



# Richard Bland College

## BOARD OF VISITORS

### DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

January 28, 2026 | 10:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. | Virtual (Microsoft Teams)

The Board of Visitors of Richard Bland College (“RBC” or “College”) met in open and closed sessions on Wednesday, January 28. Due to Governor Spanberger’s declared state of emergency in response to inclement weather, the meeting was held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

#### BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

- John Rathbone, Rector
- Albert Poole, Vice Rector
- Vickie Schray, Secretary
- Hon. James Dyke Jr.
- Hon. Kelly Gee
- Hon. Sam Parham
- Charles Patton
- Bouwien Smits
- Hon. Christopher Winslow
- Jason Pode, Faculty Representative
- Lilli Brown, Student Representative

#### STAFF PRESENT:

- Dr. Debbie Sydow, President
- Dr. Kimberly Boyd, Vice President and Chief Research & Innovation Officer
- Dr. Tiffany Birdsong, Chief of Staff
- Stacey Sokol, Chief Business Officer
- Eric Kondzielawa, Chief Operations Officer
- Justin May, Chief Enrollment Management Officer
- Jesse Vaughan, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer
- Charita Johnson, Chief Information Officer
- Vicki Humphreys, Chief Development Officer
- Dr. Adam Zucconi, Interim Chief Academic Officer
- Melissa Mahoney, Controller
- Dr. Evanda Watts-Martinez, Director of Counseling Services
- Christie Clarke, Director, Dual Enrollment and High School Programs
- Dianna Banks, Director of Human Resources
- Dr. Susan Clair, Information Security Officer
- Dr. Ann Ifekwunigwe, Director, University Center
- Ben Thoreson, Director of Student Success
- Brooklyn Bilyard, Interim Director, Student Life
- Ashley Fuller, Data and Compliance Officer
- Terelle Robinson, Associate Director of Government Relations
- Katelinn Davis, Associate Director of Development
- Carolyn Day Pruett, Associate Director of Development
- Jeff Palmore, Principal, Capital Strategies
- Ryan Jackson, President, New Crescent Strategies
- Ernest Bashikako, I.T. Manager, User Services
- Joshua Bolaji, Senior Network Engineer
- Shion Michael, Junior IT Administrator
- Nathan Moberley, OAG College Counsel

- Dr. Eileen Stremmel, Strategic Planning and Governance Consultant

- Gerrit Smith, Senior Executive Administrator and Clerk to the Board of Visitors

#### **GUESTS PRESENT:**

- Basil Dosunmu, Treasurer, Richard Bland College Foundation Board of Directors
- Scott Fleming, Director, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia
- Bill Boyce, Principal, Design Director of Higher Education Studio, RRMM Architects
- Steve Hostetler, Principal, Public Land Development Division, Timmons Group
- Rich Satmaria, Principal, Public Land Development Division, Timmons Group
- Jeremy Wright, Associate Principal, Higher Education Studio, RRMM Architects

#### **Welcome and Introductory Remarks**

Rector John Rathbone called the Board meeting to order at 10:32 a.m., recognizing the presence of a quorum, and welcomed attendees to the meeting. He then read the following statement into the record:

*Due to a state of emergency declared by the Governor of Virginia in response to severe winter weather, the Board determined that it was impracticable and unsafe to hold the scheduled in-person meeting on the Richard Bland College campus. In accordance with Virginia Code § 2.2-3708.2, the Board meeting will therefore be conducted by electronic communication means, using Microsoft Teams, which provides real-time audio and video access for members and the public.*

Rector Rathbone then asked for a **motion to approve minutes** of the September 24, 2025, and the special October 1, 2025 Board meetings. The motion was made by Secretary Vickie Schray, seconded by Vice Rector Albert Poole, and approved unanimously by voice vote. Rector Rathbone then welcomed Christopher Winslow and Kelly Gee as the newest Board members. He then asked President Debbie Sydow to provide her report.

#### **President's Report**

President Sydow provided an update regarding the interim presidential search, emphasizing that the creation and execution of a Presidential Transition Plan is being developed to ensure a smooth transition. She then introduced Scott Fleming, Director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV).

Director Fleming provided an overview of the Virginia Plan for Higher Education 2026-2032 ("Plan"). The Plan outlines a statewide strategy to strengthen the Commonwealth's economic future by developing talent through higher education; focusing on student readiness, institutional responsiveness; and emphasizing the relevance of postsecondary education. Director Fleming also identified key challenges to higher education, including declining public confidence, demographic shifts, affordability, and rapidly changing technologies, such as AI. He concluded his remarks by saying that the ultimate goal is to position Virginia as the top state for talent.

Next, President Sydow introduced Bill Boyce, Principal at RRMM Architects, and Steve Hostetler, Principal at Timmons Group, who provided a review of the updated Campus Master Plan. They discussed existing campus conditions, noting significant development and change since the 2014 Campus Master Plan was approved by the W&M Board of Visitors. Key goals for the 2026 Campus Master Plan included reviewing the

condition and utilization of existing campus buildings; accommodating the need for public safety, administrative functions, and the IT hub; and contemplating expanded and improved sports facilities. Other goals included improving vehicular and pedestrian circulation and creating 1,000 parking spaces.

Dr. Eileen Stempel, Strategic Planning and Governance Consultant, provided an update on current status of the report on the future of Richard Bland College due to the General Assembly on June 30, 2026. She thanked Secretary Schray for her input in developing the draft report and noted that the Board will receive a draft report in time for review and adoption at the April Board meeting. Dr. Stempel then reported on the “Debt-Free RBC” initiative designed to generate philanthropic support for scholarships to increase affordability and timely degree completion.

Dr. Sydow; Dr. Tiffany Birdsong, Chief of Staff; and Dr. Stempel then reviewed the 2028 Strategic Plan with Board members. The Plan establishes institutional priorities for the next 18-24 months, focusing on student success, regional development, and sustained momentum during a period of transition. It refreshes RBC’s mission and values, emphasizing agility, belonging, and student-centric services while aligning programs and credentials with market-demand. Dr. Stempel noted that the plan is centered on three pillars: expanding high-value credentials, improving student completion outcomes, and fostering innovation to remain accessible and affordable for students.

#### **Action Items**

After the 2028 Strategic Plan presentation, Rector Rathbone asked for a motion to approve **Resolution 1**, 2026-2028 Mission, Vision, and Strategic Goals. The motion was made by Ms. Gee, seconded by Chuck Patton, and approved unanimously by voice vote.

After the passage of Resolution 1, the Board took a 10-minute break. The Board reconvened at 12:30 p.m. and then received a Finance, Audit, and Compliance (FAC) Committee report from Committee Chair Patton. He provided a brief summary of the FAC Committee meeting, including a presentation by the College’s internal auditor, Baker Tilly. Chair Patton shared that the Committee had approved resolutions 2 and 3 during their meeting and moved Board approval. Rector Rathbone then asked for approval of resolutions brought forward by the FAC Committee, specifically **Resolution 2**, Fiscal Year 2026 Internal Audit Plan; and **Resolution 3**, Policy to Delineate the Relationship, Roles, and Responsibilities of the Board of Visitors and the Foundation Board of Directors. Both were approved unanimously by voice vote.

The Rector then asked for a block vote on **Resolution 5**, 2026 Campus Facilities Master Plan; **Resolution 6**, Naming the AIC Boardroom in Honor of Senator Mamie E. Locke, Ph.D.; and **Resolution 7**, Conferral of Honorary Degree. The motion was made by Mr. Patton, seconded by James Dyke, and approved unanimously by voice vote.

Jeff Palmore then provided a brief summary of advocacy efforts to obtain Level II authorization during the 2026 General Assembly session and noted that State Senator Lashrecse Aird and Delegate Kimberly Pope Adams are patrons of the bill. Rector Rathbone then called for a roll call vote approving **Resolution 8** – Level II Authorization. Clerk Gerrit Smith called the roll, and all nine Board members voted in the affirmative.

Rector Rathbone then requested a motion to approve **Resolution 9** – Faculty Leave of Absence. Vice Rector Albert Poole made the motion, seconded by Secretary Schray, and approved unanimously by voice vote.

Rector Rathbone reviewed **Resolution 10** – Conferral of President Emerita Status and Professorship for President Sydow and then requested a motion to approve the resolution. Mr. Dyke made the motion, seconded by Mr. Patton, and approved unanimously by voice vote.

### **Closed Session**

At 12:46, after passage of Resolution 10, Rector Rathbone requested a motion to move the Board meeting into closed session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters related to a potential reduction in force and the selection of the Interim President pursuant to the following exemptions under Va Code § 2.2-3711:

- § 2.2-3711(A)(1): *Authorizes public bodies to convene in closed session to discuss and evaluate the performance of departments or schools of public institutions of higher education when such evaluation necessarily involves the performance of specific individuals, the Board will enter into closed session to review and discuss matters related to a potential reduction in force. This evaluation will require consideration of the roles, duties, and performance of identifiable staff members who may be affected.*
- § 2.2-3711(A)(1): *Authorizes public bodies to convene in closed session to discuss, consider, or interview prospective candidates for employment. Namely, finalists for the position of Interim President.*

The motion was made by Mr. Dyke, seconded by Vice Rector Poole, and approved unanimously by voice vote.

### **Open Session Resumed**

The Board reconvened in open session at 1:54 p.m. Rector Rathbone requested a **motion** that the Board certify by roll call vote that, to the best of each member's knowledge, only matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act were discussed and only matters identified in the motion to have a closed session was discussed. The motion was made by Vice Rector Poole and seconded by Secretary Schray. Clerk Smith called the roll, and all nine Board members "certified yes."

Following the certification vote, Rector Rathbone requested a motion to pass **Resolution 4**, Election of Interim President Kenneth Alexander, Ph.D. Vice Rector Poole made the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Dyke. The resolution passed by a 7 to 2 voice vote, with Ms. Gee and Ms. Bouwien Smits voting in the negative.

There being no further business, Rector Rathbone adjourned the meeting at 1:59 p.m.



**Richard Bland College**  
**BOARD OF VISITOR**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**September 23-24, 2025 | 10:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. | AIC Boardroom**

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23 – Rector’s Dinner**

On Tuesday evening, September 23, 2025, voting members of the Richard Bland College Board of Visitors (Board) and Richard Bland College President Debbie Sydow convened at 6:00 p.m. at the Hotel Petersburg, located at 20 W. Tabb St., Petersburg, VA 23803, for a dinner hosted by Mayor Sam Parham. Conversation centered on college, community, and commonwealth interests and priorities. The remainder of the evening was purely social, and no business was conducted.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT FOR THE RECTOR’S DINNER:**

- Mr. John Rathbone, Rector
- Mr. Albert Poole, Vice Rector
- Ms. Vickie Schray, Secretary
- Hon. James Dyke Jr.
- Hon. Sam Parham
- Ms. Bouwien Smits

**ABSENT FROM THE RECTOR’S DINNER:**

- Mr. Charles Patton

President Debbie L. Sydow was also present at the dinner.

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 – Board of Visitors Meeting**

The Board convened on campus in the Academic Innovation Center Boardroom at 10:30 a.m. following the Finance, Audit, and Compliance Committee meeting.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT FOR THE BOARD MEETING:**

- Mr. John Rathbone, Rector
- Mr. Albert Poole, Vice Rector
- Ms. Vickie Schray, Secretary
- Hon. James Dyke Jr.
- Hon. Sam Parham

- Ms. Bouwien Smits
- Mr. Jason Pode, Faculty Representative

**ABSENT FROM THE BOARD MEETING:**

- Mr. Charles Patton
- Ms. Lilli Brown, Student Representative

**OTHERS PRESENT FOR THE FULL BOARD MEETING:**

- Dr. Debbie Sydow, President
- Dr. Kimberly Boyd, Vice President and Chief Research & Innovation Officer
- Dr. Tiffany Birdsong, Chief of Staff
- Stacey Sokol, Chief Business Officer
- Eric Kondzielawa, Chief Operations Officer
- Justin May, Chief Enrollment Management Officer
- Jesse Vaughan, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer
- Charita Johnson, Chief Information Officer
- Vicki Humphreys, Chief Development Officer
- Dr. Adam Zucconi, Interim Chief Academic Officer
- Melissa Mahoney, Controller
- Dr. Evanda Watts-Martinez, Director of Counseling Services
- Christie Clarke, Director, Dual Enrollment and High School Programs
- Dianna Banks, Director of Human Resources
- Dr. Susan Clair, Information Security Officer
- Dr. Ann Ifekwunigwe, Director, The University Center
- Ben Thoreson, Director of Student Success
- Ashley Fuller, Data and Compliance Officer
- Terelle Robinson, Associate Director of Government Relations
- Lisa Pond, Associate Director of Administrative Services
- Jeff Palmore, Principal, Capital Strategies
- Nathan Moberley, College Counsel
- Dr. Eileen Stempel, Strategic Planning and Governance Consultant
- Gerrit Smith, Senior Executive Administrator and Clerk to the Board of Visitors
- Other RBC Faculty & Staff

**Welcome and Introductory Remarks**

Rector John Rathbone called the Board meeting to order at 10:35 a.m. Recognizing that a quorum was present, Rector Rathbone asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 27, 2025, meeting. The motion was made by Mr. Parham, seconded by Ms. Smits and approved by voice vote.

At the request of Rector Rathbone, Ms. Smits provided a summary of the Finance, Audit, and Compliance Committee meeting that took place earlier in the day. With a focus on risk analysis/management, liability mitigation, and finances, the Committee received presentations from David Rasnic, Director for Higher Education at the Auditor of Public Accounts (APA); Mike Cullen, Principal with Baker Tilly, the College's internal auditor; Melissa Mahoney, RBC Controller; and Stacy Sokol, Chief Business Officer.

### **President's Report**

President Debbie Sydow provided an overview of the September Board meeting's thematic focus on college assets, noting that oversight and stewardship of all college assets—fiscal, financial, technology, human, and physical—is a primary responsibility of the Board. She also introduced Professor Jason Pode, the new Faculty Representative to the Board. Dr. Sydow reminded Board members of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Substantive Change Committee's on-site visit to campus on October 28, 2025, stating that this is one more step in the the accrediting body's process for reviewing the College's governance change. Dr. Sydow noted that the SACSCOC Board of Trustees is expected to take final action to approve RBC's governance change at their June 2026 meeting. President Sydow then introduced Dr. Kim Boyd, Vice President and Chief Research and Innovation Officer.

Dr. Boyd introduced herself and provided a summary of grants assets, highlighting grant assets obtained since 2022 (~\$10 million) and highlighting initiatives such as the RBC "Health Zone," the new RBC Workforce and Career Readiness Center on Crater Road in Petersburg, and the RBC Table Dealers Institute. She emphasized community partnerships and the alignment between grants and RBC's strategic priorities.

Charita Johnson, Chief Information Officer, introduced herself to the Board and discussed the College's technology assets, highlighting the Technology Strategic Plan. Ms. Johnson highlighted strategic focus areas of the plan, including enhancing data driven decision making, protecting institutional and personal data, and harnessing artificial intelligence for teaching and learning.

Eric Kondzielawa, Chief Operating Officer, provided an overview of the College's physical assets, noting features of the 800-acre campus on the Facilities Master Plan, including the RBC Business Innovation Park. Mr. Kondzielawa informed the Board about the development of auxiliary revenue through campus housing, dining, Grove Market, and other enterprises, as well as partnerships with entities like the Department of Forestry that manage timber sales. Mr. Kondzielawa reviewed capital projects proposed in the 2026-32 Capital Outlay Plan.

### **Working Lunch – Higher Education Consolidation: An Overview**

Following a break at 11:45, the meeting resumed at noon with a working lunch. Dr. Eileen Stempel, Consultant to the Board of Visitors, introduced John MacIntosh, Managing Partner of

SeaChange Capital, who joined via Teams to discuss the growing trend of mergers and acquisitions in higher education. SeaChange Capital supports colleges and universities to explore strategic alliances and collaborative partnerships that have the potential to improve student success. The process for applying for funding through SeaChange Capital was explained. Dr. Stremmel presented the Board with a framework for investigating Primary Models and Options for Consolidation in Higher Education.

After the working lunch, Dr. Adam Zucconi, Acting Chief Academic Officer, provided an overview of academic assets, including instructional faculty and degree programs and credentials offered. He highlighted future program development and innovation, especially planned certificate programs in data science, cyber security and healthcare. Dr. Zucconi shared that 86% of tenured and continuing track faculty hold terminal degrees and full-time faculty teach approximately 70% of classes. He also reported on faculty-led experiences for students during the last year and library and Academic Innovation Center resources available to students.

Ben Thoreson, Director of Student Success, introduced himself and highlighted student success assets, including the College's Guided Pathways to Success (GPS) program designed to help students stay on course to reach their academic and career goals. Mr. Thoreson explained the role of learner mentors who are full-time professional advisors assigned to every student. The key priorities for student success at RBC are retention, graduation, and helping students persist toward the next step in their educational journey. Mr. Thoreson described how he and his team use data interventions to assist students who encounter academic challenges. He shared success stories of three recent RBC graduates and how they are thriving at their four-year universities, including Princeton, Amherst, and UNC.

### **Committee Reports**

[See Welcome and Introductory Remarks.]

### **Action Items**

After Mr. Thoreson's presentation and conclusion of the President's report, the Board took a 15-minute break. At 1:45 p.m. the meeting continued with Dr. Sydow summarizing each of the eight resolutions presented for Board approval.

**Resolutions 1**, Appointment to Fill Vacancies in the Instructional Faculty; **Resolution 2**, Award of Academic Promotion; and **Resolution 3**, Approval to Fill Vacancies in the Professional Faculty, were voted on as a block. Rector Rathbone requested a motion to approve Resolutions 1 through 3. The motion was made by Mr. Albert Poole, seconded by Ms. Smits and approved by voice vote.

Rector Rathbone then requested a motion to approve **Resolution 4**, Approval of the College Workforce Planning and Development Report. The motion was made by Ms. Vickie Schray, seconded by Mr. Poole and approved by voice vote.

**Resolution 5**, Approval of 2026-2032 Capital Outlay Plan and **Resolution 6**, 2026-2032 Six-Year Plan, were voted on as a block. Rector Rathbone requested a motion to approve Resolutions 5 and 6. The motion was made by Mr. Poole, seconded by Ms. Schray and approved by voice vote.

Rector Rathbone requested a motion to approve **Resolution 7**, Approval of BOV Status Update Report. The motion was made by Ms. Schray, seconded by Mr. Poole and approved by voice vote.

### **Closed Session**

After passage of Resolution 7, Rector Rathbone requested a motion to move the Board meeting into closed session for the purpose of discussing the selection of a presidential search firm pursuant to Virginia Code §2.2-3711.A.29 Discussion of the award of a public contract involving the expenditure of public funds, including interviews of bidders or offerors, and discussion of the terms of scope of such contract, where discussion in an open session would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body. The motion was made by Mr. Poole, seconded by Ms. Schray and approved by voice vote. The Board went into closed session at 2:02 p.m.

### **Open Session Resumed**

The Board reconvened in open session at 2:16 p.m.

Rector Rathbone requested a motion that the Board certify by roll call vote that, to the best of each member's knowledge, only matters lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements and the Virginia Freedom of Information Act were discussed and only matters identified in the motion to have a closed session were discussed. The motion was made by Mr. Poole, seconded by Ms. Schray. Gerrit Smith, Senior Executive Administrator and Clerk to the Board, called the roll, and all six Board members present "certified yes."

Rector Rathbone requested a motion to pass **hand-delivered Resolution 8**, Authorizing the Selection of the Presidential Search Firm and Appointing an Ad Hoc Presidential Search Committee. The motion was made by Ms. Schray, seconded by Mr. Parham and passed by voice vote as amended.

There being no further business, Rector Rathbone adjourned the meeting at 2:21 p.m.

**Approved on January 28, 2026**



**Richard Bland College**  
**BOARD OF VISITOR**

**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

**October 1, 2025 | 5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. | Microsoft Teams**

The Richard Bland College Board of Visitors met virtually in an open session on October 1, 2025, for a special board meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the process of hiring an Interim President.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT FOR THE BOARD MEETING:**

- Mr. John Rathbone, Rector
- Mr. Albert Poole, Vice Rector
- Ms. Vickie Schray, Secretary
- Hon. James Dyke Jr.
- Hon. Sam Parham
- Mr. Chuck Patton
- Ms. Bouwien Smits

**ABSENT FROM THE BOARD MEETING:**

- Mr. Jason Pode, Faculty Representative
- Ms. Lilli Brown, Student Representative

**OTHERS PRESENT FOR THE BOARD MEETING:**

- Dr. Debbie Sydow, President
- Ms. Jennifer Muller, Founder and Managing Partner, Academic Career & Executive Search
- Ms. Ann Costantino, Managing Director, Academic Career & Executive Search
- Ms. Christa Vines, Project and Recruitment Manager, Academic Career & Executive Search
- Mr. Nathan Moberley, College Counsel
- Mr. Gerrit Smith, Senior Executive Administrator and Clerk to the Board of Visitors

**Welcome and Introductory Remarks**

Rector John Rathbone called the Board meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. He introduced Ms. Jennifer Muller, Founder and Managing Partner of the Academic Career & Executive Search (ACES) firm.

