



**Richard Bland College**  
*of* WILLIAM & MARY

**Interim Report of the American Council on Education's  
Learner Success Laboratory at Richard Bland College**

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## Executive Summary

In 2020, Richard Bland College of William & Mary (RBC) was invited to the pilot cohort of the American Council on Education (ACE) [Learner Success Laboratory program](#). This 18-month initiative is supported by ACE through the [Strada Education Network](#). The ACE Learner Success Lab defines itself as "an inclusive learning community that integrates evidence-based practices for persistence and completion, life design and career exploration, and workforce skills development to assist participating institutions in developing a comprehensive strategy for learner success" ([ACE Learner Success Laboratory](#)).

Since October 2020, members of RBC's LSL Leadership Team have worked with ACE advisors to establish the Learner Success Lab at RBC. The LSL Leadership Team consisted of Carly Baskerville, Head Librarian; Celia Brockway (formerly of RBC); Dr. Eric Earnhardt, Chair of Languages & Humanities and Assistant Professor of English; and Teona Henderson, Learner Mentor. ACE Advisors are Lindsey Myers, Director of Professional Learning, and Erin Baldwin, Senior Program Manager of Professional Learning. RBC's Learner Success Lab Timeline (LSL Interim Report 25) provides an overview of this process, including what has been accomplished thus far and what is expected in the months to come.

RBC's LSL committees (LSL Interim Report 26) have reflected upon learner success at RBC through the framework of ACE's Model for Comprehensive Learner Success (MCLS) (Figure 2, LSL Interim Report 10.) Each committee was assigned a different focus: Curriculum, Co-Curriculum, & Mobility; Faculty & Staff Support; Institutional Commitment & Policy; Leadership & Structure; and Partnerships. This interim report identifies three key themes in the recommendations of committees thus far:

1. College Identity
2. Guided Pathways for Success
3. Data Collection and Analysis

These three major themes are discussed in the **Learner Success** section of this report, which represents a narrative synthesis of conversations, reports, and recommendations from committees, partners, and advisors.

The **Committee Reports** section provides some of the specific data from which these key themes were drawn as well as additional findings. Committee reports are unedited and represent the current state of ongoing discussions among committee members and the college at large; they are included in order to serve as transparent indices of progression toward final conclusions and recommendations that remain subject to addition, alteration, or deletion by any and all interested parties of the College through a collaborative and inclusive process. Subcommittee meetings, minutes, and information are open to faculty and staff through the [LSL SharePoint site](#). The following recommendations deserve mention as topics that are likely to

receive more discussion in the final report and that are either related to or in addition to the three key themes identified above and discussed in the Learner Success section:

- Communication of the College’s Mission, Vision, and Values
- Investment in Student Success within GPS@RBC, to include personnel and “Career Services” support for students
- The creation of an accessible, centralized data repository and the continued promotion of an analytics culture of data-informed decision-making
- The formation of an RBC Program Advisory Board or Committee
- In addition to the LSL final report, the delivery of tools and resources, both digital and written, to aid in the development and implementation of GPS@RBC

As a last summative observation, the LSL team has often remarked upon how subcommittee meetings bring individuals together from across the campus who do not typically interact with one another with regularity and have exposed faculty, staff, and administrators to perspectives, experiences, resources, and practices that were unknown to them. The LSL initiative will end in 2022, but it is our belief that the culture of transparent comprehensive collaboration toward continuous, goal-oriented self-assessment and improvement can and should continue. A brief list of accomplishments and connections that have already emerged from the Lab demonstrate the value of this approach beyond its internal benefits to communication and collaboration:

- The entrance of RBC into the [Community College Research Center’s Summer Institute on Guided Pathways for Rural Two-Year Colleges](#), Columbia Teachers College, June 14-24.
- Collaboration with [Hopewell/Prince George Chamber of Commerce](#) CEO, Becky McDonough, to engage the CEO of [Reliability Center, Inc.](#), Bob Latino, in Critical Thinking in the Workplace education.
- Collaboration of RBC’s department of Natural Sciences and Mathematics with [Virginia State University’s College of Engineering and Technology](#) and [CodeVA](#) toward a National Science Foundation grant proposal to advance computer science education among underrepresented groups in Virginia.
- Connection with the College of William & Mary’s [THRIVE Research and Intervention Center](#) with the aim of promoting Humanity Education and sustainable experiential leadership opportunities for students with the help of the THRIVE Center’s founding directors, Dr. Daniel Gutierrez and Dr. Spencer Niles.
- Claudine Lougee’s creation of the [Data Analysis & Reporting SharePoint](#) site.

