



## Richard Bland College BOARD OF VISITOR

### **DRAFT MARCH BOARD ORIENTATION**

**March 26, 2026 | 3:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. | McNeer Hall 104**

New members of the Richard Bland College (“RBC” or “College”) Board of Visitors met in open session at Richard Bland College for a swearing-in and orientation on Thursday, March 26, 2026, from 3:00–6:00 p.m. at McNeer Hall 104. No action items were voted on during the orientation.

#### **BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

- Shawn Avery
- Hon. Peter Blake (Mr. Blake participated remotely from Denver, Colorado. Va. Code . § 2.2-3708.3(B)(4) allows for remote participation for personal matters. Mr. Blake had a prior trip scheduled for this day and could not participate in-person).
- Kevin Massengill
- Dr. Perry Miller
- Jennifer Montague
- Penny Parayo
- Dr. Amanda Russell
- Joanne Williams
- Deborah Young
- Jason Pode, Faculty 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
- 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. Ann Ifekwunigwe, Director, The University Center
- Ben Thoreson, Director of Student Success
- Ashley Fuller, Data and Compliance Officer
- Katelinn Davis, Associate Director of Development
- Carolyn Day Pruett, Associate Director of Development
- Shion Michael, Junior IT Administrator
- Nathan Moberley, OAG College Counsel
- Dr. Eileen Stempel, Strategic Planning and Governance Consultant
- Gerrit Smith, Senior Executive Administrator and Clerk to the Board of Visitors
- RBC Students, Faculty and Other Staff Members

#### **GUESTS PRESENT:**

- Hon. Barrett Chappel, Dinwiddie Circuit Court Clerk
- 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

#### **Swearing-In of New Board Members**

The Honorable Barrett Chappell, Dinwiddie Circuit Court Clerk, administered the oath of office for the new Board members. This was a ceremonial oath for the members who had taken their oath previously at different locations.

#### **Welcome / Board & Cabinet Introductions**

President Debbie Sydow welcomed new Board members to Richard Bland College. She then introduced Board member Mr. Kevin Massengill, RBC Class of 1995. Mr. Massengill opened the meeting with an icebreaker, asking fellow Board members to introduce themselves and to reflect on their time in college. President Sydow then asked Cabinet members to introduce themselves and their roles.

#### **Faculty Assembly Presentation**

Prof. Jason Pode, Chair of the Faculty Assembly and Faculty Representative to the Board of Visitors, provided an overview of the College's shared governance model. He explained that academic and faculty matters originate at the department level and move through established governance committees. In addition to reviewing the structure and purpose of shared governance, he discussed the RBC faculty profile, pointing out that the majority of faculty are full-time, and 86% of faculty members have a terminal degree.

Mr. Pode then introduced Dr. Adam Zucconi, Interim Chief Academic Officer; Dr. Kevin Peters, Chair of the Natural Sciences and Mathematics Department; and Dr. Jenna Zarling, Chair of the Languages & Humanities Department and Chair of the Social & Behavioral Science Department. Dr. Zucconi and the Department Chairs provided a presentation highlighting the College's current degree programs, faculty-led experiences for RBC students, and proposed new certificate programs. A question-and-answer session followed, allowing Board members and faculty to engage in discussion regarding academic programs and student outcomes.

Prof. David Majewski, Professor of Communication and Theatre, presented on student experiences, focusing on financial challenges students face in paying for college. The presentation included a discussion of the new Debbie & Harry Sydow Legacy Scholarship Fund and its importance for addressing two well documented challenges: mitigating student debt and incentivizing degree completion.

Mr. Pode then introduced 2026 RBC graduates, including Ms. Jada Ramirez, Mr. Luke Sweeney, Mr. Richard Agbo, Ms. Usra Jabri, Ms. Shyla Cooper, and Mr. James Revere. Each student shared their reason for attending Bland, their experience at the College, and their future plans. Board members thanked students for attending and wished them well in their future endeavors.

