

## 2025 SIX-YEAR PLAN NARRATIVE (Part II)

**INSTITUTION:** Richard Bland College

### OVERVIEW

The six-year plan should describe the institution's goals as they relate to the Commonwealth's goals which are articulated in the *Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education*; the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2011 (TJ21); the Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act of 2005; and the Governor's objectives to prepare every graduate for success in life. Please use this opportunity to outline your institution's plans and objectives.

The instructions within the institutional mission and priorities section below ask for specific strategies related to affordability and access to quality postsecondary education that prepare students for success in life. Other sections offer institutions the opportunity to describe additional strategies to advance institutional goals and Commonwealth needs.

The intent of this process is for each of the commonwealth's higher education institutions to complete a consistent, detailed biennial strategic plan, with an update to that plan in the second year of the biennium. This process should coincide with any planning processes completed by the institution and presented to their board of visitors. It is also expected that the plans rely on the fact packs maintained by SCHEV for key statistics and financial metrics.

***Please be comprehensive but as concise as possible with responses; you are encouraged to use bullet points vs. prose. Consider this a starting point for the dialogue with OpSix; you will have the opportunity to further elaborate on the narrative in your review session later this summer.***

***Please save this narrative document with your institution's name added to the file name.***

## SECTION A: MISSION & PRIORITIES

**Key question: What are your institution's unique strengths and how do those inform your strategic priorities?**

**A1. Describe how your institutional strategic plan goals align to your institutions mission. Please share any plans you have to change your mission over the six-year period.**

**Richard Bland College's Current Mission:**

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.

As Richard Bland College (RBC) advances as a forward-thinking model for higher education, its mission continues to emphasize priorities related to workforce development, educational equity, and economic growth. Central to this evolution is a strategic focus on leveraging the College's underutilized assets to serve as a catalyst for cross-sector collaboration. RBC is committed to:

- **Establishing high-impact partnerships** with K-12 school divisions, public and private higher education institutions, economic development agencies, employers, and nonprofit organizations to drive innovation and regional alignment.
- **Streamlining educational and workforce pathways**—from high school through work-based learning to postsecondary credentials assuring that all students, including nontraditional learners and veterans, are equipped for success in STEM-H and other high-demand sectors.
- **Advance educational attainment, economic opportunity, and regional development** by serving as a hub for talent development and opportunity creation.

Our institutional strategic plan centers around three core areas of focus:

1. Providing **an educational product of high value with streamlined pathways.**
2. Offering **an unmatched student experience** for our campus community.
3. Ensuring **sustainability in operation.**

As RBC prepares to welcome a newly appointed Board of Visitors, the institution is entering a pivotal period of reflection and forward planning. Over the next six-year horizon, we

anticipate dialogue around RBC’s mission, vision, and strategic priorities—ensuring alignment with the evolving needs of the Commonwealth and the students we serve.

This governance transition will coincide with the scheduled Strategic Plan refresh in Fall 2025, providing a timely opportunity to reaffirm institutional values, assess progress toward key performance indicators, and chart a bold path forward. The process will be inclusive, data-informed, and aligned with statewide goals for access, affordability, student success, and workforce readiness.

**A2. What are your institution’s greatest strengths and areas of distinctiveness that it should continue to invest in? Looking ahead, what are your institution’s greatest opportunities for improvement?**

**1. University-Parallel Experience for the Two-Year Student**

The student experience at Richard Bland College (RBC) stands apart from other two-year institutions, offering a comprehensive, university-parallel education at an accessible cost, via residential or non-residential options. Through its innovative Guided Pathways for Success (GPS@RBC) initiative, rooted in best practices from the American Council on Education (ACE), the College is transforming the student journey with a clear, structured, and supportive approach to academic and career success.

**GPS@RBC** is built around a set of student-centered value propositions that ensure every learner is equipped to thrive via:

- Streamlined onboarding which simplifies the transition into college and establishes a foundation for early student success.
- Clearly defined academic and career pathways that align with workforce needs, featuring paths of study and credentials designed to lead directly to high demand fields.
- Accelerated support for underprepared students, including fast-track summer bootcamp programs that help learners quickly master foundational skills needed for success in a postsecondary environment.
- High-touch, holistic support services that provide personalized guidance and proactive interventions throughout the student life cycle.
- Integrated tools and technologies that empower students, faculty, and staff with real-time insights into academic progress, performance, and planning.

**University College (UC) and Transfer Scholars Network (TSN) Partnership:** Expanding Transfer Access and Opportunity

The University College continues to serve as an innovative model for expanding transfer options for RBC graduates through strategic partnerships with four-year institutions and the Transfer Scholars Network (TSN).

- RBC became a full member of the Transfer Scholars Network (TSN)—a national initiative led by the Aspen Institute—in Summer 2023, following a successful pilot phase. recognizing RBC’s commitment to high-achieving, transfer-bound students.
- This partnership aligns with RBC’s mission to prepare students for a lifetime of opportunity by expanding access to selective four-year institutions, particularly for first-generation and low-income students. TSN connects eligible students (GPA 3.5+) with top-tier colleges and universities, offering personalized support and pathways to institutions that were previously perceived as out of reach.
- **Strategic Impact and Student Outcomes**
  - **2023–2024:** 10 applicants; 1 student admitted to Amherst College with full tuition and a Jack Kent Cooke Foundation (JKCF) scholarship.
  - **2024–2025:** 144 students met TSN criteria; 25 submitted interest forms.
    - Admissions included: Williams, Yale, Princeton, and Johns Hopkins.
    - Student admitted to Grinnell College outside of TSN via JKCF semifinalist status.
    - Other TSN Scholars gained admission to top public institutions (e.g., UVA, Virginia Tech, William & Mary, UNC Chapel Hill).

By embedding structure, support, purpose, and streamlined pathways into every stage of the student journey, RBC redefines what’s possible at a two-year college—setting a new standard for student success. Programs such as GPS 101 and partnerships like TSN exemplifies RBC’s strategic commitment to equity, excellence, and upward mobility—ensuring that high-achieving students from all backgrounds have access to the nation’s most selective institutions.

## 2. Early Access and Completion

RBC prides itself on its ability to make a high-value college credential affordable and accessible to traditional and non-traditional students in the local region and across the Commonwealth. Early completion at RBC has been hailed as a model for dual enrollment, enabling more than 2,000 high school students annually to complete rigorous college coursework.

- RBC strategically partners with dozens of public and private high schools across Virginia with a focus on expanding access to college coursework and credentials. These communities include: Petersburg, Hopewell, Dinwiddie, Colonial Heights, Sussex, and Prince George County Public Schools. Since 2023 RBC has increased the number of approved Off-Campus Instructional Sites for Dual Enrollment Academies from two locations to five.
- RBC Dual Enrollment Academies enable dozens of students to complete a high school diploma and a two-year college degree simultaneously. Since 2023 the number of Dual Enrollment students earning a two-year college degree has increased from 23 graduates in the Spring of 2023 to 89 graduates in the Spring of 2025 with an anticipated increase to approximately 100 graduates in Spring 2026.

### **3. RBC Works!: Workforce Preparedness and Pathways to Career Success**

RBC is advancing a comprehensive workforce development strategy that aligns with the Commonwealth's goals for talent development, economic mobility, and educational equity. Through a combination of internal student employment, experiential learning, and community-based training, RBC prepares students and community members for success in high-demand career pathways.

- **Integrated Student Employment and Internship Model** RBC provides structured on-campus employment and internship opportunities that are intentionally aligned with students' academic and career goals. A distinctive feature of this initiative is its internship-style model, integrating mentorship and skill development from within campus departments. This approach ensures that student employees are not only contributing to the College's operations but are also gaining hands-on experience, personalized guidance, and transferable skills that support their academic persistence and career progression.
  - By embedding intentional learning outcomes into on-campus employment, RBC is creating a high-impact practice that strengthens student retention, enhances workforce preparedness, and supports broader statewide goals for talent development.
  
- **Back on Track Workforce Reentry Initiative**  
Launched in FY25 with support from a \$694,000 U.S. Department of Labor grant, the *Back on Track* program is a three-year initiative designed to re-engage disconnected learners and community members—particularly those impacted by trauma or educational disruption—into higher education and the workforce.  
Key components include:
  - Career readiness workshops and soft skills bootcamps
  - Pathways to credentials in high-demand sectors with an emphasis on STEM-H
  - Wraparound support services including expanded access to mental health services, advising, and financial aid navigation

This initiative positions RBC as a regional hub for workforce reentry and credential attainment.

- **Strategic Partnerships and Future Growth**  
RBC is actively expanding partnerships with local employers, regional economic development agencies, and community-based organizations to:
  - Align training with labor market needs
  - Support seamless transitions from education to employment
  - Scale credentialing and internship opportunities.

Future goals include securing additional funding to expand employer-sponsored training, increase student access to paid internships, and enhance community engagement in workforce pathways.

**4. An Incubation Hub for Mission-Aligned Innovation and Research** Since its establishment in 2022, the Office of Research and Innovation (ORI) at RBC has become a key driver of institutional advancement and strategic growth. ORI was created to expand capacity

and support initiatives aligned with student success, workforce development, and academic innovation.

In just three years, ORI has secured over \$9.4 million in competitive grant funding—far exceeding initial projections. Highlights include:

- FY23: \$3.2M awarded (goal: \$1M)
- FY24: \$4.5M awarded from \$12M in proposals (goal: \$1.5M)
- FY25: \$1.7M awarded (goal: \$1M)

Key partners include the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and The Cameron Foundation, whose support has expanded health careers programming and student access to high-demand fields.

Regarding greatest strengths, RBC offers a high-impact, affordable educational experience that mirrors the academic rigor, student engagement, and residential life opportunities typically found at four-year institutions—while maintaining the accessibility and flexibility of a two-year college.

#### **Opportunities for Improvement:**

**1. Diversify and Expand Enrollment Pipelines:** To ensure long-term enrollment sustainability, RBC is focused on expanding access through flexible, high-impact learning models. This includes offering online and hybrid options to better serve Dual Enrollment (DE) students, adult learners, and individuals with some college but no degree. Strengthening conversion pathways for DE students and re-engagement strategies for near-completers to return and earn credentials are areas for opportunity.

**2. Advance Student Success Metrics:** RBC is committed to improving key performance indicators including retention, persistence, and graduation rates. Enhanced student support services with an emphasis on mental health promotion, data-informed advising, and targeted programming that supports student belonging and academic momentum are critical to making advancements in these areas.

**3. Expand Workforce-Aligned Academic Programs:** To meet labor market demands, RBC will continue to partner with the community to develop programs that support career attainment and advancement in high-demand sectors. Areas for opportunity include healthcare, cybersecurity, and data science, with a focus on short-term credentials and stackable certificates. Employer partnerships and work-based learning opportunities that provide students with real-world experience and clear career pathways will remain areas of focus.

**4. Strengthen Operational Sustainability:** As a central tenet of the Strategic Plan, RBC remains committed to taking measures that ensure financial resilience and institutional agility. RBC intends to improve operational efficiency through data-driven budgeting, and exploration of shared services or consortium models to reduce costs and increase capacity. RBC will also

continue to pursue growth in grant activity, corporate partnerships, and philanthropic support to advance institutional priorities and sustainability.