**Interim President Search Process Presentation and Discussion**

Ms. Muller provided the Board with an overview of the interim presidential search process and timeline. She noted that ACES will advertise the position and reach out to potential candidates. The deadline to submit applications for the position is November 12, 2025. The Interim

Presidential Search Committee (Committee) will then review submissions and select candidates for virtual interviews, which will take place in December 2025.

After the virtual interviews, the Committee will identify finalists for in-person interviews to be conducted on campus in January 2026. Once these interviews are completed, the Committee will make a recommendation to the Board regarding the candidate for Interim President. The Board will then vote on the recommended candidate at its regularly scheduled meeting on January 28, 2026. The Interim President will start on July 1, 2026, and the minimum tenure will be twelve months.

The Board members then engaged in a discussion about key qualities desired in an Interim President. Members emphasized the importance of political acumen and experience working with the Virginia legislature. They also agreed that the ideal candidate should be a strong collaborator and work effectively with faculty and staff, along with having other essential leadership attributes.

#### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Rector Rathbone adjourned the meeting at 5:59 p.m.

**Approved on January 28, 2026**



# Richard Bland College

## BOARD OF VISITORS

### **Resolution: No. 1 – 2028 MISSION, VISION and STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

**Date: January 28, 2026**

**WHEREAS**, in April 2013, President Sydow recommended and the W&M Board of Visitors approved *RBC-2019*, the 2014-2019 strategic plan for Richard Bland College; and

**WHEREAS**, in February, 2020, the Board of Visitors approved the 2020-2025 strategic plan entitled *Seize Your Potential*; and

**WHEREAS**, the goals and objectives set forth in *RBC-2019* and *Seize Your Potential (2020-2025)* drove significant gains for Richard Bland College, most notably increased enrollment, improved student outcomes, expanded educational and career pathways, and enhanced operational efficiency and performance; and

**WHEREAS**, during a pivotal period of leadership transition (board and president), unprecedented demographic and technological shifts, and legislative mandates for contemplating the future of Richard Bland College, clear focus and direction are required to continue to strengthen and advantageously position the institution for success in fulfilling its educational mission; and

**WHEREAS**, this plan sets strategic direction and priorities over the next 18-24 months, thereby assuring that during this period of transition the institution continues its forward trajectory and momentum with a central focus on student success and regional development; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2026-2028 strategic plan aligns with the Six-Year Plan, SCHEV priorities, VBHEC initiatives and state mandates to drive 1) high demand and high quality programs and services, 2) improved student outcomes, and 3) resource optimization

**WHEREAS**, Richard Bland College stakeholders have reviewed and provided input to the updated 2026-2028 mission, vision, and strategic priorities; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that upon recommendation of the President, the Richard Bland College Board of Visitors hereby approves the 2026-2028 strategic plan for Richard Bland College.

## Richard Bland College 2026-28 Strategic Plan

### I. Background and Context

Following an extensive planning process led by President Sydow, in April 2013, the W&M Board of Visitors approved the 2014-19 strategic plan for Richard Bland College. The **RBC-19** plan included a revised mission and vision, strategic goals, and key performance indicators focused on elevating the quality, relevance and reputation of Richard Bland College in direct support of Commonwealth goals. The three big goals prioritized:

1. **Students** – Increased enrollment and an enhanced the student experience
2. **Programs and Delivery** – Modified portfolio of academic programs and services to be optimally responsive to documented market demand
3. **Operations and Resources** – Financial and environmental sustainability, and high-performance operations

Significant gains were achieved in each area of focus with established goals incrementally tracked and Bland stakeholders, including the W&M Board, receiving regular progress reports. Most significantly, by developing and implementing a carefully constructed Strategic Enrollment Management Plan that prioritized the resurrection of intercollegiate athletics, dual enrollment expansion, and an exceptional student experience (ESE@RBC), student enrollment goals were achieved (2,000 students). Focused investment in high quality and strategic marketing elevated brand awareness and reputation. Strategic partnerships with both public and private universities created new student pathways, and student satisfaction increased. Operating expenses were pared, and auxiliary revenue grew to secure financial stability while, at the same time, maintaining affordable tuition and fees.

In February 2020, the president recommended and the W&M Board of Visitors approved the 2020-25 strategic plan for Richard Bland College entitled **Seize Your Potential**. Subsequently, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, goals and objectives derived from 2021 and 2022 General Assembly budget bills were integrated, and the Board approved an updated strategic plan in February 2022. With a new baseline from which to begin, the plan sought to provide students:

1. **An educational product of high value with streamlined pathways** – Each program would be vetted for transferability, academic rigor and relevance to the market.
2. **An unmatched student experience** – Building on ESE@RBC, support and guidance would be present at every stage of the student lifecycle, and barriers to success would be identified and removed.
3. **Sustainability in operation** – Building on RBC-19 advances, auxiliary revenue would continue to grow through operational efficiency, outsourcing/insourcing, and strategic partnerships. There would also be a renewed focus on growing the endowment.

During this period, Richard Bland College gathered extraordinary momentum, significantly growing the endowment, auxiliary, and grant revenue; establishing a Student Success department and Guided Pathways to Success (GPS) program; and driving consecutive enrollment increases.

Now when the higher education industry confronts unprecedented challenges at the onset of a decade-long “enrollment cliff” (decreased numbers of high school graduates and increased competition), Richard Bland finds itself doubly challenged by leadership transitions, both with a new governing board as of July 1, 2025, and an impending presidential transition (effective 7/01/2026). In addition, the legislative Code establishing the Richard Bland College Board of Visitors requires the Board to explore options for Bland’s future that include consolidation with other institutions of higher education (IHEs) and to report their findings and recommendations back to the Administration and General Assembly by June 30 of 2026, 2027, and 2028.

Retaining Bland’s nimble, entrepreneurial culture and its student-centric values is the clarion call at this pivotal time. Continuing to advance student success, career-readiness and operational sustainability are paramount to the College’s future. At the same time, changing technologies (e.g., GEN AI), changing demographics, and changing leadership provide an exciting opportunity to adjust course and set new goals to ensure that Richard Bland’s educational mission remains relevant, robust and attainable.

It is with this intention—during an interval of transition over the coming 18-24 months—to strengthen and advantageously position Richard Bland College for extraordinary success in fulfilling its educational mission, that the President and Council recommend approval of the updated **Bland 2028** strategic plan.

## **II. Updated Mission**

**Current Mission Statement:** 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.

**Proposed Mission Statement:** Richard Bland College propels student success and community development through a high-value educational core, expertly guided academic and career pathways, and robust strategic partnerships.

## **III. Updated Vision**

**Current Vision Statement:** 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.

**Proposed Vision Statement:** Richard Bland College delivers innovative educational solutions and transformative educational experiences that empower students to dream bigger, achieve more, and help communities to thrive.

## **IV. Updated Values**

### **Current Values:**

- A friendly, family atmosphere – expansive atmosphere of support for every individual
- Enthusiastic, student-focused service – serve in a way that nurtures student potential and supports their journey to success
- The power of difference – an inclusive and welcoming community of individuals with diverse talents and skills who are committed to civility, mutual respect, and the free and open exchange of ideas
- Building confidence – engaging and supporting students to cultivate their own individual potential, fortitude and agency
- Quality outcomes – continuously assess, adjust and improve

### **Proposed Values:**

- Academic Excellence - We uphold high standards in teaching and learning rooted in a rich educational core.
- Access and Connection - We serve diverse learners through inclusive pathways and individualized support.
- Empowerment - We inspire students to dream bigger and pursue their vision of success with confidence.
- Community Impact - We cultivate graduates who lead with purpose and resilience while making an impact on their community.
- \*Innovation: We embrace personalized technologies and strategic partnerships that enhance learning and opportunity while meeting evolving student and workforce needs.

## **V. Updated Strategic Priorities**

### **1. Build Portfolio of High-value Credentials Aligned with Market Demand**

- a. Execute Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan, including the launch of a robust portfolio of micro-credentials aligned with high-demand jobs.
- b. Expand STEAM-H competencies for regional students by expanding dual enrollment opportunities leading to two-year degrees, pathways to employment, and transfer to undergraduate and graduate-level STEAM-H degree programs.
- c. Identify and execute strategic partnerships that expand academic and career pathways available to students.

- d. Analyze and pursue resolution of all barriers that impede delivery of a full range of high-demand programs and credentials.

## **2. Improve Student Outcomes**

- a. Raise IPEDS graduation rate to at least 35% for the fall 2027 cohort, and continue to increase by 1% year over year.
- b. Enhance student persistence and retention by achieving at least a 60% fall to fall retention rate by 2027, and continue to increase by 1% year over year.
- c. In keeping with SEM goals and to reduce cost barriers, increase the dual enrollment conversion rate by 5% annually.
- d. Equip faculty, staff and students to utilize advanced technologies, including AI, to improve academic and operational outcomes.

## **3. Optimize Resources to Remain Affordable and Accessible**

- a. Grow endowment and sponsored programs year-over-year to increase scholarships and emergency grants, thereby reducing educational costs.
- b. Attract tenants and utilize the Business Innovation Park to provide paid internship experiences, applied research opportunities, and career exploration activities.
- c. Increase grant funding by a minimum of 2% annually, and increase paid internships -by 5% annually.
- d. Secure Tier Two authorization to reduce cost and improve operational and academic outcomes.



# Richard Bland College

BOARD OF VISITORS

**Resolution: No. 2 – FISCAL YEAR 2026 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN**

**Date: January 28, 2026**

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Visitors of Richard Bland College recognizes the importance of maintaining strong internal controls and effective risk management practices to ensure the integrity, efficiency, and accountability of College operations; and

**WHEREAS**, Baker Tilly has developed the 2025-2026 Internal Audit Plan to support Richard Bland College by strengthening risk mitigation, enhancing operational effectiveness, and promoting compliance, and which includes the following components:

- **An Enterprise Risk Assessment** that identifies, analyzes, and scores the College’s financial, operational, compliance, and strategic risks; and
- **Ongoing compliance support** for Auditor of Public Accounts (APA) requirements related to information systems security and financial operations; and

**WHEREAS**, the Internal Audit Plan has been developed in accordance with applicable professional standards and is consistent with the requirements of the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Audit and Management Services guidelines and the standards set forth by the Institute of Internal Auditors;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Visitors hereby accepts and approves the Fiscal Year 2026 Internal Audit Plan prepared by Baker Tilly as presented; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the President and College administration are authorized and directed to implement the Internal Audit Plan and to report progress, findings, and recommendations to the Finance, Audit and Compliance Committee of the Board of Visitors to ensure continued compliance with Virginia audit standards and best practices.



**Richard Bland College**  
**BOARD OF VISITORS**

**Resolution: No. 3 POLICY TO DELINIATE THE RELATIONSHIP, ROLES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD OF VISITORS AND THE FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Date: January 28, 2026**

**WHEREAS**, the Richard Bland College Board of Visitors (the 'Board') is the governing body of Richard Bland College, established pursuant to Chapter 21.1 of Title 23.1 of the Code of Virginia; and

**WHEREAS**, the Richard Bland College Foundation Board of Directors (the 'Foundation Board') is a duly incorporated 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization formed to support the mission and strategic priorities of Richard Bland College through fundraising, asset management, and community engagement; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board recognizes the importance of clearly delineating the roles, responsibilities, and collaborative expectations between the Board and the Foundation Board to ensure effective governance, transparency, and alignment with the College's mission; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Richard Bland College Board of Visitors that the Governance Policy to Delineate Roles, Responsibilities and the Relationship Between the Richard Bland College Board of Visitors and the Richard Bland College Foundation Board of Directors is hereby adopted and shall be incorporated into the Board's official Policy manual; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption and shall remain in force until amended or repealed by subsequent action of the Board.

# **Governance Policy: Delineation of Roles, Responsibilities and the Relationship Between the Board of Visitors and the Foundation Board of Directors**

## **I. Purpose**

This policy establishes clear boundaries and collaborative expectations between the governing body of the College, namely the Richard Bland College Board of Visitors (BoV), and the fiduciary body of the College's affiliated 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, namely the Richard Bland College Foundation Board of Directors (Foundation Board).

---

## **II. Legal Authority and Organizational Identity**

### ***Board of Visitors***

- Established under **Chapter 21.1 of Title 23.1 of the Code of Virginia.**
- Functions as a **corporate body** known as *The Rector and Visitors of Richard Bland College.*
- Composed of **nine members appointed by the Governor.**
- Operates under the **control of the General Assembly.**

### ***Foundation Board***

- Incorporated as a **501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.**
  - Operates independently but in support of the College's mission.
  - Governed by its own **articles of incorporation and bylaws.**
  - Subject to **IRS governance standards** for charitable organizations.
- 

## **III. Roles and Responsibilities**

### ***Board of Visitors***

#### **Governance and Oversight**

- Appoints the College President.
- Holds fiduciary duty, entrusted to act with loyalty, care, and good faith in the best interest of the College.
- Approves academic programs, tuition, and budget.
- Oversees strategic planning, institutional effectiveness, accreditation, and compliance.
- Manages all College property and assets (NOTE: Board supports Foundation's utilization of campus property and assets pursuant to Operating/Support Agreements, leases, and other agreements currently in effect).

## **Policy and Regulation**

- Adopts College policies.
  - Ensures compliance with state and federal laws.
- 

## ***Foundation Board***

### **Fundraising and Resource Development**

- Raises and manages private funds to support College priorities.
- Oversees endowed scholarships, donor relations, and major gifts.

### **Asset Stewardship**

- Manages Foundation assets in accordance with donor intent and fiduciary standards.
- Ensures transparency and accountability in financial reporting.

### **Advocacy and Community Engagement**

- Promotes the College's mission through community partnerships and events.
  - Serves as ambassadors to alumni, corporate partners, and philanthropic organizations.
- 

## **IV. Collaboration and Communication**

- The **President of Richard Bland College** serves as a **liaison** between the two boards and holds an **ex officio role** on the Foundation Board.
- Joint strategic initiatives must be **aligned with the College's mission and comply with current operating and support agreements** when involving College resources or branding.
- The Foundation Board shall **report annually** to the BoV on fundraising outcomes, financial health, and strategic priorities.



# Richard Bland College

## BOARD OF VISITORS

### **Resolution: No. 4 – ELECTION OF INTERIM PRESIDENT**

**Date: January 28, 2026**

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Visitors of Richard Bland College is vested with the power and duty to appoint the chief executive officer of the College and to set the terms and conditions of employment for such appointment, consistent with the Board’s governing authority under Title 23.1 of the Code of Virginia, including § 23.1-1301, and the Board’s bylaws and policies; and

**WHEREAS**, the College requires the timely appointment of an Interim President to ensure continuity of leadership, institutional effectiveness, and fulfillment of its mission and strategic goals when President Debbie L. Sydow steps down as president on June 30, 2025, and while any permanent presidential search and selection process is conducted; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT**, the Board of Visitors elects Dr. Kenneth Alexander as interim president of Richard Bland College, effective May 11, 2026, and ending on June 30, 2027, or the date on which a new President begins his or her term of office; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT**, the Board of Visitors authorizes the Rector to execute a final Employment Agreement with the Interim President which is consistent with law, established College policies, budgetary parameters, and the terms discussed in closed session with the Board of Visitors.



# Richard Bland College

## BOARD OF VISITORS

### **Resolution: No. 5 - 2026 CAMPUS FACILITIES MASTER PLAN**

**Date: January 28, 2026**

**WHEREAS**, Richard Bland College adopted a Campus Master Plan in 2014 that envisioned transforming the College from a commuter campus to a residential, pedestrian-friendly campus, concentrating academic, athletic, and residential activity in the southwest and northwest quadrants; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2014 plan emphasized community-building, environmental sustainability, and strategic growth aligned with the College's mission and strategic goals; and

**WHEREAS**, the College now seeks to update and refine that vision through a 2026 Campus Facilities Master Plan that promotes synergies with the adjacent Business Innovation Park and further advances its strategic priorities of operational efficiency, student affordability, institutional sustainability, and community engagement; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2026 Campus Facilities Master Plan proposes:

- Reducing the overall campus footprint to foster a more vibrant, connected campus community and to lower short-term and long-term maintenance costs;
- Renovating and repurposing Statesman Hall as a consolidated administration, technology hub, and campus safety building, thereby improving operational efficiency and service delivery;
- Systematically abandoning and ultimately razing obsolete East Campus structures originally built to support agricultural and hospital operations, which have reached the end of their useful life, while restoring these areas for green space and future programmatic opportunities; and
- Focusing on the student experience that encompasses academics, athletics, resident life and campus culture, and entrepreneurship through engagement with business innovation park, by planning and prioritizing the appropriate adjacencies and zoning of campus.

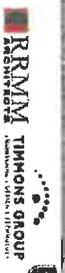
**WHEREAS**, the updated plan continues to prioritize pedestrian corridors, peripheral parking, and natural resource stewardship, consistent with the College's commitment to sustainability and student engagement;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Visitors of Richard Bland College hereby approves and adopts the 2026 Campus Facilities Master Plan, dated January 2026, as the guiding framework for campus development and directs the College administration to oversee its implementation in alignment with institutional priorities; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that any substantive changes to the 2026 Campus Facilities Master Plan shall require approval by a majority vote of the Board of Visitors.



**RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE**  
MASTER PLAN • OVERALL CAMPUS BOUNDARY 01/09/2026



**Richard Bland College**  
11501 PINEWOOD ROAD  
SOUTH BRIDGE CREEK, VIRGINIA 23061  
804.692.1100



**RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE**  
BASE MAP - EXISTING UTILITIES EXHIBIT 01/12/2026

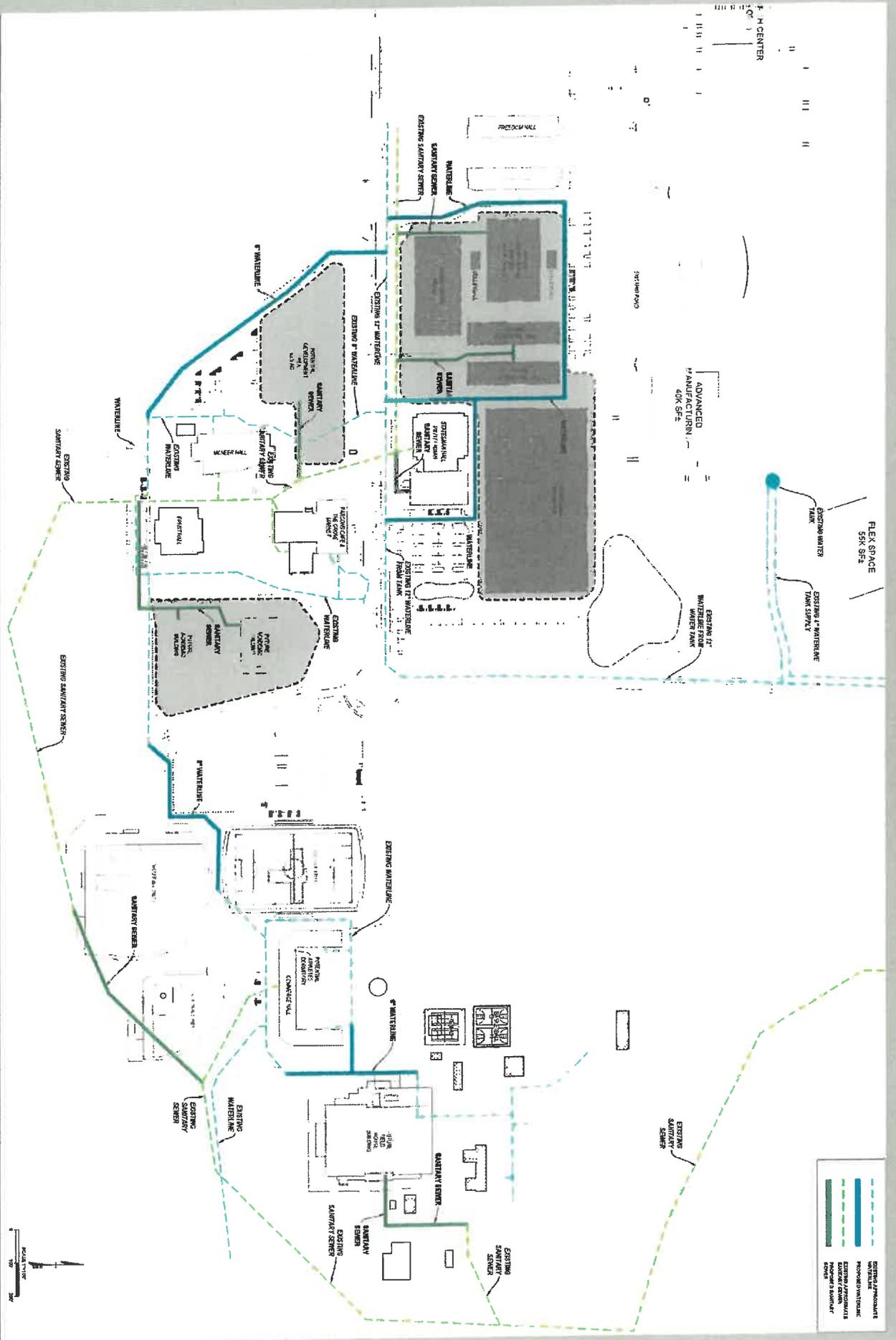


**RRM TIMMONS GROUP**  
ARCHITECTS

**Richard Bland College**  
1110N KENNEDY ROAD  
200N WALK GIBBS, VIRGINIA 23061  
202.773.1233



**RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE**  
**MASTER PLAN - WATER & SANITARY SEWER ROUTING 01/12/2026**