Finally, the LSL Co-Chairs would like to extend our deepest thanks to everyone who has been involved with and supportive of the LSL project thus far. During an unprecedented global pandemic, an economic crisis, and a racial reckoning in the U.S. and beyond, so many of you have shown a steadfast commitment to this project by coming to meetings prepared to give your full attention and consideration to the assessment process, by pursuing the charges of your committees with intelligence and vigor, and by putting in a tremendous amount of extra

time and effort to follow leads and answer questions, all of which are sure to result in a final report with far-reaching implications for learner success at RBC. You continue to do all of this in addition to your regular duties for the College or for the organizations and businesses that you run, and you have our admiration, thanks, and praise. We appreciate your patience with us as we navigate this process as a member of the inaugural cohort of ACE's Learner Success Lab, and we encourage you to continue to seek clarity from us whenever we can be of assistance.

With gratitude,

Carly Baskerville

Eric Earnhardt

Teona Henderson

## Learner Success

### College Identity

Richard Bland College was recognized as an anomaly within the higher education landscape of Virginia by the *Progress-Index* in 1969 when the newspaper reported that RBC “appeared to be more than a two-year school, but not a four-year one. It possessed new buildings and enthusiastic students and a qualified faculty, but it lacked the sense of permanence which was attached to many public colleges and universities in Virginia.” Richard Bland College has advanced considerably since then, and over 60 years of existence have demonstrated the College’s permanence, but the College retains its unique character in Virginia as “the only public-supported two-year college in the state ... not a part of the Virginia Community College System” ([McNeer 201, 249](#)).

Moreover, the College’s mission and vision have often been subject to change. Initial plans for RBC to include vocational and agricultural training while also escalating to four-year, baccalaureate-degree-granting status encountered obstacles relating to the massive changes in higher education in the state after the creation of the Virginia Community College System, the College’s geographical placement, and integration efforts during the Civil Rights movement. The addition of residence halls in 2008 and a new science and technology building in 2010 further altered the capabilities and potential trajectories of the College.



**Figure 1:** Richard Bland College Academic Quad: Ernst Hall, McNeer Hall, Library, Cafeteria

Today, change remains a constant at RBC. As President Sydow stated in her foreword to the College’s 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, “RBC has tested its entrepreneurial mettle and its capacity for transformation in recent years,” and the College has most recently articulated the bold new vision of reimagining the way that it serves students by operating within the context of our existing culture while integrating “the principles of guided pathways and a hybrid work-college experience.” In collaboration with its parent institution, the College of William & Mary, RBC has begun to enact this vision that augments its “academically rigorous programs grounded in the liberal arts tradition of William & Mary” ([College Catalog](#)).

While working through the ACE-LSL Self-Study Assessment Tool, the LSL Steering Committee at RBC encountered the questions:

*Is the institutional mission learner-centric? Are learner success goals (of any sort) mentioned (directly or indirectly) in the institution's mission statement? How?*

These questions returned the committee to one of its earliest conversations, one which identified different understandings of the Mission and Vision of the College among staff and faculty. These differences were traced to two statements on the current RBC website.

The first, within the [College Catalog](#), reads as follows:

**Richard Bland College Vision:** As an extension of William & Mary, Richard Bland College is in the vanguard of learning-outcomes based liberal arts education for university transfer and a model for testing and applying outcomes-driven solutions in higher education.

**Richard Bland College Mission:** To prepare students for university transfer through academically rigorous programs grounded in the liberal arts tradition of William & Mary and to expand access to college credentials through strategic partnerships, specialized programming, and scalable innovation.

The second, within the [Strategic Plan](#) and the [Student Handbook](#), articulates the College's Mission as follows:

To prepare our students for a lifetime of endless potential.

In lieu of articulating a formal vision, the Strategic Plan states that the College's "core values" are what "help to define our long-term vision." These are:

- A friendly, family atmosphere
- Enthusiastic, student-focused service
- The power of difference
- Building confidence
- Quality outcomes

While some employees were under the impression that the first statements remained the overarching Mission and Vision of the College and that the second articulated only the mission of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, others indicated that the Strategic Plan's mission and values replaced the earlier Mission and Vision statement and constituted the new guiding Mission and Values of the institution. It occurred to many that this confusion resulted, in part, from the coincidence of the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the launch of the Strategic Plan, and from uncertainty about the strategic planning process and the requirements surrounding substantive changes through shared governance and accreditation procedures. The Steering

Committee suggested that a unified sense of identity and purpose could be optimally promoted by:

1. A reaffirmation from senior leadership on the relationship between the Mission and Values of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan and the College's traditional Mission and Vision statements and how they may be best operationalized.
2. An articulated process for collaborative strategic planning to guide future efforts.

After the LSL Leadership Team met with President Sydow and Provost Hart regarding the relationship between statements, they affirmed that the Mission and Values of Seize Your Potential take the place of the previous Mission and Vision. RBC views the changes to the mission as editorial in nature and will make the following adjustments on the website for clarification.

Richard Bland College's mission is *To prepare our students for a lifetime of endless potential.*

We accomplish this by:

- Preparing students for university transfer through academically rigorous programs grounded in the liberal arts tradition of William & Mary
- Expanding access to college credentials through strategic partnerships, specialized programming, and scalable innovation.