**A3. What are the top 3-5 strategic priorities you are currently pursuing or planning to pursue in the next six years? Please explain how each strategy relates to the statewide strategic plan for higher education, to the strengths and/or opportunities for improvement mentioned above, and will ultimately drive better outcomes for students. If the strategy has a general fund component (operating and/or capital, equipment, renovation) please include the operating request in the “General Fund Request” tab and the capital or equipment request in the “Capital” tab of the excel file.**

**1. Ensure Richard Bland College’s (RBC) successful transition to independent board governance, focus on financial health and sustainability of operation, and preparation for Level Two authority**

As RBC enters a new chapter, special focus will be given to transitioning our newly appointed Board of Visitors, focused on advancing RBC’s vision, institutional strengths, and long-term impact within the Commonwealth. A top priority for the College remains ensuring operational sustainability to support student success and institutional resilience. In the upcoming biennium, RBC will continue to strengthen its financial health by:

- Diversifying revenue streams,
- Optimizing enrollment and retention strategies,
- Expanding advancement and philanthropic efforts, and
- Aligning academic programs with labor market demand.

Additionally, RBC will continue to pursue greater operational efficiency through data-informed budgeting and the exploration of shared services and consortium models. These efforts reflect the College’s commitment to fiscal responsibility, affordability, and operational excellence.

Looking ahead, RBC will evaluate the feasibility of pursuing expanded operational authority under Virginia’s Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act. Currently the only institution in the Commonwealth operating at Level One authority, RBC intends to explore one or more memoranda of understanding (MOUs) over the next six years to advance to Level Two status. Priority areas for expanded autonomy include:

- Information Technology – to enhance digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, and service delivery;
- Procurement – to streamline processes, reduce costs, and align purchasing with institutional priorities.

Together, these strategic efforts position Richard Bland College to deliver on its mission with greater agility, impact, and alignment with statewide goals for higher education and workforce development.

## **2. Unmatched Student Services and Support via Guided Pathways for Success (GPS) (GF FY27 \$499,750/FY28 \$499,750, Capital FY27 \$359,674)**

Student success is more than a goal—it's a comprehensive, institution-wide commitment. Through innovative programs, personalized support, and a future-focused approach, RBC delivers a student experience that is both transformative and accessible.

Guided Pathways for Success (GPS@RBC) and the work done via the American Council on Education (ACE) Learner Success Lab are central to this vision, offering a structured, student-centered framework that supports academic achievement, career readiness, and personal development including:

- Holistic advising and life design, which integrates academic planning with career exploration and experiential learning—ensuring students see clear connections between educational goals and their everyday lives.
- Expansion of RBC Works! programs, including development of program infrastructure and increased staffing that supports career readiness through meaningful experiences that combine a liberal arts foundation with tangible skills for the workforce.
- Faculty and staff development, via the establishment of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Leadership, equipping educators with the tools needed to embed life design and experiential learning into the curriculum, increasing student engagement, and improving retention, persistence, and graduation rates. RBC has requested funds to support the renovation of existing space on campus to establish this Center (\$359,674).
- Given the growing mental health needs of students, RBC is committed to expanding mental health services and has requested funding to support this area (\$499,750). This includes additional staff in the form of licensed counselors and life coaches, as well as programming and support services for neurodivergent learners. SCHEV recently reported that emotional stress and personal mental health are barriers to college enrollment and completion. RBC has identified reaching near-completers as a target market for enrollment and sees increased mental health services as a fundamental component of being able to successfully access and support these students. In response to national trends and rising demand on campus, the College seeks to provide resources that are on par with premier universities and best practices nationwide. This includes increasing access to counseling, disability services, wellness programming, and proactive mental health support to ensure students are equipped to thrive both academically and personally.

Together, these initiatives reflect RBC's commitment to delivering an unmatched student experience—one that is inclusive, innovative, and deeply aligned with broader goals for educational equity, workforce development, and a transformative student experience. This approach reflects RBC's focus on improving rates of retention, persistence, graduation, and thriving post-completion.

**3. Drive High-Performance, High-Impact Practices with an emphasis on the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into academic program delivery and appropriate campus functions (GF: FY27 \$477,000/FY28 \$477,000)**

• **RBC Online**

The launch of RBC Online will represent a bold step forward in Richard Bland College's values of being a forward-thinking model of higher education—one that emphasizes flexibility, accelerated learning, and market-driven credentials to meet the evolving needs of today's learners and tomorrow's workforce.

**Key features of RBC Online include:**

- Career-aligned programs offering in-demand certifications and degrees in high-growth fields such as cybersecurity, cloud computing, and data science—directly addressing regional workforce gaps and supporting local economic development.
  - Expanded access to education for a diverse student population, including working professionals, adult learners, and K–12 students, thereby broadening RBC's reach and impact.
  - Dual enrollment and preparatory coursework for high school students, providing early exposure to college-level learning and fostering postsecondary readiness along with improvement in pass-through rates.
  - Curriculum aligned with national industry standards and certifications, ensuring graduates are competitive in both local and national job markets.
  - Agile, technology-driven delivery, allowing for rapid updates and integration of emerging tools and methodologies to keep pace with industry trends.
  - With its scalable, future-ready platform, RBC Online will not only expand access to high-quality education and improve affordability—but will position the College as a leader in workforce innovation and digital transformation.
- **Learning Excellence and Integration of Artificial Intelligence**
- RBC is focused on integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) across college operations, encompassing administrative, academic, and student support functions, in alignment with AI Guidelines and prioritizing curricular innovation and agility in response to market needs.
  - Curricular enhancement and personalized learning support will be a primary focus, ensuring that faculty and students have access to the tools needed to be successful.
  - Increasing administrative efficiency to expand our capacity for scalable innovation and strategic partnerships will also be a primary focus.

In the upcoming biennium, RBC will build on the success of its current online offerings by fully developing the integrated RBC Online degree-completion program. RBC has requested funding to support the launch of this program including partnering with learning experience design experts and specialized marketing outreach to identified student populations (\$477,000). This initiative is designed to expand access to high-quality, flexible academic pathways—particularly for adult learners, working professionals, Dual Enrollment students

and those with some college but no degree. RBC Online directly supports statewide strategic priorities around educational equity, credential attainment, and talent pipeline development

**A4. Please explain how your institution has engaged your Board of Visitors and institution leadership in the mandatory review of the Pell Initiative for Virginia.**

Richard Bland College (RBC) has fully integrated the Institution-Wide Barrier Review (IwBR) into its strategic planning and governance processes, in alignment with the SCHEV Pathways to Opportunity framework.

**Board and Leadership Engagement**

- In January 2025, President Sydow formally charged the institution to embed the IwBR into both the six-year plan and governance structure, ensuring sustained focus and accountability.
- The President’s Cabinet and Council led early-stage policy reviews and barrier identification, followed by structured engagement with faculty, staff, and students.
- The Office of Research and Innovation has briefed the Board of Visitors on updates from major grant initiatives related to strategic goals and performance metrics.

**Inclusive and Data-Informed Process**

- RBC launched a comprehensive review process that included:
  - Qualtrics surveys of faculty and staff
  - Focus groups with students and faculty

**Strategic Priorities Under Review**

The IwBR has focused on identifying and addressing barriers in:

- Health Careers Pathways
- Drone and Aviation Programs
- Student Support Services (mental health, scholarships, paid internships, experiential learning)

**Governance and Continuous Improvement**

- Barriers are categorized into two strategic areas:
  1. Immediate – actionable within the current fiscal year
  2. Complex – requiring long-term planning and resource alignment
- A continuous improvement self-assessment function is now embedded in institutional operations, ensuring that findings inform both policy and practice.

## SECTION B: STRATEGIC DEEP DIVE – ENROLLMENT VOLUME & COMPOSITION

*Key question: How is your institution managing enrollment in light of state and national trends, and what are the financial implications?*

**B1. What do you see as the primary drivers of recent enrollment trends for your institution? Further, describe your 2023 enrollment projections and explain why those projections have (or have not) resulted as projected. Please reference any specific academic programs that have had a significant (positive or negative) effect on enrollment, if relevant. When responding to this question please consider data under the “Enrollment” section of your institution’s fact pack ([linked here](#)).**

### **1. Recent Enrollment Growth at Richard Bland College: Key Drivers and Strategic Impact**

Richard Bland College (RBC) has experienced sustained enrollment growth in recent years, driven by a combination of strategic initiatives and evolving market dynamics. The following factors have been instrumental in shaping this positive trajectory:

- **Strategic Expansion of Recruitment Territories**

RBC has significantly broadened its geographic reach, particularly in Northern Virginia and the Tidewater region. The deployment of dedicated recruitment staff and consistent engagement with high schools in these areas has led to a measurable increase in application volume and improved yield rates.

- **Robust Growth in Dual Enrollment**

The College’s dual enrollment program continues to thrive, reflecting strong demand across the Commonwealth. In 2023, dual enrollment students comprised 68% of total headcount—a 26% increase over the previous year. RBC is actively working to convert these students into full-time, degree-seeking enrollers through targeted pipelines, incentive programs, and personalized outreach.

- **Athletics as a Catalyst for Residential Enrollment**

RBC’s athletics program has emerged as a key driver of residential enrollment, currently supporting approximately 200 student-athletes, over 80% of whom reside on campus. The program has grown from six athletic teams to fifteen in three years, including an increase in student athletes from 125 to nearly 200 in the same time frame. This has enhanced RBC’s visibility both regionally and out-of-state, enriched campus life, and contributed to higher referral and yield rates among first-time-in-college (FTIC) applicants.

- **Increased Peer and Family Referrals**

Positive student experiences have translated into stronger word-of-mouth recruitment. In Fall 2024, 24% of new students reported learning about RBC through a friend or family member, underscoring the value of community trust and satisfaction.

- **Data-Driven Marketing and Personalization**

RBC has adopted a sophisticated, data-informed marketing strategy that leverages geo-targeting, storytelling, and digital engagement. Campaigns highlight affordability, guaranteed transfer pathways, and student success stories. CRM-driven workflows enable personalized communication based on prospective student behavior and interests, significantly improving conversion rates.

- **Enhanced Admissions Operations and Communication**

Operational improvements have streamlined the admissions process, including same-day application processing, 24-hour follow-ups, and multichannel communication (text, email, phone). Integration with the Element451 platform has enabled automation, increased counselor efficiency, and ensured sustained student engagement from application through enrollment.

- **A Compelling Value Proposition Amid Rising Costs**

As families increasingly scrutinize the return on investment in higher education, RBC's affordable tuition and guaranteed transfer agreements offer a compelling value proposition. These attributes resonate strongly with cost-conscious students and families seeking quality education without sacrificing future opportunity.

## 2. **2023 Enrollment Projections vs. Actual Outcomes**

Based on the 2023 enrollment projections, RBC has exceeded headcount numbers for the 2024-25 Academic Year, because of the efforts described above. The current 2B response incorporates updated internal data, accurately reflects enrollment trends and informs strategic planning efforts moving forward.

Richard Bland College experienced a 7% year-over-year increase in first-time-in-college (FTIC) students from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023, as documented in the RBC Fact Pack.

## 3. **Enrollment Performance Highlights**

- **Traditional First-Time Enrollment**

Projections for 2023 anticipated modest growth in traditional FTIC enrollment. Actual outcomes slightly exceeded expectations, driven by a comprehensive and data-informed recruitment strategy that included:

- **Geographic Expansion:** Increased outreach in Northern Virginia and Tidewater through targeted high school visits and strengthened counselor engagement.
- **Personalized Communication:** Enhanced follow-up efforts via text, phone, and email, supported by behavior-based CRM workflows.
- **Strategic Marketing:** Digital campaigns highlighting RBC's affordability, residential experience, and guaranteed transfer pathways.
- **Financial Support:** Foundation- and grant-funded scholarships that reduced summer melt by addressing unmet financial need.