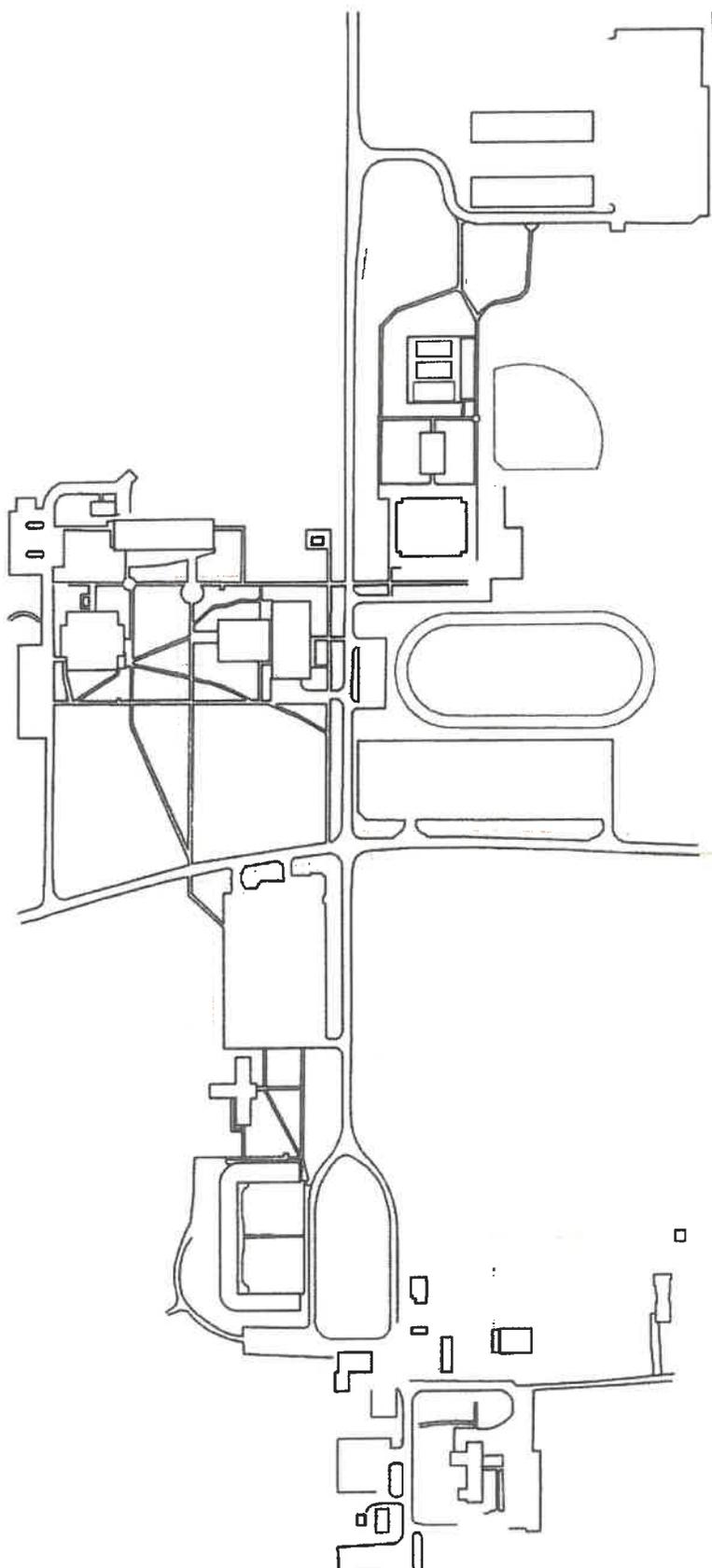
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**LEGEND**

- EXISTING TELECOMMUNICATIONS ROUTING
- EXISTING TELECOMMUNICATIONS ROUTING
- EXISTING TELECOMMUNICATIONS ROUTING
- EXISTING TELECOMMUNICATIONS ROUTING



**EXISTING TELECOMMUNICATIONS ROUTING PLAN**

**GRAPHIC SCALE**



PROJECT TITLE <b>RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE OF WILLIAM &amp; MARY</b> <b>MASTER PLAN ASSISTANCE - OSP SURVEY</b>		LOCATION <b>PETERSBURG</b> <b>VIRGINIA</b>	
DRAWN BY DATE CHECKED BY DATE	DESIGNED BY DATE PROJECT NO. SHEET NO.	NO.	REVISIONS DESCRIPTION

**T001**  
SHEET 1 OF 18

**EXISTING TELECOMMUNICATIONS ROUTING PLAN**



# Richard Bland College

## BOARD OF VISITORS

**Resolution: No. 6 – NAMING THE AIC BOARDROOM IN HONOR OF SENATOR MAMIE E. LOCKE, PH.D.**

**Date: January 28, 2025**

**WHEREAS**, Senator Mamie E. Locke has served the Commonwealth of Virginia with distinction since 2004 as a member of the Senate of Virginia, representing the 23rd District, which includes the City of Hampton and parts of the City of Newport News; and

**WHEREAS**, Senator Locke is a nationally respected educator, civic leader, and policymaker whose decades of service have profoundly impacted public education, governance, equity, and economic opportunity in Virginia and beyond; and

**WHEREAS**, Senator Locke holds a B.A. from Tougaloo College and both M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Political Science from Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta University), along with certifications from Harvard University and Emory University, and is Professor Emerita of Political Science at Hampton University; and

**WHEREAS**, Senator Locke has been a steadfast advocate for public higher education, including serving as Chair of the Senate Rules Committee, Chair of the Senate Democratic Caucus, and holding appointments on the Senate Finance and Appropriations, Commerce and Labor, General Laws and Technology, and Education and Health Committees; and

**WHEREAS**, Senator Locke served as the Chief Patron of Senate Bill 742 (SB742) during the 2025 Regular Session of the Virginia General Assembly—a transformative and historic piece of legislation that established the independent Board of Visitors for Richard Bland College, separating the institution from the College of William & Mary and granting it full operational autonomy, effective July 1, 2025; and

**WHEREAS**, Senator Locke’s legislative leadership and strategic vision were instrumental in the passage of SB742 with unanimous bipartisan support (40-0 in the Senate; 96-0 in the House), culminating in its enactment as Chapter 607 of the Acts of Assembly of 2025, thus shaping the future of Richard Bland College for generations; and

**WHEREAS**, Senator Locke’s lifelong commitment to public service, student access, shared governance, and leadership development exemplifies the values and aspirations of Richard Bland College as it enters this new era of independence;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Visitors of Richard Bland College does hereby name the official Boardroom of Richard Bland College located in the Academic Innovation Center the:

### **Honorable Mamie E. Locke Boardroom**

for a period of ten (10) years from the date of this resolution, in honor of her enduring legacy, transformative leadership, and pivotal role in securing independent board governance for Richard Bland College through the patronage and passage of Senate Bill 742.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that a commemorative plaque shall be prominently installed to reflect this honor and the significance of Senator Locke’s contributions to the College and the Commonwealth of Virginia.



## Richard Bland College BOARD OF VISITORS

### **Resolution: No. 7 – CONFERRAL OF HONORARY DEGREE**

**Date: January 28, 2026**

Richard Bland College seeks to honor meritorious and outstanding service to the College and the community at large, and to recognize persons whose lives serve as examples of the College's aspirations for its students by awarding the honorary Associate degree.

**WHEREAS**, Senator Mamie E. Locke has served with distinction in the Virginia Senate since 2004, representing the 23rd District, and has been a tireless advocate for education, equity, and public service throughout her career;

**WHEREAS**, Senator Locke received her Bachelor's degree in history and political science from Tougaloo College, and both Master's and Ph.D. degrees in Political Science from Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta University), and has served as Professor and Dean at Hampton University, earning the title of Professor Emerita of Political Science;

**WHEREAS**, Senator Locke was the first African American woman elected Mayor of the City of Hampton, serving from 2000 to 2004, and previously as Vice Mayor and City Council member, demonstrating a lifelong commitment to civic leadership and community development;

**WHEREAS**, Senator Locke has received numerous accolades, including the RBC Stateswoman Award, the Diane Blair Award for Outstanding Achievement in Politics and Government, the Virginia Education Association's Legislative Champion Award, and Lifetime Achievement honors from Virginia Union University and Virginia State University;

**WHEREAS**, Senator Locke currently chairs the Senate Rules Committee and the Senate Democratic Caucus, and she serves on key committees, including Finance and Appropriations, Education and Health, and General Laws and Technology, with a special focus on higher education policy;

**WHEREAS**, Senator Locke served as the Chief Patron of Senate Bill 742 (SB742) during the 2025 Regular Session of the Virginia General Assembly, a transformative and historic piece of legislation that established the independent Board of Visitors for Richard Bland College, separating the institution from the College of William & Mary and granting it full operational autonomy, effective July 1, 2025;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that in recognition of Senator Mamie Locke's public service, professional achievements, distinguished career, commitment to educational excellence in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the historic advancement of Richard Bland College's independence she receive the highest form of recognition offered by Richard Bland College to persons of exceptional distinction.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that upon recommendation of the President, the Board of Visitors of Richard Bland College, hereby approves the awarding of the honorary Associate of Science degree to Senator Mamie Locke at the Richard Bland College Commencement Ceremony on May 16, 2026.



**Richard Bland College**  
**BOARD OF VISITORS**

**Resolution: No. 8 – Level II AUTHORIZATION**

**Date: January 28, 2026**

**WHEREAS**, the 2005 Session of the General Assembly enacted Chapters 933 and 945, Acts of Assembly, known as the Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act (the “Act”), originally codified at Chapter 4.10 of Title 23, Sections 23-38.88 et seq., and now codified at Chapter 10 of Title 23.1, Sections 23.1-1001 et seq., of the Code of Virginia (1950), as amended; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2008 Session for the General Assembly enacted Chapters 824 and 829, Acts of the Assembly to amend and reenact §23-38.90 of the Code of Virginia relating to operational authority for public institutions of higher education in procurement, information technology, and capital projects excluding leases of real property, and which allows colleges and universities to enter into memoranda of understanding for additional operating authority in two, but no more than two, of these three areas; and

**WHEREAS**, Richard Bland College has established appropriate policies, procedures and controls and now stands ready to enter into an agreement with the Commonwealth of Virginia by memoranda of understanding with the appropriate Cabinet Secretaries, as stipulated by the Governor, granting appropriate operational authority, for the functional areas of procurement and information technology, for a period of three years; and

**WHEREAS**, as a condition for entering memoranda of understanding, the Richard Bland College Board of Visitors must approve a resolution affirmed by at least two-thirds of the Visitors stipulating that the institution is qualified to be, and should be, governed by such memoranda of understanding; and

**WHEREAS**, the President recommends and the Board has determined that entering into the memoranda of understanding is in the best interest of Richard Bland College and its ability to operate with greater flexibility and efficiency;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the Board hereby authorizes the President, Chief Business Officer, and Chief Operating Officer to proceed in cooperation with the appropriate Cabinet Secretary to obtain the operating authority outlined in § 23.1-1003 relative to procurement and information technology and to take all actions deemed by them to be necessary or advisable to facilitate this understanding; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that upon approval of the memoranda of understanding, the President, the Chief Business Officer, and Chief Operating Officer are granted full authority and responsibility to manage the procurement and information technology function of the College.



**Richard Bland College**  
**BOARD OF VISITORS**

**Resolution: No. 9 – FACULTY LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Date: January 28, 2026**

As noted below, Professor David Morgan has requested a leave of absence with full pay and benefits during the 2025-2026 academic year for purposes of study and reflection. This professional enrichment will ultimately benefit Richard Bland College and its students.

**BE IT RESOLVED**, That upon recommendation of the President, the Board of Visitors hereby approves the following leave of absence:

David Morgan, Professor of Physics, to complete several writing projects ranging from academic papers on physics/cosmology to an English translation of a 17th-century mechanics text, and to strengthen professional expertise in AI, Human-Robot Interaction (HRI), and programming (Python/data science) to directly support courses and institutional projects at RBC.



# Richard Bland College

## BOARD OF VISITORS

### **Resolution: No. 10 – CONFERRING UPON DR. DEBBIE L. SYDOW PRESIDENT EMERITA STATUS AND AFFIRMING PROFESSORSHIP, SABBATICAL LEAVE**

**Date: January 28, 2026**

**WHEREAS**, Dr. Debbie L. Sydow has served with distinction as President of Richard Bland College since July 1, 2012, providing visionary leadership, fostering academic excellence, and advancing the College’s mission to prepare students for transfer and workforce success; and

**WHEREAS**, under Dr. Sydow’s leadership, the College achieved significant milestones, including the establishment of an independent governing board, extensive revitalization of campus buildings and grounds, growth in enrollment and endowment, and enhanced institutional reputation; and

**WHEREAS**, insofar as Dr. Sydow has announced her intention to step down as president on June 30, 2026, the Board of Visitors wishes to recognize Dr. Sydow’s exemplary service and enduring contributions to the College and the Commonwealth of Virginia; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Visitors hereby confers upon Dr. Debbie L. Sydow the honorary title of President Emerita, effective July 1, 2026; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that Dr. Sydow is appointed Professor of English, with tenure, effective July 1, 2026, in accordance with her employment contract and in recognition of her academic credentials and demonstrated commitment to higher education and the professoriate; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Board affirms the contractual agreement granting Dr. Sydow one year of sabbatical leave, effective July 1, 2026, at her base salary for the 2025–2026 fiscal year, to support scholarly and professional pursuits; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that in accordance with Richard Bland College Human Resource Policy 1030, Administrative and Professional Leave Policy, Dr. Sydow’s leave balance upon separation from the presidency and as calculated through June 30, 2026—not to exceed a maximum payout of 240 hours—will be paid on or before August 16, 2026; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the Board of Visitors heartily commends Dr. Sydow for her outstanding leadership and service, and extends its deepest appreciation for her relentless and unwavering dedication to Richard Bland College and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

# Developing Tomorrow's Talent: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education

## Information Session

A. Scott Fleming, Executive Director



STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA

# THE VIRGINIA PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

## DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S TALENT



*Top state for talent – learning to leading*



## Vision/North Star Goal

### TOP STATE FOR TALENT BY 2032

*Creating a new value proposition in Virginia*

- Measured by Credentials of Value
- SCHEV to create index
- Currently ranked #7 by Lumina

### CREDENTIALS OF VALUE?

Credentials that lead to meaningful career, social and economic benefits and earning more than the median annual earnings of a high school graduate.\*

\*Note: The definition of "Credentials of Value" is informed by LUMINA CREDENTIALS OF VALUE. The definition serves as a placeholder while SCHEV works with other stakeholders and learns from other states to craft a definition to measure progress toward The Plan's vision. SCHEV is in the process of developing the index to measure credentials of value and how Virginia ranks compared to the 49 states.





## Goal 1: Ready - Measures

**First Time in  
College  
Retention (FTIC)**

Increase rate year-over-year and close gaps between IHEs and types of IHEs.

**Employment**

Increase total employed one-year post-grad within each degree level.



## Goal 1: Ready - Measures

### FTIC

### Retention

Increase rate year-over-year and close gaps between IHEs and types of IHEs

Source is SCHEV data and is inclusive of all institution types.

79.1%

BASELINE  
2022-2023

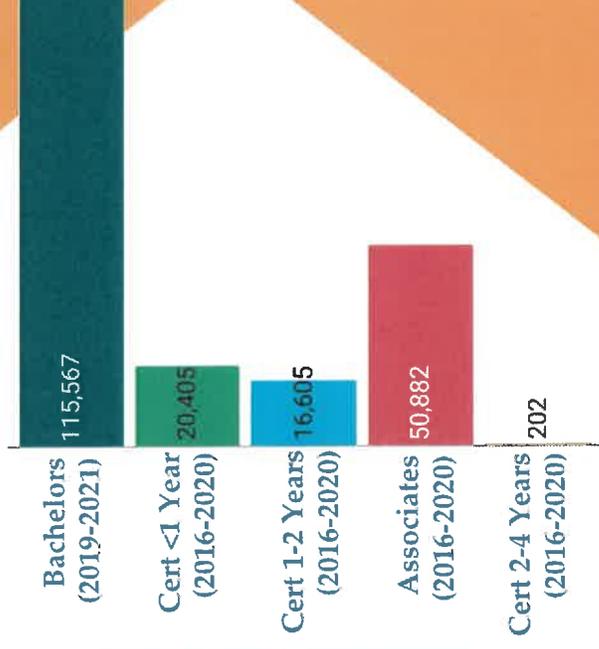


## Goal 1: Ready - Measures

### Employment

Increase total employed within each degree level one-year post graduation.

Source is PSEO data and is inclusive of all institution types.



# DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S TALENT



## Goal 1: Ready READY TO LEARN

### Strategy 1.1

Establish formal partnerships between VDOE, SCHEV and institutions to align exit and entry standards regarding college readiness. (Academic skills, soft skills, life skills, career exploration and SOL alignment to work/careers.)

# DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S TALENT



## Goal 1: Ready READY TO WORK

### Strategy 1.2

Increase collaboration and commitments between Virginia K-12, post-secondary institutions and employers to improve pathway alignment and enhance career readiness via career-focused education and work-based learning (e.g., certifications in high-demand fields, apprenticeships and internships).

# DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S TALENT



## Goal 1: Ready READY TO CONTRIBUTE & LEAD

### Strategy 1.3

Incorporate civic knowledge, civil discourse, service-learning opportunities and leadership development into the Virginia college experience – what it means to be a part of a community and what is means to lead in an environment of diverse perspectives.



## Goal 2: Responsive - Measures

### Completion

Increase rate year-over-year and close gaps between IHEs and types of IHEs

### Community College Success Rate

Increase aggregate success rate and across all factors.

### Workforce Alignment

51% (majority) of graduates from programs aligned to high-growth occupations.

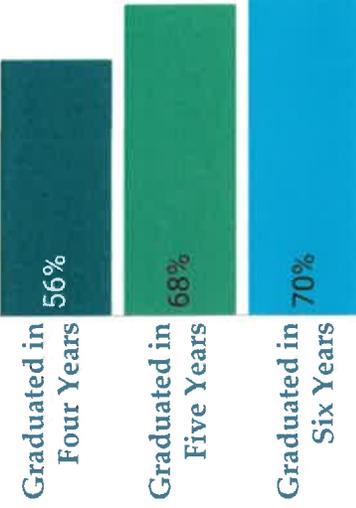


## Goal 2: Responsive - Measures

### BASELINE

2018

(Per SCHEV College Outcomes Data)



Reduce time to degree and close gaps between economic cohorts and between IHEs.

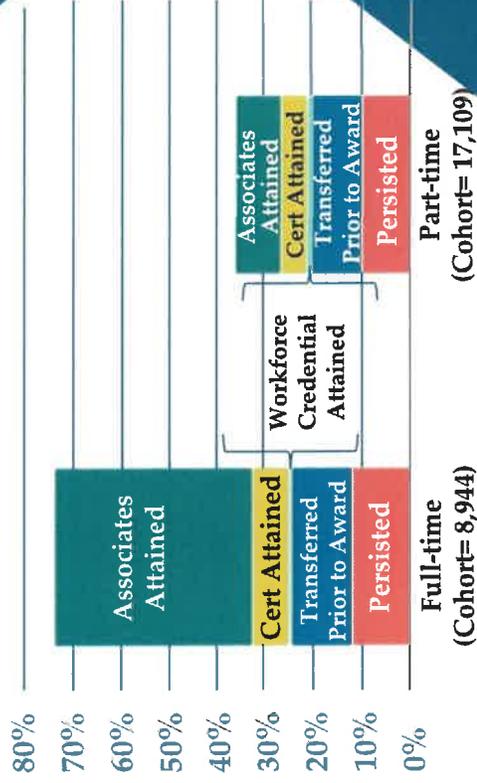
Four-year and six-year graduation rate trends, first-time, full-time in college (does not include transfer).

### Completion



## Goal 2: Responsive - Measures

**BASELINE  
2024**



Increase aggregate success rate and each success component rate.

