



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor

Aimee Rogstad Guidera
Secretary of Education

August 15, 2024

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Glenn Youngkin, Governor of Virginia
The Honorable Luke E. Torian, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable L. Louise Lucas, Chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations
Committee

FROM: Aimee Rogstad Guidera

SUBJECT: Final report on the evaluation and recommendations for Richard Bland College

Pursuant to Item 156, Chapter 1, 2023 Virginia Acts of Assembly Special Session I, please find enclosed the final report on Richard Bland College.

As explained in the January 4, 2024, interim report, the December 1, 2023, deadline was insufficient to complete such a comprehensive evaluation that could serve as a basis for major change to Richard Bland College and the Commonwealth's higher education ecosystem.

Given the General Assembly's directive and the potential impact of the resulting evaluation and recommendations, engaging a wide range of stakeholders and carefully examining various inputs and institutional outcomes to inform strategic and governance considerations for Richard Bland College was necessary to ensure confidence with any go-forward governance decision.

I want to thank the many individuals, including several members of the General Assembly and their staff, who contributed their time and perspectives to inform the enclosed report.

FINAL REPORT

Enabling Authority: Appropriation Act - Item 156 H.1-3. (Special Session I, 2023)

Report on the evaluation and recommendations for the creation of a regional partnership and other strategies to improve education attainment, alternative delivery methods, enhanced efficiencies, and economic and community development for the region and the state, including an evaluation of a new governance model, building upon the November 2022 report issued by Richard Bland College.

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Executive summary

In September 2023, the Virginia Secretary of Education (Secretary) was directed by the Virginia General Assembly to evaluate a new governance model for Richard Bland College (Richard Bland), a public two-year institution of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as part of the effort to review the creation of a regional partnership or other strategies to improve education attainment, alternative delivery methods, enhanced efficiencies and economic and community development for the region and state. The Secretary and her team, supported by the Boston Consulting Group, interviewed 28 stakeholders and examined a range of data inputs, including a comprehensive set of metrics from the recently completed biennial six-year planning process, to learn more about Richard Bland's history and current governance model and to identify areas of strength and challenges.

Richard Bland is currently governed by The College of William and Mary in Virginia (William & Mary) Board of Visitors, with a standing committee of William & Mary's Board of Visitors devoted to Richard Bland. For the past several years, Richard Bland has been seeking independent governance from William & Mary, with these efforts accelerating since January 2023. Interviewees were in consensus that the current partnership with William & Mary is not meeting the needs of either institution. However, when considering the alternative of independence, they also expressed concerns about the performance and sustainability of Richard Bland across several dimensions, including its identity and viability as a small, independent public junior college in a challenging higher education market in which few if any similar institutions have been able to endure and succeed.

This evaluation considered five potential governance options for Richard Bland: (1) Continue to be governed by the William & Mary Board of Visitors (i.e., maintain the status quo), (2) Report to the Board of Visitors of a different Virginia public higher education institution, (3) Join the Virginia Community College System, (4) Integrate with a Virginia public four-year institution, combining management under a single existing Board of Visitors, and (5) Create a newly constituted Board of Visitors to govern Richard Bland. Option 1 was deemed unattractive given the unanimous consensus that the status quo is not working, and Option 2 was also inadvisable given it is likely to encounter the same challenges as the current governance model. Options 3, 4, and 5 all present substantial potential benefits and similarly substantial potential drawbacks, as well as interrelated strategic questions around Richard Bland's identity and positioning. As a result, both the governance and strategic implications are considered for these options.

Although this analysis was focused on Richard Bland, it is important to acknowledge that other public higher education institutions in the Commonwealth face their own challenges in this environment. The Secretary recommends that leadership and boards of all institutions take a similar look at their respective institutions' performance and identify a set of key metrics to transparently monitor on an ongoing basis and a series of strategic action steps to explore.

Background

Richard Bland was established by the Virginia General Assembly in 1960 as a division of The College of William and Mary in Virginia (William & Mary) and was initially named the Petersburg Division. In 1971, a federal three-judge panel that presided over *Norris v. SCHEV* enjoined the William & Mary Board of Visitors and the president of Richard Bland from escalating Richard Bland to be a four-year institution, unlike the three other two-year colleges that had recently been escalated (George Mason, Christopher Newport, and Clinch Valley (now the University of Virginia's College at Wise)). The impact of this decision has led Richard Bland to exist anomalously as the only public two-year college in the Commonwealth that is not part of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS)¹.

According to Richard Bland, the institution aims to make a high-value college credential affordable and accessible to traditional and non-traditional students in the region and across the Commonwealth.² Richard Bland notes that it is distinctive for its early completion / dual enrollment programming, innovative workforce preparedness programs (e.g., Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME) and DroneUp), Guided Pathways for Success, and Research, Innovation, and Grant activity (including the new Office of Research Innovation). Although not part of VCCS, Richard Bland is a two-year institution focused primarily on transfer pathways and degrees rather than applied associate degrees. It has a high residential student population, student athletics, and majority full-time faculty, and prides itself on providing a two-year, liberal arts experience. It is not an open enrollment institution, though its acceptance rate has now risen to approximately 98%³. In addition, it serves a relatively diverse student body, both racially and socioeconomically. For more detail on the characteristics of Richard Bland students and faculty, see [Richard Bland by the numbers](#) or the [U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard profile on Richard Bland](#).

Today, Richard Bland is governed by the William & Mary Board of Visitors, with a standing committee of William & Mary's Board of Visitors devoted to Richard Bland. Richard Bland has advocated for its own governing board independent of William & Mary for over a decade. Until earlier this year, those efforts have been slow-going.