This change resulted from the vote of the William & Mary Board of Visitors to adopt the new Mission and Values for the College as part of adopting the new strategic plan ([W&M BOV Minutes](#), [W&M BOV Resolution](#)). From an accreditation standpoint this change is editorial in nature, articulating a more learner-centric mission and values. This mission and these values may be more easily recalled and recited by all members of the campus community but do not change the College's identity as a rigorous academic institution focused on the liberal arts or any other aspect of the College's essential programs, populations, etc. Additionally, President Sydow supported the idea of articulating a standard framework or process for strategic planning, stating that the process is already fairly formalized and could therefore be easily incorporated into shared governance procedures.

In answer to the ACE questions that prompted the return of this topic to the Steering Committee, the members indicated that the Strategic Plan's mission and the values and goals expressed therewith were learner centric as defined by ACE's model. Learner success goals were mentioned directly and measurably through *Seize Your Potential's* Student Value Proposition, Strategic Goals, Strategic Objectives, and Kept Promise Indicators. Indeed, these were found to be more learner-centric than the traditional Mission and Vision, though the committee expressed that (1) aspects of the College's identity that were important to articulate remained within the traditional Mission and Vision and that (2) those valuable learner-centric



aspects of *Seize Your Potential* may not be permanent, as would be ideal, if only part of a five-year plan.

The LSL Leadership Team and other committee members have also remarked upon an emergent consciousness of two important truths pertaining to the College's identity:

First, the vicissitudes of the College's history and its singularity in Virginia, which have resulted in RBC at times experiencing what some have termed a mild institutional "identity crisis" are neither that singular nor deserving of the term *crisis*. Junior colleges, including those tied to four-year institutions, exist across the nation. Embracing this junior college identity and our singularity within the state as a source of distinction and pride, and connecting with other junior colleges with similar missions and structures across the United States, offer RBC opportunities to alleviate internal concerns over the College's unique position within the state.

Second, the work being done by the Racial Justice and Equity Task Force to confront the history of a racially segregated system of higher education in Virginia as it relates to Richard Bland College is an absolutely essential step that offers opportunities to be more relevant to the needs of all of our students, employees, and community partners. It offers opportunities for more authentic and meaningful community engagement, more equitable services, and experiential learning that could result in valuable and distinctive knowledge production on the part of faculty and students. Members of and contributors to the Racial Justice and Equity Task Force overlap with members of and contributors to the Learner Success Lab team, and cross-team collaboration has resulted in exciting insights and opportunities. The RJ&E Task Force has the full support of the LSL team and commends its work, which has both influenced and inspired the LSL process. Indeed, as part of their site visit at the beginning of the LSL process, our ACE Advisors surveyed the Steering Committee members on those themes that were most important for the LSL to examine. "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" (DEI) came first, with "Guided Pathways" being second alongside "Defining Learner Success vis-à-vis RBC's Mission." As a result, DEI concerns have both driven and informed the work of the Learner Success Lab throughout its initial phases.

Finally, the LSL Subcommittee on Partnerships has conducted Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat/Challenge (SWOC/SWOT) analyses of major partners that will prove useful for thinking about the College's identity as a learner-centric institution. These include an analysis of the partnership between Richard Bland College and the College of William and Mary, both of which are governed by the William & Mary College Board of Visitors ([Code of VA § 23.1-2806](#)). Opportunities for interactions between the two will continue to be a topic of conversation, and working with William & Mary partners to assist in the LSL process will continue in order to determine how to best pursue collaboration that supports the success of RBC's students. The

LSL team would like to thank [Victor Branch](#), Chair of the RBC Committee of the William & Mary Board of Visitors, for his service on the Partnerships Subcommittee.

The LSL Co-Chairs would also like to extend very special thanks to [Dr. Daniel Gutierrez and Dr. Spencer Niles](#) (former W&M Dean of Education), the Founding Directors of William & Mary's [THRIVE Research and Intervention Center](#). Their intuitive understanding of issues facing RBC students (both those who matriculate to William & Mary and those who do not), and their graciousness and energy in pursuing collaboration with RBC have been truly exhilarating. Preliminary discussions promise exciting opportunities for learner-centric partnerships between RBC and the College of William & Mary based around Humanity Education and student leadership, opportunities that align with and add value to RBC's current initiatives around the Critical Thinking Quality Enhancement Plan, SCHEV assessment of Civic Engagement, the Racial Justice and Equity Task Force, and the hybrid work-college emphasis on experiential learning. Thanks to our ACE Advisors, Lindsey Myers and Erin Baldwin, for connecting us with the THRIVE Center.