Based on data collected by the Richmond Federal Reserve

### Community College Success Rate



## Goal 2: Responsive - Measures

51% (majority) of graduates from programs aligned to high-growth occupations.

### Workforce Alignment

Source is SCHEV data and is inclusive of all institution types.

42%

BASELINE  
2022-2023

# DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S TALENT



## Goal 2: Responsive RESPONSIVE TO STUDENT NEEDS

### Strategy 2.1

Expand mental health training and services as well as basic need supports to students, faculty and staff.

# DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S TALENT



## Goal 2: Responsive RESPONSIVE TO INDUSTRY NEEDS

### Strategy 2.2.a

Foster sustainable industry partnerships and commitments to co-develop training, re-skilling, work-based learning and credentialing programs. Integrate technological literacy and ethics, especially regarding AI and other advancing technologies, into the college experience.

### Strategy 2.2.b

Encourage development of agile, responsive, student-centered curriculum policies and audits for faster adaptation to industry and technological shifts.

# DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S TALENT



## Goal 2: Responsive RESPONSIVE TO VIRGINIANS' NEEDS

### Strategy 2.3a

Champion innovative funding strategies and efficiencies (e.g., enrollment and infrastructure management) that support affordable access to public higher education

### Strategy 2.3b

Increase outreach and supports to engage and retain non-traditional students (e.g., adult learners, military, incarcerated, etc.)

# DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S TALENT



## Goal 2: Responsive RESPONSIVE TO SOCIETAL & CULTURAL NEEDS

### Strategy 2.4

Establish new and strengthen existing innovation ecosystems around research conducted by Virginia universities to commercialize research discoveries that address societal needs and advance entrepreneurship and startup formation.

# DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S TALENT



## Goal 3: Relevant - Measures

College  
Participation  
Rate

Achieve a participation rate of  
75%.



### Goal 3: Relevant - Measures

#### College Participation Rate

Achieve a participation rate of 75%.

Source is VDOE data and is inclusive of students enrolled in an IHE within 16 months of earning a high school diploma.

64%  
BASELINE  
2023



# DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S TALENT



## Goal 3: Relevant RELEVANT TO STUDENTS

### Strategy 3.1

Implement a cross-sector communication campaign on the value of Virginia higher ed that links existing resources; expand access programming (including FAFSA completion, college advising and career coaches for K-12 and college students), as well as enhance the college application process for Virginians.

# DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S TALENT



## Goal 3: Relevant RELEVANT TO STUDENTS & FAMILIES

### Strategy 3.2.a

Improve transparency to students and families:  
Provide cost transparency and more consistent financial aid and scholarship information earlier in the college decision-making process.

### Strategy 3.2.b

Promote non-traditional pathways toward credential completion: Credit for prior learning/ experience; stackable credentials as package toward completion; consider three-year degree pathways and transfer agreements for high school DE and AP courses.

# DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S TALENT



## Goal 3: Relevant RELEVANT TO VIRGINIANS

### Strategy 3.3

Improve transparency to Virginians on institutions' outcomes and return on investment including graduate employment rates and their economic impact.

# DEVELOPING TOMORROW'S TALENT

## HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT THE PLAN?

- Consider its goals, objectives and strategies when developing your institutional/ business/organization strategic plans.
- Consider ways to enhance programs and activities you are already pursuing that address these goals, objectives and strategies.
- Collaborate with regional partners (industry, education and community) to share initiatives that are working and partner where possible.
- Share your progress, activities and ideas with SCHEV.
- Follow along on SCHEV's website to monitor the plan's progress.



Richard Bland College

# Campus Master Plan Update

Board of Visitors Presentation | 01-28-2026



TIMMONS GROUP

# Agenda

- » Existing Campus Conditions
- » Review 2014 Campus Master Plan
- » Review Innovation Center Master Plan
- » Campus Master Plan Update
  - Residential/Student Life
  - Athletics
  - Academics
- » Infrastructure Master Planning
- » Questions?

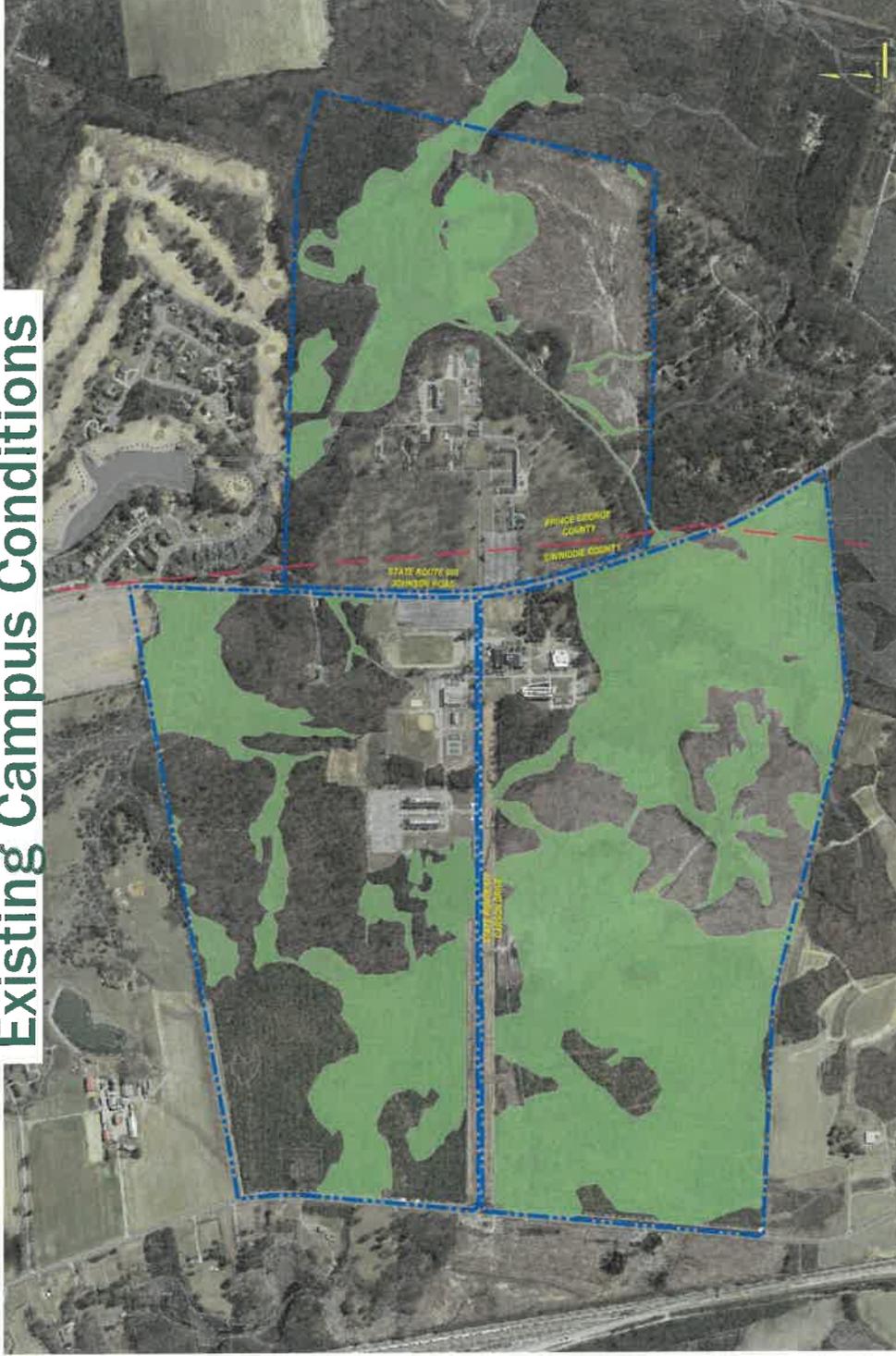


Richard Bland College



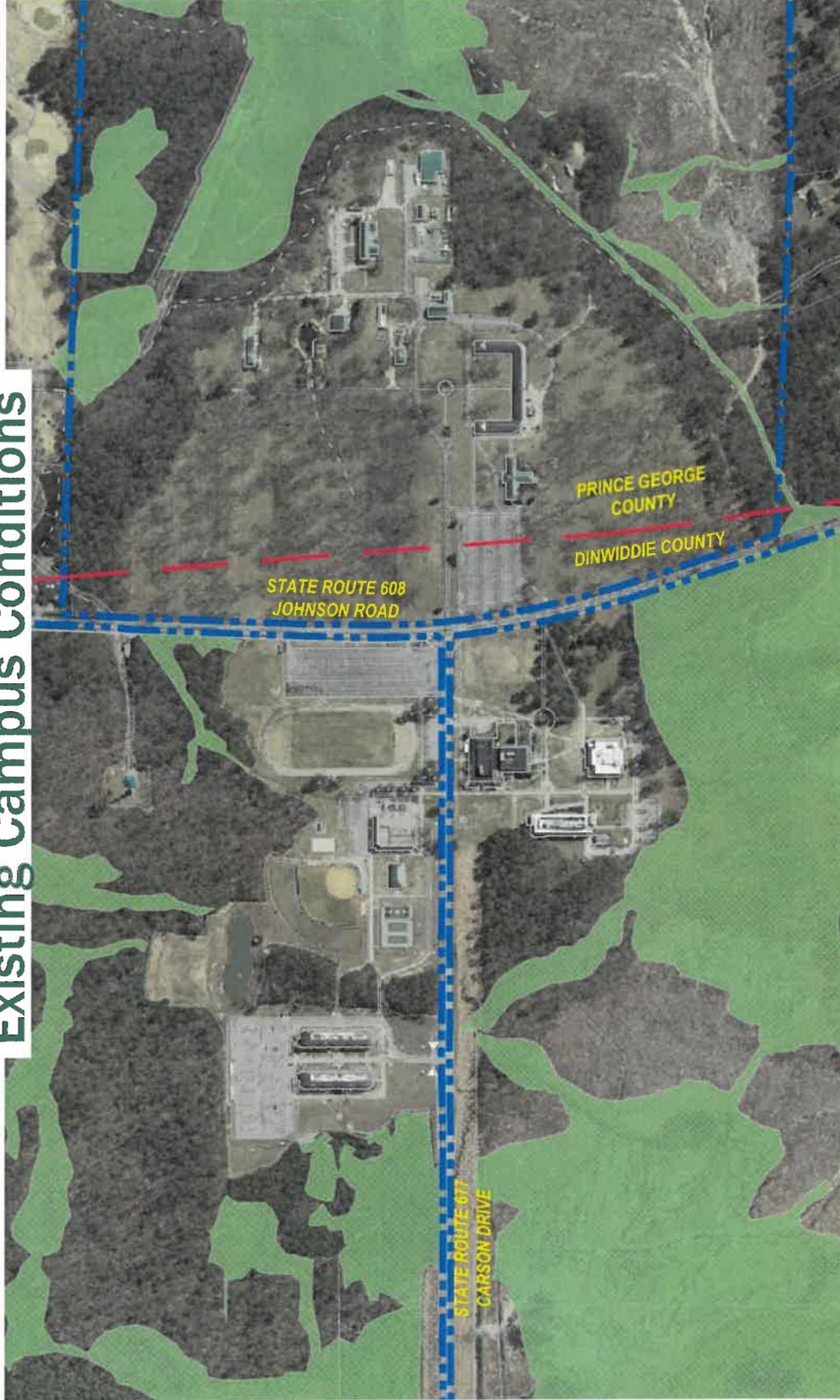
TIMMONS GROUP

# Existing Campus Conditions



RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE  
AERIAL BASE MAP

# Existing Campus Conditions



Richard Bland College



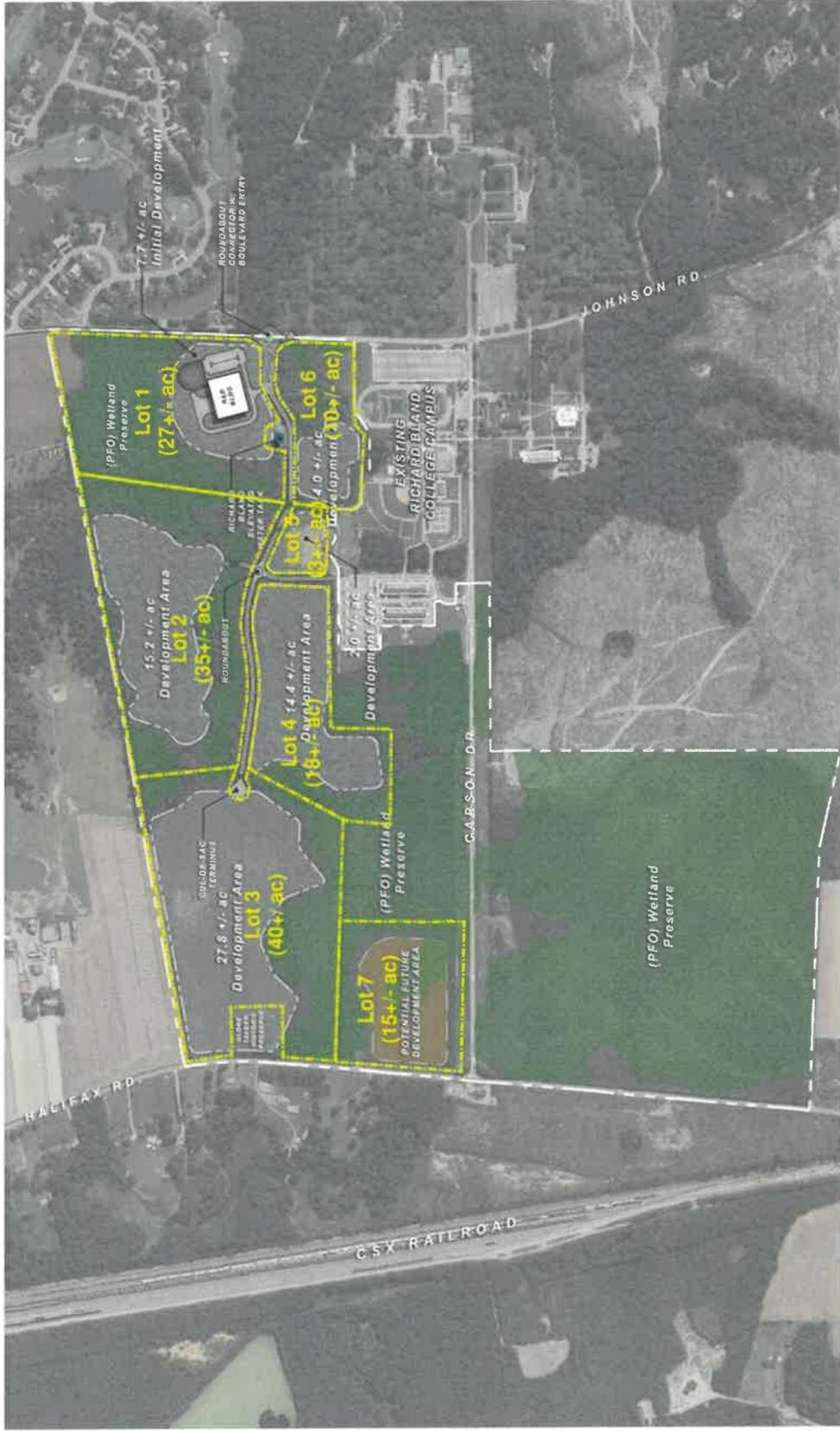
TIMMONS GROUP

# 2014 Campus Master Plan

Richard Bland College  
Site Concept Plan



# Innovation Park Master Plan



Richard Bland College



RRMM ARCHITECTS  
TIMMONS GROUP

# Innovation Park Subdivision

LINE	BEARING	LENGTH
L1	S81°23'07"W	64.84
L2	S89°44'31"W	135.50
L3	N1°23'56"E	26.00
L4	N87°23'33"W	10.07
L5	N87°23'33"W	45.57
L6	N73°54'46"E	101.15
L7	N47°03'57"W	101.15
L8	N22°20'06"E	303.02
L9	N22°20'06"E	222.89
L10	N22°20'06"E	80.37
L11	S89°44'31"W	691.09
L12	S22°20'06"E	70.09
L13	N87°23'33"W	202.54
L14	S73°54'46"E	129.02
L15	N87°23'33"W	371.84
L16	N84°43'05"W	309.42
L17	S81°23'07"W	58.64
L18	N71°40'54"W	302.29
L19	N71°40'54"W	66.99
L20	N57°11'17"W	644.49
L21	S81°23'33"W	111.17
L22	S81°23'33"W	300.07
L23	S81°23'33"W	672.29
L24	N84°43'05"E	510.77
L25	N89°33'00"W	370.39
L26	N89°33'00"W	315.09
L27	N71°40'57"E	58.94
L28	S89°44'31"E	318.51
L29	S89°44'31"W	361.90
L30	S89°44'31"W	578.77
L31	S89°44'31"W	61.07
L32	N89°33'00"W	260.29
L33	N89°33'00"W	32.07
L34	S84°43'06"E	308.42
L35	S71°40'57"W	195.97
L36	S89°44'31"W	427.89
L37	N71°40'57"W	184.89
L38	N87°11'27"W	68.24
L39	S89°44'31"W	62.80
L40	S87°10'08"E	371.84
L41	N87°10'08"E	66.42
L42	S87°10'08"E	201.54

CURVE	RADIUS	LENGTH	TANGENT	DELTA	CHORD BEARING	CHORD
C1	1844.88	238.88	116.44	93°14'	N17°30'06"	232.92
C2	2004.79	306.39	153.20	87°05'	N5°52'12"W	277.07
C3	318.67	194.37	97.19	34°14'39"	S7°58'40"E	206.24
C4	159.10	97.07	47.37	33°03'49"	S7°58'40"E	197.28
C5	69.29	34.29	17.15	57°17'46"	N74°10'14"E	81.79
C6	69.29	34.29	17.15	57°17'46"	S81°10'42"E	81.79
C7	50.07	48.87	24.15	54°11'06"	S75°28'47"E	54.22
C8	1708.17	326.82	163.41	49°12'29"	N87°50'24"W	491.19
C9	26.00	21.07	10.54	49°12'29"	S57°43'12"E	29.41
C10	60.00	34.19	17.10	27°22'49"	S87°11'04"W	66.87

CURVE	RADIUS	LENGTH	TANGENT	DELTA	CHORD BEARING	CHORD
C10	1736.17	351.89	175.95	177°29'	N87°30'31"E	392.87
C11	783.02	306.39	153.20	87°05'	N5°52'12"W	391.43
C12	26.00	21.07	10.54	49°12'29"	N27°25'04"W	36.47
C13	203.37	94.37	47.19	54°17'02"	S17°16'04"W	103.81
C14	173.33	73.72	36.88	50°10'15"	S17°16'04"W	76.52
C15	26.00	21.07	10.54	49°12'29"	S17°16'04"W	36.46
C16	203.37	94.37	47.19	54°17'02"	S17°16'04"E	103.81
C17	203.37	94.37	47.19	54°17'02"	S17°16'04"E	103.81
C18	203.37	94.37	47.19	54°17'02"	S17°16'04"E	103.81
C19	203.37	94.37	47.19	54°17'02"	S17°16'04"E	103.81
C20	203.37	94.37	47.19	54°17'02"	S17°16'04"E	103.81
C21	203.37	94.37	47.19	54°17'02"	S17°16'04"E	103.81
C22	203.37	94.37	47.19	54°17'02"	S17°16'04"E	103.81

NORTH SIDE OF CARSON DRIVE  
 PARCEL 02-363 (PART) ORIGINAL 218.807 ACRES  
 LESS 1.00 ACRES  
 LEASE LOT 1 38.899 ACRES  
 LEASE LOT 2 38.899 ACRES  
 LEASE LOT 3 2.886 ACRES  
 LEASE LOT 4 2.886 ACRES  
 LEASE LOT 5 11.830 ACRES  
 LEASE LOT 6 11.830 ACRES  
 PROPOSED ROAD LESS 4.638 ACRES  
 REMAINING 66.200 ACRES

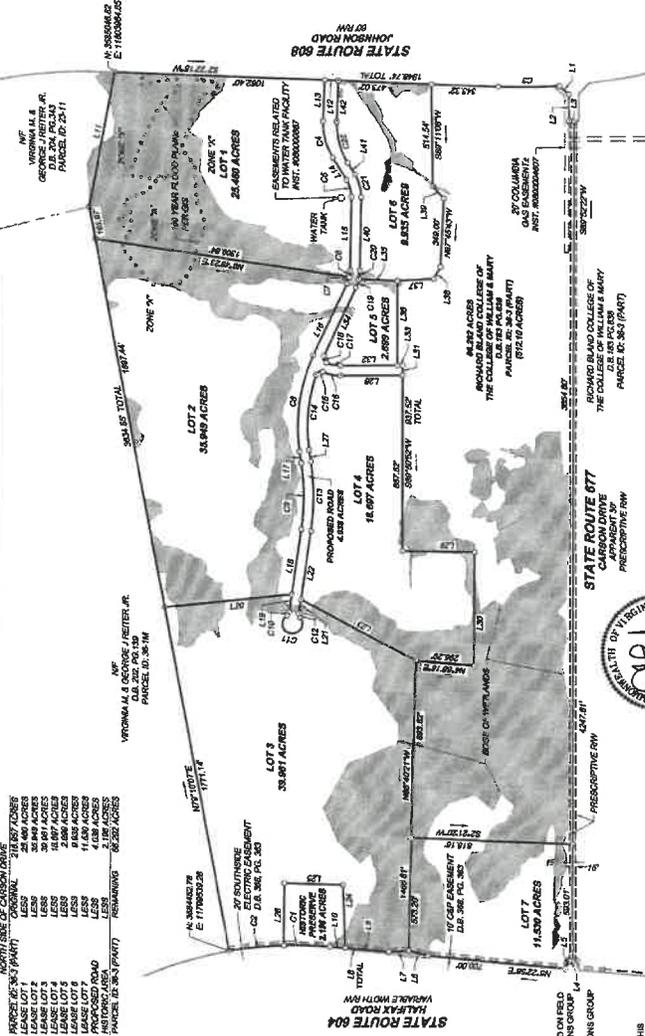


EXHIBIT SHOWING  
 LEASE LOTS ACROSS THE PROPERTY OF  
 RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE OF  
 THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM & MARY



WETLAND INFORMATION SHOWN BASED ON FIELD DELINEATION OF WETLANDS BY TIMMONS GROUP SURVEY.  
 IMPROVEMENTS NOT SHOWN.  
 BASED ON GRAPHIC DETERMINATION THIS PROPERTY IS IN ZONE X & Y OF THE FLOOD INSURANCE RATE MAP, COMMUNITY PANEL ENDS/03/13/2018 DATED JUNE 1, 2022.  
 THIS PLAN WAS PREPARED WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF A TITLE ENDORSEMENT WHICH MAY AFFECT THE PROPERTY.  
 LINESWORK BASED ON PREVIOUS TIMMONS GROUP SURVEY.