- **Dual Enrollment**

Dual enrollment significantly outperformed projections, with 1,888 students enrolled compared to the anticipated 1,400. This growth reflects heightened interest from high schools seeking affordable college credit opportunities for their students.

While this surge has not yet translated into increased post-secondary matriculation at RBC, the College has implemented new strategies to improve conversion. These include:

- Streamlined admissions processes
- Incentive-based enrollment initiatives
- Targeted messaging to dual-enrollment students

Early indicators suggest these efforts are beginning to yield positive results.

#### 4. Program-Level Impact

- Specialized Liberal Arts Transfer Pathways continue to attract students focused on transferring, by offering high-impact, affordable educational experiences that mirror the academic rigor and student engagement of a four-year institution.
- Athletics remains a consistent enrollment stabilizer where recruitment pipelines are strong.
- Flexible learning modalities including online and hybrid delivery continue to draw students who are balancing employment obligations with their educational goals.

**B2. Please summarize your institutions enrollment management strategy to align with recent demographic and enrollment trends. Consider online education enrollment in your response. What is the level of confidence in your 2025 enrollment projections, considering potential risks and unknowns such as economic factors, shifting student preferences, and regional demographic changes? Please reference national and statewide enrollment trends/projections and cite any other data (e.g. regional trends, performance of prior enrollment strategies) that informed your projections.**

Richard Bland College's (RBC) enrollment management strategy is intentionally designed to address the challenges facing higher education, including shifting demographics, increasing skepticism toward higher education, and intensifying competition from both traditional and online institutions. Our approach emphasizes **market expansion, student success, and program accessibility**, while maintaining fiscal and operational discipline by avoiding overreliance on unproven initiatives.

#### Strategic Alignment with Demographic and Enrollment Trends

##### 1. Territory Expansion

In response to projected declines in high school graduates across Southside and rural Virginia—estimated at a 10% decrease from 2025 to 2032 (WICHE)—RBC has strategically expanded recruitment efforts into more demographically stable regions such as Northern Virginia and Tidewater. These areas not only offer a consistent pipeline of prospective students but also align with RBC's residential model, appealing to students seeking a balance between independence and proximity to home.

- **Northern Virginia:** Produces approximately 42,000–43,000 high school graduates annually, with projections remaining stable through the early 2030s.
- **Tidewater (Hampton Roads):** Generates 11,500–12,000 graduates annually across divisions including Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Chesapeake, and Newport News, with minimal fluctuation expected through 2031.

This expansion supports RBC's dual-market strategy, targeting:

- **High-achieving students** leveraging guaranteed transfer pathways to reduce cost and build academic confidence.
- **Mid-range GPA students (2.0–3.0)** seeking a supportive, university-parallel environment to improve academic standing before transferring.

## 2. **Dual Enrollment as a Strategic Pipeline**

Dual enrollment now comprises 68% of RBC's total headcount, serving as a critical early-access platform for brand exposure and student engagement. While not yet a direct FTIC pipeline, RBC is implementing strategies to improve post-graduation yield through:

- Personalized outreach to dual-enrollment seniors
- Seamless admissions processes
- Targeted messaging to encourage matriculation

## 3. **Support for Underserved Populations**

RBC remains committed to expanding access for first-generation, rural, and underrepresented students. In Fall 2024, 51% of the incoming class identified as first-generation, a significant increase from 33% in Fall 2021. RBC's affordability, residential experience, and guided pathways model, including summer bootcamps, directly address the barriers these students face.

To further reduce access gaps, RBC has launched a mobile recruitment van equipped with virtual reality campus tours, bringing the college experience to remote and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities.

## 4. **Modernized Marketing Strategy**

RBC's marketing efforts have evolved to focus on geo-targeted digital campaigns that reach students and families most aligned with the College's mission. Key components include:

- Digital storytelling and paid social media
- Programmatic ad targeting emphasizing affordability, transfer pathways, and student success
- CRM-driven communications (Element451) that deliver behavior-based, personalized messaging from inquiry through enrollment

These efforts contributed to a 9% increase in FTIC enrollment in Fall 2024 and have significantly expanded RBC's brand presence in Northern Virginia and Tidewater.

## 5. **Online Learning Development**

The RBC Online initiative continues to evolve, with initial enrollment projected for 2026. Rather than overestimating early impact, RBC is prioritizing workforce-aligned, transferable offerings such as stackable certificates. The online platform will initially serve adult learners and credential-seekers, with modest enrollment goals set for 2027. While the current 2B Report references modest growth based on existing institutional infrastructure and capacity, we anticipate updates to the 2B Report for the 2027-28 academic year that reflects growth in the number of distance learners once this platform is adopted.

## **Enrollment Outlook for 2025: Sustained Growth and Strategic Alignment**

We are confident in our 2025 enrollment projection of 429 first-time-in-college (FTIC) students and a total student body of 2,431, grounded in both recent performance trends and the continued impact of our strategic initiatives.

**Key Drivers Supporting Our Projection:**

- **Sustained Enrollment Momentum:**

Richard Bland College has experienced consistent year-over-year growth. Our Fall 2024 FTIC enrollment increased by 9%, while total enrollment exceeded projections by 16% (2,787 actual vs. 2,385 projected). This follows a 7% increase in Fall 2023 and a 30% surge in Fall 2022, underscoring the effectiveness of our enhanced outreach efforts and student-centered service improvements.

- **Strategic Responsiveness to National Trends:**

Our projections are informed by broader demographic and behavioral shifts, including the anticipated 10% decline in high school graduates through the early 2030s—commonly referred to as the “demographic cliff.” Additionally, we have accounted for the decline in Virginia’s immediate college-going rate, which has dropped from 71% to 65% in recent years. Despite these headwinds, our proactive strategies continue to yield positive enrollment outcomes.

**B3. Explain the implications of your enrollment strategy on your institution’s financials. Please consider impacts on both revenues (e.g., discounting, financial aid, net tuition revenue) and expenditures (e.g., costs to implement enrollment management strategies, costs of enrolling more students or students with different needs, cost-per-student impact of flat/decreased enrollment).**

Richard Bland College’s enrollment strategy is designed to balance growth with fiscal responsibility, ensuring that both revenue generation and expenditure management align with institutional goals. The following outlines key financial impacts across revenue streams and cost structures:

**Revenue Implications:**

- **Dual Enrollment Programs**

Dual enrollment continues to be a cost-effective revenue stream with varying financial models based on program agreements:

- **Minimal Direct Costs:** Courses taught by qualified high school instructors credentialed as RBC adjunct faculty incur little to no cost for RBC.
- **Revenue from Instructional Gaps:** When RBC provides instructors for courses not offered by partner high schools, the College captures additional tuition revenue that would otherwise be unrealized.
- **Partner Contributions:** High school partners often cover tuition and/or instructor compensation for online or on-campus courses taught by RBC faculty.
- **Post-COVID Growth:** Enrollment of dual enrollment students attending courses on RBC’s campus has surpassed pre-pandemic levels, generating full tuition revenue and increasing overall enrollment efficiency.

- **Student-Athlete Enrollment**

Student-athletes represent a significant portion of full-time enrollment (~200 students annually), with approximately 80% residing in on-campus housing, accounting for 50% of housing capacity. This contributes meaningfully to both tuition and auxiliary revenue streams, as well as providing the university parallel experience at an affordable rate for many students.

- **Grant Support**

- Department of Labor Grant: RBC received a Department of Labor grant (award date January 2024, effective FY25). These funds support our “Back on Track” program to support the development of a comprehensive back-to-education task force designed to effectively provide pathways for traumatized college and high school students to return to educational environments. This 3-year funded program (\$694,000) is linked to increasing student outcomes (admission, enrollment, retention and workforce development).
- State Council of Higher Education in Virginia: RBC received a 3.4 million dollar REACH grant designed to support students in rural areas. The program includes STEM activities, dual enrollment opportunities, scholarships, paid internships and programming.
- In January 2024, RBC was awarded a \$694,000 Department of Labor grant to launch the “Back on Track” initiative. This three-year program supports re-engagement pathways for students impacted by trauma and disruption, with a focus on improving admission, enrollment, retention, and workforce outcomes. The grant offsets programmatic costs while enhancing long-term enrollment and student success metrics.

### **Expenditure Implications:**

- **Strategic Enrollment Management Costs**

Investments in outreach, student services, and instructional capacity have been essential to recent enrollment gains. These include:

- Expanded recruitment and marketing efforts
- Enhanced academic advising and support services
- Increased instructional staffing for dual enrollment and high-demand courses

- **Cost of Serving a Growing and Diverse Student Body**

As enrollment grows—particularly among dual enrollment, first generation, and student-athlete populations—RBC must continue to invest in:

- Scalable academic and residential support services
- Technology infrastructure for hybrid and online learning
- Faculty and staff development to meet evolving student needs

### **Cost Efficiency Considerations:**

- While flat or declining enrollment typically increases per-student costs, RBC’s recent growth has improved economies of scale. Strategic use of dual enrollment and grant-funded initiatives helps mitigate cost pressures and supports long-term financial sustainability.

## SECTION C: STRATEGIC DEEP DIVE – PROGRAM ALIGNMENT & PERFORMANCE

### COMPLETION OUTCOMES

**Key question: How is your institution supporting all students to succeed in completing their degree or credential in a timely manner?**

**C1. What are your highest-priority completion outcomes targets, both overall and for particular student segments? Please include aspirational targets, realistic expectations, and qualitative targets and specify by when and how you are aiming to meet those targets (e.g., X% 6-year graduation rate for Pell students by 2030). Also include information on recent changes in completion outcomes. When responding please reference the “Completion” section of your institution’s fact pack data ([linked here](#)).**

#### **Priority Completion Outcome Targets**

Richard Bland College (RBC) is committed to continuous improvement and student success, guided by a focused set of performance metrics that align with statewide priorities. These completion outcomes are used to monitor progress, inform strategic decisions, and ensure equitable outcomes across student populations. RBC’s high priority completion outcomes and targets include:

- A 35% graduation rate (150%) by Fall Cohort. For the 2020-2021 cohort, RBC maintained a 26% graduation rate based on Fact Pack data.
- 65% Fall to Fall retention by Fall Cohort. For the 2023 Fall cohort RBC maintained a 54% retention rate based on Fact Pack Data
- A 55% Persistence by Fall Cohort. Using internal data RBC maintains a 52% persistence rate as a 3-year average.
- 70 % 4-year baccalaureate completion. Based on Fact Pack Data 72% of those transferring to public schools complete a baccalaureate degree and 78% of those transferring to private schools
- Dual enrollment measures—In response to significant growth of Dual Enrollment programs, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee is currently reviewing preliminary performance data to guide the establishment of meaningful benchmarks aligned with the strategic goals for these programs.
  - o Percentage of DE students earning a C or better in classes (currently 94%)
  - o Number of DE students earning an associate degree (currently 65 completers in 2024)

#### **Student Segment Focus:**

To ensure equity in outcomes, RBC monitors performance across key student populations:

- Students of Color
- First-Generation Students

### **Performance Analysis and Institutional Targets**

- **150% Graduation Rate**

Graduation rates, as stated in the Fact Pack, have declined beginning with the 2019 cohort, largely due to pandemic-related disruptions at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. According to IPEDS, students of color averaged a 22% graduation rate across the 2017–2019 cohorts, highlighting the need for targeted support strategies. RBC plans to raise total graduation rates to 32% for the Fall 2027 Cohort.

- **Fall-to-Fall Retention**

RBC’s retention rates experienced a post-pandemic decline, reaching a low of 45% in 2021 as reported in the SCHEV Retention Report (RT01). However, recent cohorts have shown improvement, with rates approaching 60% and trending toward the institutional target of 65%. RBC plans to achieve a 60% fall to fall retention rate by 2027.