On January 11, 2023, Senator Frank Ruff introduced SB1077 that proposed to remove authority of the William & Mary Board of Visitors to supervise, manage, and control Richard Bland and to establish a 12-member Board of Visitors of Richard Bland to generally direct the affairs of the college, with companion bill HB1415 introduced in the House of Delegates by Delegate Emily Brewer. Although the Senate passed SB1077 on February 6, 2023, HB1415 did not advance from the House Committee on Appropriations when the General Assembly adjourned from its 2023 legislative session.

¹ Historical information on Richard Bland from the Secretary's '[Interim report on the evaluation and recommendations for Richard Bland College](#)'

² Richard Bland 2023 Six-Year Plan Narrative

³ SCHEV data information request 2/7/24, data from 2022-23

Related, on January 18, 2023, the State Board for Community Colleges voted a resolution requesting “the Chancellor and her staff to engage with the Administration and with legislators to pursue amendments to HB1415 and SB1077 that would seek to replace the creation of a new board with a study of governance options for Richard Bland College to include the viability and benefits of the State Board for Community Colleges serving as the governing body for Richard Bland College.” In November 2023, the William & Mary Board of Visitors expressed “its support for Richard Bland College being transitioned to an independent governance structure.” These two recent actions illustrate differing perspectives amongst the Commonwealth’s public institutions on what new governance model should emerge for Richard Bland.

Pursuant to budget language added during the 2023 Special Session I and approved on September 14, 2023, the Secretary was directed to, “in collaboration with the Director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, the Secretary of Finance, the Director of the Department of Planning and Budget, the Staff Directors of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees, the President of the Virginia Economic Development Authority and Richard Bland College, evaluate the creation of a regional partnership and other strategies to improve education attainment, alternative delivery methods, enhanced efficiencies, and economic and community development for the region and state. Additional input may be provided by regional partners and other entities including Virginia State University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Brightpoint Community College. The review shall include an evaluation of the new governance model building upon the November 2022 report issued by Richard Bland College.”

The General Assembly’s directive of the Secretary suggests legislators want additional information to make an informed decision on Richard Bland’s governance model, which promises to carry significant implications for the Commonwealth’s higher education ecosystem, the region, and the state. The Secretary takes this responsibility seriously and has approached this task understanding its complexity and potential impact.

Inputs

The enabling clause called for the Secretary to confer with seven mandated stakeholders and gave her the option to obtain input from regional partners and other entities as part of her review. As of February 13th, the Secretary and her team had conducted individual interviews with all seven mandated stakeholders, as well as 11 additional Virginia stakeholders and two national experts, for a total of 20 interviews. In addition to the interviews, analysis considered:

- Relevant historical information, statutes, and case law;
- Richard Bland’s most recent [six-year plan and data “fact pack”](#);
- Information requests responded to by Richard Bland;
- Supplemental data from the [State Council of Higher Education for Virginia \(SCHEV\)](#);

- Richard Bland’s February 2024 Cost Drivers Mitigation Strategies presentation to the William & Mary Board of Visitors;
- The November 2022 report, [“A Model for Higher Education Innovation”](#);
- Other state reports, third-party letters, and news articles; and
- National research on analogous institutions.

The Secretary also hosted an in-person discussion on February 7th with Richard Bland’s President and eight additional stakeholders of President Sydow’s choosing to share initial findings and solicit feedback on Richard Bland’s context and the go-forward governance options under consideration.

During the recent biennial six-year planning process, the Secretary and her team, along with the rest of OpSix,⁴ conducted a rigorous, fact-based assessment of every institution in the Commonwealth including Richard Bland (see the fact packs, six-year plans, and narratives for each institution [here](#)). Given inherent challenges with comparing non-identical institutions, the assessment considered each individual institution’s trends over time (most typically the past 10 years) rather than against the Commonwealth. However, there are some instances in which it is helpful to put Richard Bland’s numbers in context by referencing metrics from other institutions. Given Richard Bland’s unique model, there are multiple ways to assemble peer sets for these analyses including VCCS (or the most proximate community college, Brightpoint Community College); small, low-selectivity four-year public institutions in the Commonwealth (for example, the University of Virginia’s College at Wise or University of Mary Washington), or those in geographic proximity to Richard Bland (for example, Virginia State University). This report is unable to present all possible comparisons for each metric, and policymakers may choose to use the publicly available data to further analyze Richard Bland’s performance.

See *Appendix I: Additional detail on data inputs* for a more detailed listing of interviewees and data sources.

Challenges with the status quo

Governance

Interviewees unanimously asserted that the current governance model, with the William & Mary Board of Visitors overseeing Richard Bland, is not effectively serving the needs of either institution or the Commonwealth.

⁴ OpSix includes the Secretary of Education, Secretary of Finance, Director of the Department of Planning and Budget, Director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, Staff Director of the House Appropriations Committee, and the Staff Director of the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee

William & Mary and Richard Bland are substantively dissimilar institutions in different areas of the Commonwealth with different missions, student bodies, academic programs, financial models, and local economic development needs. They are also currently operating as independent institutions in terms of their professional leadership, operations, accreditation, state appropriations, financial operations, and real estate – and there is no indication of any plans for greater strategic or operational integration between the two institutions in the future. As a result, there are no material synergies resulting from the relationship.

Nonetheless, today William & Mary and Richard Bland share a single Board of Visitors, which is responsible for serving all of the mandated Board of Visitors functions for both institutions, as well as for the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences (VIMS)⁵. Stakeholders of both William & Mary and Richard Bland highlighted the significant disadvantages of sharing a Board of Visitors, most notably:

- With the Board and each of its quarterly meeting agendas divided across the institutions, each institution and its priorities receive significantly less attention, oversight, support, and guidance than they otherwise would; as one example, although four current Board members have executive-level finance expertise (as of Spring 2024), they are spread across the two institutions so each institution benefits from two instead of four.
- Given the substantive differences between the institutions, members selected to join the William & Mary Board of Visitors often lack the relevant expertise or even understanding to act as effective stewards of Richard Bland; one interviewee mentioned that, in the history of the William & Mary Board of Visitors, there has only ever been one Richard Bland alumnus, and that many new members only discover they are responsible for Richard Bland once in role.
- Given the more limited Board capacity available to each institution, stakeholders from both institutions have noted insufficient time to tackle critical strategic questions about the role of each institution in the higher education landscape and explore opportunities for innovation in a timely manner; in the case of Richard Bland, this is exacerbated by the perceived mismatch between the expertise of the members and the particular challenges or opportunities it is facing.
- Some interviewees noted that having two operationally independent institutions share a Board of Visitors can, on occasion, create a conflict of interest if, while contemplating a consequential decision for one institution, the Board needs to also consider the potential impact of that decision on the other institution.

