

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.