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100% DESIGN APPROVED THROUGH DATE: 05/11/2023  
 15% DESIGN APPROVED THROUGH DATE: 05/11/2023  
 THIS DRAWING PREPARED BY THE ARCHITECTS

1" = 200'

DATE: MARCH 15, 2022  
 SCALE: 1" = 200'  
 SHEET 1 OF 1  
 DRAWN BY: J. UPHAMSTON CHECKED BY: B. PAUL



Richard Bland College  
 RRM TIMMONS GROUP ARCHITECTS

EXHIBIT SHOWING  
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 RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE OF  
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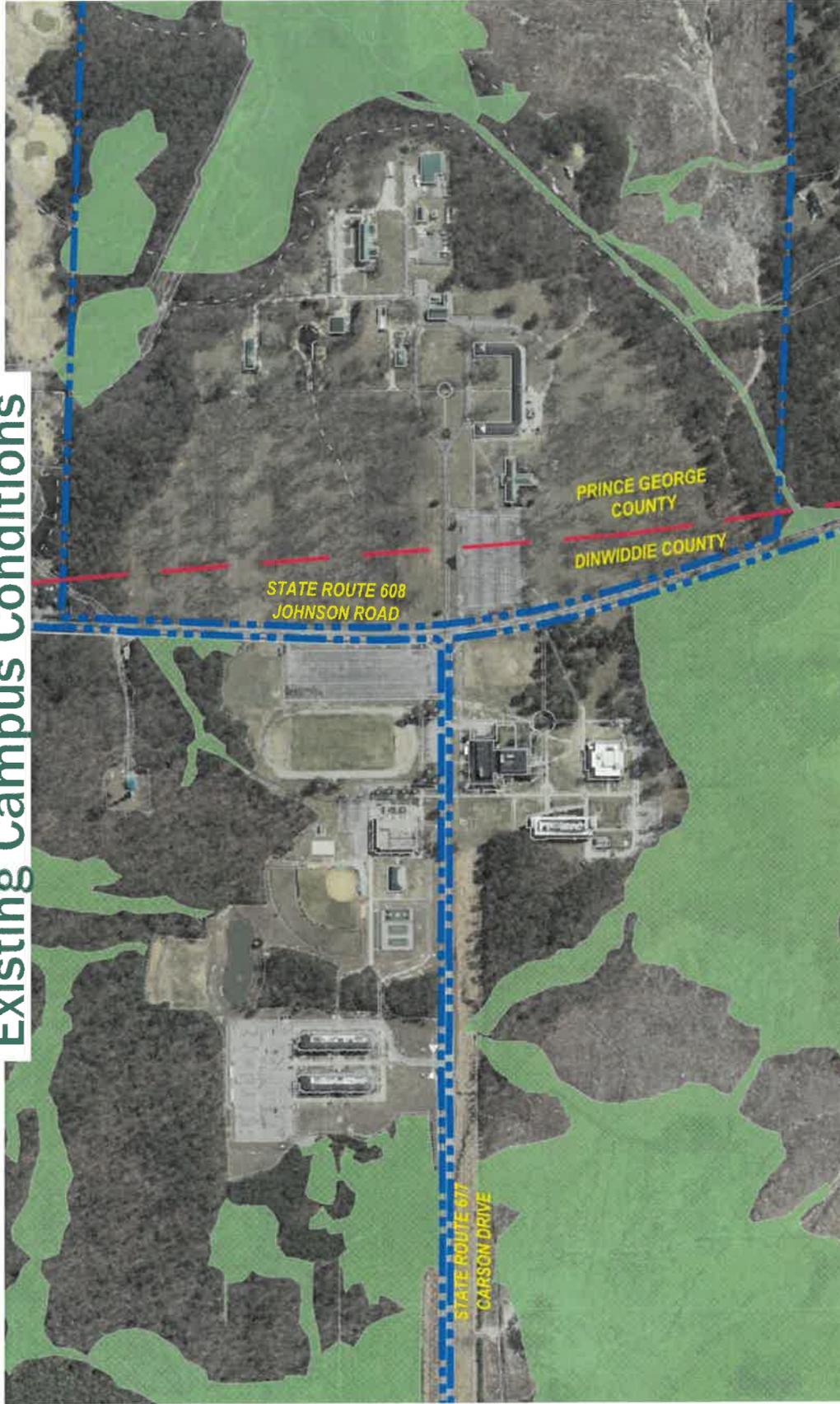
# Innovation Park



Richard Bland College

**RRMM** ARCHITECTS  
**TIMMONS GROUP**

# Existing Campus Conditions



Richard Bland College



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## Master Plan Update Goals

- » Review Usability of Existing Campus Buildings
- » Accommodate Need for Public Safety and IT Hub Facilities
- » Additional/Improved Sports Facilities
- » Improve Parking and Vehicular Circulation
- » Pedestrian Circulation & Safety
- » Flexibility of Plan for Phasing and/or Changing Requirements

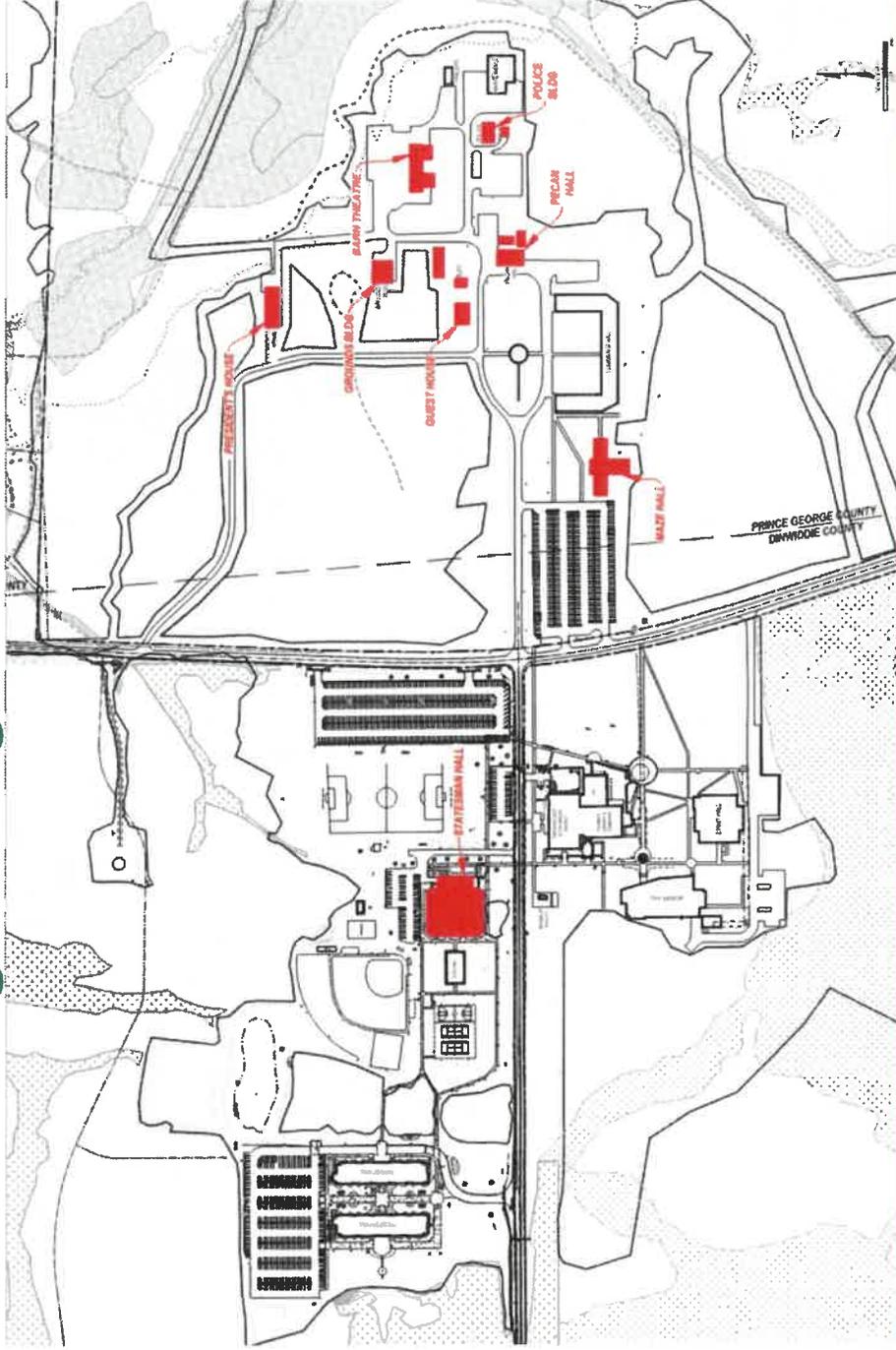


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# Existing Buildings in Poor Condition



RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE  
MASTER PLAN - EXISTING BUILDINGS TO BE DEMOLISHED



# Proposed Campus Zones

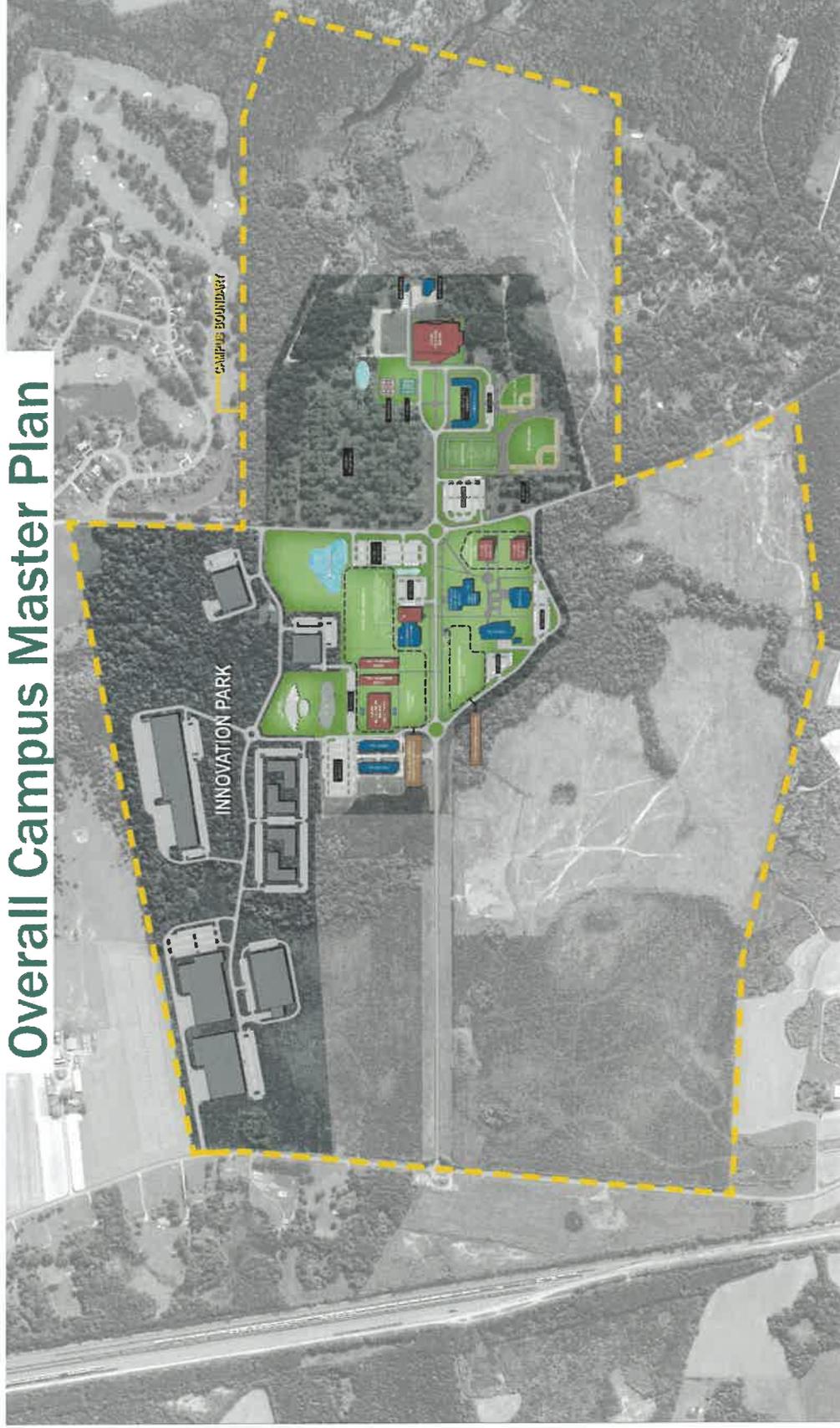


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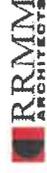


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# Overall Campus Master Plan



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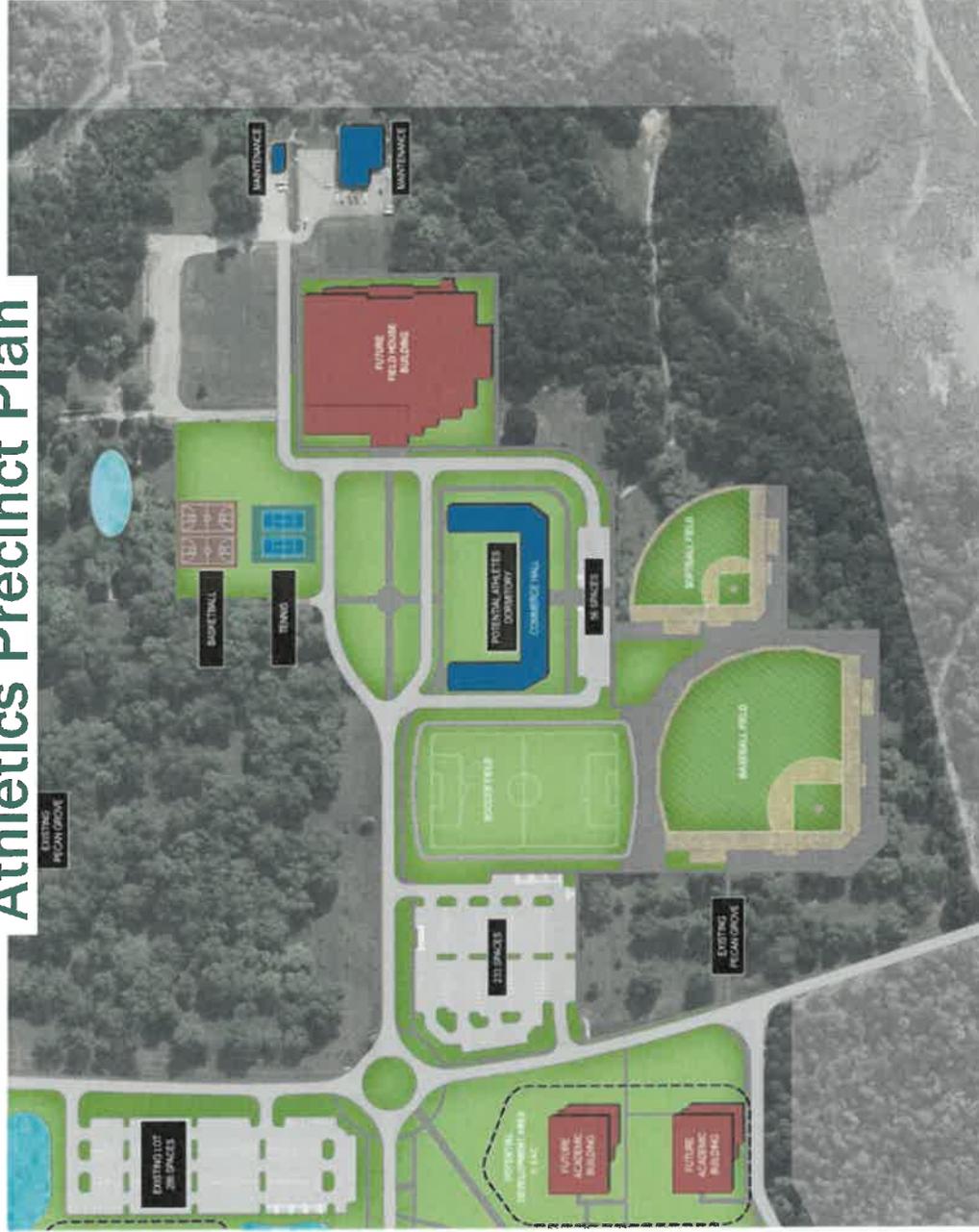


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# Athletics Precinct Plan



# Academic Precinct Plan



# Existing Campus Utilities Map

- Water
- Sanitary Sewer
- Storm Sewer
- Electric
- Gas



RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE  
BASE MAP - EXISTING UTILITIES EXHIBIT 01/12/2026

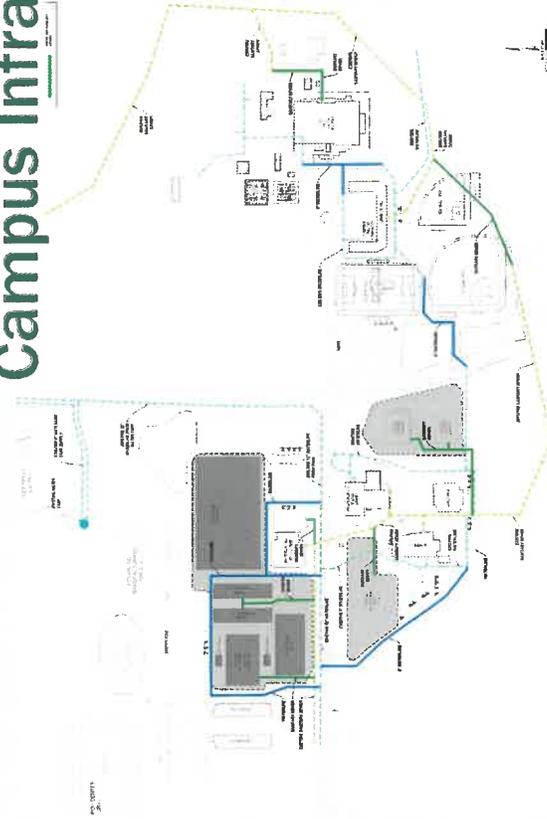
 Richard Bland College  
1001 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, VIRGINIA 23061  
804.692.1234

 RRMM ARCHITECTS  
11111 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, VIRGINIA 23061  
804.692.1234