## Guided Pathways for Success

Guided Pathways for Success at Richard Bland College (GPS@RBC) “is the primary focal point of the future-sighted strategic plan of the College” (*Seize Your Potential*). Upon RBC’s entrance into the Learner Success Lab, the Leadership Team understood the process to entail a comprehensive, student-centric self-assessment of the College based on both ACE’s Comprehensive Model for Learner Success (MCLS, Figure 2) and the key practices of the American Association of Community College’s (AACC) Pathways Project:

1. clarifying paths to student end goals,
2. helping students choose and enter a pathway,
3. helping students stay on a path, and
4. ensuring that students are learning. ([“What is the Pathways Model?”](#))

### ACE Model for Comprehensive Learner Success



**Figure 2:** ACE Model for Comprehensive Learner Success (MCLS)

LSL Co-Chairs structured the Steering Committee and subcommittees and created their charges by synthesizing ACE’s MCLS and the key practices of the AACC Pathways Project, particularly by sorting the elements of RBC’s Student Value Proposition (Table 1) into the categories from ACE’s model. The result has been the LSL team’s advancement through the self-assessment

process while incorporating a concern for guided pathways implementation and RBC’s student value proposition at every stage.

Elements of RBC’s Student Value Proposition (i.e., a measurable return on the student’s investment in college)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to navigate onboarding</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly defined pathways that outline workforce-friendly majors and credentials, and effective processes for entering a pathway</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A work-integrated curriculum focusing on required soft-skills</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fast track programs that enable academically underprepared students to achieve, in a timely manner, expected learning outcomes in crucial English and Math courses</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-touch, intensive, student-centric support across the college</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tools for faculty, staff and students that provide useful information about assessment and progress</li> </ul>

**Table 1:** Elements of RBC’s Student Value Proposition, *Seize Your Potential*

Major topics of discussion regarding a guided pathways model at RBC have included those areas of strength and weakness pertaining to the Essential Capacities for Guided Pathways Reforms from the AACC. The “broad engagement of college faculty and staff in the design, implementation, evaluation, and ongoing improvement of pathways for students” is exemplified by the LSL process and should continue after the conclusion of the initiative. It is not yet clear whether the “Institutional will and capacity to use data and evidence to design academic and career pathways, monitor student progress, and implement needed improvements over time” is sufficiently established. With regard to institutional will, momentum toward GPS@RBC is being improved through the development of a plan of implementation driven by the LSL process. Support of this plan via directives from leadership, investment in the department of Student Success, and technology and data experts informed about guided pathways practices will assist with demonstrating institutional will. With regard to capacity, a common theme among subcommittee members has been that data is not readily available, that it is unclear when relevant data has been collected and by whom, and it is unclear how or whether it is used systematically to make learner-centric decisions at the individual, department, unit, or senior level.

One major initiative to address this problem will be the participation of Thom Addington, Tiffany Birdsong, Eric Earnhardt, Mary Gurnick, Jason Pode, and Alice Henton in the Community College Research Center’s (CCRC) “Summer Institute for Guided Pathways at Rural Two-Year Colleges” (hosted virtually through the Teachers College at Columbia University). The LSL Leadership Team was informed of this opportunity through their ACE Advisors, Lindsey Myers and Erin Baldwin; Dr. Earnhardt wrote the application and Drs. Earnhardt and Gurnick interviewed in a competitive process that resulted in RBC’s entrance into the CCRC cohort.

From June 14-June 24, the RBC team will meet to use data from the fall 2019 semester (related to student degree program, coursetaking, age, race, gender, Pell eligibility, etc.) and institutional data (especially top transfer institutions and top programs) in order to develop “data-driven plans for implementing reforms that will help them to recruit and retain students, improve student success rates, and close equity gaps” ([CCRC Summer Institute Overview](#)). Thanks to Claudine Lougee for producing the data required for this initiative.

Ongoing discussions regarding the most sensible guided pathways model for RBC have included a number of proposals, some based on other practices and programs at RBC such as the Exceptional Student Experience (ESE) program. Discussions have also included the incorporation of research and resources from the National Association of Colleges and Employers, from EAB, ACE, AACC, and others. Conversations will also be informed by data currently being gathered from alumni, faculty, partners, staff, and students through the subcommittees. Many subcommittees have either already distributed survey instruments or are in the process of doing so.

Additionally, the team attending the CCRC institute expects their work to result in a data-informed plan for how to develop pathways (building on the foundation laid by Dr. Gurnick’s study plans) and how to monitor and promote student success along pathways in a manner that optimizes processes for RBC students (including the “ask, connect, inspire, plan” framework for advising). Indeed, completing the pre-work for this institute has already revealed areas where development should occur. For instance, students do not currently declare a track early in their career. Degree programs are not grouped with meta-majors, meta-majors do not currently correspond to specialized study plans, and workforce data is not immediately available as a part of advising for these educational choices as a result of capacities for advising or other resources.