- **Persistence by Fall Cohort**

Using National Student Clearinghouse data, RBC tracks persistence as the percentage of students who graduate, remain enrolled, or transfer to another institution. The three-year average remains near the 55% target, with a slight post-pandemic decline but remains above the institutionally established minimum threshold. RBC aims to increase persistence rates to 60% in the Fall 2027 Cohort.

RBC views the above priority outcomes as measures of progress towards completion. We are aiming to improve upon these targets through campuswide efforts as discussed in the response to C2 below.

**C2. Please describe efforts at your institution to ensure all students are graduating in a timely manner. Reference data from the “Program Alignment and Performance” section of your fact pack ([linked here](#)).**

### **Addressing Graduation Rate Challenges Through Equity-Focused Student Success Initiatives**

Since 2019, Richard Bland College’s 150% graduation rate has fallen below the institutional target threshold as referenced in the Fact Pack. While recent trends show signs of recovery, the College remains focused on addressing persistent equity gaps—particularly among male students of color, who have been disproportionately impacted.

To reverse these trends and promote inclusive student success, RBC has implemented a comprehensive suite of initiatives designed to support all students, with targeted strategies for historically underserved populations:

#### **Strategic Interventions to Foster Belonging and Access-Driven Programs**

- **Guided Pathways for Success**

Informed by the *American Council on Education’s Learner Success Lab*, RBC expanded its Guided Pathways model through redesigned freshman orientation courses, dedicated learner mentors, and enhanced transition support for incoming students.

- **Inclusive Excellence Framework**  
Following the completion of the *Racial Justice and Equity Report*, RBC established the *Inclusive Excellence Committee* to identify and close equity gaps in student outcomes through data-informed strategies and inclusive practices.
- **Academic Support Infrastructure**  
The *MySTiC Tutoring Center* was launched to provide targeted academic support in mathematics and science, combining peer tutoring with faculty engagement in a collaborative learning environment.
  - **Culturally Responsive Engagement**
    - *Barbershop Talks* offer a safe, authentic space for men of color to engage in open dialogue and build community.
    - *R.I.C.H. Men of RBC* (Respect, Integrity, Character, and Honor) fosters leadership and belonging among male students through mentorship and peer support.
- **First-Generation Student Success**  
In 2023, RBC joined the *First Scholars Network*, aligning with national best practices to improve outcomes for first-generation students—who comprise nearly half of the College’s population.
  - *Summer Bootcamps* for both dual enrollment and first-generation students help ease the transition to college and improve early academic success.
  - First-Generation student recognition includes First Generation Declaration Day for students, faculty and staff, first-generation graduate celebration, and graduation stoles commemorating first-generation status.
- **Emergency Financial Support**  
The *Save Our Students (SOS) Fund* was established to address urgent financial barriers that threaten students’ academic continuity, reinforcing RBC’s commitment to holistic student support.

## POST-COMPLETION OUTCOMES

**Key question: How is your institution preparing all students for success beyond completion (e.g., career preparation)?**

**C3. Please explain how you monitor post-completion outcomes (e.g., employment rates, wage attainment, debt load, upward mobility). What data do you collect? What metrics are you monitoring most closely? What does the data reveal about your institution's greatest strengths and areas for improvement with respect to post-completion outcomes? Please include any relevant data/reports in the appendix or as a separate attachment, including any data that captures outcomes by school/department/program. When responding please reference the "Post Completion" section of your institution's fact pack data ([linked here](#)).**

### **Monitoring Post-Completion Outcomes: Strengthening Data to Demonstrate Long-Term Impact**

Richard Bland College (RBC) is committed to understanding and improving the long-term success of its graduates. As a transfer-oriented institution, RBC's post-completion outcomes are closely tied to students' continued academic progress and eventual entry into the workforce. To that end, the College is actively enhancing its capacity to track and analyze post-graduation outcomes through both internal and external data sources.

#### **Current Monitoring Practices**

- **Graduation Survey (Administered by the RBC Foundation)**  
In partnership with the Richard Bland College Foundation, RBC administers a graduation survey that captures students' immediate post-completion plans, including:
  - Intent to transfer to a four-year institution
  - Entry into the workforce
  - Career interests and satisfaction with their RBC experience
- **National Student Clearinghouse (NSC)**  
RBC uses NSC data to monitor:
  - Transfer rates to four-year institutions
  - Baccalaureate degree completion
  - Time-to-degree metrics
- **State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV)**  
SCHEV provides data on:
  - Median income levels three years post-graduation
  - Employment rates by program of study
  - Student debt levels and repayment trends
  - Baccalaureate Completion Rates

#### **Strategic Enhancements in Progress**

To improve the accuracy, timeliness, and comprehensiveness of post-completion data, RBC is finalizing a **data-sharing agreement** with the RBC Foundation. This agreement will enable:

- Longitudinal tracking of alumni employment outcomes
- Collection of wage data and job placement rates

- Analysis of graduate satisfaction and upward mobility

These efforts are aligned with RBC's strategic goal to better demonstrate the value of an RBC education and to inform continuous improvement in academic programming and student support services.

### **Key Metrics Monitored**

- Transfer and Baccalaureate Completion Rates
- Employment Status and Industry Alignment
- Median Earnings Three Years Post-Graduation
- Student Debt Load and Repayment Trends
- Graduate Satisfaction and Career Readiness

### **Preliminary Insights and Areas for Growth**

- **Strengths:**  
RBC continues to perform well in transfer outcomes, with a significant proportion of graduates successfully enrolling in and completing degrees at four-year institutions. SCHEV data also indicates competitive earnings for RBC alumni relative to peers at similar institutions.
- **Opportunities for Improvement:**  
More robust employment and wage tracking is needed to fully capture the workforce outcomes of students who do not pursue immediate transfer. Additionally, disaggregated data by program, race/ethnicity, and first-generation status will be critical in identifying equity gaps and tailoring support services.

**C4. What specific strategies/actions, including potential changes to your program portfolio or curriculum, are you planning to take to maximize the career readiness and job attainment of all students across programs of study, including increasing early career exposure for students (e.g., internships, work-based learning) during their time at your institution? How will you draw on successes/challenges from prior initiatives? Please describe how you intend to use existing/provided resources to execute the strategies.**

### **Strategic Alignment of Academic Excellence and Workforce Readiness at Richard Bland College**

Richard Bland College is committed to aligning the strengths of its academic programs with the dynamic needs of today’s evolving industries. Our academic portfolio is anchored in a broad, transferable liberal arts foundation that cultivates the core competencies essential for long-term career success—critical thinking, effective communication, analytical and ethical reasoning, and cultural and historical literacy. Through our RBC Works! framework, we intentionally bridge academic learning with real-world application. By integrating career-aligned pathways and work-based learning opportunities into the student experience, we ensure that graduates are not only well-educated but also workforce-ready:

#### **1. RBC Works! — A Strategic Workforce Development Initiative at Richard Bland College**

Richard Bland College is advancing a forward-looking, integrated approach to workforce development that aligns the strengths of its liberal arts and STEM academic programs with the Commonwealth’s goals for talent development, economic mobility, and educational equity. Through the RBC Works! initiative, the College is building a scalable model that connects education to employment by embedding experiential learning, community partnerships, and innovation-driven infrastructure into the student experience and regional workforce ecosystem including:

- **Integrated Student Employment & Internship Model:** RBC offers a structured, on-campus employment and internship program that is intentionally aligned with students’ academic and career trajectories. This internship-style model incorporates mentorship, professional skill-building, and departmental collaboration, transforming campus employment into a high-impact learning experience that prepares students for Virginia’s workforce needs. Since 2022 RBC has more than tripled the number of student workers on campus and quadrupled the institutional funds awarded to student workers since the program's relaunch.
- **2025 RBC Works! Grant Support:** In alignment with RBC’s priorities for workforce development and career readiness, the Office of Research and Innovation (ORI) has prioritized the pursuit of grant opportunities that directly support the goals of the RBC Works! initiative. This program is designed to enhance career pathways, expand work-based learning opportunities, and strengthen the infrastructure necessary to prepare students for high-demand careers.

In 2025, ORI secured key external funding to advance these objectives:

- **SCHEV Work-Based Learning Grant** – \$150,000

Through the Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership (V-TOP), this grant

supports the development and delivery of structured work-based learning experiences. Funding is being used to expand training modules, employer engagement strategies, and student readiness programs that align with regional workforce needs.

- **Cameron Foundation Health Careers Grant** – \$644,000

This transformative grant supports the creation of 100 health career internships and apprenticeships through a partnership with Riipen a leading platform for experiential learning. The initiative targets critical shortages in the healthcare workforce by providing students with real-world, mentored experiences in clinical and allied health settings.

- **Community Workforce Partnerships:** RBC has cultivated strategic partnerships with regional employers to create career-aligned educational pathways that serve both students and the broader community. These partnerships have included Advanced Manufacturing and Uncrewed Aerial Systems and currently are focused on Pre-Nursing Pathways in collaboration with Bon Secours and the RBC Dealer Institute, launched in partnership with Live! Casino in Petersburg, offering zero-credit training and direct employment opportunities for residents. RBC was awarded an NSF Enabling Partnerships to Increase Innovation Capacity (EPIIC) grant for the work being done to expand opportunities for workforce collaboration in rural communities.

- **Business Innovation Park: A Vision for Economic and Educational Synergy**

RBC's Business Innovation Park—a 180-acre undeveloped parcel adjacent to the main campus—represents a bold opportunity to attract emerging industries and support statewide economic development. Under a ground lease model, the Business Innovation Park will host businesses that commit to providing RBC students with internships, apprenticeships, and workforce training. This space will also serve as a Research and Development Hub for faculty innovation, collaboration, and professional development.

This initiative will:

- Stimulate regional job creation
- Foster public-private collaboration
- Serve as a living laboratory for applied learning and innovation

**RBC Works!** is a strategic framework that bridges the gap between academic preparation and economic opportunity. These initiatives exemplify RBC's commitment to inclusive workforce development and its role as a catalyst for regional economic advancement.

## **2. Academic Innovation: Expanding Experiential Learning for Workforce Readiness**

In alignment with the RBC Works! framework, RBC is advancing academic innovation by embedding credit-bearing internship and research experiences into the curriculum. Faculty, in collaboration with academic leadership, are developing structured courses that allow students to earn academic credit for supervised, career-relevant work experiences. These opportunities are designed to:

- Deepen student engagement through real-world application of academic concepts
- Strengthen career readiness by aligning experiential learning with students' fields of study

- Foster early exposure to professional environments, enhancing both academic and workforce outcomes

This model reflects a growing recognition that experiential learning is essential to 21st-century education, particularly for students navigating the transition from college to career.

**Strategic Capacity Building: Addressing Implementation Challenges** To scale this initiative effectively and equitably, RBC recognizes the need for dedicated institutional capacity. Key requirements include:

- **Workforce Partnerships Coordinator:** A full-time staff member to manage external relationships with industry partners, coordinate internship placements, and ensure alignment with academic standards and student learning outcomes.
- **Curriculum and Assessment Oversight:** Centralized coordination to maintain academic rigor, monitor student progress, and integrate feedback from employers and faculty.
- **Infrastructure and Funding:** Investment in staffing, physical space, and operational support to sustain and expand experiential learning opportunities across disciplines.

