

Richard Bland College

Public Safety and Operations Center

Executive Summary

In accordance with its updated master plan, Richard Bland College proposes the renovation and adaptive reuse and expansion of a 34,000-square-foot facility—currently housing a gymnasium, offices, weight room, and locker rooms—into a state-of-the-art Public Safety and Emergency Operations Center, IT Hub, and office building. This transformation will serve the dual purpose of enhancing campus safety and supporting regional emergency coordination, while also modernizing infrastructure to meet the demands of a thriving academic institution.

Strategic Rationale

As Virginia's only public two-year college with a residential campus, Richard Bland College plays a unique role in higher education and regional preparedness. The proposed renovation aligns with the College's mission to foster innovation, safety, and leadership, while maximizing existing assets through sustainable design.

National Trend Toward Integration

The industry is seeing a trend toward the integration of physical security and cybersecurity in higher education. Modern campus safety increasingly relies on unified software platforms that bring together data from security systems and sensors into a single Security Operations Center (SOC). This allows campus safety personnel to view all relevant information in one place, requiring a close operational, if not always physical, integration of IT and public safety functions.

RBC's newly updated master plan contemplates long-term expansion in 3 key areas: academic, athletic, and student life. The existing gymnasium (Statesman Hall) is centrally located to be engaged in each of the 3 campus districts. Additionally, to be strategic and fiscally responsible, the current data hub for campus is located on the second floor of the existing gym. This was not by design but, rather, was inherited over a significant time frame. Keeping the IT systems located in the building and intact is the best and least costly solution.

The current gymnasium, Statesman Hall, was a great facility once but has since outlived its validity in the current intercollegiate sports landscape. There are façade concerns, as well as code challenges that make a public sports venue a challenge to serve all aspects of the campus community. The "skeletal" structure of the building is intact, which makes it a good option to house such an important multi-purpose function on campus.

From a site planning perspective, the gymnasium is located proximate to the main entrance to campus along Carson Road and has ample parking for police vehicles, security drone operations, and vantage points both to the existing residence halls, as well as close proximity to the proposed innovation business park.

Design Inspiration and Precedents

This proposal draws on nationally recognized architectural projects that have successfully repurposed legacy structures for civic and technological advancement:

- Salt Lake City Public Safety Building: A LEED Platinum facility that integrates emergency operations with community engagement.
- San Francisco Public Safety Campus: Designed for seismic resilience and operational continuity, serving as a model for multi-agency coordination.
- Bloomberg London Headquarters: A benchmark for IT integration and workplace innovation.
- Greenville Public Safety Campus: Integration of the security and police forces with the IT department to create a single point for both physical needs as well as cybersecurity oversight
- University of Utah Public Safety Building: The new public safety building at the University of Utah houses police, emergency communications, and emergency management units under one roof, along with on-site IT specialists. It was designed with an emergency generator and back-up systems to maintain emergency communication functions and data connectivity during an outage, demonstrating a strong link between public safety and IT infrastructure.

Project Scope

The renovated facility will include:

- Emergency Operations Center (EOC): Equipped with secure communications, modular workstations, and backup power systems.
- IT Hub: Featuring climate-controlled server rooms, fiber-optic infrastructure, and collaborative tech labs.
- Administrative Offices: Designed for 50 managers with natural lighting, acoustic optimization, and flexible workspaces.

Sustainability and Stewardship

The project will pursue LEED Silver or Gold certification, incorporating:

- Reuse of structural elements and materials
- Solar energy integration

- Water conservation systems
- Smart building technologies

This approach reflects the Commonwealth's commitment to environmental responsibility and fiscal prudence.

Budget and Funding Request

Richard Bland College respectfully requests funding support from the Virginia General Assembly to initiate design and engineering. The investment will:

- Enhance regional emergency preparedness
- Support digital infrastructure for academic and administrative growth
- Create a model for adaptive reuse in public education

Conclusion

This project is more than a renovation—it is a strategic transformation that positions Richard Bland College as a leader in public safety, innovation, and sustainable development. With support from the General Assembly, the College will deliver a facility that serves students, staff, and the broader community for decades to come.