Key performance metrics

Despite its governance challenges, Richard Bland does serve an important role in the lives of its students and residents of the Petersburg region – noted with great passion and conviction by stakeholders

⁵ VIMS is one of the largest marine research and education centers in the U.S. VIMS is a state agency, established in the Code of Virginia, and an institution of higher education with a tripartite mission of research, education, and advisory services. It is governed by the [Board of Visitors of William & Mary](#), of which it is a part. The [School of Marine Science \(SMS\)](#) at VIMS is the graduate school in marine science for [William & Mary](#).

interviewed for this evaluation. Richard Bland has worked tirelessly to meet General Assembly requests to respond to state workforce and talent needs through a growing dual enrollment program (serving high school students from both Petersburg and across the Commonwealth⁶); the development of new programs aligned to key industry sectors, including Virginia's only Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education (FAME) chapter and Richard Bland's partnership with DroneUp; and multiple planned partnerships with Virginia State University (joint Lab School proposal, online Richard Bland-Virginia State University School of Technical and Professional Studies). Richard Bland has also implemented several new initiatives to bolster student success, such as the Promise Scholars Program and Exceptional Student Experience.

Although interviewees commended Richard Bland leadership's persistence and resourcefulness, they also expressed concerns about the performance and sustainability of Richard Bland across a number of dimensions including enrollment, student outcomes, affordability, financial sustainability, and financial reporting and controls, and raised questions surrounding Richard Bland's efforts to diversify its enrollment base and strategy away from its traditional model of educating undergraduate students toward a focus on dual enrollment (high school) students. A close analysis of the data collected (reflecting the latest available as of February 2024) corroborates many of these concerns, most notably:

- **Enrollment:**

- Richard Bland's headcount enrollment grew 1.5% annually (13% total) from 2,308 in Fall 2015 to 2,607 in Fall 2023. However, that increase coincided with a 5% annual growth (47% total) in dual enrollment (high school) students from 1,203 to 1,774 students – nearly all of whom are part-time – during the same time period⁷.
- Although this trend is in line with the Governor's goal of increasing dual enrollment⁸, dual enrolled students are not apples-to-apples to traditional students in terms of a higher education institution's enrollment or resource utilization. Since dual enrollment students are still part of the K-12 system, typically only enroll in a small number of college credits at a time, and rarely use most of the higher education institution's resources (e.g., fewer than 4% of Richard Bland's high school student enrollment in Fall 2023 attended classes on Richard Bland's campus, while the other 96% received instruction at partner high schools⁹), they represent a fundamentally different academic model and set of resource needs than traditional students.
- Excluding dual enrollment students, Richard Bland enrollment has fallen 2.8% annually (25% total), from 1,105 students in Fall 2015 to 833 in Fall 2023¹⁰ (notably, the Fall 2023 enrollment represents an improvement over the trough of 677 in 2021 and a more

⁶ Richard Bland data submitted in 11/21/2023 information request; 40% of dual enrollment students are within 30 miles of Richard Bland, 60% are outside of 30 miles from Richard Bland

⁷ Richard Bland data submitted in 11/21/2023 information request

⁸ [Cardinal News](#)

⁹ Richard Bland data submitted in 11/21/2023 information request

¹⁰ Richard Bland data submitted in 11/21/2023 information request

- positive trajectory than VCCS)¹¹. Dual enrollment students made up 68% of Richard Bland’s headcount enrollment in Fall 2023, up from 50% in Fall 2015 and 21% in Fall 2012¹².
- The trend of declining enrollment is common among small and two-year institutions across the Commonwealth; Richard Bland has seen an annual decline of 3.7% from Fall 2013 through Fall 2022 (~29% decline total), while VCCS has had an annual decline of 4.5% over the same time frame (~34% decline total). Richard Bland’s core enrollment declines have been more severe than almost all four-year public institutions in the Commonwealth; several other small four-year institutions have had annual declines of 1-3% over the last 10 years, and total declines of 10-30%¹³.
 - ***Student outcomes:***
 - *Retention:* Retention rates of full-time freshman cohorts at Richard Bland are at the lowest level in 10 years, with fewer than half of students retained in 2022 – this represents a 15 percentage point decline (from 60% to 45%) since Fall 2012 and a divergence from VCCS, whose retention rate has increased from 60% to 64% over the same time period¹⁴.
 - *Graduation:* Fewer than 30% of Richard Bland students graduate from Richard Bland within two years, with 40% graduating within four years (per latest data available as of February 2024; note that some students transfer to a four-year institution before graduating). This has improved slightly over the last several years and is still materially higher than VCCS, whose two-year graduation rate stands at 12% (per latest data available as of February 2024) and four year graduation rate has increased from 20% in 2017 to 27% in 2022¹⁵. In fact, not a single community college in VCCS outperforms Richard Bland on graduation rates.
 - *Degree conferral:* Given enrollment and retention declines, Richard Bland now confers 20% fewer degrees per year, from 239 degrees in 2014 to 190 in 2023¹⁶.
 - *Transfer outcomes:* Richard Bland’s transfers to public four-year institutions in the 2017-18 cohort (data available as of February 2024) graduated within four years 59% of the time, which is similar to the 60% rate for the 2013-14 cohort; this is, however, seven percentage points lower than the 66% graduation rate for those transferring from VCCS to public four-year institutions in the 2017-18 cohort¹⁷ (latest data available as of