RBC's overarching approach to maximizing the career readiness and job attainment of all students is clear: empower students with a timeless academic core while equipping them with the tools, experiences, and connections necessary to thrive in a modern economy. As part of the institution's ongoing academic program review process, consideration is being given to phasing out certificate programs that have experienced persistent under-enrollment, while adding certificates that align with high demand fields in the areas of business communication and leadership, AI and computer information systems, data science, and health professions. With targeted investment and cross-sector collaboration, RBC is well-positioned to serve as a statewide model for integrating academic innovation with workforce development.

## WORKFORCE ALIGNMENT

**Key question: How are your institution's programs of study and degree conferrals aligned with the evolving talent needs of the Commonwealth?**

**C5. For which specific workforce needs is your institution best positioned to supply talent, based on regional, industry, or occupation alignment? When responding please reference the "Workforce Alignment" section of your institution's fact pack data ([linked here](#)).**

Through the American Council on Education's (ACE) Learner Success Lab, RBC consulted with local industry partners and community stakeholders to reconfigure its degree offerings to be responsive to these partners'/stakeholders' personnel needs. RBC thus offers the following specialized "career tracks" as concentrations of their foundational associate degree programs:

- Behavioral Sciences
- Business Administration
- Clinical Lab Sciences
- Life Science
- Math/Computer Science
- Physical Science

As noted in the response to *C4*, faculty in collaboration with academic leadership are developing structured courses that allow students to earn academic credit for supervised, career-relevant work experiences. In addition, concerted effort is being put forth to develop additional stackable micro credentials in the form of Certificates that align with specific workforce needs and partnerships and allow students to earn relevant credentials along their journey towards earning their two-year degree. As part of the institution's ongoing academic program review process, conducted in close collaboration with faculty, consideration is being given to phasing out certificate programs that have experienced persistent under-enrollment or no longer align with current student demand and institutional priorities.

The above offerings paired with strategic expansion of micro credentials suggest institutional strength in meeting personnel needs in mental health, medical/STEM, and commerce sectors for the Virginia Gateway Region including

- Uncrewed Aerial Systems
- Pre-Nursing Pathway (launched in partnership with Bon Secours)
- RBC Dealer Institute, (launched in partnership with Live! Casino)

**C6. Explain any additional initiatives or partnerships the institution is currently involved in to improve workforce alignment of academic programs.**

**Expanding Micro-Credentials and Workforce-Aligned Pathways**

A central pillar of this strategy is the continued development of stackable micro-credentials and certificate programs that equip learners with tangible, job-ready skills while they pursue their associate degrees. These short, focused credentials are designed to:

- Accelerate entry into high-demand, high-wage careers
- Provide flexible, modular learning options for traditional and non-traditional students
- Complement a broad liberal arts foundation that fosters critical thinking, communication, and ethical reasoning—skills essential for long-term career adaptability

These credentials will be developed in close consultation with industry partners to ensure relevance and impact.

**Priority Areas for Credential Development**

RBC will prioritize credential development in sectors that are critical to regional and statewide economic growth, including:

- Business Communication and Leadership
- AI and Computer Information Systems
- Data Science
- Health Professions

Richard Bland College is committed to serving as a strategic partner in Virginia’s workforce development ecosystem. Through intentional program design, industry collaboration, and a focus on equity and access, RBC is building a scalable model that prepares students for meaningful careers while strengthening the Commonwealth’s economic resilience. As noted in the response to C5, as part of the ongoing academic program review process, consideration is being given to phasing out certificate programs that have experienced persistent under-enrollment or no longer align with current student demand and institutional priorities.

## SECTION D: STRATEGIC DEEP DIVE – FINANCIAL EFFECTIVENESS & SUSTAINABILITY

### AFFORDABILITY FOR STUDENTS & FAMILIES

*Key question: How is your institution accounting for and improving affordability for students and families?*

**D1. What specific strategies/actions do you plan to take to improve affordability moving forward across your overall student body and priority subpopulations, and what is the expected impact? Please account for a broad range of factors including the full cost of attendance, net price, time to degree, debt load, etc. When responding please reference the “Financial Effectiveness & Sustainability: Affordability” and “Financial Health” section of your institution’s fact pack data ([linked here](#)).**

#### **Affordability as a Strategic Imperative**

Affordability remains a priority for Richard Bland College and a key pillar of its strategic plan. RBC is committed to reducing financial barriers to access and completion of a degree—particularly for first-generation, Pell-eligible, and rural students—through a comprehensive, equity-focused affordability strategy. As an institution that primarily serves Virginia residents (96% in-state), RBC’s is committed to providing as much need-based financial aid as possible to in-state students.

#### **Strategic Affordability Initiatives**

- **Tuition Stability as a Competitive Advantage**  
RBC will continue to limit tuition increases to at or below the rate of inflation. With current in-state tuition and fees at approximately **\$8,850**, RBC offers one of the most affordable pathways to a bachelor’s degree in Virginia—roughly half the cost of many public four-year institutions. This pricing strategy supports long-term financial planning for students and families.
- **Targeted Institutional Aid to Bridge Financial Gaps**  
RBC is scaling up institutional aid to address small but critical financial shortfalls—particularly for students nearing degree completion or facing financial holds. These micro-grants are designed to reduce dropout risk, accelerate time to degree, and support persistence among financially vulnerable populations.
- **FAFSA Completion as a Lever for Equity**  
Recognizing FAFSA completion as a key driver of affordability, RBC offers ongoing workshops and one-on-one support to ensure students maximize access to federal and state aid. Increasing FAFSA completion rates—especially among first-generation and rural students—is a top priority to reduce net price and borrowing.
- **Dual Enrollment and Transfer Pathways to Reduce Total Degree Cost**  
Many RBC students enter with dual enrollment credits, and the College’s guaranteed transfer agreements enable students to complete a bachelor’s degree with just two

additional years at a four-year institution. This “2+2” model significantly lowers the total cost of a degree and will be emphasized in outreach to students and families.

- **Streamlined Advising and Academic Pathways**

RBC has enhanced its advising model and implemented structured course pathways to help students complete their associate degrees within two years. By minimizing excess credits, the College reduces both tuition costs and opportunity costs for students.

**Expected Impact**

- **Lower Net Price and Unmet Financial Need** Especially for Pell-eligible and first-generation students, through increased aid and FAFSA engagement.
- **Reduced Student Loan Debt** By maximizing grant and scholarship use and minimizing time to degree.
- **Improved Retention and Completion** Through targeted financial interventions and clear academic pathways.
- **Sustained Affordability Leadership** Maintaining RBC’s strong standing on affordability metrics relative to peer institutions across the Commonwealth.

**Grant Support**

In January 2024, RBC was awarded a \$694,000 Department of Labor grant to launch the “Back on Track” initiative. This three-year program supports re-engagement pathways for students impacted by trauma and disruption, with a focus on improving admission, enrollment, retention, and workforce outcomes. The grant offsets programmatic costs while enhancing long-term enrollment and student success metrics.

## REVENUE

**Key question: How is your institution approaching pricing and revenue management? What are the implications on long-term top-line financial health?**

**D2. Please explain the rationale behind your full pricing (i.e. published tuition & fees, including mandatory non-E&G fees) and financial aid award strategy (i.e. net tuition revenue projections). What data informed your assessment of T&F increase feasibility (e.g., market comparisons, student capacity to pay) and estimates of discounts/waivers/unfunded scholarships? What informed your strategy around financial aid awards, merit and need-based, particularly for various student segments by income level and academic preparation? Further describe your institution's discounting by type and if this is sustainable in future years. Please reference the "Revenue" and "Financial Health" slides of your institution's fact pack ([linked here](#)).**

### **Affordability and FY26 Pricing Strategy: Advancing Access While Managing Inflationary Pressures**

Affordability remains a foundational pillar of Richard Bland College's mission and strategic plan. With a student population that includes a high percentage of first-generation, Pell-eligible, and rural students, RBC is committed to maintaining access to high-quality education while responsibly managing operational costs. With a modest endowment, RBC relies heavily on state, federal, and institutional aid to meet the needs of its students.

### **Student Financial Profile: Fall 2023 First-Time, Full-Time Students**

(Source: IPEDS Financial Aid Report)

- **40%:** At or below the Federal Poverty Level (\$0–\$30,000)
- **15%:** 101%–160% of FPL (\$30,001–\$48,000)
- **16%:** 161%–250% of FPL (\$48,001–\$75,000)
- **13%:** 251%–366% of FPL (\$75,001–\$110,000)
- **15%:** Above 366% of FPL (>\$110,000)

This data underscores RBC's critical role in serving economically vulnerable populations and reinforces the importance of a pricing strategy that protects affordability.

### **FY26 Tuition and Fee Strategy: Balancing Affordability and Sustainability**

To maintain affordability while addressing inflationary pressures and state-mandated cost increases, the William & Mary Board of Visitors approved the following FY26 pricing model:

- **Tuition and Fee Adjustments:**
  - **2.5% increase** for in-state tuition
  - **5.0% increase** for out-of-state tuition
  - **3.0% increase** in mandatory fees
- **Annual Cost Impact (In-State):**
  - Total increase of **\$270 YoY** from FY25
  - Equivalent to **\$9 per credit hour**
- **Inflation Context:**
  - May 2024–May 2025 CPI: 2.4%

- December 2023–December 2024 CPI: 2.9%
- HEPI FY25 forecast: 3.7%
- Increases are aligned with inflation and help offset:
  - Rising operational costs
  - The unfunded portion of the state’s 3% salary increase (effective June 10, 2025)

### **Affordability for Pell-Eligible Students**

- **FY26 Pell Grant:** Remains unchanged from FY25
- **Remaining Tuition Gap:**
  - For fully Pell-eligible students, the average annual tuition gap is **\$1,965**
  - This gap can be fully or partially covered through:
    - Commonwealth State Grant (CSG)
    - Virginia Guaranteed Assistance Program (VGAP)
    - RBC Foundation awards
    - Federal/state grants, outside scholarships, and third-party payments

### **Strategic Impact**

- Preserves affordability for low-income and first-generation students
- Maintains RBC’s competitive advantage as one of Virginia’s most affordable public institutions
- Supports financial sustainability amid rising costs and inflation
- Aligns with state affordability metrics and equity goals

### **Strategic Financial Stewardship and Affordability Commitment**

Over the past decade, Richard Bland College (RBC) has demonstrated disciplined financial stewardship while navigating long-deferred investments in critical infrastructure—particularly in financial systems, IT security, and compliance staffing to meet evolving state and federal regulatory requirements.

### **E&G Funding and Strategic Investment**

- Since FY15, RBC’s **Education and General (E&G) funding**—excluding direct student financial aid—has increased by **\$10 million**, enabling the College to begin addressing essential infrastructure needs that had been postponed due to resource constraints.
- These investments have been strategically prioritized to modernize operations, strengthen institutional resilience, and ensure compliance with cybersecurity and financial accountability standards.

### **Diversified Revenue Streams and Operational Efficiency**

- RBC has proactively expanded **non-tuition revenue streams** to reduce reliance on student tuition and fees, thereby preserving affordability:

- o In **FY25, auxiliary and other revenues** are projected to generate **\$7.7 million**, surpassing the **\$6 million** expected from tuition and fees.
- The College maintains **lean and flexible operations**, with **salary and wages accounting for just 50%** of projected FY25 expenditures (**\$15.68 million**), well below sector norms. This operational model allows RBC to remain agile while directing resources toward student success and institutional priorities.

### **Foundation Support and Affordability Strategy**

- The Richard Bland College Foundation plays a vital role in supporting affordability through annual scholarship awards totaling approximately **\$300,000**, with similar levels anticipated in FY26.
- These need-based scholarships with a merit component are awarded based on FAFSA results and academic performance, complementing federal and state aid programs such as the Pell Grant and Virginia State Grant.
- This layered approach to financial aid ensures that students—particularly those from low-income and first-generation backgrounds—can access and persist through college with minimal financial burden.

