

The couple was introduced during an adult professional league volleyball tournament where you could say they met their match. "Coaching as husband and wife instead of with a random coach has been easier because we have similar coaching styles and bounce off of each other well," says Champine. "It's more fun and makes for easy travel." In just one season of coaching at RBC, their team made school history.

"Bringing on Stephanie and Shaun has benefited the program."

Scott Newton



Women's Volleyball makes history at Richard Bland College of William & Mary.



Historic season concludes with National Championship Title for the first time in RBC school's history.

Champine and Dryden's coaching philosophy reveals: "A good coach realizes the game is about the athletes, and they're passionate about their players. Each athlete is different, so our coaching techniques are flexible enough to adjust based on the player's needs. We're always researching how to teach skills in new ways, and we'll work with them until they're ready to stop for the day. We're 100% invested and available, and they know they can call us up anytime, regardless of whether it's volleyball related. We're here to help them through college, supporting them and holding them accountable."

"I was never worried about the championship. When we got the job, we intentionally recruited athletes with the character and drive necessary to compete successfully. Once they arrived on campus, we worked with them to develop their play, and they took it from there. We have a team of strong, self-motivated, and talented players, and we do our best to teach and support them," comments Champine.

During the tournament, the

team consistently took out essential opponents who performed well over the season. RBC defeated #4 Iowa Central Community College in three straight sets, playing against the nation's top scorer. In the match against the #1 Johnson County Community College, RBC was down two sets but came back in a reverse sweep to win the next three.

Shaun says, "It took all the players to make it happen. Some of the matches were tough, and it took all five sets to come out on top. We trained our players to focus, teaching them how to face adversity and maintain mental toughness. A well-rounded athlete is taught on and off the court. From the start of the season to championships, our athletes grew in working as a team in structure and communication. They can see how much they're improving and their teammates are improving, which is rewarding."

In the finals against #6 Scottsdale Community College (SCC), SCC was at match point, but RBC overcame the pressure, winning the National Championship title and closing the season 34-3. Setter Karagyn Durco broke

RBC's record with 62 assists in a final match and was named MVP. In addition, Leilani Goggin and Hailey Hopkins were voted All-Tournament, and Champine was named Coach of the Tournament.

Newton says, "This is an exciting time for the volleyball program, the athletic department, and the college as a whole. Traditionally the National Champion in volleyball has come from the Midwest or the western regions, but being able to do it with a team mainly from VA is a great achievement. This will help recruit for all programs and show that we are committed to being successful athletically and academically. Especially with the recruiting ability that Stephanie and Shaun have, I believe we can be contenders for the championship every year. This is the first step to building a powerhouse program that maintains national recognition annually."



RBC setter Karagyn Durco was named 2022 NJCAA Division II Volleyball Player of The Year!



RBC MAKES HISTORY

Richard Bland College became the NJCAA Division II Women's Basketball National Runners-Up, in the program's inaugural season.





Inside Alumni Relations

ALUM RUNS VIRGINIA LOTTERY

BY ABIGAIL HOLMES

Class of '08 RBC alumna is appointed Executive Director of the Virginia Lottery and oversees opening of first casino in Virginia and regulation of mobile sports betting.

Kelly Gee is a graduate of Richard Bland College who went from an unpaid intern position to an executive director of a 3.7 billion dollar business in 12 years. The mentorship she received from a government professor at RBC fostered her determination to work hard and her love for state politics.

Gee's parents chose RBC for her because, with the help of a 529 plan, she would be able to graduate without student loans. "I worked hard and finished my associate degree in one year and transferred to William and Mary where I graduated with my bachelor's degree in 2010," says Gee. "Earning two degrees in three years is all because of RBC."

In addition to a long commute and heavy coursework, Gee managed to work for the school newspaper and volunteer as a team leader for the Relay for Life club, which fundraised to fight cancer. "I remember working really hard, long days. I would drive to school in the morning, come home for lunch, and return for my afternoon classes," says Gee.

"I had a government professor named Dr. Love, and I will never forget his first day of class. He walked us through our days from the moment we woke up to the moment we went to sleep and showed us how government is involved in every aspect—electricity, roads, etc.," remembers Gee. "His class resonated with me, and I became

interested in government."