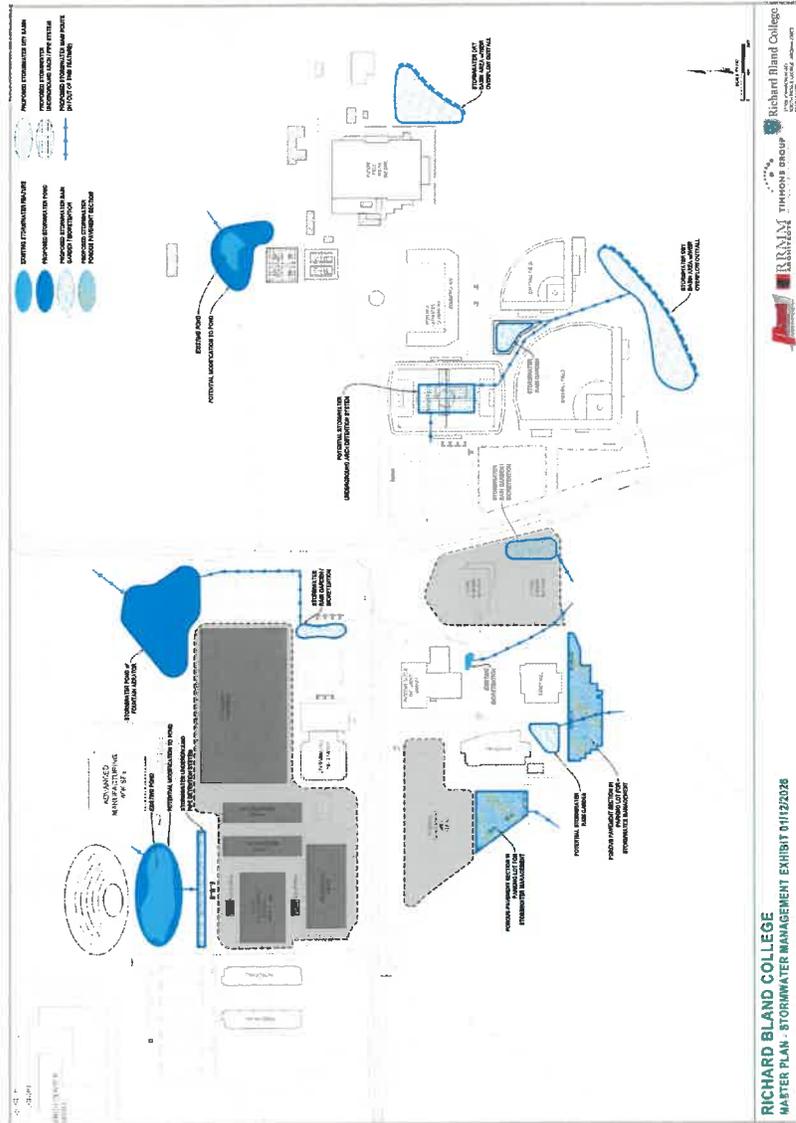
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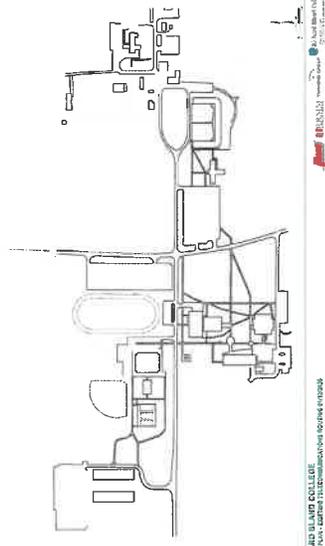
# Campus Infrastructure Master Plans



RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE  
MASTER PLAN - WATER & SANITARY SEWER ROUTING EDITORS



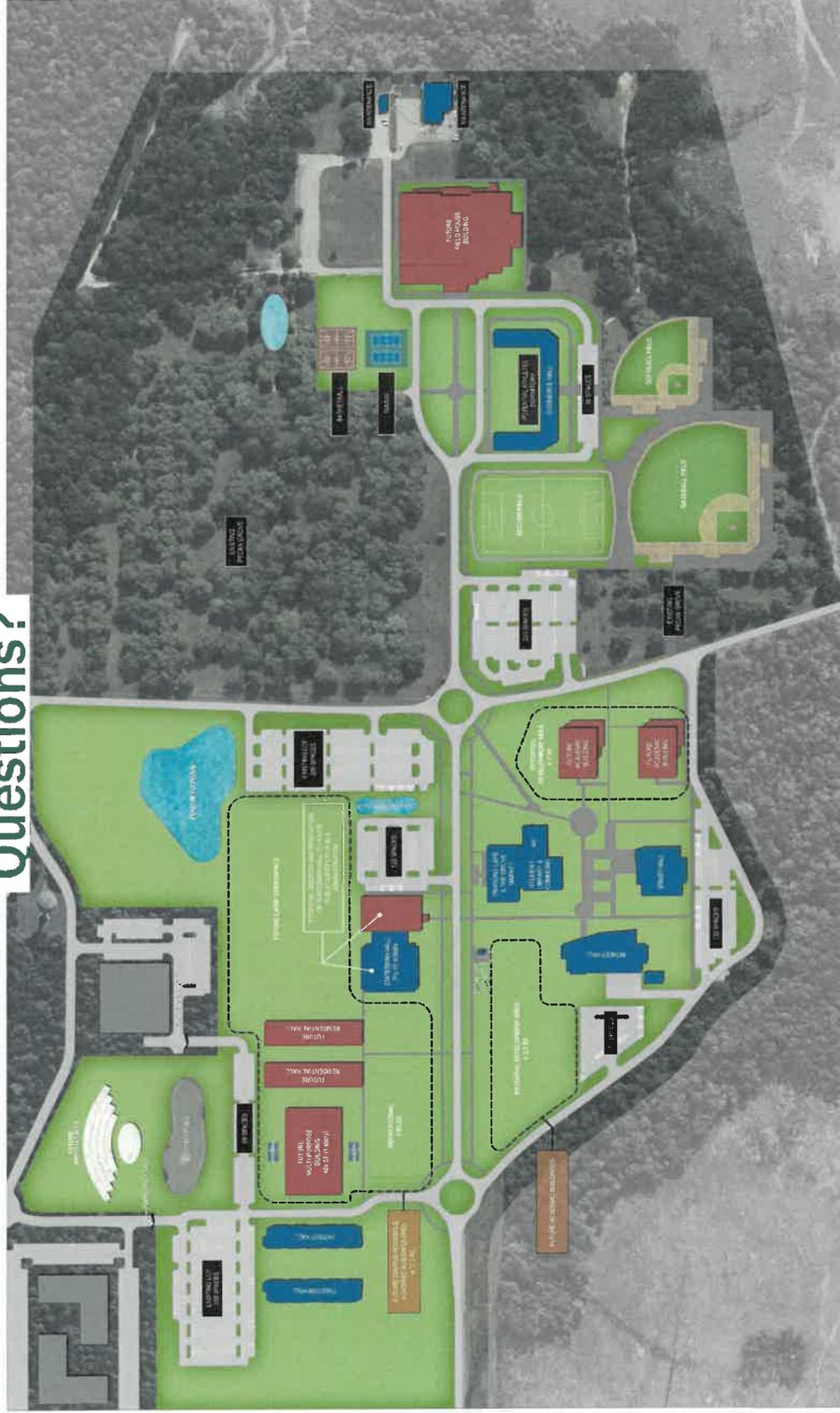
RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE  
MASTER PLAN - STORMWATER MANAGEMENT EXHIBIT 01122028



RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE  
MASTER PLAN - STORMWATER MANAGEMENT EXHIBIT 01122028



# Questions?





# Richard Bland College

## Board of Visitors Meeting

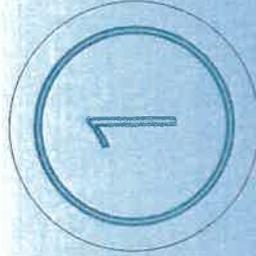
January 28, 2026





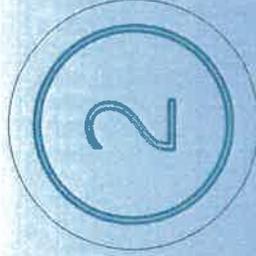
Richard Bland College

## Phased Approach



**June 30, 2026**

- Updates on KPIs
- Inventory of state workforce needs
- Inventory of RBC programs & pathways
- Create gap analysis



**June 30, 2027**

- Updates on KPIs
- Create project plan for new program dev't to address gaps
- Access partners/alliances for achieving goals



**June 30, 2028**

- Updates on KPIs
- Execute plan
- Track & monitor progress
- Delineate outcomes and ongoing exploration of partnerships that advance RBC's mission and goals



Richard Bland College

## **June 30<sup>th</sup> Report (Phase 1)**

### **Key Components:**

- Board adoption of key performance metrics, e.g., student enrollment, student persistence and retention, financial soundness
- Inventory of current workforce needs in the region/state
- Inventory of programs and pathways available at RBC (and via existing partnerships with regional and statewide institutions) to prepare students for university transfer and careers,
- Create gap analysis to inform RBC's future trajectory.
- Adoption of an updated RBC strategic plan that sets priority goals for the next 18-24 months.



## Richard Bland College

### Process for gathering and incorporating feedback

December

Review of draft of June 30th, 2026 report with Executive Committee; focus on strategy and approach.

January

1:1 Conversations with Executive Committee members to gather feedback.

January

Review of progress to date on June 30th, 2026 report with BoV; discussion of three-year phased approach.

Spring

Feedback from January BoV meeting incorporated; June 30th, 2026 report presented for approval at April BoV meeting.

April

Final report submitted June 15, 2026 (final version submitted to BoV via email June 1)



Richard Bland College

## June 30<sup>th</sup> 2027 + 2028 Report Components

### Phase Two:

- Develop a **project plan** that prioritizes new program development/partnerships in accordance with regional/statewide needs and assess alternative approaches/partners/third-parties for achieving goals.

### Phase Three:

- Execute project plan and track/monitor progress.
- Delineate outcomes
- Set forth a plan for ongoing exploration of strategic partnerships that advance RBC's mission and priority goals.





# Richard Bland College

## Board of Visitors Meeting

January 28, 2026



# Strategic Plan 2028

## Background and Context

- Establishes strategic direction and priorities over the next 18-24 months.
- Ensures RBC continues its forward trajectory and momentum during period of transition.
- Central focus on student success and regional development.



# Strategic Plan 2028

## Process

August

Review of  
**Seize Your  
Potential**  
and  
progress  
towards  
goals

Sept.- Oct.

Successive  
drafts  
resulting in  
initial  
**Strategic  
Plan 2028**

November

Discussion  
and  
revisions  
with  
President's  
Cabinet

November

Discussion  
and  
revisions  
with  
President's  
Council

December

Discussion  
and  
revisions  
with  
Faculty  
Assembly  
and  
Executive  
Committee  
of the BoV



Richard Bland College

# Mission

**Current Mission Statement:** 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.





## Strategic Plan 2028

### **Revised Mission Statement:**

**To educate students and  
communities to flourish.**



## Vision

### **Current Vision:**

- 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.



## Strategic Plan 2028

### **Revised Vision:**

To deliver personalized educational experiences, credentials, and pathways and that empower students to dream bigger, achieve more, and help communities to thrive.



Richard Bland College

# Values

## Current Values:

- A friendly, family atmosphere – expansive atmosphere of support for every individual
- Enthusiastic, student-focused service – serve in a way that nurtures student potential and supports their journey to success
- The power of difference – an inclusive and welcoming community of individuals with diverse talents and skills who are committed to civility, mutual respect, and the free and open exchange of ideas
- Building confidence – engaging and supporting students to cultivate their own individual potential, fortitude and agency
- Quality outcomes – continuously assess, adjust and improve



# Strategic Plan 2028

## Revised Values:

- **Agility:** Agile, resourceful, data-informed problem solving – continuously assess, adjust and improve across outcomes across all academic and administrative programs and operations
- **Belonging:** A community and culture of belonging where every member of the campus community is supported, encouraged and empowered to flourish
- **Student-Centric:** Friendly, enthusiastic, student-centric service that nurtures resilience, builds confidence and agency, and supports each student's journey to success



# Strategic Plan 2028:

## Strategic Priorities



### **Pillar One:**

**Build Portfolio of High-Value Credentials Aligned with Market Demand**



### **Pillar Two:**

**Improve Student Completion Outcomes**



### **Pillar Three:**

**Foster Innovation to Remain Accessible**



Richard Bland College

## 1. Build Portfolio of High-Value Credentials Aligned with Market Demand

- a) Execute Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan, including the launch of a robust portfolio of online credentials—both credit and non-credit— that are accessible to diverse student populations.
- b) Expand STEAM-H competencies for regional students by expanding dual enrollment opportunities leading to two-year degrees, pathways to employment, and transfer to undergraduate and graduate-level STEAM-H degree programs.

## Strategic Plan 2028: Pillar One

### 1. Build Portfolio of High-value Credentials Aligned with Market Demand (cont'd)

- c) Identify and execute strategic partnerships that expand high-value academic and career pathways available to students
- d) Analyze and pursue resolution of all barriers that impede delivery of a full range of high-demand programs and credentials.



## Strategic Plan 2028: Pillar Two

### 2. Improve Student Completion Outcomes

#### a. Improve graduation rate.

1. Raise IPEDS graduation rate to at least 35% for the fall 2027 cohort and continue to increase by 1% year over year.

#### b. Enhance student persistence and retention.

1. Achieve at least a 92% fall to spring persistence rate for first-year students.
2. Achieve at least a 60% fall to fall retention rate and continue to increase by 1% year over year.

#### c. Equip faculty, staff and students to utilize advanced technologies, including AI, to improve academic and operational outcomes.

1. Provide AI training and advanced technologies that support AI to all employees and students.
2. Design and deliver training that leads to 70% AI Literacy certification for employees.



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## Strategic Plan 2028: Pillar Three

### 3. Foster Innovation to Remain Accessible

- a. Build an endowment that provides gap scholarship funding to supplement state and federal student financial aid to ensure that every student *may* attend RBC tuition-free.
- b. Attract tenants and utilize the Business Innovation Park to generate revenue and provide internship, applied research and career exploration and entrepreneurial opportunities.
- c. Secure administrative and/or legislative approval for Tier Two procurement and IT authorization to reduce costs and improve operational and academic outcomes.



## Strategic Plan 2028: Pillar Three

### 3. Foster Innovation to Remain Accessible

- a. Build an endowment that provides gap scholarship funding to supplement state and federal student financial aid to ensure that every student may attend RBC tuition-free.

## FY26 GAP FUNDING

**\$9,330: RBC Tuition**

**\$7,395: Pell FY26**

**\$1,935: Funding Gap**

### **Innovative Programming to Reduce Cost of Education**

- Dual Enrollment
- Promise Scholars
- Honors Program
- Commonwealth Scholarships
- Foundation Scholarships
- SCHEV Grants
- Institutional Work Study



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**Pell Eligibility**



**\$**  
**\$54,500**  
**INCOME OF A**  
**FAMILY OF 4**



Richard Bland College

## **Strategic Plan 2028**

- Focused, forward momentum
- Refreshed mission, vision and values
- Recentered Strategic Priorities:
  1. Expand online, industry-recognized credentials
  2. Improve key student outcomes
  3. Optimize resources



Richard Bland College

Thank you for using  
Our Board Evaluation  
QR Code:





# Richard Bland College

**Q&A**

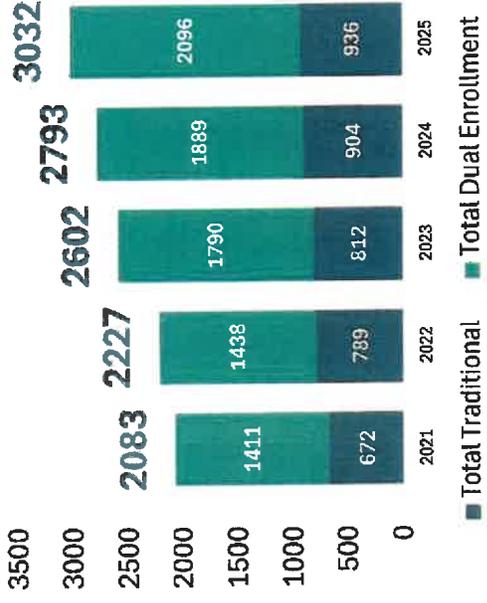
**Pre-Reads**  
**for**  
**January 28, 2026**  
**Board Meeting**



# Richard Bland College

## Richard Bland College Board of Visitors Metrics January 2026

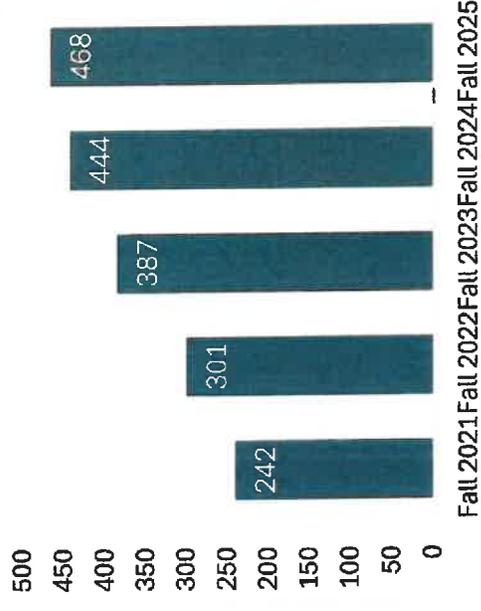
### Fall Headcount



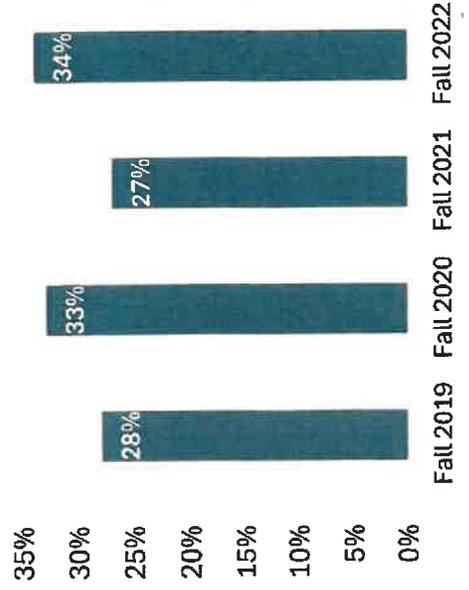
### Fall Athletes Enrolled



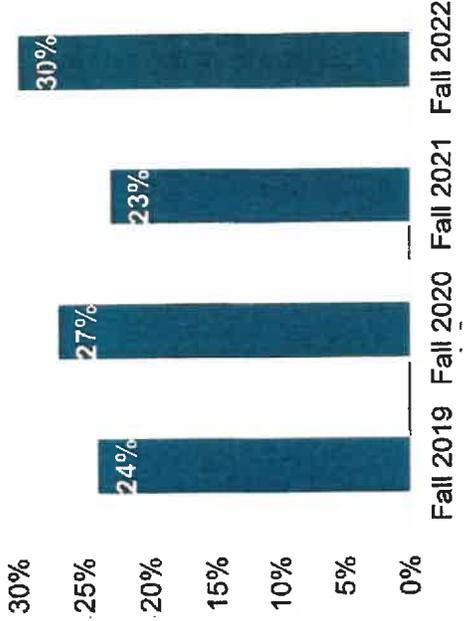
### Fall Housing Capacity



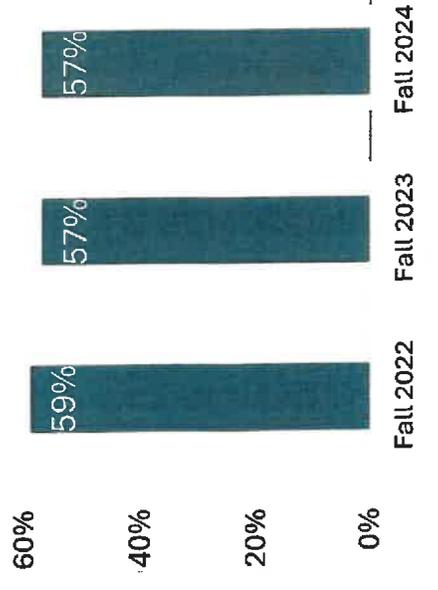
### Graduation 150%



### Graduation 100%



### Fall to Fall Retention



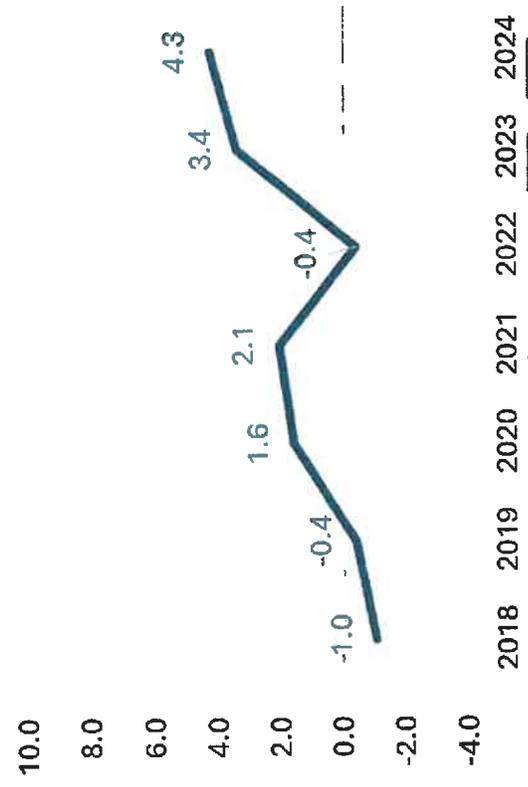


# Richard Bland College

## Richard Bland College Board of Visitors Metrics January 2026

\*\*2025 Figures pending audit completion. Estimated date end of February.