**ACES Presentation**

Dr. Sydow then introduced Ms. Jennifer Muller, Founder and Managing Partner of the Academic Career & Executive Search (ACES) firm and her team. Ms. Muller provided attendees a brief overview of the upcoming presidential search process and a proposed timeline. Faculty members then engaged in a discussion about key qualities desired in a new President, emphasizing the importance of understanding the College's diverse student body, being approachable, supporting experiential learning, as well as possessing other essential leadership attributes.

**Dinner**

At 4:45 p.m., Board members left the Faculty Assembly to have official Board photos taken in McNeer Atrium. At 5:00 p.m., all eight Board members present on campus joined Dr. Sydow and her staff for a catered dinner held in McNeer 106. Others present at the dinner were Christie Clarke, Director of the Dual Enrollment and High School Programs and Incoming Chief of Staff; Ms. Ashley Fuller, Data and Compliance Officer; Dr. Eileen Stempel, Strategic Planning and Governance Consultant; Nathan Moberley, OAG College Counsel; Gerrit Smith, Senior Executive Administrator and Clerk to the Board of Visitors. The Board Handbook and Reference Manual was briefly discussed at the dinner; however, no business was conducted. The dinner ended at 6:15 p.m.



# Richard Bland College

## Academics and Shared Governance



**Faculty Assembly**



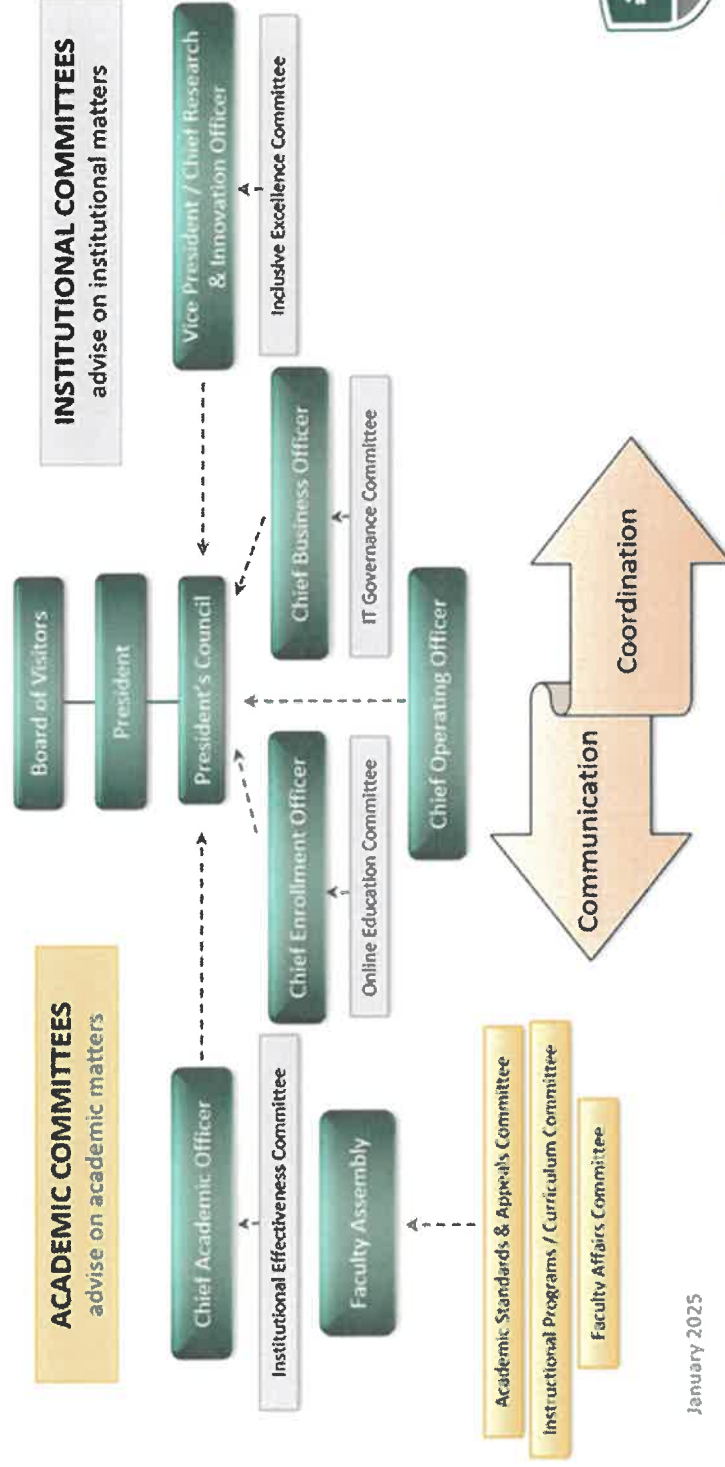
**Professor Jason Pode**  
**Faculty Assembly chair**