It is important to remember that the Guided Pathways movement, which began with the publication of *Redesigning America’s Community Colleges* (Harvard UP, 2015), was originally intended to address the challenge of the “cafeteria college” in large community college systems, where a formidably large menu of vocational and postsecondary courses confronted first-year students with little idea of where to go and what to take. RBC students do not face this same challenge, and RBC has already distinguished itself for the high quality and transferability of its courses. Certain aspects of a Guided Pathways approach, therefore, will be less relevant to RBC, such as an emphasis on narrowly defined vocational elements. Still, the Partnerships subcommittee has stated that the identification and integration of workforce competencies and “micro-credentials” within the curriculum, as well as the strengthening and development of partnerships with regional industries and thought leaders, is an important way to support program alignment, provide internship and employment opportunities, and develop Career Services support, which is an opportunity area for the College.

Perhaps the greatest advantage to the core focus of GPS@RBC on the four key practices of the AACC Pathways Project is the emphasis on assisting students in identifying their own potential and directing them toward courses, opportunities, and supports that will build confidence and momentum toward a degree and further education or a career. Building this confidence and momentum would directly affect the Kept Promise Indicators of RBC's learner-centric strategic goals:

Strategic Goal 1: An Educational Product of High Value with Streamlined Pathways

- A. Number of two-year credentials (degrees and certificates) achieved at RBC within three (3) years of start
- B. Number of credentials achieved from any postsecondary institution (including a Bachelor's degree) within six (6) years of starting at RBC

Strategic Goal 2: An Unmatched Student Experience

- A. Fall to spring persistence in the first year, from semester one (1) to semester two (2)
- B. Net Promoter Score for overall student satisfaction, measured on exit

By better advancing the success of learners in this way, RBC not only better fulfills its learner-centric mission and demonstrates its values, but it also makes progress toward its third 2020-2025 Strategic Goal: Sustainability in Operation.

## Data Collection & Analysis

ACE's Model for Comprehensive Learner Success (MCLS) identifies data-informed decision making as one of its three strategic lenses. Applying this lens to institutional self-assessment ensures "that institutional goals are well articulated, strategic choices are grounded in evidence, and learner success outcomes are formally assessed" and that "Systems are in place to help academic leaders identify barriers to learner success across the institution" (MCLS 2). In each subcommittee report, institutional data collection appeared as a challenge. The Curriculum, Co-Curriculum, and Mobility subcommittee identified a need for "configuring instruments for faculty and students that gather related but different streams of information without overlap and that can be themed/coded effectively" (LSL Interim Report 17). The Faculty & Staff Support subcommittee reported "knowing that reports & data were generated at RBC but not knowing where the information was stored" (LSL Interim Report 18).

RBC's access to nationally recognized data resources such as [EAB's Research and Insights data platform](#) and ACE reports such as [The Data-Enabled Executive: Using Analytics for Student Success and Sustainability](#) will be useful in identifying best practices and recommendations for the final report, and it is understood from such resources that data challenges are not unique to RBC. In describing the situation among many American colleges and universities today, Gagliardi & Turk (2017) state that:

At the institutional level, data are of varied quality, and often poorly connected across important functions (e.g., finance, academic affairs, personnel, facilities), making it difficult for many institutions to analyze program and service performance relative to cost. Fears over the misuse of data have further impeded the development of analytics cultures. The upfront costs of analytics modernization efforts can be a non-starter for many senior leaders, despite potential long-term savings and revenue generation that stem in part from improved student persistence and completion. At the state and federal policy levels, data that are required for the purposes of funding allocations and accountability are often out of touch with contemporary students and institutional realities. (*The Data-Enabled Executive* 1-2)

The LSL Steering Committee has recommended "the establishment of a systematic approach to institutional data collection, including an accessible data repository to house all data produced at the College—surveys, reports, raw data—and established processes and procedures for data collection, requests, and analysis" (LSL Interim Report 16). This initiative would promote a stronger analytics culture at RBC and would help to identify and address any shortcomings in the quality, connectivity, and accessibility of data. The establishment of RBC's Data Analysis & Reporting SharePoint site has been a step toward greater data and information sharing on campus, but work remains to establish a robust analytics culture, and committees will continue to identify ways to further improve the College's approach to institutional research.

# Committee Reports

## Steering Committee

### *Charges*

- Lead by ensuring that Richard Bland College of William & Mary works together as a campus to develop and implement an integrated learner success strategy.
- Provide oversight of the work of the Learner Success Lab subcommittees to include compiling a plan for implementing Guided Pathways for Success (GPS@RBC), the student value proposition outlined in Seize Your Potential.
- Liaise between the subcommittees and the campus to maximize campus-wide ownership of the planning process and implementation of the plan.
- Create a culture of involvement and participation during the planning and implementation process.
- Provide oversight in executing, evaluating, and refining the plan.

### *Challenges*

- Lack of clarity around what the College's mission and vision are—those listed on the website or those listed in the strategic plan—has led to confusion during multiple self-study assessment discussions.
- Supporting subcommittees in their data-collection processes—lack of clarity over existing data, ownership of data, and timeline to receive data requests
- Addressing components of the self-study assessments when there is confusion around the College's mission and vision.
- Addressing components of the self-study assessments when there is much transition (staff leaving, organizational restructure).