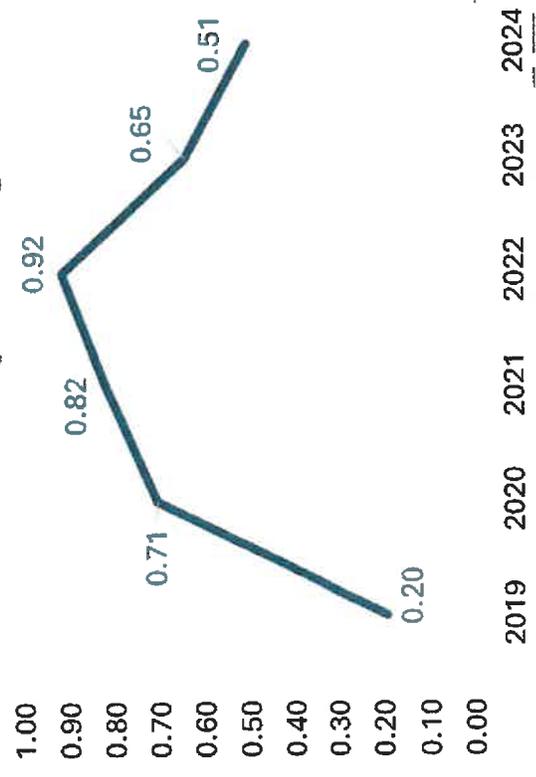
### Composite Financial Index



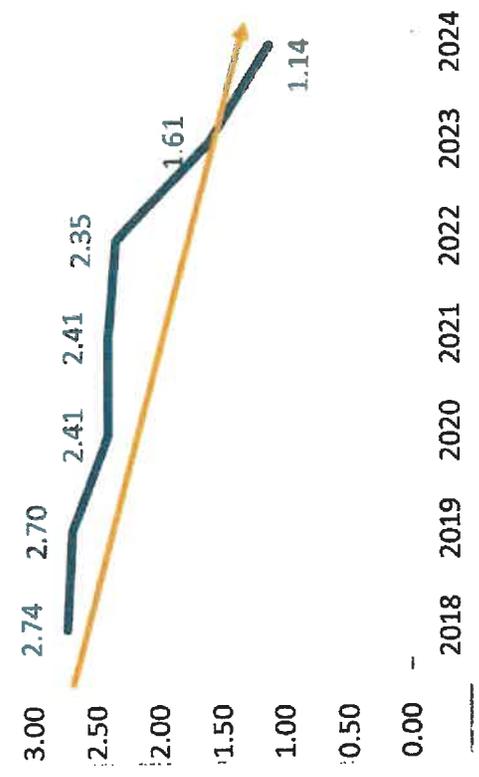
### Current Ratio



### Cash Ratio



### Debt to Equity Ratio





# Richard Bland College

## SHARED GOVERNANCE AT RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE

At Richard Bland College, shared governance is a mutual commitment among the (1) Richard Bland College Board of Visitors, (2) the administration and (3) the faculty—each in accordance with their respective roles and responsibilities—to work collaboratively to honor and fulfill the mission, the promise and the strategic goals of the college in an environment of transparency, trust and respect and in full accordance with the College’s policies, procedures and Code of Ethics.

In practice, as Richard Bland College continues to reinvent itself to the extent necessary to respond to the current and future higher education needs of the Commonwealth, an effective, efficient and fully integrated system for shared governance will ensure that the collective intelligence and specific expertise of each stakeholder is tapped and appropriately applied in support of the mission and strategic goals of the College. In addition to the primary governance role of the Board of Visitors who establishes College policy, and the responsibility of the administration to manage operations, this system is inclusive of a Faculty Assembly that will govern faculty input into institutional decision-making, and President’s Council.

## THE BOARD OF VISITORS

For the most up to date information, please access the Bylaws of the Board of Visitors found at this link: [RBC BOV Bylaws](#)

## THE ADMINISTRATION

### PRESIDENT’S COUNCIL

#### I. PURPOSE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRESIDENT’S COUNCIL

##### A. The purpose of the President’s Council will be to:

1. Improve collaboration, transparency and institutional effectiveness by serving as a central body responsible for deliberating and reviewing issues of college-wide significance that are submitted by one of the recognized College Committees or stakeholder bodies (e.g., Faculty Assembly, Student Assembly).

2. Improve the College's capacity to achieve its goals and promote organizational excellence by advancing habits of thinking and acting that reflect innovation, creativity and agility.
3. Foster an atmosphere that embraces diversity and encourages collegiality by facilitating consistent, effective campus-wide involvement in planning and institutional effectiveness.

B. The primary responsibilities of the President's Council will include, but not be limited to:

1. Facilitating shared governance at Richard Bland College by serving as a conduit between each member's constituents and President's Council, communicating fairly and accurately to enhance understanding between these entities.
2. Serving in an advisory capacity to the President.
3. Reviewing and recommending to the President actions on proposals for new programs, projects, or services with cross-institutional significance, in alignment with the strategic plan (RBC-19).
4. Reviewing institutional metrics demonstrating progress toward the mission, goals and outcomes established in the strategic plan; regularly communicating updates to the campus community regarding progress; and periodically recommending new or alternative actions to support the achievement of established targets.
5. Reviewing and monitoring the quality of programs and services, and compliance with all external accrediting and licensing agencies, e.g., SACSCOC.

## II. MEMBERSHIP

A. Membership of the President's Council will be comprised of a cross-section of the campus community and will, therefore, include administrators, faculty, staff and student representatives.

Administrators – Members of President's Cabinet, Department Heads and other administrators appointed by the President.

Faculty – Faculty Assembly Chair, Faculty Representative to Board of Visitors, Department Chairs

Staff – Nominations received from Council and appointed by the President

Student – Student Representative to the Board of Visitors

B. The roles and responsibilities of the membership are to:

1. Represent the views and interests of their respective constituencies.
2. Report to their respective constituencies on the work of the President's Council.
3. Solicit input from their respective constituencies on matters that come before the President's Council.

### **III. CHAIR**

The President presides over meetings or appoints a designee who may represent any of the above constituent groups.

### **IV. MEETINGS**

- A. The President's Council will determine and establish its own meeting schedule, subject to the following provisions:
  1. The President's Council will meet at least two (2) times each semester during the College's academic year, and the first meeting will serve as an organizational meeting during which members will be advised by the president or her representative about the purpose of Council, the expectations for service and priorities for the year.
  2. Special meetings of President's Council may be scheduled at the request of the President.
- B.
  1. Meeting agendas will follow a standard format acceptable to the Council to include review of proposals and recommendations from college committees or stakeholder bodies, as well as standing items based on a calendar of critical topics to be reviewed and discussed throughout the year.
  2. The agenda for regular meetings, including proposals for consideration and all relevant documentation, will be distributed to the membership one (1) week prior to the meeting.

## **Inclusive Excellence Committee**

**Chair:** President's Designee(s)

**Reports to:** President's Council

### **Purpose and Charge:**

*The purpose of the Inclusive Excellence Committee is to:*

- Foster an environment of diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and justice among students, faculty, and staff at Richard Bland College.
- Aims to identify and address systemic barriers to access and success for underrepresented groups at Richard Bland College.
- Promote a sense of belonging for all members of the campus community.
- Development of spaces that encourage intellectual diversity, constructive dialogue, and community conversation at Richard Bland College.
- Foster an environment of advocacy, awareness, cultural humility, and understanding through diversity education and training.
- Cultivate a campus culture where every individual feels valued, respected, and empowered to thrive at Richard Bland College.

### **Scope of Activities:**

*The Inclusive Excellence Committee will:*

- Develop and implement diversity training programs for students, faculty, and staff to promote diversity, equity, inclusions, cultural humility, and awareness.
- Facilitate dissemination of innovative approaches and best practices (developed internally and externally) to members of the campus community on matters related to inclusive excellence;
- Conduct assessments and surveys to gather feedback from the campus community on issues related to diversity and including and using this data to inform future initiatives and policies.
- Host programs, workshops, forums, group dialogue, and events that center topics around diversity, equity, culture, and inclusion for the entire campus community;
- Curate spaces for community hope and healing both proactively and reactively as response to global and national happenings
- Review data, assessment, and conduct research on key metrics around diversity and inclusion.
- Submit an annual report to the campus community and stakeholders outlining the

college's efforts to promote a more inclusive environment and paints a story of both the college's and the inclusive excellence committee's efforts and impact.

**Membership:** Membership of the Committee will include: (1) representative from the Office of Student Success, (1) faculty representatives, (1) representative from the Office of Student Success, (1) College ADA Coordinator, (1) representatives from athletics, (1) representatives from the Department of Student Life, (1) representatives from the Department of Marketing and Communications, (1) representatives from Finance and Administration, and (1) student representative.

**Selection/Appointment of Members:** Faculty representatives are recommended by the Department Chairs to the appointed chair of the committee each spring for two-year terms and may serve no more than two consecutive terms on any one committee. Administrative representatives will be recommended by their department head each spring. The student representative will be recommended by the Student Assembly each spring. All members are appointed by the President.

**Meeting Frequency, Schedule, Location:** The Committee meets on a regular basis during the academic year, with additional meetings scheduled as needed. All meetings are open to the campus community.

**Communications, Recommendations and Reporting:** The Committee provides regular updates to the President's Council and, through one of its faculty representatives, to Faculty Assembly. Progress toward goals is updated and distributed to the campus through a biennial report and dashboard. Recommendations, including a summary of campus feedback collected and the process used for gathering the feedback, should be submitted to the Council at least one week prior to the meeting at which the Council is expected to review. All minutes and committee reports will be available to the campus community for review.

## **Institutional Effectiveness Committee**

**Chair:** Chief Institutional Effectiveness Officer or President's Designee(s)

**Reports to:** President's Council

### **Purpose and Charge:**

The purpose of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee is to:

- Link academic and institutional assessment efforts to College-wide strategic planning;
- Create a strong feedback loop between research and assessment data and the planning, development, and modification of existing programs and academic support services in order to facilitate innovation and the achievement of the highest standards of excellence in academic programs and services;
- Advance a collaborative, integrated approach to academic and institutional planning and assessment that maximizes communication and transparency among all campus constituents;
- Serve as a recommending body to the Council regarding academic and institutional planning and assessment practices.

### **Scope of Activities:**

The Institutional Effectiveness Committee will:

- Facilitate the review of proposals for new academic programs and major modifications to existing programs and provide recommendations to Council based on needs data, pertinent input from stakeholders, cost benefit analysis, and the College's overall goals relative to its program portfolio;
- Facilitate dissemination of innovative approaches and best practices (developed internally and by other colleges and universities) to members of the campus community;
- Inform the development of an institution-wide, systematic, evidence-based institutional effectiveness plan, and assess existing planning and assessment practices at the College related to academic, student services, and administrative functions with a focus on integrated, meaningful, and sustained improvement;
- Inform the Council of progress made toward achieving the College's mission and goals as defined in the Strategic Plan through systematic review and monitoring of academic division, administrative department, program and student outcomes assessment plans and activities;
- Monitor compliance with all pertinent SACSCOC Standards (see purpose and charge above);
- Communicate the results of institutional effectiveness efforts to appropriate campus and external stakeholders to promote accountability and transparency.

**Membership:** Membership of the Committee will include: three (3) faculty representatives, two (2) representing administrative departments, a staff representative (1) and a student representative (1).

**Selection/Appointment of Members:** Faculty representatives are recommended by the Department Chairs to the appointed chair of the committee each spring for two-year terms and may serve no more than two

consecutive terms on any one committee. Administrative representatives will be recommended by their department head each spring. The student representative will be recommended by the Student Assembly each spring. All members are appointed by the President.

**Meeting Frequency, Schedule, Location:** The Committee meets on a regular basis during the academic year, with additional meetings scheduled as needed. All meetings are open to the campus community.

**Communications, Recommendations and Reporting:** The Committee provides regular updates to the President's Council and, through one of its faculty representatives, to Faculty Assembly. Progress toward goals is updated and distributed to the campus through a biennial report and dashboard.

Recommendations, including a summary of campus feedback collected and the process used for gathering the feedback, should be submitted to the Council at least one week prior to the meeting at which the Council is expected to review. All minutes and committee reports will be available to the campus community for review.

## Information Technology Governance Committee

**Chair:** Chief Business Officer

**Reports to:** President's Council

**Purpose and Charge:**

The purpose of the IT Governance Committee is to:

- Serve as a recommending body to Council to promote timely, sound, and mission-driven decision-making regarding IT investments, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities.
- Provide a college-wide IT vision that utilizes research-based information and industry best practices to consider and recommend IT needs and requirements that align with the College's strategic priorities and higher education trends.
- Seek opportunities for college-wide collaboration that encourage efficiency and innovation while managing within known and acceptable risk.
- Create transparency and build a college-wide understanding of IS operations and the full portfolio of IT/IS initiatives.

**Membership:** Membership of the Committee will include the Chief Business Officer (Chair); Chief Information Officer; Information Security Officer (ISO); Procurement Officer; Ellucian contract administrator (if different than ISO or Procurement Officer); three (3) faculty members representing each respective academic department, three (3) administrators representing enrollment management, student success, and one additional department (TBD on an as-needed basis).

**Selection/Appointment of Members:** Faculty representatives are recommended by Department Chairs to the appointed chair of the committee each spring for two-year terms and may serve no more than two consecutive terms on any one committee. Administrative representatives who are not represented by title will be recommended by the Committee Chair. All members are appointed by the President.

**Meeting Frequency, Schedule, Location:** The Committee meets on a regular basis during the academic year, with additional meetings scheduled as needed. All meetings are open to the campus community.

**Communications, Recommendations and Reporting:** The Committee provides regular updates to the President's Council and, through one of its faculty representatives, to the Faculty Assembly. Progress toward goals is updated and distributed to the campus community through an annual report and dashboard. Recommendations should be submitted to the Council at least one week prior to the meeting at which the Council is expected to review. All minutes and committee reports will be available to the campus community for review.

## Online Education Committee

**Chair:** Chief Enrollment Officer or President's Designee(s)

**Reports to:** President's Council

### **Purpose and Charge:**

The purpose of the Online Education Committee is to:

- Serve as a recommending body to the Council regarding online education planning, programming, and assessment practices;
- Utilizing research-based information and data on best practices, recommend strategies for supporting high quality teaching and learning in online courses and programs;
- Create a strong feedback loop between research and assessment data and the planning, development, and modification of existing online programs and academic support services for online students;
- Contribute to planning, assessment and growth of the RBC-VSU Joint School for Professional and Technical Studies;
- Advance a collaborative, integrated approach to online planning and assessment that maximizes communication and transparency among all campus constituents.

### **Scope of Activities:**

The Online Education Committee will:

- Review the practices and effectiveness of online education;
- Develop recommendations concerning standards and policies for online educational programs (synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid);
- Support and monitor priorities established in the Strategic Plan as related to online and virtual education modalities and provide updates and recommendation to Council;
- Monitor compliance with all pertinent SACSCOC Standards (see purpose and charge above);
- Facilitate dissemination of innovative approaches and best practices related to online education, online delivery, modes, online tools, and online student experience.
- Communicate the results of online education efforts to appropriate campus and external stakeholders to promote accountability and transparency.

**Membership:** Membership of the Committee will include: two (2) faculty representatives, three (3) representing administrative departments, a staff representative (1) and a student representative (1).

**Selection/Appointment of Members:** Faculty representatives are recommended by Department Chairs to the appointed chair of the committee each spring for two-year terms and may serve no more than two consecutive terms on any one committee. Administrative representatives will be recommended by their

department head each spring. The student representative will be recommended by the Student Assembly each spring. All members are appointed by the President.

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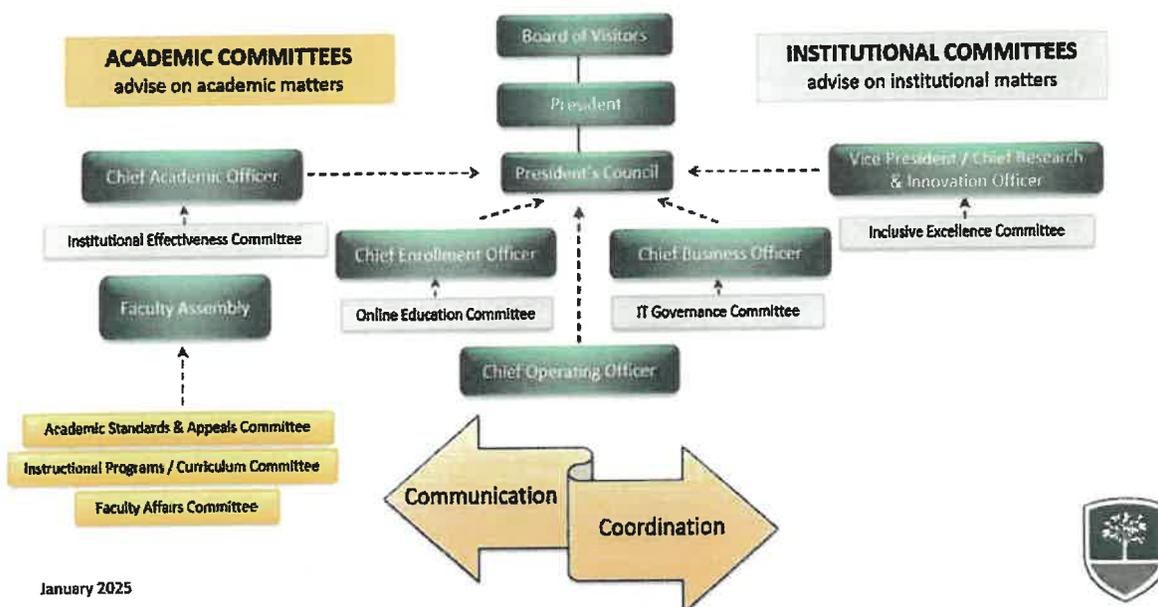
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## THE FACULTY Faculty Assembly

For the most up to date information on Faculty Assembly, please access Section III of the Faculty Handbook found at this link, [Faculty Handbook - Agencies of Faculty Self-Governance](#).

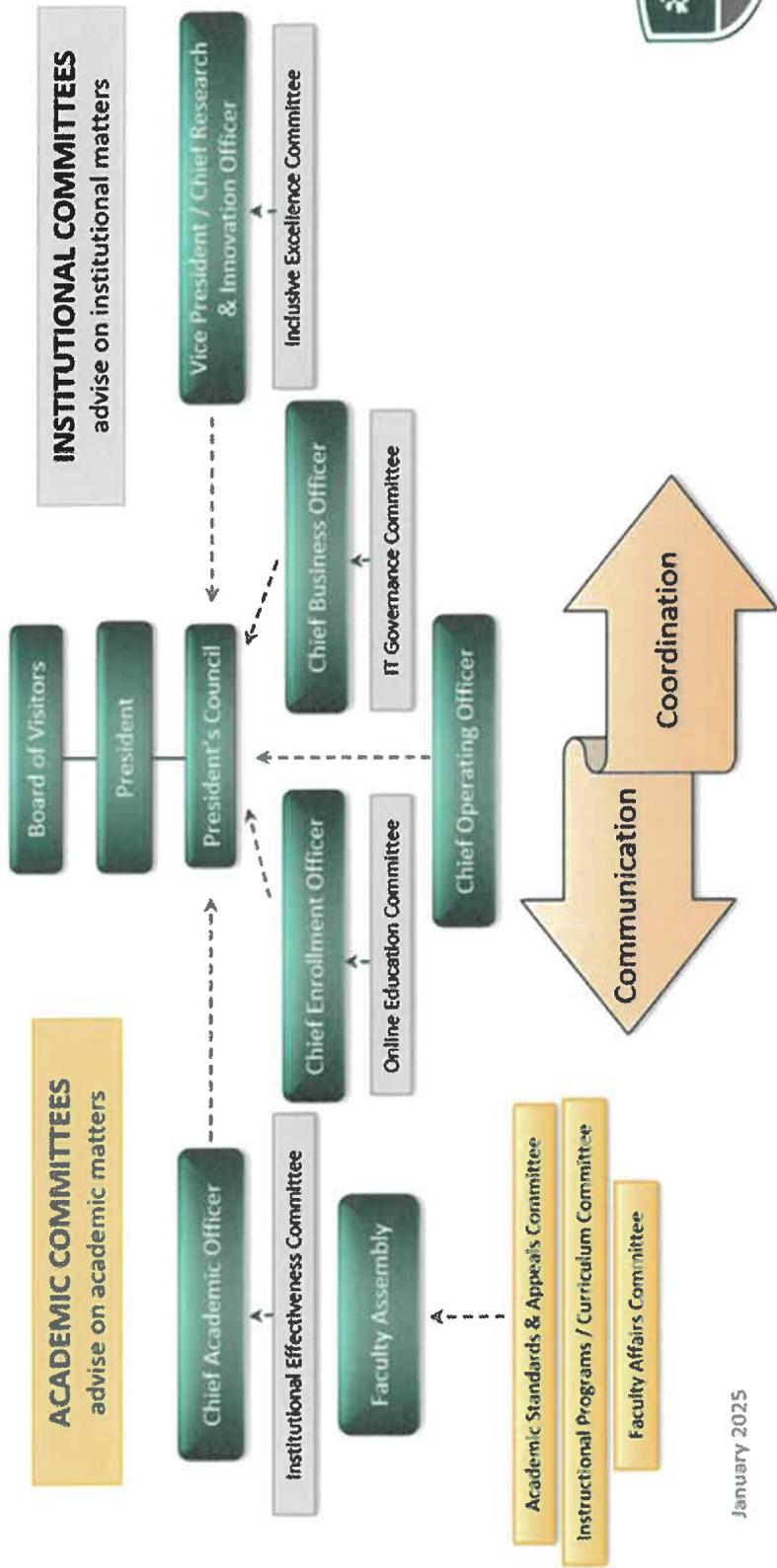
### RBC SHARED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



January 2025

# SHARED GOVERNANCE

## RBC SHARED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



January 2025



January 6, 2026

Dr. Debbie L. Sydow  
President  
Richard Bland College  
11301 Johnson Road  
South Prince George, VA 23805

Dear Dr. Sydow:

The following action regarding your institution was taken by the Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) during its meeting held on December 7, 2025:

The SACSCOC Board of Trustees conducted a focused review. No additional report was requested.