This integrated financial strategy reflects RBC’s commitment to:

- Maintaining affordability for Virginia families
- Investing in institutional capacity to support long-term sustainability
- Aligning with statewide goals for access, equity, and student success

### **FY27 and FY28 Tuition and Fees Proposal**

The College maintains its commitment to access and affordability in future years with projected tuition and fees increases remaining low:

- 3 – 5% In-state tuition YoY increases
- 5% Out-of-state tuition YoY increases
- 3% Mandatory E&G fees YoY increases
- 3 – 5% Mandatory auxiliary comprehensive fees YoY increases

### **Strategic Financial Aid Framework: Advancing Access and Affordability**

Richard Bland College (RBC) leverages a comprehensive, policy-aligned financial aid strategy to ensure that students—particularly those from underserved backgrounds—have access to the resources they need to enroll, persist, and complete their degrees. The College’s financial aid awarding process is grounded in federal, state, and institutional policy, and is supported by an automated, policy-driven infrastructure within the Financial Aid Management (FAM) system.

### **Core Financial Aid Components**

RBC’s financial aid packages are composed of multiple funding sources, including:

- **Federal Aid:** Pell Grant, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)
- **State Aid:** Virginia Guaranteed Assistance Program (VGAP), Commonwealth State Grant (CSG)

- **Institutional Aid:** Merit-based and need-based scholarships administered through the RBC Foundation

Aid is awarded based on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which calculates an Expected Family Contribution (EFC). Students with lower EFCs receive higher levels of need-based aid. Awards are also contingent on full-time enrollment status, with adjustments made for students who fall below full-time thresholds.

### **Tuition Discounting and Institutional Aid Strategies**

To further enhance affordability and reduce out-of-pocket costs, RBC employs targeted tuition discounting strategies aligned with institutional priorities:

- **Statesman Scholars:** Merit-based, unfunded scholarships awarded to high-achieving students based on GPA and academic performance.
- **Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP):** RBC's proximity to Fort Lee (formerly Fort Gregg-Adams) makes the College a natural choice for military dependents. RBC supports eligible students through this state-funded program, which continues to see exponential growth in utilization and impact. However, without additional state-supported funding to cover the program, overall tuition and fee increases may be necessary to offset the VMSDEP waivers.
- **Student-Athlete Scholarships:** As a member of the NJCAA Division II and III, RBC provides tuition scholarships to student-athletes, supporting access and retention through athletic engagement.
- **Housing Waivers:** Offered to resident assistants and Residence Life Coordinators, as well as student-athletes, to reduce total cost of attendance and support the growing residential student population.

Because of RBC's current out-of-state tuition, the College is priced out of the market outside of the Commonwealth, where the price is too high and requires substantial discounting. Beyond athletics, the College is unable to sustain this model. Reducing out-of-state tuition is a critical strategy that RBC will be proposing that will not only positively impact the College's enrollment but also the Commonwealth's growth.

### **Foundation Support and Strategic Alignment**

The RBC Foundation plays a critical role in advancing the College's affordability mission. Each year, the Foundation awards approximately \$300,000 in scholarships, with similar levels projected for FY26. These awards are:

- Need-based with a merit component
- Determined through FAFSA data and academic eligibility
- Designed to complement federal and state aid, reducing unmet financial need

### **Strategic Impact**

- Expands access for low-income, first-generation, and rural students
- Reduces student debt by maximizing grant and scholarship support
- Supports retention and completion through targeted financial interventions

- Aligns with state affordability and equity goals, reinforcing RBC’s role in advancing educational opportunity across the Commonwealth

**D3. What do you expect to be the impact of your pricing/discounting approach on enrollment numbers/mix (if any) and net tuition revenue moving forward and why? Please reference the “Financial Health” slides of your institution’s fact pack ([linked here](#)).**

As a regional public institution located in a central yet rural area, Richard Bland College remains deeply intentional in shaping an affordable and high-impact student experience. The College’s tuition model is most effective when students can fully leverage both federal and state grant programs, significantly reducing their out-of-pocket costs. This approach not only minimizes student borrowing but also alleviates pressure on institutional resources. In addition, the RBC Foundation’s donor-funded scholarship program complements public grant aid, creating a layered financial support structure. This integrated discounting strategy benefits students by lowering financial barriers while also supporting the College’s long-term net tuition revenue goals.

**Enrollment Strength and Strategic Growth at Richard Bland College**

Richard Bland College continues to demonstrate strong in-state enrollment performance, with over 90% of first-time, full-time students classified as Virginia residents. This trend is projected to remain stable, with in-state full-time enrollment expected to exceed 91% over the next six years. With fewer than 10% of traditional students classified as out-of-state, RBC’s limited tuition discounting model ensures that fluctuations in non-resident enrollment will have minimal impact on net tuition revenue, supporting long-term financial sustainability.

**Athletics as a Strategic Enrollment and Revenue Driver**

RBC’s athletic programs have emerged as a key contributor to enrollment growth, student engagement, and institutional revenue. As the College maintains and strategically expands its athletic offerings, it has seen a consistent rise in student-athlete enrollment. This growth generates significant auxiliary revenue through tuition, fees, housing, and meal plans. A comprehensive cost-benefit analysis conducted in FY21 by the College’s finance department confirmed that the athletics program is net revenue positive. With a current goal of enrolling 200 student-athletes, the program is projected to generate over \$200,000 in additional annual revenue. Moreover, with 90% of student-athletes expected to reside on campus by FY26, the program also supports the vitality of the College’s residential life and campus community.

Beyond financial impact, athletics enhances the College’s visibility and reputation. RBC teams are increasingly competing—and succeeding—at the regional and national levels, elevating the institution’s profile and contributing to a vibrant, engaged student body.

Richard Bland College’s enrollment strategy is grounded in strong in-state demand, prudent financial planning, and innovative programmatic growth. The integration of athletics as a strategic lever for enrollment and engagement, combined with a stable tuition model and high in-state participation, positions RBC as a resilient and forward-looking institution within Virginia’s higher education landscape.

## COST EFFECTIVENESS

**Key question: How has your institution maintained bottom-line financial health and focused investment on the levers that will drive improvements in student outcomes?**

D4. Reflect on the categories/subcategories of cost that have recently experienced the most significant increases on an absolute or per-student basis. What have been the primary drivers of those increases? Please be specific and include supporting data using the “Expenditures by Category” and “Financial Health” slides from your institution’s fact pack data ([linked here](#)).

### **Cost Drivers and Budgetary Pressures at Richard Bland College**

Over the past fiscal years, Richard Bland College has experienced notable increases in several cost categories—both on an absolute and per-student basis—driven by a combination of salary and fringe benefit increases mandated by the Commonwealth, structural investments, inflationary pressures, and strategic growth initiatives. The most significant areas of cost escalation include:

#### **1. Instructional Costs**

- **Faculty Compensation:** Implementation of a faculty salary parity and talent retention study has led to targeted pay increases to ensure competitive compensation and retention.
- **Benefits and Fringe Costs:** Rising healthcare and retirement benefit expenses have contributed to overall instructional cost growth.
- **Per-Student Impact:** While total instructional costs have increased, per-student costs have slightly decreased due to enrollment growth and reflecting improved instructional efficiency.

#### **2. Institutional Support and Executive Leadership**

- **Strategic Leadership Expansion:** The addition of executive-level positions has been necessary to support institutional transformation, strategic planning, and compliance with evolving state and federal mandates.
- **Finance and Compliance:** Increased staffing in finance and administrative functions has been essential to meet heightened audit and reporting requirements, including those from the Auditor of Public Accounts (APA).

#### **3. Student Services and Enrollment Management**

- **Admissions and Financial Aid:** There has been an approximately 11% increase in total classified undergraduates from 2023 to 2024. This growth has necessitated

expanded staffing and services in admissions, financial aid, and student records. RBC has also outsourced student records management to improve efficiency and compliance.

- **Student Engagement:** Investments in student support services have been critical to improving retention and student success outcomes.

#### **4. Auxiliary Services and Plant Operations**

- **Increase in residential students:** Doubling the capacity of on-campus housing has increased plant operations costs, including utilities, maintenance, and custodial services—particularly given the aging infrastructure. Since 2019, utility expenses have increased by approximately 38%, from \$611,140 in 2019 to approximately \$842,000 in 2025.
- **Athletics:** While athletics remains a net revenue-positive program, associated operational costs (e.g., travel, staffing, facilities) have grown in tandem with program expansion.

#### **5. Technology and Logistical Services**

- **IT and Campus Safety:** Investments in cybersecurity, IT infrastructure, and campus police services have increased to meet modern standards for digital learning and campus security.

#### **6. Research and Academic Innovation**

- **Research Investment:** The FY25 budget reflects a **58% increase in research expenditures**, supporting faculty-led initiatives, student research opportunities, and academic innovation aligned with workforce development.

These cost adjustments represent a thoughtful and strategic investment in advancing the College’s institutional priorities. They are designed to support the delivery of a high-value educational experience through streamlined academic pathways, an exceptional student experience, and enhanced institutional capacity. These efforts are aimed at improving student outcomes while aligning with the Commonwealth’s broader goals for talent development and educational equity.

To maintain affordability, RBC relies on full-time employee positions to assume the duties of multiple fractional employees in mission-critical areas while relying on part-time employees to assume operational and auxiliary-related duties. Wage employees comprise 26% of RBC’s workforce with 57% of wage employees working in food service, grounds, custodial, and police/campus security positions.

**D5. What specific strategies/actions do you plan to take to contain/reduce key costs and improve fiscal health going forward while improving student outcomes? What are your objectives and what have been your results to date of any already-launched initiatives? What is the expected impact and timeframe of these strategies? Include any short-term costs that would need to be incurred to implement the strategies. Include the costs with a general fund request in the Excel file in the “GF Request” tab. Please reference the “Fastest Growing Expenditures” and “Financial Health” tables in your institution’s fact pack data ([linked here](#)).**

### **1. Innovation Park at Richard Bland College: A Catalyst for Regional Growth and Workforce Development**

Richard Bland College has received formal authorization from the Virginia General Assembly and the William & Mary Board of Visitors to pursue a transformative economic development initiative: the creation of Innovation Park, a 333-acre business and research park located on underutilized campus property.

This initiative, led by the RBC Foundation Board, is designed to align with regional and statewide economic development priorities by attracting businesses in emerging and high-growth industries that will benefit from a direct partnership with the College. In return, RBC will serve as a talent pipeline, providing student interns and workers to support these industries—creating a mutually reinforcing ecosystem of education and innovation.

#### **Strategic Design and Development**

- **Master Plan Complete:** The Innovation Park master plan has been finalized, and the site is certified for **Tier 4 construction**, signaling readiness for advanced development.
- **Architectural Design:** A comprehensive site design includes parcel layouts, road infrastructure, access points, and construction standards to support long-term growth.
- **Ground Lease Model:** Businesses will enter into long-term ground leases, ensuring the property remains state-owned while generating sustainable revenue for the College.

#### **Institutional and Regional Impact**

- **Workforce Integration:** All tenant businesses will be required to establish formal partnerships with RBC, offering internships, apprenticeships, and work-based learning opportunities for students pursuing associate degrees.
- **Revenue Generation:** In addition to lease income, RBC will benefit from increased demand for on-campus housing, dining, and classroom rentals—strengthening the College’s financial position.
- **Economic Development:** Innovation Park is projected to create **high-paying jobs** in Dinwiddie and Prince George Counties and across the Petersburg metropolitan region, supporting the Commonwealth’s broader goals for economic mobility and regional revitalization.