At W&M, Gee got involved in political activism and seized opportunities to volunteer with candidates. An internship with a congressman doing constituent casework turned into a paid internship with Kirk Cox (RBC '81) in the state legislature. Gee remained working for Cox for 6 years and was promoted from intern to Deputy Chief of Staff when he was Speaker of the VA House of Delegates.

"Running a caucus and guiding 55 members was difficult but rewarding," says Gee. After working in partisan politics for 7 years and going back to school to earn a master's degree from Virginia Tech, Gee decided she wanted to shift her career.

There was talk of legalizing mobile sports betting and land-based casinos in the Commonwealth, and the Virginia Lottery was on the rise. The government needed someone to guide the agency through the transformation of just selling lottery tickets to opening the state's first casino in Bristol, VA. In the beginning of 2022, Governor

Glenn Youngkin appointed Gee to head the independent agency and oversee its 350 employees as the Executive Director.

In addition to selling lottery tickets, the agency now regulates 13 mobile sports betting platforms that saw over \$4 billion in wagering on events last year. The first casino in Virginia has opened, with three more in Danville, Portsmouth, and Norfolk undergoing licensing investigations.

Gee is the youngest person to have served in her role, and she is a working mom with twin toddlers. She says there are two qualities to being a leader: "A good leader succeeds when their peers also succeed, and a good leader empowers the people under them to be creative and demonstrate their own values."

She attributes her success to RBC saying, "It was the mentorship I received from RBC that allowed me to get there." She currently serves as secretary of RBC's Foundation and chair of the Advancement Committee, helping to raise money to meet the school's strategic financial goals.



MAYOR SAMUEL PARHAM

As a Richard Bland College Alum, the Mayor of Petersburg shares memories of his college life-long friendship with Sean Robinson, Class of '96.



Mayor Samuel Parham and his good friend, Sean Robinson grew up in Petersburg, VA where they attended school together from their time at Stuart Elementary to RBC where they graduated in May of '96. Sharing his experiences at RBC, the Mayor fondly looks back at the school and the foundation it gave him

"Growing up in Petersburg, I have always loved this city. I met some of my best friends here, including Sean. I remem-

ber staying late with him after elementary school to help my mom, who was a teacher, crank the mimeograph machine." The two friends gravitated toward each other during school, playing sports and video games as some of the first Madden NFL interactive series kids.

In high school, Mayor Parham worked in the family business where his father encouraged him to attend RBC to pay less for a quality education close to home. Mayor Parham says, "My dad offered to help keep my sister and me out of debt. He would say, 'you're getting more

bang for your buck at Richard Bland while adding the necessary tools to your belt to get you to the next level."

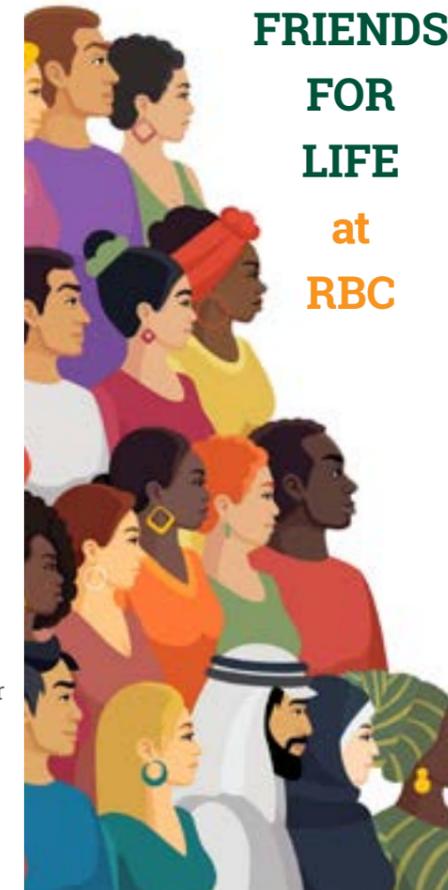
Robinson's mom gave Mayor Parham gas money to give him a ride to campus every day, and the friends' college adventures began. "We spent most of our time in the commons between classes, hanging out and eating taco salad. Before our afternoon classes, we would head to the gym to play intramural basketball," remembers Mayor Parham, adding, "Time was a lot slower back then."