¹¹ SCHEV E25 (Fall Headcount High School Dual Enrolled) and E2 (Fall Headcount Enrollment) reports

¹² SCHEV E25 (Fall Headcount High School Dual Enrolled) and E2 (Fall Headcount Enrollment) reports

¹³ Data is from the May 2023 institutional fact packs from Richard Bland, VCCS, and small, four-year public institutions in Virginia

¹⁴ SCHEV Retention report RT01

¹⁵ Data is from the May 2023 institutional fact packs from Richard Bland and VCCS; SCHEV Sub-Cohort Retention and Completion Rate Trends

¹⁶ Richard Bland data submitted in 11/21/2023 information request, retrieved from SCHEV C01 Completions report

¹⁷ Data is from the May 2023 institutional fact packs from Richard Bland and VCCS

February 2024). This is particularly notable given Richard Bland’s core focus on transfer pathways (Richard Bland, unlike VCCS, does not offer applied degrees).

- **Affordability:** Richard Bland’s total in-state cost per credit (per prices available as of February 2024) stands at \$295, which represents an 80% premium over nearby Brightpoint Community College’s \$164 per credit¹⁸. Total estimated annual in-state student charges (excluding room & board) for Richard Bland students are \$8,847, 86% more than the \$4,758 average for VCCS and just 9% less than the \$9,755 to attend nearby four-year institution Virginia State University¹⁹.
- **Reliance on state funding:** Since 2011, Richard Bland’s Education & General revenue has grown by 7% annually, with 3.5% annual growth (45% total) in Non-General Fund (largely tuition) revenue and 9% annual growth (157% total) in General Fund (state) revenue. General Fund made up 71% of Richard Bland revenue in 2022-23 – up from 55% in 2015-16 – making Richard Bland the second highest of the 17 public higher education institutions in the Commonwealth in terms of how much of its annual budget is supported by the Commonwealth²⁰. In 2022-23, the Commonwealth spent \$66,641 for each associate degree awarded by Richard Bland, which is triple the \$22,202 spent for each degree or credential awarded by VCCS (weighted by length of credential; see footnote for weighting methodology)²¹. (Note that the state General Fund numbers cited exclude state funding for financial aid, which is appropriated separately.)
- **Expenditure growth:** Richard Bland’s Education & General expenditures more than doubled from \$9.4M in 2011 to \$18.9M in 2022 (6.6% annual growth, 102% total)²². Between 2011 and 2021, institutional and administrative expenditures tripled, and in 2021 accounted for 54% of Education & General spend, up from 35% in 2011. Instructional expenditures as a percentage of total expenditures declined over this timeframe from 29% to 19%, and student service expenditures declined over this timeframe from 11% of total expenditures to 8%²³. VCCS, on the other hand, has had more modest increases in cost, with total Education & General expenditures growing from \$856M in 2011 to \$921M in 2021-22 (0.7% annual growth, 8% total); institutional expenditures have increased over this time period from 22% to 29%. Student services have increased (from 8% to 11%), while instructional spend has decreased (from 48% to 40%). Other small four-year institutions have also seen cost growth, but at lower levels, typically 2-5% annual growth and 20-60% total growth²⁴.

¹⁸ Richard Bland and Brightpoint websites

¹⁹ SCHEV report TF01: Student charges by student level and residency status

²⁰ Data is from the May 2023 institutional fact packs from Richard Bland

²¹ SCHEV C01 completions report, 2022-23; BCG analysis, Note: Awards weighted for length, Associate = 1, awards 1-2 years = 0.75, and less than 1 year is 0.25.

²² SCHEV [FP02: Educational and General Expenditures by Program](#)

²³ Data is from the May 2023 institutional fact packs from Richard Bland, Cardinal Expendwise expenditure data

²⁴ Data is from the May 2023 institutional fact packs from VCCS and other small, four-year institutions, Cardinal Expendwise expenditure data

- ***Financial reporting & controls:*** Several interviewees cited Richard Bland’s history of financial management challenges, mostly revolving around financial reporting errors and financial control gaps identified in fiscal year 2018 and 2019 audits by the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts. Although the issues have since been rectified (in part with the assistance of William & Mary), concerns remain among some stakeholders about Richard Bland’s ability to continue to deliver clean audits given its small scale and limited resources.

A more holistic concern raised in multiple interviews references Richard Bland’s recent strategic initiatives that extend beyond its historical focus on serving residential students pursuing transfer pathways to four-year degrees and feel untethered from an overall guiding strategy for the institution. (Some examples cited: doubling down on expanding dual enrollment reach and programming, investing in niche applied programs in drone aviation and advanced manufacturing, and creating an innovation center). Although some stakeholders close to Richard Bland view these actions as a sign of Richard Bland’s capacity for innovation, others interpret them as the institution struggling to find a new identity as higher education continues to evolve and the original Richard Bland model continues to be under pressure (see above). One interviewee noted that, *“Richard Bland has lurched to find an identity. It can’t be a four-year college, and it doesn’t want to be only a feeder college. It is constantly reinventing itself to find some unique need. It says it does so many things that it can’t do.”* Relatedly, stakeholders question whether such a small institution is spreading itself too thin, especially as some new programs are considerably sub-scale (e.g., one interviewee highlighted that the FAME program has fewer than 20 students), and want to see Richard Bland demonstrate a clearer focus and position in the market.

Interviewees emphasized that Richard Bland’s strategic and sustainability challenges are unsurprising for a small, independent junior college in 2024. They commended the resourcefulness of Richard Bland’s leadership and acknowledged the difficult environment in which it is attempting to find its footing. They also saw Richard Bland’s challenges as separate from, though influenced by, the governance challenges associated with reporting to the William & Mary Board of Visitors. In other words, interviewees did not feel that merely changing governance would directly resolve Richard Bland’s strategic questions – or student or sustainability outcomes.