We appreciate your continued support of SACSCOC's activities and work. If you have questions, please contact your assigned SACSCOC Vice President and refer to case RC001006 or Action ACT-29742.

Sincerely,

Stephen L. Pruitt, Ph.D.  
President

cc: Dr. John R. Donnelly, Vice President, SACSCOC



# Richard Bland College

## OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

### A REPORT TO THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

#### Status Update for Governance Transition to the Richard Bland College Board of Visitors

Prepared by: Dr. Debbie L. Sydow, President, December, 2025

#### Executive Summary

In accordance with Chapter 607, Chapter 21.1, of the Virginia Acts of Assembly, Richard Bland College (RBC) has initiated a comprehensive transition to independent governance under its newly established Board of Visitors (BoV). This report outlines the status of the transition, key accomplishments to date, and remaining steps necessary to ensure full implementation and operational excellence.

#### I. Governance Transition Team and Planning

The President's Council has served as the Governance Transition Team since Senate Bill 742 was approved on April 2, 2025, overseeing the development and execution of a detailed Transition Plan. This team has:

- Drafted and monitored the Transition Plan.
- Assumed responsibility for task execution and progress reporting.
- Acted as internal and external influencers to build understanding and support.
- Communicated progress to stakeholders throughout the 2025–26 academic year.

#### II. Board Infrastructure and Effectiveness

To support the inaugural BoV, Richard Bland College has:

- Prepared a robust Board orientation program held on August 27, 2025.
- Engaged with AGB, SACSCOC, and AG college counsel to define board roles and responsibilities as part of the Board orientation program.
- Created a BoV webpage and email ([bov@rbc.edu](mailto:bov@rbc.edu)).
- Scheduled regular 2025-26 board meetings (8/27/25, 9/24/25, 1/28/26, 4/22/26).
- Hired a Chief of Staff and a part-time Strategic Planning and Governance Specialist.
- Adopted Bylaws via Board action on August 27, 2025.
- Designed Board evaluation program to measure performance relative to role and responsibilities, which went into effect at the September 24, 2026, meeting.

### **III. Institutional Identity and Messaging**

As Richard Bland College separates from more than six decades of governance by the W&M Board of Visitors, the College is reintroducing its identity, values and brand:

- Engaged brand consultant Julia Yager to advise on rebranding and core messaging from April to August 2025.
- Created core messaging and transitional logo and began utilizing new branding for marketing and communications.
- Phased removal of W&M branding from materials and platforms in process.
- Developed messaging to explain the governance change to stakeholders.

### **IV. Legal, Logistical, and Compliance Measures**

Key legal and operational steps include:

- SACSCOC conducted an onsite review on October 28, 2025. At the conclusion of the visit, the Committee confirmed that the College is fully compliant with all governance-related quality standards. These findings guided the SACSCOC Board of Trustees' decision, and final approval of the substantive change was granted at the Board's December 2025 meeting.
- Reviewed enabling legislation with legal counsel.
- Confirmed Commonwealth liability coverage for BoV members.
- Included a line item for Board of Visitors expenses in FY26 budget and hired a fractional internal auditor, Baker-Tilly, who presented to the BoV at the September 24, 2025 meeting.
- Reviewed implications for Foundation contracts and state systems.
- Updated EIN, Cardinal classification, and federal registrations.

### **V. Cultural Realignment and Traditions**

RBC is aligning campus culture and traditions with its new governance structure:

- Reset commencement dates (May 16 @ 2:00 p.m. / May 17 @ 2:00 rain date) to align with Richard Bland College—not W&M—schedule and redesigned diplomas and transcripts.
- Established new traditions, e.g., 2025 convocation ceremony.
- Updated library consortium agreement, academic calendars, etc.

### **VI. Foundation Board Integration**

Efforts to align the RBC Foundation with the new Board of Visitors include:

- Foundation Board retreat on September 3, 2025, included invitations to Visitors with a focus on roles and responsibilities of each board.
- Scheduled joint social events to foster collaboration, including September 3, 2025, Foundation Board retreat, Pecan Festival, Awards of Distinction event, etc.

- Board of Visitors adopted a resolution on August 27, 2025, to authorize the president to request that the W&M Foundation transfer the Sutherland Fund to RBC's Foundation. Funds were transferred from W&M Foundation to RBC's Foundation in October of 2025.
- Board of Visitors will act on Resolution to Delineate the Relationship, Roles, and Responsibilities of the Board of Visitors and the Foundation Board of Directors during the January 28, 2026 meeting.

### **Guiding Philosophy**

Inspired by advice from Mike Petters (William & Mary BoV), Richard Bland College views its inaugural Board of Visitors as the "first crew of the ship," setting the tone, culture, and standards for generations to come. Every aspect of their integration was prioritized to ensure that they enthusiastically embrace RBC's mission, values, and promise to the Commonwealth.

### **Remaining Steps**

- Complete presidential search and appointment by July 1, 2026.
- Continue rebranding efforts, e.g., new RBC logo, mascot, etc. (ongoing)
- Finalize updates to contracts, systems, and compliance documentation. (ongoing)

### **Conclusion**

In anticipation of General Assembly support for Richard Bland College independence, which was granted on April 2, 2025, the college administration meticulously planned, designed and executed the transition to an independent governing board over the past several years. As a result, since the new Richard Bland College Board of Visitors went into effect on July 1, 2025, the College has already begun to realize the benefits of a dedicated, high-performing Board of Visitors that is committed to working collaboratively in a shared governance environment to advance the institution's mission and values.

## Appendices



August 2025 BOV  
Agenda.pdf

August 2025 BOV Agenda



August 2025 BOV  
Minutes.pdf

August 2025 BOV Minutes



RBC Board of  
Visitors Bylaws.pdf

RBC Board of Visitors Bylaws



September 2025  
BOV Agenda.pdf

September 2025 BOV Agenda



September 2025  
BOV Agenda.pdf

September 2025 BOV Draft Minutes



January 2026 BOV  
DRAFT Agenda.pdf

January 2026 BOV Draft Agenda



BOV Members &  
Bios.pdf

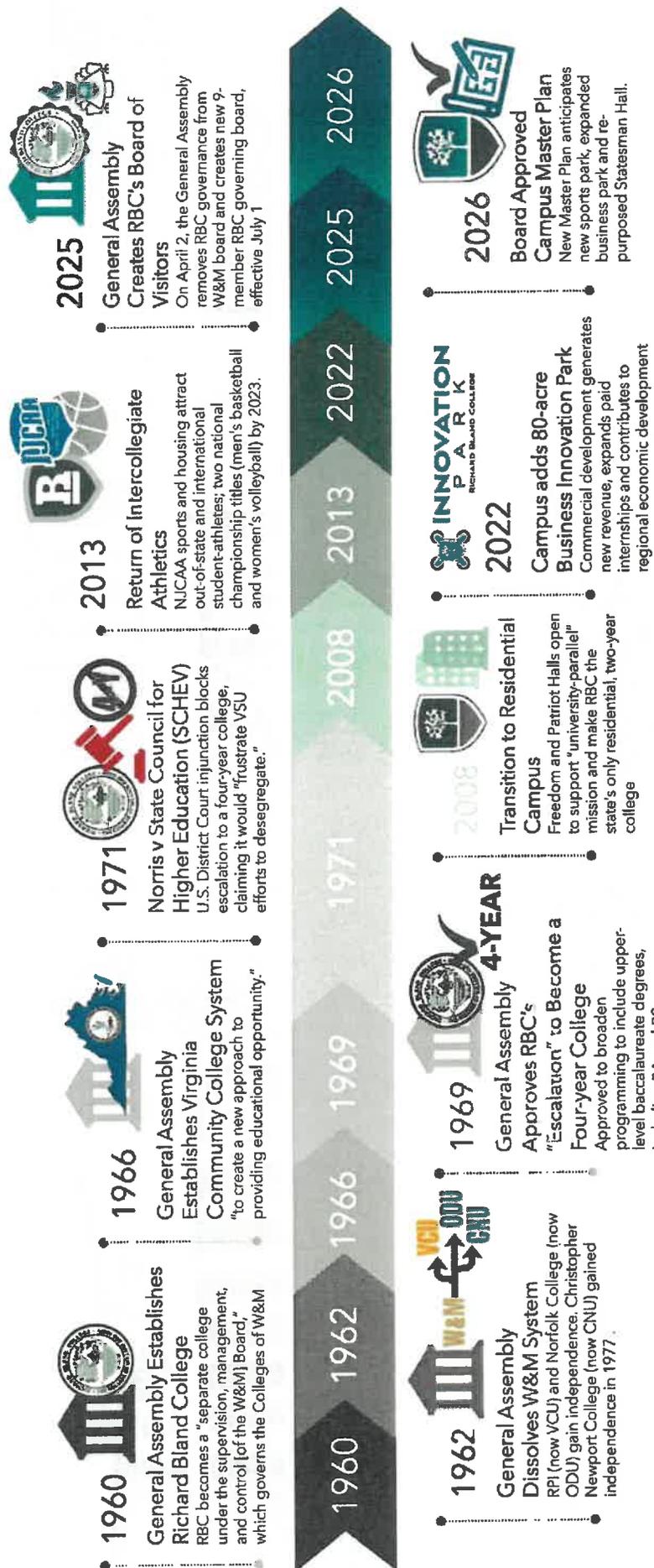
BOV Members & Bios



Report of the  
SACSCOC Substanti

Report of the SACSCOC Substantive  
Change Committee October 2025

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE



**1960**  
**General Assembly Establishes Richard Bland College**  
 RBC becomes a "separate college under the supervision, management, and control [of the W&M] Board," which governs the Colleges of W&M



**1966**  
**General Assembly Establishes Virginia Community College System**  
 "to create a new approach to providing educational opportunity."



**1971**  
**Norris v State Council for Higher Education (SCHEV)**  
 U.S. District Court injunction blocks escalation to a four-year college, claiming it would "frustrate VSU efforts to desegregate."



**2013**  
**Return of Intercollegiate Athletics**  
 NJCAA sports and housing attract out-of-state and international student-athletes; two national championship titles (men's basketball and women's volleyball) by 2023.



**2025**  
**General Assembly Creates RBC's Board of Visitors**  
 On April 2, the General Assembly removes RBC governance from W&M board and creates new 9-member RBC governing board, effective July 1



**1962**  
**General Assembly Dissolves W&M System**  
 RPI (now VCU) and Norfolk College (now ODU) gain independence. Christopher Newport College (now CNU) gained independence in 1977.



**1969**  
**General Assembly Approves RBC's "Escalation" to Become a Four-year College**  
 Approved to broaden programming to include upper-level baccalaureate degrees, including BA and BS.



**2008**  
**Transition to Residential Campus**  
 Freedom and Patriot Halls open to support "university-parallel" mission and make RBC the state's only residential, two-year college



**2022**  
**Innovation Park**  
**Campus adds 80-acre Business Innovation Park**  
 Commercial development generates new revenue, expands paid internships and contributes to regional economic development



**2026**  
**Board Approved Campus Master Plan**  
 New Master Plan anticipates new sports park, expanded business park and re-purposed Statesman Hall.



**Richard Bland College**

## Report from the Faculty Representative to the Richard Bland College Board of Visitors

January 2026

Dr. Timothy Rohrbach, Associate Professor of Biology, along with Dr. Eric Miller, Associate Professor of Biology, took seven, BIO 211: Microbiology, students on a tour of the local Trapezium Brewery in Petersburg. The tour was a fantastic opportunity for our microbiology students – many of whom are pursuing careers in allied health – to explore industrial and food science microbiology in action. The brewers at Trapezium did an excellent job explaining the fermentation process, emphasizing how controlling microbial growth through temperature and nutrient management not only affects the growth of microorganisms but also influences the flavor profile of the beer. Students also observed the use of cell counting techniques to estimate microbial populations in each batch, providing a hands-on example of how microbiological principles are applied in a real-world setting. Overall, this experience was a valuable demonstration of how classroom theory and foundational lab skills translate into practical applications.

Dr. Eric Miller and Lee Smith, Assistant Professor of English, took three students to London, England from December 15-21<sup>st</sup> for RBC's first ever study abroad program. The trip included a walking tour of the city, a tour of Shakespeare's Globe Theater, several museums such as Tate Modern and The British Museum, and three plays (Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, and *Hamilton*). From traveling on the tube, eating pub food, and countless conversations around history, culture, theater, and art, it was a remarkably enriching experience for students and faculty alike.

Dr. Miller also led students on several trips this past semester. He led 15 students on a kayaking ecotour of the Great Dismal Swamp on September 15<sup>th</sup>, where they learned about the history and complex ecosystem that animals and humans have relied upon for centuries. Shortly after, he took 8 students flyfishing and hiking in Pocohontas County, WV, from September 19-21<sup>st</sup>. In addition to the outdoor activities, they walked the town and enjoyed a bluegrass concert at the local opera house. He also took 15 students to the Appomattox River on October 9<sup>th</sup>, where students learned about the local flora and fauna, as well as invasive species removal. They also visited the water treatment facility on Lake Chesdin, where students learned about drinking water.

Dr. Mary Gurnick, Professor of Chemistry, co-authored an article published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science* titled "Ceramic rehydroxylation dating by infrared diffuse reflectance spectroscopy", Vol. 177, May 2025.

Dr. Katie Bjorkman-Till, Associate Professor of Mathematics, served as an organizer for a regional conference on Research in Undergraduate Mathematics Education (RUME) at James Madison University. There were about 40 participants including undergraduate and graduate students, and she organized the panel discussion this year titled "All Roads Lead to RUME: How Many Discipline Backgrounds Become Part of Our Community".

Dr. Bjorkman-Till also co-authored the paper "A Synthesis of Mathematical Departmental Change Efforts: Framing, Foci, and Future Opportunities", a part of PRIMUS' Special Issue on Infusing active learning into precalculus and calculus courses: Mathematics department transformation in challenging times [v.35.4-5]. The paper was also selected as an editor's pick for 2025.

Abbigayle Poirier, Assistant Professor of Art, took students to the Lamb Arts Fest in Hopewell on October 4<sup>th</sup>. Students made t-shirts, viewed work from local artists, and represented RBC. Recently, Prof. Poirier had a solo exhibition in the Thyen-Clark Gallery at Jasper Community Arts in Jasper, Indiana. The gallery is located roughly 70 miles southwest of her alma mater, Indiana University. This January, she will be attending the Green Olive Arts residency in Morocco, which welcomes top artistic talent from around the world.

Dr. Daniel Franke, Associate Professor of History, attended the 44<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Haskins Society in November, hosted at the University of Miami. He presented a paper entitled "The Logistics of the Siege of Milan, 1158-1162." He brought RBC student Usra Jabri to the conference to make connections and explore a possible major and career as a historian; she was warmly received by the scholarly community and had a very productive experience.

Dr. Franke also published an article in December, "The Last March to Jerusalem: Manuscripts and Eyewitness Testimony in the Crusade of Frederick Barbarossa." This was part of an edited volume, *The Third Crusade: New Interpretations* (Boydell Press). The article presented research by Dr. Franke conducted in Germany and Austria that was funded by a grant from the American Philosophical Society in 2024.

Dr. Kevin Peters, Chair of the Natural Science and Mathematics Department and Professor of Biology, attended the Southeastern Psychological Colloquy (SEPC) at VIMS-ESL in Wachapreague, VA from October 17-19<sup>th</sup>.

## **Report from the Student Representative to the Board of Visitors**

**January, 2026**

**Submitted by Lilli Brown**

### **Introduction**

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the last board meeting in September, so if you aren't familiar with me, my name is Lilli Brown. I am President of the Student Assembly and honored to be the Student Representative to the Richard Bland College Board of Visitors. Some background on me: I am a sophomore in my final semester here at Richard Bland and am a student-athlete on the Women's soccer team. I have also been privileged to work with the lovely search team in finding an Interim President for the college these past couple of months. I fell in love with Richard Bland's mission for student life and can honestly say I've formed a home and community that I hold very close to my heart. During my time here, I have learned incredible lessons about overcoming hardship and leaning into challenges, both physically and mentally. The relationships at this institution are one of a kind. I plan on transferring to William & Mary in the fall but am waiting to hear from other options currently. It is my honor to represent the students of Richard Bland College.

### **JMU Student Representatives Conference**

In November I was asked by JMU's Student Body President, Sydney Strafford, to attend a conference gathering other Student Body Presidents from institutions all over Virginia. The Student Body President of Mary Washington, Virginia Tech, and William & Mary attended along with other members of their student assemblies, such as their Treasurers and Secretaries. At the conference, the JMU Advisor of Student Assembly, Dr. Miller, introduced us and made us feel welcomed on their campus. Other guests of the event included the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, Janet Kelly; Rector Suzanne Obenshain; and Academic Committee Chair Nicole Wood. They answered our questions about how we can improve as Student Body Presidents, and they advised us about the importance of caring for ourselves while balancing multiple extracurricular activities. The event was very insightful and informational about how to navigate college as President of your Student Body and the importance of utilizing your resources.

### **Student Assembly - Fall Semester Events**

The Student Assembly created multiple events on campus in the Fall semester. We volunteered and dedicated our time toward the RedCross blood drive, Virginia21, and a food drive for the holiday season. Our Commuter Representative offered doughnuts and coffee to students passing by once they filled out a survey about the commuter experience. We received lots of constructive feedback, which we plan to use for improvement. A Student Assembly

Meet and Greet was held in the Student Engagement Center this fall. Students were introduced to the Council, and we had the opportunity to play games while also exploring their concerns about campus life and culture, helping us sketch out where we can improve as an Assembly. As for serving the community, our Friendsgiving event was a major success. We partnered with Parson's Cafe and served hot plates to students as they enjoyed holiday music and games with friends. The Student Assembly had a very successful fall semester, and we look forward to what's next in store.

### **Student Engagement Center and Coordinator Hire**

Our long-awaited Student Engagement Center has opened for student-occupancy as a space for academic and recreational use. With access to a large flatscreen, bean bag chairs, couches, books, and a basketball arcade game, the Student Engagement Center is a place for students to relax and connect with one another.

In addition to the Center, our new Student Engagement Coordinator, Adrian Rios, promises to better the student atmosphere and work to improve student engagement around campus.

### **Fall Sports Update**

Our athletic programs were once again very successful and worked incredibly hard this fall semester, challenging themselves every day, which has paid off. The win/lose/tie scores include:

**Men's Soccer: 8-4-2 overall**

**Women's Soccer: 6-4-2 overall**

Rhianna Pena was titled Region 10's DII Player of the year due to her strengths offensively shown through her 12 goals and 26 points across 11 matches.

**Women's Volleyball: 20-6**

**Men's Basketball: 4-6**

**Women's Basketball: 3-11**

### **Student Assembly's Goals and Events for Spring 2026**

As the Student Assembly reflects back on what worked and what did not in the fall, we plan to implement improvements. One area for improvement was a lack of student feedback, which we plan on expanding with a Town Hall event early in the spring semester. This would include an open session for members of the student body to pass the mic to voice their suggestions or concerns. We focused a lot on creating engaging events in the fall, but we are anticipating a semester focused on understanding and resolving student issues in the Spring.

I am honored to provide an update to the Board of Visitors regarding the RBC student experience this past Fall. Go Statesmen!