"Every professor wanted us to succeed. My history professor, William Jefferson, and communications professor, David Majewski, were some of the best professors I've ever had." With the support of faculty, the friends started a Multicultural Alliance Club to unite all ethnicities and nationalities on campus, organizing dances and fashion shows to gather students.

He says, "Graduation was a bittersweet moment for Sean and me because it meant we wouldn't be riding to school together or seeing each other every day. He went on to Virginia State and I transferred to Virginia Commonwealth, and I was separated from my brother by a school for the first time."

"Robinson went on to become a Sports Anchor for Channel 6 News, and Mayor Parham is serving his 6th term in office. Because of the mayor's love



for the city and his desire to revitalize it, he is developing a program to get the next generation involved in city government where high schoolers can shadow first responders and local government departments. I didn't have a clue what was going on in the city's government when I was growing up. I want to lay the groundwork for the next generation of leaders by exposing them to current events and potential career paths," says the mayor. "RBC is helping to revitalize the city of Petersburg by educating students who can enter into the city's labor market."

The two friends thoroughly enjoyed and grew in their few years at RBC, which prepared them for where they are in their careers today. Their life-long friendship and experiences at RBC are special memories and a testament to the nature of RBC.

Robinson's mom gave Mayor Parham gas money to give him a ride to campus every day, and the friends' college adventures began.

2 FRIENDS: SEAN ROBINSON

Sean Robinson grew up in Petersburg, VA with his single mom and attended Petersburg County Public Schools K-12. During school, he met one of his best friends, Samuel Parham, who would later become the Mayor of Petersburg. Robinson remembers, "I knew Sam from Stuart Elementary School. His mom was a teacher there, and mine was a secretary. After about 35 years of friendship, we're still friends."

Robinson decided to attend RBC because of a program called Project Opportunity Group that gave students a stipend to take three core classes the summer after graduating high school. When he heard that his friend, Mayor Parham, was also planning to attend RBC, they planned their courses so that they could ride together. "I didn't have a car, but I was a shotgun driver," says Robinson. "My mom took care of Sam's gas in exchange for giving me a ride to classes."

"Starting at Bland instead of a four-year was the best thing that ever happened to us. The professors worked with us to help us do well,

and Sam and I motivated each other." The two friends only had a handful of classes together, but they would meet during lunch and hang out. They desired to bring the lively campus closer together and started a club called Multicultural Alliance.

When graduation came in May of '96, the graduates were sad to leave their beloved college, which was a holding place for so many good memories. "Statesman gym was packed with people that day. Once the ceremony ended, Sam was the first person I sought out after my family. We both exclaimed, 'We did it!'" shares Robinson.

Robinson and Mayor Parham went separate ways for the first time since they met. Their friendship no longer relied on having a school in common but thrived nonetheless. Mayor Parham went to Virginia Commonwealth University, and Robinson studied at Virginia State University, becoming a PA Announcer for the women's basketball team and later an intern and employee for the campus radio station.

After six years at VSU's radio station and working full-time

as the station's Sports Director, another director at the station put a word in for Robinson at CBS 6 News in Richmond. He says, "I received a call from the Channel 6 Sports Director offering me a freelance position. I would do weekend shoots when their weekend person wanted time off, but when that person left, they asked me to be the Weekend Sports Anchor."

"Even when Sam and I were kids, I wanted to work in sports broadcasting. Now, if you had told me in high school that Sam would be the Mayor of Petersburg, I wouldn't have believed you. Looking back, our conversations about sports and the city propelled us toward our careers," comments Robinson.

Studying at RBC was a massive step toward success for the two friends, "Coming to RBC prepares students for a four-year degree. You can be your own person, live in the dorms, and participate in extracurricular activities," recognizes Robinson. "I will never forget my RBC friends and how much the faculty cared. I recently spoke to my English professor, Miss Floyd, and she told me how proud she is of me. She helped me to become a better writer and person."

Robinson and Mayor Parham began as elementary school buds bonded by video games. They continue as professionals and brothers, celebrating more than 35 years of friendship.



FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT SUCCESS *at* RBC



The Center for First-generation Student Success, an initiative of NASPA and The Suder Foundation, today announced the advancement of Richard Bland College of William & Mary (RBC) to the First Scholars phase of the First Scholars Network. RBC was chosen based upon its demonstrated commitment to advancing the outcomes of first-generation students through improving both first-generation student success initiatives and institution-wide approaches.