National peer set

Relatedly, interviews and parallel research highlighted that, although there were many junior colleges in the U.S. several decades ago, there may be no (or, at best, very few) other remaining small, independent public junior colleges like Richard Bland, as they have all become four-year institutions or community colleges, and/or have joined a system.

In determining the sample set, research first looked at institutions with similar profiles to Richard Bland (public, two-year institutions, with over 50% of students on campus²⁵); this yielded fewer than 40 similar institutions in the U.S., about half of which are part of a community college or state university system. Of the remainder, 12 were independent community or technical colleges, five were two-year colleges governed by a four-year institution or directly by a state, and only one appeared to be a truly independent institution, but it was a tribal college.

Taking a narrower slice: there appear to be only approximately 25 remaining colleges in the U.S. that are currently junior colleges or formerly had this status²⁶, slightly more than half of which are public. However, several of these 25 institutions are called a ‘junior’ college (per their name), but now actually categorize themselves as public community colleges (e.g., Northeastern Junior College, Jones Junior College, Paris Junior College, Joliet Junior College). Others were historically founded as junior colleges but have since dropped ‘junior’ from their names and become community colleges (e.g., Vernon College, Otero College), further reducing the number of remaining true junior colleges. Many of these reconstitutions occurred in the 1960s, when junior colleges transitioned either to four-year institutions or to community colleges (often as part of a system), with the aim of increasing access through open enrollment and meeting local workforce need²⁷.

Among this list of institutions, Richard Bland is the third smallest for undergraduate enrollment (most have undergraduate enrollments of over 4,000 students), and all of these institutions appear to have graduation outcomes significantly lower than four-year colleges (with exception of one, no institutions have a four-year graduation rate over 50%)²⁸. Only one institution, New Mexico Junior College, did surface as similar to Richard Bland, but offers applied degrees and certificates in addition to transfer programs, and charges significantly lower tuition rates (\$40, \$60, and \$75 per credit hour for in-district, in-state, and out-of-state, respectively)²⁹.

An interview with a national expert validated that *'there are very few, if any, remaining public colleges like Richard Bland in all of the U.S.'* This points to the inherent challenge of continuing to stand alone as a junior college when the rest of the higher education ‘market’ has adjusted.

Considering the options

This evaluation considered five potential **governance options** for Richard Bland, surfaced through a breadth of stakeholder conversations:

1. Continue to be governed by the William & Mary Board of Visitors (i.e., maintain the status quo)

²⁵ Based on full-time, first-time degree/certificate seeking undergrad students paying in-state/in-district rate and who were granted a scholarship or aid from federal, state, or local government sources; data from IPEDS

²⁶ Based on IPEDS data

²⁷ Federal Reserve Bank 'A Brief Community College Origin Story'

²⁸ IPEDS data

²⁹ Institution website

2. Report to the Board of Visitors of a different Virginia public higher education institution
3. Join the Virginia Community College System
4. Integrate with a Virginia public four-year institution, combining management under a single existing Board of Visitors
5. Create a newly constituted Board of Visitors to govern Richard Bland

In considering these governance options, the Secretary evaluated each option along the following criteria:

- Provide effective oversight of Richard Bland’s strategy and performance
- Ensure Richard Bland has the ability to be nimble and innovative
- Position Richard Bland to serve and partner with the local community
- Maintain a sufficient degree of oversight of other institutions
- Align governance with Richard Bland’s go-forward strategy (or maintain optionality) – more detail below

The feedback received and analysis conducted for this evaluation made it clear that **option #1** (continue to be governed by the William & Mary Board of Visitors) is not an attractive option for the reasons described above, with a unanimous view by stakeholders that the relationship between Richard Bland and William & Mary should not continue in its current form.

Option #2 (report to the Board of Visitors of a different Virginia public higher education institution) was similarly unpopular; stakeholders agreed that simply swapping out the William & Mary Board of Visitors for a different institution’s Board of Visitors would likely not result in an improvement over the status quo since similar challenges would be expected.

The remaining three governance options (join VCCS, integrate with a four-year institution, and create an independent Board of Visitors) all present substantial potential benefits and similarly substantial potential drawbacks with no clear standout solution, and there were multiple interviewees who were in favor of each option while others were opposed or skeptical.

Moreover, unlike options #1 and 2, each of options #3, 4, and 5 suggest a differently distinctive strategic “bet” for Richard Bland around its identity and positioning within the Commonwealth, and how it would improve both student outcomes and financial sustainability; for these options, Richard Bland’s governance should bring optimal representation and expertise to bear in helping Richard Bland evaluate and navigate its strategic path forward. Therefore, the governance question of “Who is best positioned to ensure Richard Bland’s financial stability, student & community impact, stakeholder engagement, and adherence to its mission?” is interrelated with the strategic question of “How will Richard Bland ensure it is competitive in the market and produce desirable outcomes for students, greater Petersburg, and the Commonwealth?” for these options. As such, it important to consider the merits of the strategies themselves in tandem with the governance options.

Below, the Secretary presents the main potential benefit(s) surfaced for actioning each governance option, alongside strategic relevance, concerns, and considerations and next steps for each option.

Option #3 (join VCCS):

- Strategic relevance: Pursuing this option requires understanding how Richard Bland will fit within the VCCS system, either as a unique institution, additional community college, or part of Brightpoint Community College, and how this move will be additive and promote synergy, efficiency, and stronger outcomes across both parties.
- Benefit of a strategic + governance change: The VCCS system is already set up to govern the state's two-year institutions, providing an opportunity for each institution to have its own identity through local advisory boards, as well as the support and infrastructure to share best practices and resources across the system.
- Concerns/considerations: Given the large scale of VCCS, integrating Richard Bland could distract the system from its ongoing strategic priorities – though benchmarking research did surface some examples of two-year institutions with unique missions operating within a community college system (e.g., Marion Military Institute within the Alabama Community College System, Howard College for the Deaf in the Howard County Junior College District³⁰).
- Next steps: Determine how Richard Bland would be operationally integrated into the VCCS system, accounting for differences in academic and financial models; the cost to execute this integration; the strategic role and identity of Richard Bland within the system; and how joining the VCCS system would fundamentally help address Richard Bland's recent strategic challenges.