### *Recommendations*

- College administration needs to clearly define the College's mission and vision to the campus community.
- The establishment of a systematic approach to institutional data collection, including an accessible data repository to house all data produced at the College—surveys, reports, raw data—and established processes and procedures for data collection, requests, and analysis.
- The inclusion of the student body in decision making processes on campus to ensure a sense of community and ownership.
- Streamline internal communication efforts with a campus-wide adoption of SharePoint as the main communication and storage system.
- The establishment of a clearly defined approach to the College's strategic planning process. This will ensure a consistency in the process, collection of appropriate data to



properly inform in the decision making process, and input from the entire campus community.

#### *Data & Analysis*

- Analyze and develop a chart of organizational communication tools and identify how they can be used to share information about LSL.

## Curriculum, Co-Curriculum, & Mobility

### *Charges*

- Review case studies on Guided Pathways at other institutions; research realistic ways to include career readiness in the curriculum
- Survey 200 current, 100 past (graduated no earlier than 2016), and 100 prospective students to ask which micro-credentials they prefer as part of Guided Pathways to Success. (Partnership Subcommittee to survey employers)
- Survey faculty to ask which micro-credentials they can integrate into their courses as part of Guided Pathways to Success.
- Recommend a plan for the development and implementation of Guided Pathways to Success; include specific meta-majors and pathways in the recommendation.
- Complete the subcommittee's assigned portion of the self-study assessment.

### *Challenges*

- Configuring instruments for faculty and students that gather related but different streams of information without overlap and that can be themed/coded effectively. For example, surveying faculty on how they might incorporate career readiness into the curriculum and/or their classes invites a variety of responses that might not be easily balanced.
- Defining the relationship between (or linkage of) “career readiness” with “micro-credentials”
- Academic freedom defense as a means to avoid curricular and pedagogical standardization that would allow for the incorporation of career readiness into the curriculum

### *Recommendations*

- Include any recommendations you have already identified for the final report

### *Data & Analysis*

- Instruments for surveying faculty and students on career readiness in the curriculum have been developed and need to be approved by IRB

## Faculty & Staff Support

### *Charges*

- Survey faculty and staff on professional development, focusing on what is needed to best support learner success.
- Conduct a SWOT analysis of current professional development policies, employment models, load distribution, and compensation for employees across campus.
- Recommend a plan for assessing professional development offerings and policies on a regular basis, focusing on what is needed to best support learner success.
- Create an implementation plan for faculty and staff support, focusing on learner success.
- Complete the subcommittee's assigned portion of the self-study assessment.

### *Challenges*

- Unfortunately, 2 of our 7 members left RBC.
- Lack of examples or directions from ACE at the very start of the study
- Knowing that reports & data were generated at RBC but not knowing where the information was stored (*see recommendation*)
- Not having a documented method for developing & approving FormStack surveys
- Lack of clarity regarding what will happen to the recommendations once this self-assessment is completed

### *Recommendations*

- Need to clearly identify the process for conducting, analyzing, publishing reports or studies from surveys conducted at RBC.
- Central location documenting responsibilities of personnel, including “fail-safe” measures that would indicate who would assume responsibilities for that individual’s position if individual leaves or is absent for prolonged period of time (*Proposed solution SharePoint*)
- Central location for policies & procedures for tasks on campus (*reserving rooms, completing FormStacks, etc. Propose SharePoint*)
- Sharepoint site should have an internal facing page (used only for individuals within that department) and an external facing page (accessible to individuals outside of that department)
  - This may help remove unnecessary links, documents, etc., from the RBC website
- Professional development officer to communicate development opportunities. Website or newsletter to communicate resources.
- Once this self-assessment is completed for RBC employees, the survey used to gather data should be extended to RBC-affiliated employees (VERTO, for example)

### *Data & Analysis*

- Generating FormStack survey for faculty and staff to answer regarding Professional Development to address student learner success.
- Generating FormStack survey for faculty and staff to answer regarding Strength-Weakness-Opportunities-Threats for Professional Development.

## Leadership & Structure

### *Charges*

- Assess RBC's infrastructure for providing and implementing learner success initiatives, including career readiness, that meet learners' diverse needs.
- Complete a gap analysis to determine where improvement is needed to have “high-touch, intensive, student-centric support across the College” as prescribed in Seize Your Potential.
- Evaluate the student onboarding experience at RBC (Richard Bland College) to determine what changes are needed to make this process easy to navigate.
- Partner with ACE-LSL Advisors to review RBC's organizational structure and systems and make recommendations.
- Complete the subcommittee's assigned portion of the self-study assessment.
- Collect data from early transfers and non-conversion students regarding their decision to not enroll at RBC.