"We are extremely honored to be selected as a First Scholars institution by the Center for First-generation Student Success," said Debbie L. Sydow, Ph.D., President of Richard Bland College of William & Mary. "We look upon our first-generation students as our change agents at RBC, both on campus and within our community. They break down barriers and provide support to other students who are transitioning to college life."

Powered by the Center for First-generation Student Success, the First Scholars Network is a four-phase approach that allows institutions of higher education to advance outcomes through establishing communities of practice, gaining knowledge of resources, and establishing peer networks. More than 275 institutions of higher education have entered the Network and progressed through the second phase, First-gen Forward.

Through their outstanding commitment, Richard Bland College has been selected to join a third phase, First Scholars, that signals an unprecedented commitment to serving first-generation students. The Center recently announced a commitment to serving over 700 institutions through the Network in the next five years.



The Center is pleased to welcome Richard Bland College of William & Mary as a new First Scholars institution.

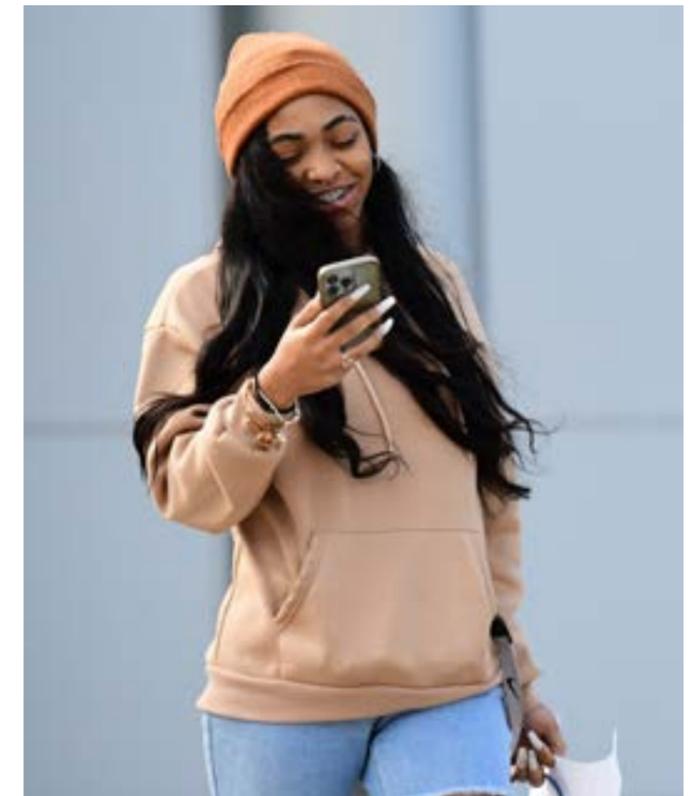
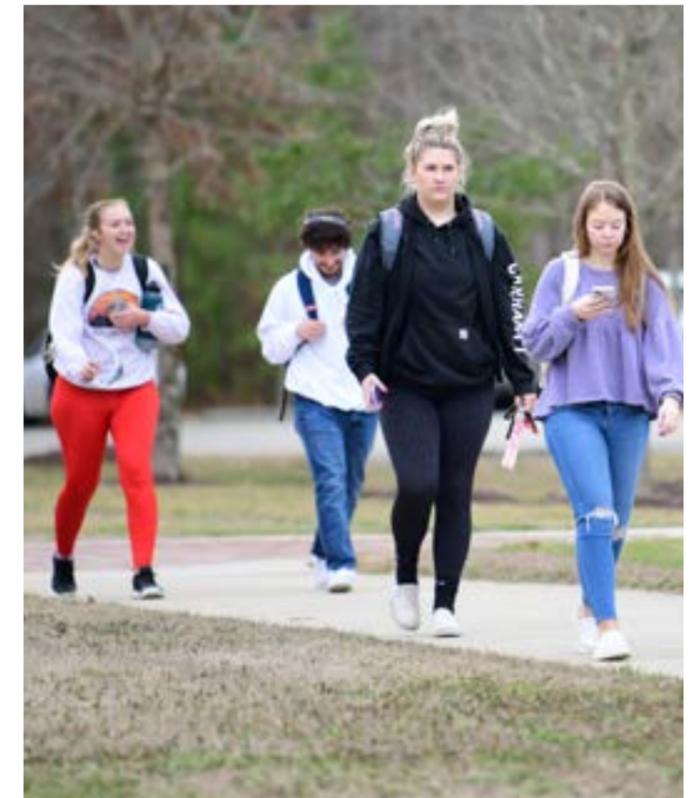
"After seeing such exciting Network progress and leadership, the Center is pleased to welcome Richard Bland College of William & Mary as a new First Scholars institution," said Dr. Sarah E. Whitley, vice president with the Center for First-generation Student Success. "Through every step, it was evident that RBC is not only invested in serving first-generation students, but is prepared to make a long-term commitment to radically change the way first-generation students are served and to employ strategies for sustainability and scale that result in intentional impact."