## **2. Office of Research and Innovation (ORI): Advancing Strategic Growth Through External Funding**

Richard Bland College's Office of Research and Innovation (ORI) continues to play a pivotal role in advancing the institution's strategic priorities through aggressive pursuit of external funding. In alignment with the College's mission to expand access, improve student outcomes, and strengthen workforce readiness, ORI has secured a series of competitive federal grants that directly support institutional transformation and regional impact.

### **Recent Grant Awards and Strategic Impact:**

- **U.S. Department of Labor – “Back on Track” Initiative**  
Awarded in January 2024, this 3-year, \$694,000 grant supports a comprehensive re-engagement strategy for high school and college students who have experienced trauma or disruption in their educational journeys. The initiative is designed to improve key student success metrics—admissions, enrollment, retention, and workforce placement—through targeted support and pathway development.
- **U.S. Department of Justice – Campus Safety and Prevention**  
In 2023, RBC received a \$300,000, 3-year grant from the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) to implement a campus-wide violence prevention and awareness program. This initiative enhances student safety, engagement, and well-being through education, outreach, and community-building events.
- **National Science Foundation – Innovation Capacity Building**  
RBC was awarded \$400,000 through the NSF's Enabling Partnerships to Increase Innovation Capacity (EPIIC) program. This funding supports the development of academic-industry partnerships, expanding student access to internships, practicums, and applied workforce experiences in high-demand sectors.
- **FY25 Awards – Strategic Expansion**  
RBC has been notified of two major awards for FY25:
  - **\$1 million** to establish a centralized marketing and engagement unit to support enrollment growth and institutional visibility.
  - **\$3.4 million** to launch the Rural Student Success Initiative, aimed at improving access, persistence, and completion for students from rural communities.

### **Grant Activity and Projections:**

In FY24, ORI submitted 14 competitive grant proposals totaling over \$12 million. As a result, RBC has secured \$5.9 million in confirmed funding to date, with an additional \$6 million projected for FY25 under the College's "Exploring and Expanding Partnership Opportunities" initiative

## **3. Strategic Outsourcing to Enhance Institutional Focus and Operational Efficiency:**

As part of its ongoing commitment to operational excellence and mission-centered growth, Richard Bland College has strategically outsourced select administrative and student support functions. These decisions are designed to optimize institutional resources, improve service delivery, and allow the College to focus more intensively on its core mission of academic instruction, student success, and workforce development.

Key areas of strategic outsourcing include:

- **Virtual Registrar Services:** By transitioning registrar functions to a virtual model, RBC has enhanced service accessibility, streamlined transcript and enrollment processes, and ensured compliance with academic records standards—while reducing administrative overhead.
- **Managed IT Services:** Outsourcing IT operations has enabled the College to maintain a secure, modern, and scalable technology infrastructure. This model ensures 24/7 support, cybersecurity compliance, and cost-effective access to specialized technical expertise.
- **Online Counseling Services:** To meet growing student demand for mental health and wellness support, RBC has partnered with a virtual counseling provider. This approach expands access to licensed professionals, offers flexible scheduling, and supports student well-being as a critical component of academic success.

RBC will continue to explore opportunities to engage in shared services agreements and/or outsourcing for back-end functions that would benefit the campus community. These strategic outsourcing initiatives reflect Richard Bland College’s commitment to fiscal stewardship, service innovation, and mission alignment. By reallocating internal capacity toward high-impact academic and student success initiatives, RBC is positioning itself for sustainable growth and enhanced institutional effectiveness.

#### **4. Operations and Facilities: Aligning Resources with Core Mission**

Richard Bland College continues to pursue operational strategies that prioritize instructional quality and student support while ensuring fiscal responsibility. In non-instructional areas, the College has adopted a flexible staffing model that emphasizes part-time employment for non-core functions. This approach reduces benefit-related expenditures and allows the College to reallocate resources toward full-time positions in instruction and student services, directly supporting its academic mission.

Additionally, RBC is actively evaluating the cost-effectiveness of managing retail and dining services in-house versus outsourcing. This analysis is focused on identifying the most efficient and sustainable model for delivering high-quality services to students while maintaining operational agility.

#### **5. Auxiliary Services: Supporting Institutional Sustainability**

RBC operates a self-sustaining auxiliary services enterprise that plays a critical role in supporting the College’s financial health and student experience. The enterprise’s primary revenue-generating functions—dining, catering, and student housing—account for 98% of its activity. These services are essential to the residential campus model and contribute significantly to student satisfaction and retention.

Additional auxiliary revenue is generated through:

- Cash sales and facility rentals
- Campus market operations
- Vending commissions

These diversified revenue streams help offset operational costs and reduce the financial burden on the institution’s core academic functions.

**D6. Please describe the data in your fact pack ([linked here](#)) under “Expenditures by Category” and “Personnel”. Provide an overview of any challenges present and what your institution is doing to get ahead of any anticipated challenges.**

**Strategic Considerations and Anticipated Fiscal Challenges:**

**1. Full State Funding for VMSDEP Waivers (GF FY27 \$300,000/FY28 \$300,000):** The College respectfully requests full funding for the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP).

- Estimated unfunded cost for FY26: \$416,262
- While one-time funding was provided in FY25 based on historical waiver levels, this approach is neither sufficient nor sustainable for future years.
- FY24 actuals: \$327,407 (waivers) and \$37,560 (stipends)

**2. Fully Fund Mandated Compensation Increases:** RBC is committed to competitive compensation but faces structural challenges due to the lag in cost-sharing allocations:

- Cost-sharing is based on the prior year’s base budget, creating a funding gap when increases are implemented.
- With a cost share of 37.85%, RBC must allocate non-general fund (NGF) resources—including operating and auxiliary revenues—to meet mandated salary increases, placing pressure on core services.

**3. Anticipated Reduction in Federal Pell Grant Funding:** The proposed 23% reduction in full Pell Grant awards (from \$7,395 to \$5,710) would have a disproportionate impact on RBC students:

- Approximately half of degree-seeking students in Fall 2023 received full Pell funding (IPEDS).
- 40% of the student population is at or below the Federal Poverty Level.
- This reduction would significantly affect enrollment, affordability, and student success, particularly for low-income and first-generation students.

**4. Housing Capacity and Affordability:** RBC has experienced higher-than-anticipated housing demand due to recent enrollment growth:

- In FY24 and FY25, the College partnered with Virginia State University to provide surplus housing.
- To accommodate overflow in FY25, RBC secured off-campus housing, resulting in additional auxiliary costs.
- With housing projected to be at or near capacity in FY26, RBC has opted not to renew the VSU contract to reduce costs, but long-term housing solutions will be needed to support continued enrollment growth.

**5. Personnel Cost Management**

To maintain fiscal discipline, RBC is:

- Closely monitoring all hiring requests,
- Prioritizing essential roles only,
- Ensuring that personnel decisions align with strategic priorities and budget constraints.

**D7. Please discuss how statewide salary and health insurance premium increases impact your institution (please reference your institution's estimated cost impact from the salary and health insurance calculator file). Further describe any challenges or the ability to support the NGF portion of the statewide increases. If statewide salary and health insurance premium increases occur and you do not receive additional state support above the general fund share, please describe how you will manage the NGF portion of these increases.**

The impact of estimated increases to salary and health insurance will greatly impact the amount the College will have to address cost increases related to inflation for services already being paid. The increase will use 31% of any additional tuition and fee increases approved by the Board. The projected increases may cause the College to decrease personnel, reduce budget to College departments for travel and other expenditures, and put projects planned being put on hold. The college may also need to develop other non-general fees to help offset the cost. This will be a direct impact on student cost.

**D8. Using the information from the ProForma tab of the Excel file please describe any present funding concerns (if relevant) and how your institution plans to address any potential concerns.**

The pro-forma does not reflect any concerns presently, but any potential concerns will have to be addressed by increasing the cost to students through increased tuition and fees, as well as requesting additional funding from the state. The pro-forma assumes flat state appropriations. Any state-mandated increases – to include employee raises and/or bonuses – would have to be funded through College-generated funds. RBC prides itself on keeping student tuition and fees low. As noted in D7, the increase in salary and health insurance alone will use 31% of the College's increased revenue that is generated from Board-approved tuition and fees. The College is in a state of growth and change which may bring unexpected challenges.

## SECTION E: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT

**E1. Provide a link to any report your institution has produced about its economic development contributions. You may also share it in the appendix or as an attachment**

The Virginia Business Higher Education Council / Weldon Cooper Center provided economic development report in July 2023. Highlights of that report are available [here](#)

## SECTION F: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND INQUIRY, FREE SPEECH, ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT

**F1. Provide a copy of any policy or reports your institution has produced and provide information about annual training or orientation related to this topic.**

**Vision Statement:** Advancing Intellectual Freedom and Inclusive Dialogue  
Richard Bland College envisions a campus community where freedom of expression and academic inquiry are foundational to the educational experience. RBC is committed to fostering an environment that upholds academic freedom, encourages diverse perspectives, and promotes constructive dialogue as essential to discovery, innovation, and civic engagement.

By empowering students, faculty, and staff to question, challenge, and contribute without fear, we cultivate a culture of critical thinking, respectful engagement, and ethical leadership—preparing graduates to navigate and lead in a complex, pluralistic society.

### **1. Strategic Partnership:** Constructive Dialogue Institute

In partnership with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and the Constructive Dialogue Institute, Richard Bland College joins a statewide coalition of 12 institutions committed to advancing inclusive dialogue and civil discourse across higher education.

This initiative supports RBC's strategic goal of fostering a campus culture rooted in intellectual diversity and mutual respect. Through this collaboration, we are embedding dialogue-based learning into:

### **2. Student life programming**

- Leadership development initiatives
- Curricular experiences

These efforts are designed to equip students with the skills to engage across differences, build community, and contribute meaningfully to democratic society.

This vision and partnership reflect Richard Bland College's broader commitment to academic excellence, civic responsibility, and inclusive campus culture—core pillars of our strategic plan and our contribution to the Commonwealth's higher education mission.

**3. The Campus Belonging Campaign**, launching Fall 2025, represents a strategic institutional commitment to fostering a more connected and supportive campus environment. Grounded in national best practices and emerging research, this initiative will serve as a comprehensive framework to assess the current state of student belonging at RBC and guide the development of targeted programs, initiatives, and physical spaces that promote a sense of belonging and community for all students. Recent national studies underscore the critical role of belonging in student success, with research indicating that students who feel a strong sense of belonging are significantly more likely to persist, engage academically, and graduate on time and RBC is embracing this model as method for improving student outcomes.

**4. Annual Training and Development Initiative: *Advancing Campus Inclusion and Belonging***. Beginning in Fall 2025, Richard Bland College will launch a comprehensive series of voluntary professional development and training opportunities for faculty, staff, and students. This initiative reflects the College’s ongoing commitment to cultivating a welcoming, inclusive, and culturally responsive campus environment—a key pillar of our strategic plan.

**Training topics include:**

- Unconscious Bias Awareness
- Cultural Competence and Responsiveness
- Harassment Prevention and Response
- Navigating and Addressing Microaggressions

To ensure broad accessibility and participation, sessions will be delivered in a hybrid format, offering both in-person and virtual options. Participants who complete the full training series will earn a *Campus Belonging Certification*, recognizing their commitment to fostering inclusive excellence and contributing to a respectful, engaged campus community.