Option #4 (integrate with a four-year institution):

- Strategic relevance: Pursuing this option requires understanding how Richard Bland will fit within the four-year institution, and how the strategic path for integration would be additive and promote synergy, efficiency, and stronger outcomes across both parties.
- Benefit of a strategic + governance change: In the event there is clear rationale, appetite, and a path forward to integrate Richard Bland with another institution, bringing institutional governance together would be a critical early advance in the integration process.
- Concern/consideration: Making a governance move without a strategy, execution and integration plan, and path to synergies would be problematic. Notably, there are other two-year institutions affiliated with four-year institutions (e.g., Arrupe College of Loyola University Chicago, Doherty Family College of University of St. Thomas, Mount St. Vincent – Seton College, Butler University, and Boston College – Pine Manor College³¹), but all are all private institutions, began with small cohorts, and focused on specific or targeted professional programs.
- Next steps: Conduct additional diligence to assess how Richard Bland would be integrated into the institution and the associated cost of doing so; how it would be additive to leadership with

³⁰ Desktop research

³¹ Desktop research, news articles

limited downside or distraction; how integration would mitigate Richard Bland’s strategic challenges; and how the integration might impact current transfer pathways from Richard Bland to other four-year institutions (and any steps taken to address any negative effects).

Option #5 (create an independent board to govern Richard Bland):

- Strategic relevance: Pursuing this option requires understanding how Richard Bland will build on existing strengths while pivoting in other areas to promote long-term financial sustainability, stronger student outcomes, and clarified view of identity and role within the Commonwealth.
- Benefit of a strategic + governance change: An independent Board of Visitors could be narrowly focused on Richard Bland’s strategy and performance and more quickly make decisions (for example, to assess, design, and implement new and innovative programming). An independent Board could also have a more targeted composition to best serve the context, identity, and needs of Richard Bland (e.g., experts in two-year institutions, local leaders from the Petersburg region). In parallel, this would also free capacity for William & Mary Board members to focus solely on William & Mary. Relative to options #3 and 4, an independent Board of Visitors would more practically maintain optionality for the Board to decide on the best future path for Richard Bland from a strategic perspective.
- Concern/consideration: Disrupting the current governance (under William & Mary) and onboarding a new Board could divert attention away from Richard Bland’s ongoing strategic initiatives and priorities. In addition, creating an independent Board could convey that Richard Bland has solved its strategic challenges, and reduce the institution’s urgency to aggressively solve some of its ongoing concerns related to its long-term viability and sustainability.
- Next steps: Continue to assess option attractiveness vis-a-vis options #3 and 4.

See *Appendix II: Detailed benefits and concerns of governance and strategic options* for more information.

Overall, significant further investigation and planning needs to be done – in many cases in partnership with other Virginia public higher education institutions – to more fully and tangibly flesh out the parameters, resourcing, and relative attractiveness of these options. Making such consequential decisions based off hypothetical synergies, plans, or commitments is premature and could risk doing harm to Richard Bland or other institutions and their students. To determine the best strategic direction for Richard Bland within the Commonwealth, a more robust strategic assessment is needed to explore and develop a detailed plan for each option and then compare the options to identify the optimal path forward.

Recommended path forward

Overall, there is widespread consensus that the status quo is not working; however, there are many different perspectives on what should happen next. Among the other governance options on the table,

there is no clear front-runner based on extensive analysis and conversations conducted to date – but also the absence of complete information (e.g., motivations and perspectives of other institutional leaders in the Commonwealth). Several of the options, with a developed strategy and strong execution, could potentially result in promising outcomes for Richard Bland, but additional diligence must be done to explore those options with greater specificity and evaluate their relative attractiveness.

With the long-term strategic path forward for Richard Bland still to be determined, a no-regrets move for the immediate-term seems to be to name a new Board of Visitors for Richard Bland.

- A governing body whose members are chosen specifically for their relevance to Richard Bland’s context and who can focus on the strategy and performance of Richard Bland without needing to split their attention with another institution will better support the unique needs of the institution while holding Richard Bland’s professional staff accountable to addressing its challenges and continuing (on some metrics) or improving (on other metrics) its trajectory.
- An independent Board of Visitors with the appropriate expertise and relationships will also be best equipped to explore strategic options for Richard Bland (join VCCS, integrate with a four-year institution, long-term independence) with focus, rigor, and accountability.
- Although joining a system or integrating with another institution today would be a significant move and difficult to reverse step, establishing an independent Board of Visitors maintains the optionality to explore strategic alternatives in the future.

At the same time, this evaluation has made it clear that merely establishing a new Board of Visitors will not necessarily lead to the resolution of Richard Bland’s strategic challenges. An explicit sense of focus, urgency, and accountability must be instilled in the new Board to ensure that it is in a position to quickly address these challenges and further explore long-term independence, as well as other strategic options for the institution.

Therefore, to properly address these questions and potentialities, the Secretary recommends that the General Assembly constitute a new, independent Board of Visitors for Richard Bland and simultaneously charge that Board with a three-year directive to both hold Richard Bland accountable for progress in performance against key metrics, while doing further diligence in parallel on potential strategic alternatives surfaced during this evaluation. Additional parameters for the Board are described below.

Board charge

The new Richard Bland Board of Visitors should be legally and structurally similar to the Boards of Visitors of other public higher education institutions in the Commonwealth, as outlined in the Code of Virginia Title 23.1 Chapter 13, with members appointed by the Governor and a standard baseline set of powers, duties, committees, and policies as delineated in the Code.