**Professor Kalota Stewart**  
**Faculty Assembly Vice Chair**

# Shared Governance

## RBC SHARED GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



January 2025



Richard Bland College

# Faculty Committees

Collaborative faculty leadership in shaping academic polices and institutional decision-making

**Academic Standards & Appeals**



Overseeing and upholding academic quality and standards

**Faculty Affairs**



Promoting faculty welfare and development

**Instructional Programs/Curriculum**



Guiding curriculum and policy development

# College Committees

**Aligning administrative strategy and faculty expertise through collaboration to ensure institutional accountability and academic excellence**

## Institutional Effectiveness



Aligning assessment, planning, and compliance to drive institutional effectiveness

## Online Education



Guiding quality, innovation, and compliance in online education

## Inclusive Excellence



Advancing an inclusive, equitable, and empowering campus culture

## IT Shared Governance



Ensuring strategic, informed, and transparent IT planning across campus

# Academic Council

## Academic Council

Richard Bland College · Shared Governance Structure

### Membership

Department Chairs + Chief Academic Officer

### Areas of Focus

#### Curriculum

Academic program oversight

#### Instruction

Teaching quality & delivery

#### Assessment

Outcomes & evaluation

### Connections

#### President's Council

Members serve on President's Council

#### Regular meetings

Coordinate academic efforts · transparent communication



Richard Bland College

# Academic Departments

## Languages & Humanities

Communication, Composition, Education,  
Literature, Foreign Languages, Geography,  
Philosophy, Religion, and Theatre



Exploring human  
expression, culture, and  
meaning

## Natural Sciences & Mathematics

Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Health,  
Physical Education, Physics, and Mathematics



Understanding and  
mastering the laws that  
govern reality

## Social & Behavioral Sciences

Art, Business, Economics, Government,  
History, Logistics, Music, Project  
Management, Psychology, and Sociology



Exploring the art and  
science of human  
systems

## RBC Faculty Profile

### Terminal Degrees

24/28 (86%) of tenured and continuing track faculty hold a terminal degree

Full-time faculty teach approximately 70% of classes per semester

### Faculty Appointment Tracks

1. Tenured Faculty: 10
2. Continuing Track Faculty: 18
3. Faculty/Advisors: 2



## Faculty-Led Experiences



Stream Ecology, West Virginia  
(2024)



Dinosaur fossil dig, Utah (2025)

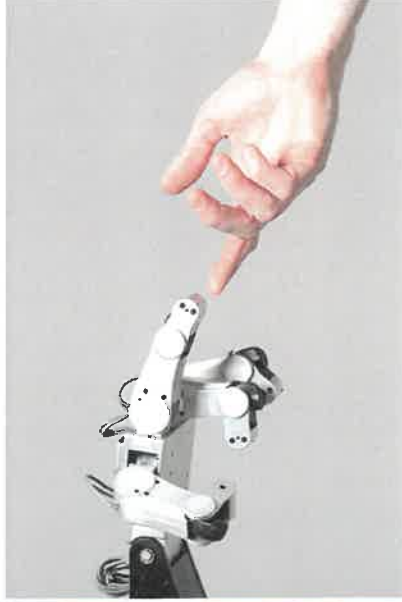


Madagascar trip (2024)