Through a phased approach designed to scaffold learning and achievement of institutions over time, First Scholars provides institutions with the opportunity to engage in student-centered, systemic transformation through an ecosystem of resources. Benefits of participation in First Scholars include:

- An evidence-based and research-supported framework of actionable priorities supported through monthly workshops;
- Diagnostic tools providing critical institutional insight;
- Robust data sharing as part of the national Postsecondary Data Partnership;
- Guidance of expert coaches along each step of the experience;
- And customized solutions and continuous improvement plans personalized to allow each institution to meet its first-generation student success goals.

Upon meeting milestones in the First Scholars phase, institutions are eligible to earn the Champion Campus designation.

"First Scholars provides a unique balance of bringing first-generation student initiative scaling into focus while drilling down into how Richard Bland College recalibrates institutional systems to elevate potential and advance outcomes for first-generation students, positioning them to be a real leader in first-generation student success," said Dr. Kevin Kruger, President and CEO of NASPA. "I look forward to seeing their success as they drive national change and advance success outcomes for first-generation students."



"We look upon our first-generation students as our change agents at RB," says Dr. Sydow.





Richard Bland College
FOUNDATION

INVEST IN OUR FUTURE

Your contribution helps our students succeed and experience a lifetime of endless possibilities.

Inside Faculty

ADAM ZUCCONI, Ph.D. BY ABIGAIL HOLMES

Dr. Zucconi helps his students realize that while he has much to show them, he is still learning like they are.



Dr. Zucconi says he is never bored outside his academic career.

Dr. Adam Zucconi, Assistant Professor of History and Faculty Assembly Chair joined Richard Bland College as a faculty member in 2015. Having briefly taught at West Virginia University as a graduate student, Zucconi was getting his feet wet as an instructor.

“When I came on as a professor at RBC, I was still a grad student, writing and then defending my dissertation,” remembers Zucconi, “I had one foot in the student realm and the other foot in the teacher realm, making me sympathetic to my students.”

Being thrown into the classroom to teach students as a student himself forced Zucconi to think about how he could best support and connect with his class. As a student, he knew the importance of a professor who was passionate about the subject material and genuine about teaching it. “Once students understand why a subject matters to me, they have an easier time understanding why it should matter to them,” says Zucconi.

At the start of each class, Zucconi aims to help his students feel welcome and ask how they are doing. When relationships

are formed with students inside the classroom, Zucconi believes they will feel more comfortable reaching out to him outside the classroom.