### *Challenges*

- Data collection is diffused throughout campus and not always easily or quickly accessed, or available.
- Many processes under analysis are in the process of significant change, and since the new systems have not yet been implemented (Sales Force, etc.), there is a lack of data to assess.

### *Recommendations*

Assuming that financial barriers are identified as a cause for students not completing their degree at RBC, the following recommendations should be further considered and explored at other colleges. Sample reports and programs as well as participating colleges are listed as available.

- Link incoming student in the GPS (Guided Pathways to Success) model with at least one financial literacy Module that must be completed by the end of the first semester, or a hold is placed on their account.
- Offer additional financial literacy modules online with incentives provided by the college and/or local organizations that the students can complete to win prizes (\$100 towards tuition, \$100 amazon gift card, etc.).
- Partner with local social services offices to begin linking students with services that they may need in a high-touch, intensive model, as opposed to handing them a list.
- Work to create a one-stop shop in student success where students can go to receive high-tough guidance in regards to financial needs, financial aid, food assistance (set-up a food pantry), clothing for interviews, and other immediate need items.

- Partner with local banks and financial advisors who can offer banking advice, tax prep services, and other financial assistance in a one stop shop.
- Develop an emergency “Completion Grant” for students who are over half-way to their degree but lack the funds to complete it despite financial Aid.

### *Data & Analysis*

- Admissions Map Outline has been provided.
- Overview of Financial Aid Process (2021) has been provided.
- Request sent to HR for updated ORG chart
- Request sent to Preston Bousman, Program Manager to see if we can get data from schools, we have an articulation agreement with to see if our students transfer to them.
- Data Request Pending (Service Ticket 48741):
  - A list of surveys that were distributed to students through Formstack. We only need the names of the surveys, departments they are for, and the date + number of responses. Our focus is on student success initiatives so anything for student events and student onboarding (including Orientation) would be best. We do not need the content of the surveys yet; we just want to see what surveys are out to know which ones to request.
  - 2016 – present list of students who did not re-enroll (withdrawals). I believe name and R-Number would be all we need for the time being, since we can get the rest of the information from Banner if we need to. Let me know if that is not possible to get student information from Banner.
  - Data of students who applied to RBC, including the high school they graduated from and race. To answer this question:
    - Does your institution’s enrollment strategy include a focus on any particular group?
- To assess how the inability to meet basic physical needs is affecting our students’ ability to achieve degree completion, data is needed in the following areas:
  - Percentage of students receiving Pell Grants
  - Number of hours students are working for pay
  - Number of outside scholarships students are applying for
  - Percentage of students that care for children
  - Percentage of students that “struggle” to keep up with bills
  - Percentage of students that do not fill out a FASFA
  - How students perceive their understanding of FASFA
  - Survey regarding how students perceive their ability to meet emergency financial need, budget, and if they live paycheck to paycheck
  - Survey of faculty/staff to know where to refer students who need financial assistance not covered by financial aid
- Data Collection Recommendations for Assessing Transfer:

- We can pull processed transcript requests from the National Student Clearinghouse to see where our students transfer to (we would take out the graduates to find the early transfer outs)
- The NSCH report can help us identify if our graduates transfer to 4-year schools when they leave here. Offering a mandatory zero credit course and will be presented in our next meeting, stay tuned!
- LMs can also ask the early transfer out students' questions and collect the answers. They can also ask the non-converters as well (those who did not even register yet), but that is only if they get them on the phone (only 5% answer the phone call).
- We can collect data from the cancellation form ([Cancellation of Student Registration - Formstack](#)). I have requested access to the data in Form Stack. Right now, the main reason field is not required, but I will request to make it required. We can discuss which specific reasons we want to give them as an option to collect the data.

## Partnerships

### *Charges*

- Review current RBC partnerships and provide a SWOT analysis of each partnership and implementation at RBC; recommend a plan for regular assessment of each partnership.
- Work with community partners to better understand and meet local workforce demands in the Tri-Cities\*, Dinwiddie, Prince George, and Chesterfield communities.
- Survey employers in the Tri-Cities\*, Dinwiddie, Prince George, and Chesterfield communities to determine labor market and community needs.
- Survey employers to ask which micro-credentials they prefer as part of Guided Pathways for Success (GSP@RBC). (Curriculum, Co-Curriculum, & Mobility Subcommittee to survey students)
- Engage at least 200 alumni in a conversation about how they want to support our current students; recommend a plan for implementing this support.
- Complete the subcommittee's assigned portion of the self-study assessment.

\*Tri-Cities: Petersburg, Colonial Heights, Hopewell

### *Challenges*

- Lack of consistency with participation of all members, addition of new members on an ongoing basis.
- Co-chair taking a new position.
- Further distinguishing RBC from area community colleges.
- Gaining higher visibility among local employers and other higher education professionals.
- Alumni sample group is limited based on lack of self-reported updates for contact information.