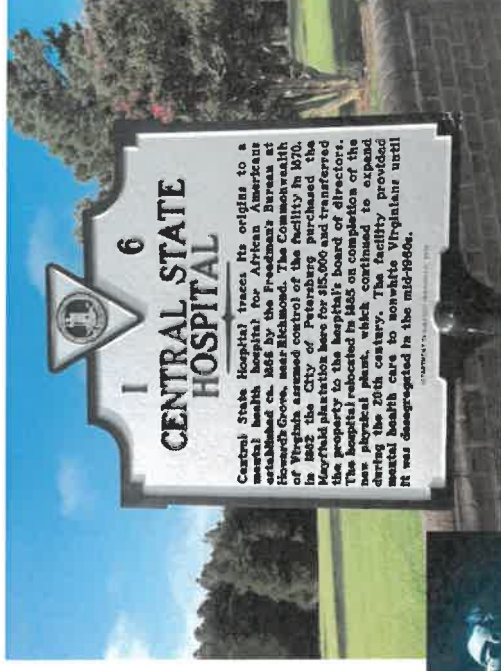
Richard Bland College

## Faculty-Led Initiatives



### Human Robot Interaction (HRI)

- Psychology
- Philosophy
- Spanish/Foreign Languages
- Computer Science



### Central State Hospital

- History
- Psychology
- Sociology



### VR Learning

- Chemistry
- Biology
- Physics
- Math



Richard Bland College

# Degrees/Programs

Pathways for Student Success



## Year-over-Year Growth in Science Fields

### Behavioral Sciences

Study of human behavior and society

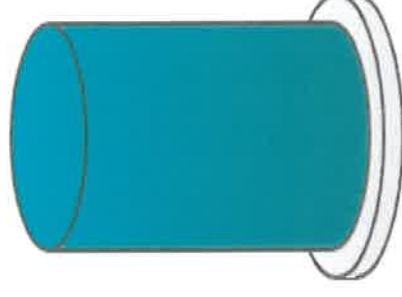
### Math/Computer Science

Focus on mathematical and computational principles

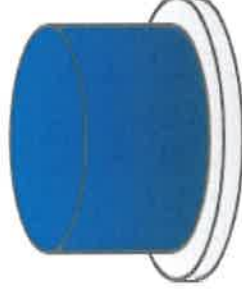
### Physical Science

Exploration of natural phenomena and matter

220%



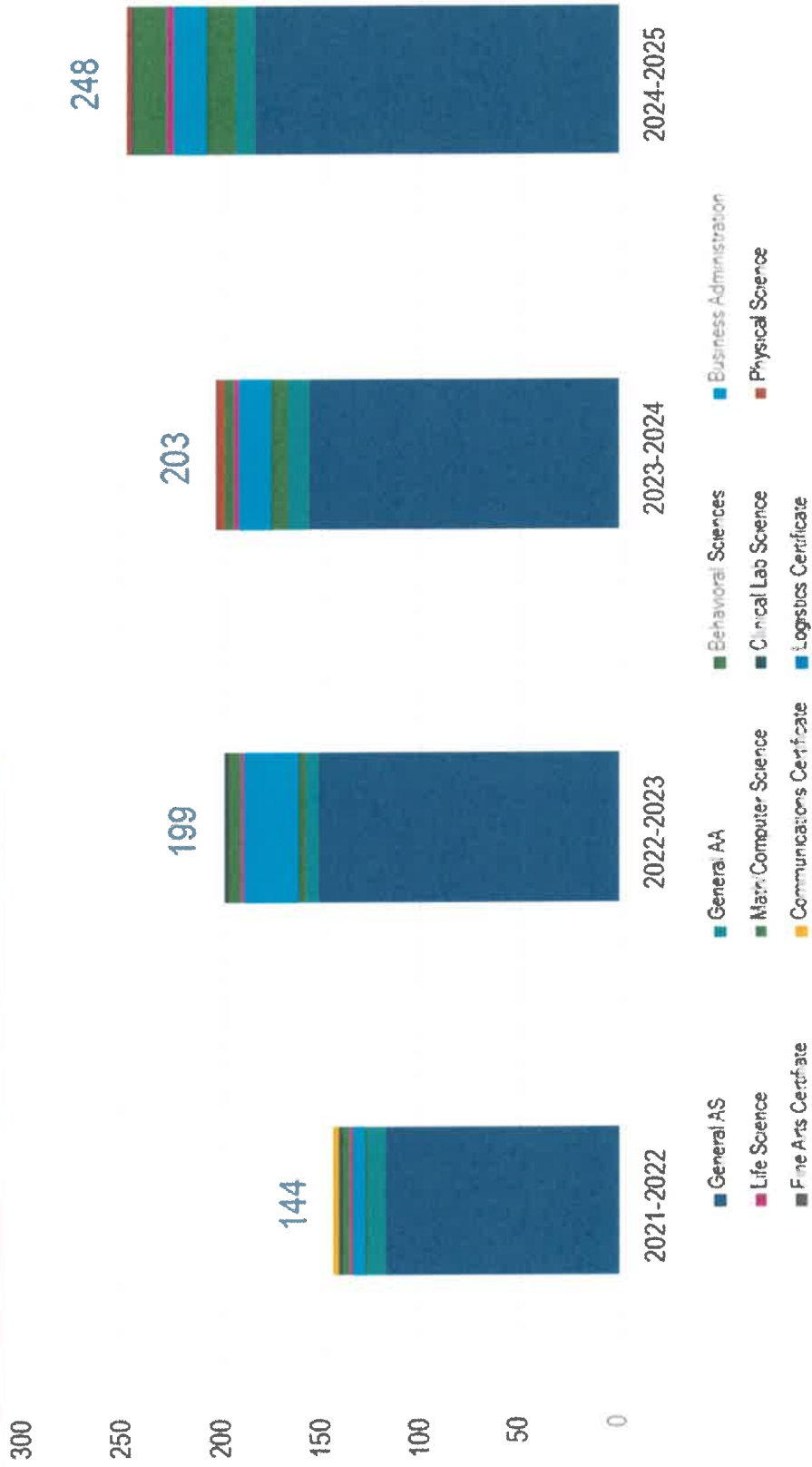
87.5%



15%



# Degrees Conferred



## Uncrewed Aerial Systems (UAS) certificate

### Career Pathways

The program aligns with high-demand industries including:

- **Energy & Utilities:** Infrastructure inspection and energy-resilient systems.
- **Agriculture:** Crop monitoring and precision farming.
- **Public Safety:** Search and rescue and fire mapping.
- **Commercial:** Surveying, real estate photography, and environmental monitoring.

### Why This Matters

- **Workforce Readiness:** Responds directly to the growing demand for credentials that provide immediate employment value.