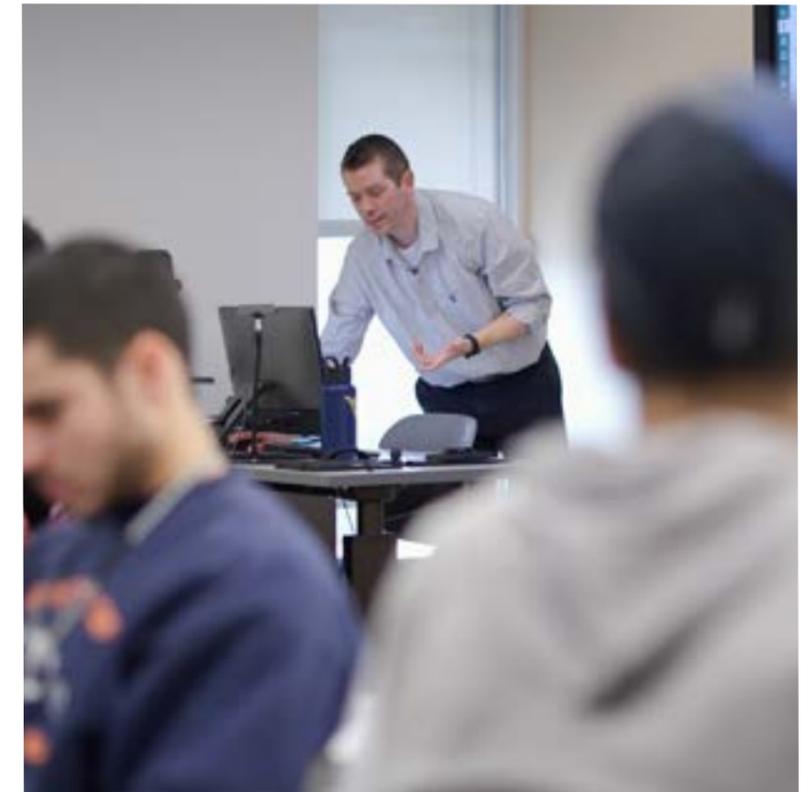
Zucconi teaches history and political science and believes that “students come into contact with these subjects before taking a class on them.” Because students are often already familiar with the material, Zucconi tends to focus on showing them how to balance learning the content with understanding its application.

“Google knows far more than I do,” confesses Zucconi. Stu-

dents can easily look up a semester’s worth of information, but Google does not specialize in how to analyze, interpret, and apply the material in the real world.

Zucconi helps his students realize that while he has much to show them, he is still researching and learning like they are. Currently, he is writing an article and a book on the creation of West Virginia as a slaveholding state amidst the war against slavery. Zucconi is developing his research from his dissertation on how the dissolution of slavery led to the formation of West Virginia.

“Learning doesn’t stop just because I have earned my doctorate. I am continually evolving and improving, and I am restless to explore,” says Zucconi. Former college professors have

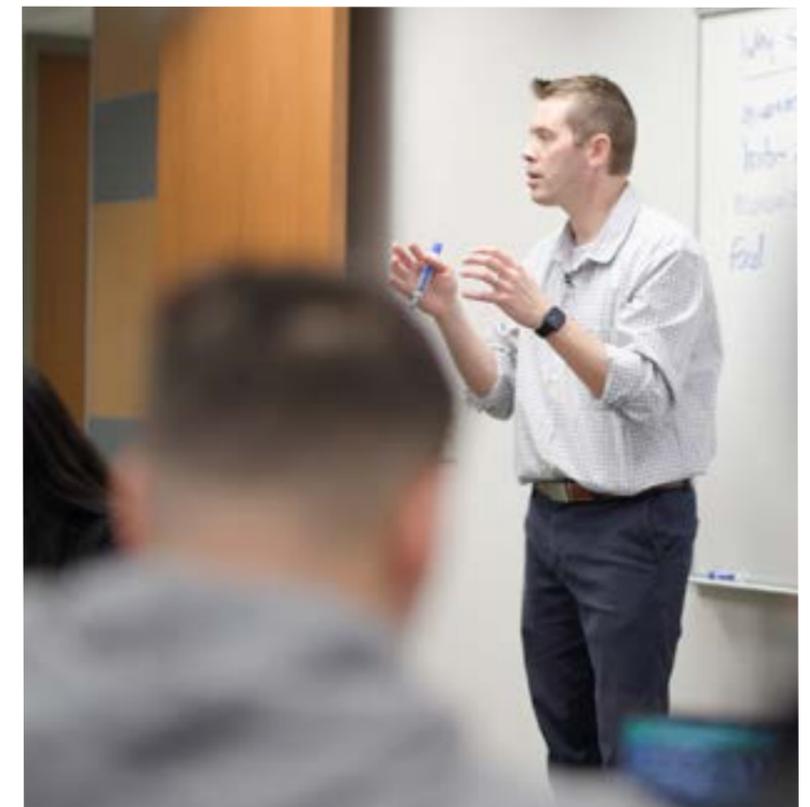


Being thrown into the classroom to teach students as a student himself forced Zucconi to think about how he could best support and connect with his class.

become mentors to Zucconi, continuing his life-long education.