### *Recommendations*

- Adding workforce competencies and critical thinking to the curriculum enjoys broad support among industry partners.
- The creation of meaningful experiential learning and teamwork within the curriculum builds experience that is valuable to employers and can make an RBC education more distinctive.
- NACE competencies overlap well with characteristics that employers seek and are preferable to the language of “soft skills.”
- The creation of a program advisory board and/or CEO roundtables that would more closely tie programs and curricula to regional industry needs would provide development guidance for RBC.



- The continuation of the Pecan Festival as a regional networking opportunity that raises the profile of RBC and engages with the community at large is strongly recommended.

#### *Data & Analysis*

- Some data disclosure or sharing is limited because of internal and external members.
- Instrument for alumni survey completed and approved through IRB. Currently moving to FormStack format.
- SWOT analyses of existing partners are completed. Moving into analysis phase (initial finding is that close relationships with individual industries and major area employers could be made, improved, strengthened).
- Employer survey postponed until nearer to final report to serve the purpose of garnering information on recommendations and interest in GPS@RBC.

## Supplementary Documents

### RBC's Learner Success Lab Timeline

In 2020, Richard Bland College of William & Mary (RBC) was invited to the pilot cohort of the American Council on Education (ACE) Learner Success Laboratory program. This 18-month initiative is supported by ACE through the [Strada Education Network](#). The ACE Learner Success Lab is an inclusive learning community that integrates evidence-based practices for persistence and completion, life design and career exploration, and workforce skills development to assist participating institutions in developing a comprehensive strategy for learner success.

Early fall 2020 saw the creation of the RBC LSL Leadership Team. The Leadership Team spent fall 2020 mapping out the LSL project timeline, fielding initial information requests from ACE advisors, and preparing for a virtual site visit. By early 2021, a steering committee and four subcommittees comprised of faculty and staff from student-services departments on campus were established. These committees, in addition to other members of institutional leadership, participated in a virtual site visit conducted by ACE advisors in mid-January. Committee charges were assigned in February 2021, and committees commenced discussion, data collection, and data analysis in the months to follow. In addition to sitting on the steering committee and subcommittees, the RBC LSL Leadership Team meets weekly to discuss the lab process, hosts regular meetings with ACE advisors, participates in monthly lab chats with other members of LSL Cohort 1, and completes assigned lab work hosted on ACE's learning platform, ACE Engage.

In May 2021, the LSL Leadership Team worked with subcommittee co-chairs to gather the information for the writing of the interim report. The interim report includes the initial steering committee and subcommittee findings of the ACE Self-Study Assessment Part I and ACE Self-Study Assessment Part II. In addition to the findings of the self-study assessments, the report also includes initial findings related to the assigned committee charges related to the shift from Exceptional Student Experience (ESE@RBC) to Guided Pathways for Success (GPS@RBC).

Looking ahead, summer and fall 2021 will involve continued data collection, data analysis, committee meetings, and selection of peer reviewers. As data is analyzed, committees will work to formulate conclusions and recommendations and begin working on their individual sections of the final deliverable. Winter 2021 will see the submission of the final deliverable draft to RBC's ACE advisors, as well as a peer review visit. Feedback from ACE advisors and the peer review visit will then be used to finalize the final deliverable, which will be submitted to ACE in February 2022 and delivered by ACE to campus administration in March 2022.

## Committee Memberships

<b>Steering Committee</b>			
Carly Baskerville	Tiffany Birdsong	Jazmyn Bremby	Kyle Dobry
Eric Earnhardt	Hashauna Farmer	Ashley Fuller	Teona Henderson
Alice Henton	George Jellerson	Lauran Johnson	Scott Newton
Mia Register	Stacey Sokol		

<b>Curriculum, Co-Curriculum, &amp; Mobility Subcommittee</b>			
Thomas Addington, Co-Chair	Teona Henderson, Co-Chair	Tim Blackston	Dana Davis
Jason Pode	Vanessa Stout		

<b>Faculty &amp; Staff Support Subcommittee</b>			
Timothy Rohrbach, Co-Chair	Adam Zucconi, Co-Chair	Carly Baskerville	Jazmyn Bremby
Bryan Roethel	Cassandra Standberry	Daniel Zelinski	

<b>Leadership &amp; Structure Subcommittee</b>			
Alice Henton, Co-Chair	Navelle Watkins, Co-Chair	Kyle Binaxas	Dana Davis
Kyle Dobry	Ashley Fuller	Shelly Gresham	Teona Henderson
Scott Newton	Melissa Mahoney	Mia Register	Cassandra Standberry
Daniel Zelinski			

<b>Partnerships Subcommittee</b>			
Sharon Rauch, Co-Chair	Eric Earnhardt, Co-Chair	Victor Branch	Danielle Fitz-Hugh
Dawit Haile	Tyler Hart	Becky McDonough	Linda Pittman
Stacey Sokol	Ashley Fuller		