- **Stackable Credentials:** Credits can often be applied toward further associate or baccalaureate degrees.



## **Data Science**

**A Data Science certificate would offer rapid workforce entry and strong ROI for students**

## **Cyber Security**

**A Cybersecurity certificate would equip students for immediate employment in critical roles—boosting job placement and institutional outcomes**

## **Healthcare Professions**

**A Healthcare certificate would offer rapid entry into stable, essential careers—supporting both student success and workforce development**

# **Proposed New Certificates**

**Launching certificates in Data Science, Cybersecurity, and Healthcare strategically positions RBC to meet urgent workforce needs, drive enrollment growth, and deliver high-impact, career-ready education in essential industries.**

Students at RBC



**Jada Ramirez**  
**Student Assembly Secretary / Gloucester Institute**

Students at RBC



**Luke Sweeney**  
**Baseball / RA / Legislative Intern**

Students at RBC



**Richard Agbo**  
**International Student / Basketball**



Richard Bland College

Students at RBC



**Usra Jabri**  
**ORI Intern / Former Student Assembly Historian**

Students at RBC



**Shyla Cooper**  
**Track & Field / Student Assembly Student-Athlete Rep**

Students at RBC



**James Revere**

**Lead Campus Relations Intern / Honors & Promise Scholar**

**Jack Kent Cooke Semi-Finalist**



Richard Bland College