In addition to establishing the Richard Bland Board of Visitors, the Secretary recommends that the General Assembly task the new Board of Visitors with two clearly defined tasks to be completed during its first three years following its creation:

- 1) **Oversee rapid improvement on key performance metrics** in partnership with Richard Bland professional leadership, showing consistent positive trajectory across enrollment (particularly for traditional students), completion and post-completion (including transfer and job/wage) outcomes, and financial health (including student affordability and efficient use of Commonwealth resources), as well as clear progress on crystalizing the strategic focus and target market positioning of Richard Bland moving forward.

A wide range of metrics – similar to those included in the Richard Bland Fact Pack produced as an input to the recent biennial six-year planning process – are important for the Richard Bland Board of Visitors to monitor and measure progress over time. However, for the purpose of this task, the Secretary recommends a more streamlined set of executive-level metrics for the Board to focus on over its first three years, including:

- **Enrollment**
 - Full-time-equivalent student enrollment targets (excluding dual enrollment) aligned with enabling financial stability and demonstrating strengthening student demand
 - Consistent annual progress toward those enrollment targets
- **Student outcomes**
 - Sustained improvement in first year retention rates, on-time graduation rates, transfer graduation rates from four-year institutions, and post-graduation wages relative to high school graduation wages
 - Consistent increase in annual degree conferrals leading to a significant annual decrease in overall cost per degree
- **Financial sustainability**
 - Flat/decreased percent of Education & General revenues coming from the state General Fund relative to tuition sources
 - Education & General expenditures per student growing slower annually than the rate of inflation

The Board may identify additional metrics to monitor and report out in addition to the ones listed.

- 2) **Substantively explore and evaluate alternative options** for addressing Richard Bland’s strategy and sustainability challenges over the long term. Options should include (but do not need to be limited to) joining VCCS and integrating with a four-year public institution. The Board of Visitors should be tasked with identifying and exploring alternative options in

partnership with representatives of those institutions and evaluating those options in comparison to each other and long-term independence to recommend the best path forward for Richard Bland in the long term.

In order to demonstrate that it has thoroughly explored and evaluated a particular option, the Board will need to document its answer the following questions for each option considered:

- 1) What would the most promising, likely version of this option look like in practice?
- 2) What would the likely impacts be on students' well-being, access, and outcomes?
- 3) What would the educational and economic impacts be on the Petersburg region?
- 4) What would be the impacts on cost and stewardship of student and taxpayer dollars?
- 5) What would the impacts be on the overall health of Virginia's higher education institutions?
- 6) How long would the strategy take to execute and how much would it cost to implement?

The Secretary recommends that the General Assembly charge the new Richard Bland Board of Visitors with delivering a final report and recommendation(s) at the end of three years, with interim reports to be delivered at the end of the first and second years documenting progress on both tasks. The reports should be submitted to OpSix (Secretary of Education, Secretary of Finance, Director of the Department of Planning and Budget, Director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, Staff Director of the House Appropriations Committee, and Staff Director of the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee). The final recommendation(s) should be made public and should inform the General Assembly's decision on the appropriate actions, if any, that should be taken at that time.

Board composition

Given the critical role and charge of the new Board of Visitors, it is important that the Board be comprised of members who can represent and earn the trust of key Richard Bland and Commonwealth stakeholders while bringing the experience and expertise necessary to effectively fulfill the charge above.

In order to be appropriately representative of key stakeholders and serve the critical role of strengthening Richard Bland's external relationships, the Board should include members who:

- Bring continuity and institutional knowledge from the current William & Mary Board of Visitors' Richard Bland College Committee
- Are or represent Richard Bland alumni and patrons, and have a rich understanding and appreciation for the value that Richard Bland provides to its students and the Commonwealth
- Have deep knowledge of and connections to the Petersburg community

Additionally, Richard Bland's Board of Visitors will need to include members with a wide range of relevant expertise and skillsets necessary to deliver on its two charges of overseeing rapid Richard Bland

improvement on key metrics and substantively exploring and evaluating alternative strategic options. As such, the Board should include members who bring experience and expertise in:

- Institutional leadership of two- and four-year institutions, including a track record of improving financial and student outcomes
- Financial management and controls
- Mergers, acquisitions, and integration
- Transformation and change management
- Economic and commercial development

Finally, the Board should include members who are well-positioned because of their experience and relationships to explore potential partnerships with other public higher education institutions in the Commonwealth (especially Virginia Community College System / Brightpoint Community College, Virginia State University, and Virginia Commonwealth University) as part of the “substantively evaluate alternative options” portion of the charge.

Conclusion and implications for the broader Virginia higher education ecosystem

This evaluation has demonstrated that, despite Richard Bland’s rich history and ongoing efforts to meet the needs of a rapidly evolving higher education market, the institution has not been able to serve students in the Commonwealth to consistent excellence and/or in a sustainable way. In addition to legitimate concerns with its shared governance with William & Mary, Richard Bland is also facing significant strategic challenges related to enrollment, student outcomes, and financial stability, among others.

This evaluation considered five potential governance options for Richard Bland and determined that joining VCCS, integrating with a four-year institution, and creating a new and independent Board of Visitors are all promising options, but with additional consideration of both governance and strategic implications needed.

Although the Secretary was specifically tasked with submitting an evaluation of Richard Bland, it is important to acknowledge that Richard Bland is not the only higher education institution in the Commonwealth facing challenges amidst a complex and dynamic landscape for postsecondary education. As the recent six-year planning process confirmed, the higher education sector continues to be buffeted by significant headwinds (e.g., unfavorable demographic trends, shifts in student postsecondary objectives and needs, rapid technological change, evolving workforce dynamics and gaps, and an increasingly competitive higher education market), forcing leaders to adapt and innovate to ensure bright futures for their institutions and the Commonwealth.