With a wife and two boys, Zucconi is never bored outside his academic career. The family of four enjoys hiking adventurous trails in the fall and exploring nature. Fit with a rain barrel, the Zucconis have planted an extensive vegetable garden. The home garden produces fresh peppers, eggplant, tomatoes, and zucchini, but the boys like examining the bugs best.

Staying active in mind and body is a Zucconi family trait that has them playing games, tackling DIY projects, and practicing curiosity and innovation. Zucconi’s proudest accomplishments are fathering his boys and teaching his students how to understand history and apply it to current times.



**“Learning doesn’t stop just because I have earned my doctorate.”
Adam Zucconi, Ph.D.**



Morris goes over materials with Jeff Britt - RBC Foundation Board of Directors Chairman.

Inside Alumni Relations

TAX CHOSE ME

BY ABIGAIL HOLMES

The kindness showed to RBC alum by student services and financial aid departments instilled in her the interest to give back to her community through finance.

“I knew he considered me a good candidate for a position with the firm.”

Felicity Morris



Felicity Morris earned her associate degree from Richard Bland College in 2009, becoming interested in the financial industry during her studies. RBC’s student services and financial aid departments along with some accounting classes demonstrated to Morris how she could help people through her work as an accountant.

“I honestly didn’t like accounting that much at first, but I was good at analyzing data and providing solutions, and I loved that I could use it to help people long-term,” says Morris. “I knew the financial aid team by name. Their willingness to pull grants and scholarships and whatever they could to help me obtain

my educational and financial goals was inspiring.”

Morris transferred to the William and Mary School of Business to study finance and earned her bachelor’s degree in 2011. She then attended Liberty University to focus her attention on accounting, earning a master’s degree in 2014. It was at Liberty that Morris says, “tax chose me.”

“My accounting studies at Liberty put me on a track where companies would hire me due to the demand for talent in the accounting field,” says Morris. “I gave my resume to a recruiter from KPMG at a William & Mary Career Fair, and he dog-eared the paper—that’s how I knew he

considered me a good candidate for a position with the firm.” Morris spent four years dedicating her accounting skills to the clients of KPMG as a Tax Associate and was promoted to a Senior Tax Associate before deciding to take a break from corporate to be with her kids.

It was not long before Morris began to miss the analytical challenge of accounting, and she soon returned to public accounting to work for YHB CPA & Consultants as a tax supervisor. “Returning to the field was the best decision I could have made because I love working with the people and clients at my firm.” Her return meant that she could use her experience and skills to continue helping individuals and business owners plan and prepare for a more comfortable life financially.

As a tax supervisor, Morris manages tax compliance engagements and tax professionals. She continues to emulate the generosity and kindness that RBC’s student service and financial aid departments showed her by investing in professionals and clients. In September of 2022, she was promoted as Tax Manager at YHB. She says, “I have always aspired to be in management, and now that I am, I have an even greater ability to help people.”

In addition to her career, Morris serves as Vice Chair of the college’s foundation where she helps develop, improve, and implement the college’s strategic goals and objectives for the betterment of the students, faculty, and community. The college is serious about helping its students to further opportu-

nities to receive a higher education.

“To anyone pursuing a career in accounting, establish trust with your employer, show reliability, always communicate, and be your authentic self.” Morris emphasizes the importance of putting your best and true self forward. Her success is largely due to her unselfish desire to empower others to tap into their potential to help drive success.

“I honestly didn’t like accounting that much at first, but I was good at analyzing data.”

Felicity Morris



In addition to her career, Morris serves as Vice Chair of the college’s foundation.

Inside Student Life

HISTORY CLUB ATTENDS

HASKINS SOCIETY CONFERENCE BY ABIGAIL HOLMES



The Haskins Society is a prestigious organization dedicated to researching medieval history since its founding in 1982. Scholars and historians from all over the world who are interested in the Middle Ages meet annually to discuss their studies. During Fall 2022, the Haskins Society Conference was held at the University of Richmond with a Cocktail Reception at Agecroft Hall and Gardens.

Associate Professor of History Dr. Daniel Franke took

four of RBC's history club students on a field trip to attend the weekend-long event. The students heard scholars speak from across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and France. With a few dozen attendees each day, the students were able to hold intimate and involved conversations with scholars about historical topics

President of the History Club, Vick Chrepta, says, "The group of historians gathered there was amazing. They studied topics

ranging from gender studies to sainthood, and I soaked in what they had to say." They were surprised to have had the pleasure of speaking to scholars one-on-one, but a professor assured them that the academics were just as interested in hearing the students' views as they were professionals.