**Strategic Impact:**

These initiatives support RBC’s broader goals of:

- Enhancing campus climate and student success, aligned with RBC’s Strategic Priority of delivering an unmatched student experience.
- Strengthening employee engagement and retention.
- Aligning with statewide priorities for increasing access and workforce readiness.

## SECTION G: NEW SCHOOLS, SITES, AND MERGERS

**G1. Provide information on any new instructional sites, schools, or mergers supported by all types of funding that your institution is considering or planning to undertake during the six-year period.**

### **Expansion of Instructional Sites and Dual Enrollment Pathways:**

As part of its six-year strategic vision, Richard Bland College (RBC) is expanding its instructional footprint through a robust and equity-driven dual enrollment strategy. This expansion is designed to increase early college access, accelerate degree attainment, and strengthen regional talent pipelines—particularly in underserved and rural communities across the Commonwealth.

#### **Approved Off-Campus Instructional Sites**

RBC has received approval from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to offer more than 50% of a degree program at the following high schools:

- Rock Ridge High School – Loudoun County
- Hopewell High School – Hopewell City
- Dinwiddie High School – Dinwiddie County
- Prince George High School – Prince George County
- Colonial Heights High School – Colonial Heights City (approved and implemented January 2025)

These partnerships reflect RBC’s commitment to localized, flexible delivery models that meet the unique needs of each school division.

#### **Dual Enrollment Growth and Projections**

- Fall 2024 Dual Enrollment Headcount: 1,888 students
- Projected Growth: 2% increase in Fall 2025, followed by 1% annual growth through FY30
- On-Campus Dual Enrollment:
  - o Average of 55 students annually since 2022
  - o Fall 2025 enrollment: 83 students (a 50% increase over Fall 2024)

As on-campus participation grows, RBC is scaling academic support services—including Learner Mentors and ADA accommodations—to ensure a high-quality, inclusive student experience.

#### **Strategic Model for Dual Enrollment Delivery:**

RBC’s dual enrollment program is recognized for its customized, partnership-driven approach, rather than a one-size-fits-all model. Key elements include:

- Associate Degree Pathways delivered at high schools through a blend of qualified high school instructors and asynchronous RBC faculty
- Expanded course offerings tailored to each school’s capacity and student interest
- Credentialing support for high school teachers to become dual enrollment instructors

- Ongoing advising and eligibility guidance to ensure instructional quality and compliance

**Outcomes and Impact:** RBC’s intentional strategy has led to a dramatic increase in the number of high school students earning associate degrees:

- Spring 2023: 23 graduates
- Spring 2024: 64 graduates
- May 2025: 89 graduates
- Projected May 2026: ~120 graduates
- Projected May 2027: ~130 graduates

As partnerships mature, RBC anticipates a leveling of growth, with sustained high-impact outcomes across participating districts.

**Strategic Alignment:** This expansion supports the Commonwealth’s goals for:

- Accelerated credential attainment
- Improved college affordability
- Stronger K–12/higher education alignment
- Workforce readiness and regional economic development

## [OPTIONAL] SECTION H: RESEARCH

**H1. [OPTIONAL] Highlight any strategic research priorities, programs, or key areas of investment (e.g., hiring plans, critical research agendas, interdisciplinary centers, business partnerships, commercialization efforts) and IP dissemination and commercialization priorities you intend to pursue over the next 6 years that have not already been mentioned in this narrative. What are the anticipated benefits to your faculty attraction/retention strategy, student value proposition, and the economic competitiveness of the Commonwealth?**

### **Strategic Initiatives in Advanced Technology Education and Global Workforce**

**Development:** Richard Bland College is advancing a multi-pronged strategy to strengthen regional workforce pipelines and global learning opportunities through its Advanced Technology Education and International AI Collaborations.

#### **1. Advanced Technology Education & UAS Workforce Development**

As part of its commitment to regional economic development, RBC is launching a targeted initiative to expand access to technical education and STEM career pathways. The program focuses on:

- Improving math efficacy and STEM performance in surrounding communities,
- Closing curriculum gaps in Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS),
- Recruiting and retaining students in the newly launched UAS Certificate Program.

This initiative positions UAS as a gateway to STEM degrees and responds directly to growing workforce demand in aviation, logistics, and geospatial technologies.

## 2. Global AI Engagement through the IDEAS Project

In partnership with the U.S. Department of State’s World Learning IDEAS Project, RBC is developing two innovative global programs that integrate artificial intelligence, ethics, and international study:

- **AI London:** This program introduces students to global AI innovation through a study abroad experience anchored by OMNI, RBC’s new 6-foot AI robot (acquired in 2025 from Engineered Arts). Students will engage in pre-departure learning with OMNI, followed by immersive visits to:
  - Engineered Arts in London (software and programming development),
  - California AI Assembly Plant, exploring AI design, ethics, and global applications.
- **AI South Africa & Data Science Center Operations:** In collaboration with Cape Town University and the University of Johannesburg, this initiative explores the use of AI in data center operations. Students will engage with:
  - South African universities, government agencies, and private sector leaders,
  - Training in machine learning, algorithm development, and open-source platforms.

This program supports the U.S. goal of modernizing digital infrastructure and highlights AI’s strategic role in operational resilience and global competitiveness.

## [OPTIONAL] SECTION I: COLLABORATION

**11. [OPTIONAL] Outline any existing or potential initiatives you have not already highlighted in this narrative that feature collaboration across public higher education institutions and the K-12 sector (and other state agencies as appropriate) in furthering the goals outlined in sections B-D. What is the expected impact and in what timeframe? What is the timeline for the initiative and how far along is it? What (if anything) would be required from a budget or policy perspective to facilitate the success of the initiative?**

### **Cross-Sector Collaboration with K–12 and Public Higher Education Partners:**

Richard Bland College is actively engaged in initiatives that strengthen the educational continuum from high school through postsecondary education, with a focus on college readiness, dual enrollment, and faculty development. These efforts reflect the College’s commitment to building **collaborative, scalable models** that support student success and align with the Commonwealth’s strategic goals for educational equity and workforce development.

**1. Summer Bridge Program with Petersburg High School:** In partnership with Petersburg High School, RBC developed and hosted a week-long summer boot camp for Middle College students. This program is designed to ease the transition from high school to college, particularly for students from historically underserved communities.

This initiative includes:

- A comprehensive new student orientation
- Academic readiness sessions in Mathematics and English, taught by RBC faculty and Student Success staff
- Early exposure to college expectations and campus resources

**2. Dual Enrollment Faculty Development and Support:** To ensure instructional quality and alignment with college-level standards, RBC's Director of Academics/Chief Academic Officer and Director of Dual Enrollment conduct faculty development workshops at partner high schools. This model strengthens instructional consistency and fosters a professional learning community across institutions. These sessions include:

- Orient credentialed high school instructors to RBC's academic expectations and course learning outcomes
- Connect dual enrollment instructors with on-campus subject matter experts who serve as ongoing academic liaisons and instructional resources

**3. Student Recruitment and Enrichment through Research and Innovation**

The Office of Research and Innovation collaborates with the Director of Dual Enrollment to promote and recruit students for summer enrichment camps. These camps are designed to:

- Introduce students to high-impact learning experiences
- Build early interest in STEM, liberal arts, and workforce-aligned pathways
- Strengthen the pipeline from high school to college and beyond

**4. RBC Health: University-Led Telehealth & STEAMh Expansion :** In FY25, Richard Bland College advanced its regional impact through RBC Health, a grant-funded initiative delivering mobile telehealth services, mental health education, and STEAMh learning to 12 underserved school communities across southern Virginia.

Funded by the USDA Rural Development Program, this initiative demonstrates how university-led partnerships can bridge health and education equity gaps in medically underserved areas.

Key partners include:

- Virginia Commonwealth University – Health
- Virginia State University Public Health Institute
- The College of William & Mary
- New College Institute
- Bon Secours Southside Medical Center

Together, these STEAMh partners are working to expand access and equity by equipping K–12 schools with telehealth and distance learning tools, delivering mental health and community health programming, expanding dual enrollment and STEAMh research opportunities, and supporting mentoring and professional development for both students and educators.

These initiatives exemplify Richard Bland College’s role as a collaborative partner in Virginia’s public education ecosystem. By aligning efforts across K–12 and higher education, RBC is advancing a shared vision of student-centered, access-driven, and outcomes-focused education that prepares learners for success in college, career, and civic life.

## [OPTIONAL] SECTION J: STATE POLICY

**J1. [OPTIONAL] Use this section to outline any state policy changes you have not already mentioned in this narrative that would enhance your ability to achieve greater success on the topics, strategies, and initiatives referenced in this narrative. What existing policies, if any, are hindering your ability to maximize outcomes and value for students? What new policies might create conditions that are more conducive to achieving those goals? What strategies or initiatives would these policy changes enable your institution to do or try that you are not yet able to do today? Please be as specific as possible.**

### **Policy change recommendations for improved efficiency and minimization of cost:**

**Operational Authority:** Under the provisions of Virginia’s Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act, Richard Bland College is currently operating with Level One authority. Over the next six-year planning period, the College will evaluate the feasibility of pursuing expanded operational autonomy through one or more memoranda of understanding (MOUs). Specifically, RBC is exploring opportunities to obtain enhanced authority in the areas of information technology and procurement. These areas have been identified as strategic priorities for improving institutional efficiency, responsiveness, and alignment with the College’s long-term operational goals.

### **VMSDEP:**

- Support for unfunded mandates:
  - Full state funding for VMSDEP waivers
  - Fully fund mandated compensation increases
    - Cost Sharing funding lags one year. As such, base budget increases are based on a lower base than the year in which they are executed.

**Maintenance Reserve:** At present, the minimum threshold for accessing maintenance reserve funds is set at \$25,000. Given RBC's relatively small size, this restricts the College's ability to utilize these funds for essential, smaller-scale projects.

## [OPTIONAL] SECTION K: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**K1. [OPTIONAL] Use this final section to provide any additional context and/or supporting materials you feel should be incorporated into the six-year planning process.**

### **Proposed Public Safety and Emergency Operations Center(Capital FY27\$971,270)**

Richard Bland College respectfully requests funding for the construction of a 22,500-square-foot Public Safety and Emergency Operations Center (\$971,270—Planning Dollars)—a critical infrastructure investment to enhance campus safety, emergency preparedness, and operational resilience.

This facility will address current deficiencies and align with best practices in campus security and emergency management. Key features include:

1. **Strategic Centralized Location** positioned for optimal accessibility, the facility will enable rapid response to campus-wide emergencies and serve as a central hub for coordinated safety operations.
2. **Dual-Use, Resource-Efficient Design** The building will co-locate the Campus Safety & Police Department and the Information Technology Department, promoting operational efficiency, cross-functional coordination, and cost-effective use of space and infrastructure.
3. **Modern Safety and Technology Systems** equipped with state-of-the-art fire alarms, sprinkler systems, and integrated technology platforms to ensure seamless communication, monitoring, and emergency response capabilities.
4. **Victim-Centered and Trauma-Informed Spaces** which include private, secure, and welcoming areas designed to support confidential interactions and provide a safe environment for individuals in crisis.
5. **Full ADA Compliance** The facility will be fully accessible to individuals with disabilities, ensuring equitable access and adherence to federal and state accessibility standards.

This proposed center is a vital component of RBC's broader commitment to campus safety, student well-being, and institutional resilience. It will also serve as a model for cost-effective,

multi-functional public safety infrastructure in the Commonwealth's higher education system. Additional details regarding this request can be found at the link below.

The following link provides access to supporting materials that are relevant to RBC's Six-Year planning process: <https://www.rbc.edu/six-year-plan-supplemental-documents/>.