The students quickly overcame the intimidation that sharing their thoughts brought and learned the importance of asking questions, speaking their minds, and networking. Another History Club



member, Micael De Almeida, says, "I spoke with a scholar about how Portugal was involved in medieval history and how more researchers in that area are needed. I am Brazilian, and Portuguese is my native language, so I could be ideal for researching primary sources."

Like De Almeida, all the students in attendance benefitted from listening to the conference sessions and discussing them afterward. RBC student, Kristen Kountz, says, "The most valuable thing I learned is that nothing in history is new. Many problems from our past are still apparent today, such as untrustworthy government officials." The students were so eager to debate the topics they were learning that they would

impatiently pass notes during a lecture to discuss an issue immediately.

After meeting RBC's students, a Longwood University faculty member and conference co-director tweeted, "And the word all around was that your students were impressive. It's great when the enrichment goes both ways."

Attending the Haskins Society Conference was a valuable experience for the students who hope to pursue careers in historical studies. Not only were they able to hear from a wide range of scholars on various topics, but they left with connections to people in their field. The History Club plans to return to the conference in future years should they have the opportunity.



University of Richmond

**"They studied topics ranging from gender studies to sainthood."
President of the History Club, Vick Chrepta**

Commonwealth Coffee: Women of Influence



The Secretary of the Commonwealth, Kay Coles James, and Richard Bland College of William & Mary partnered to host a mentoring event for college and high school students. The goal was to inspire young women to pursue their dreams and show them the power of networking.

SAVING OUR STUDENTS *at* RBC

An Emergency Fund Assisting Students Facing Short Term Financial Crisis Starts at Richard Bland College

BY ABIGAIL HOLMS

The Save Our Students Fund of RBC was created by Mathematics Professors Ashley Fuller, Jason Pode, and Student Success Manager Ben Thoreson. Launched in fall of 2022, the financial relief program has already given hundreds to assist students in need.

Pode and Fuller began dreaming up the program in 2021 because they were concerned about their students' well-being. Many students have bills and families to pay for, so college tuition becomes a luxury item some months.

Fuller says, "I got the idea for the fund from an article about a community college covering the cost of commuters' car repairs. After having several students drop out because of their financial crises, I sought a similar model."

After gaining the Foundation's approval, initial funds were designated by President Debbie Sydow. The SOS committee held a fundraiser during the 2022 Pecan Festival, and the Parson's Café staff facilitated raffles to increase the program's funding.

The SOS application to request funds can only be obtained by

faculty or staff referral, but the committee hopes to introduce self-applications come spring 2023. "Self-applications will expand our reach to more students and allow us to take more immediate action," says Fuller.

She says, "I had a student who was taking my Zoom class during their lunch break at work, but when they couldn't pay their power bill, they had to drop out. Another student who was residential couldn't make it back on campus for a week because their car broke down, and they didn't have the money to fix it. SOS could have saved these students."



RBC's new approach to student success leads to increased enrollment.



Fuller's students have missed class or dropped out because they could not pay for textbooks, gas, groceries, or rent. These crises block students from performing their coursework and continuing their education. Already, multiple students have given the distress signal for SOS to help them since its launch, and the assistance they received has allowed them to continue their studies.

While SOS is not a long-term solution, it helps students regain their footing. Moreover, the committee hopes to provide resources to students in crisis that can provide a permanent solution. "Our goal is to keep financial restraints from being the barrier that stops a student from finishing college," says Fuller.

If you are a student in need, talk to a staff or faculty member to signal SOS.

"The Saving Our Students (SOS) Fund provides immediate financial assistance to RBC students experiencing a financial crisis that impacts their academic coursework and personal well-being."

The SOS TEAM
Richard Bland College of William & Mary



The SOS Office will make every effort to contact the student about his/her application request within 48-hours.

EARN WHILE YOU LEARN at RBC



Richard Bland College
of WILLIAM & MARY

Federation for Advanced
Manufacturing Education



Gain Leading Industry
Work Experience

Earn Your RBC
Associate Degree

Finish With No Debt



SCAN LEARN MORE

CCAM
SOLVING ADVANCED MANUFACTURING CHALLENGES