As such, the Secretary further recommends that leadership and Boards of Visitors of all higher education institutions in the Commonwealth take a similar look at their respective institutions’ performance and

identify a set of key metrics to transparently monitor on an ongoing basis. Of course, the challenges facing each institution differ, and some institutions' challenges are more acute or concerning than others. Institutions may look to their respective [fact packs](#) from the recent six-year planning process or the Richard Bland metrics listed in this report as a starting point.

Rigorous and transparent use of data is critical for Virginia higher education institutions to assess where to double down and where to change course. Through continuous improvement, cross-ecosystem collaboration, and a relentless focus on outcomes, Virginia can continue to lead the nation in higher education for years to come.

Appendix I: Additional detail on data inputs

The enabling clause called for the Secretary to confer with seven mandated stakeholders and gave her the option to obtain input from regional partners and other entities as part of her review. As of February 13th, the Secretary and her team had conducted individual interviews with all seven mandated stakeholders, as well as 11 additional Virginia stakeholders and two national experts, for a total of 20 individual interviews:

- 7 Mandated Stakeholders:
 - Richard Bland: Dr. Debbie Sydow, President
 - State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV): Peter Blake, Director
 - Secretary of Finance: Honorable Steve Cummings, Secretary
 - Department of Planning and Budget: Michael Maul, Director
 - House Appropriations Committee: Tony Maggio, Legislative Fiscal Analyst (representing Anne Oman, Staff Director)
 - Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee: April Kees, Staff Director
 - Virginia Economic Development Partnership Authority: Jason El Koubi, President and CEO
- 11 Additional Stakeholders:
 - 15th Senate District: Senator Frank Ruff
 - 82nd House of Delegates District: Delegate Kimberly Taylor
 - City of Petersburg: Mayor Samuel Parham
 - Virginia Community College System: Dr. David Doré, Chancellor
 - Brightpoint Community College: Dr. Bill Fiege, President
 - Community College Workforce Alliance, a partnership of Reynolds and Brightpoint Community Colleges: Elizabeth Creamer, Vice President of Workforce Development and Credential Attainment
 - Virginia State University: Dr. Makola Abdullah, President
 - Virginia Commonwealth University: Dr. Michael Rao, President
 - College of William & Mary: Dr. Katherine Rowe, President
 - Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission: Justin Brown, Senior Associate Director, and Tracey Smith, Associate Director
 - Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts: Eric Sandridge, Deputy Auditor
- 2 National Experts:
 - National Association of Community College Trustees: Jee Hang Lee, President and CEO
 - Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges: Dr. Terrence MacTaggart, Senior Consultant and Senior Fellow

Additionally, the Secretary hosted an in-person discussion on February 7th with President Sydow and eight stakeholders of President Sydow's choosing to share initial findings and solicit feedback on Richard Bland's context and the go-forward governance options under consideration:

- Richard Bland: Dr. Debbie Sydow, President
- 8 Additional Stakeholders:
 - William & Mary Board of Visitors Richard Bland College Committee:
 - John Rathbone, Chair
 - Brian Woolfolk, Vice Chair
 - Victor Branch, former Chair; Richmond Market President, Bank of America; Richard Bland alumnus; and member of Virginia State University Board of Visitors
 - Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges: Dr. Belle Wheelan, President
 - 13th Senate District: Senator Lashrecse Aird
 - Richard Bland Consultants:
 - Karen Jackson, Richard Bland technology consultant for launch of DroneUp Academy, FAME
 - Jeff Palmore, CapSquare Consulting
 - Richard Bland Foundation Board of Directors: Jeffrey Britt, Chair; Richard Bland alumnus

Many additional quantitative and qualitative inputs informed this report. Analysis leveraged the following sources from the six-year planning process:

- Richard Bland’s [50-page “Fact Pack,”](#) including the following trends (with an addendum that includes the most recent data as of October, 2023):
 - Enrollment (headcount, part-time/full-time, demographics, etc.)
 - Completion outcomes (retention, graduation, time to degree, transfer rates & destinations)
 - Post-completion outcomes (wage trends, debt vs. earnings, etc.)
 - Workforce alignment (graduates working in high-growth and/or high-priority industries and occupations)
 - Affordability (total cost of attendance, debt)
 - Revenue (reliance on General Fund, Non-General Fund sources, discounting)
 - Cost effectiveness (expenditures by category, personnel growth, fastest-growing expenditure categories)
 - Other institution fact packs, as relevant
- Richard Bland’s [six-year plan submissions](#), including:
 - Financial projections
 - Six-year plan narrative
 - Enrollment projections through 2030
 - Answers to OpSix follow-up questions
 - Materials from Richard Bland’s live six-year plan presentation to OpSix on September 7, 2023

- OpSix takeaways from Richard Bland’s six-year plan submission, live presentation, and answers to follow-up questions

Additional sources consulted include:

- Additional SCHEV data from research.schev.edu
- Additional information from Richard Bland in response to questions from the Secretary’s office on November 27, 2023, including [Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts](#) audit documentation from Fiscal Years 2018 and 2019
- Benchmarking of similar institutions using the [Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System \(IPEDS\)](#), desk research, etc.
- February 2024 Board of Visitors Cost Drivers Mitigation Strategies presentation
- Richard Bland/Huron report from November 2022 entitled [“A Model for Higher Education Innovation”](#)
- Letters of support for Richard Bland’s independent Board of Visitors

Appendix II: Brief summary of key benefits and concerns surfaced for governance options evaluated

Option 1: Continue to be governed by the William & Mary Board of Visitors (status quo)	
Benefits	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current William & Mary Board has the most experience governing Richard Bland and would maintain continuity • Keeping the status quo maintains optionality as a longer-term strategy is further explored and evaluated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite efforts of William & Mary Board members, the shared Board of Visitors has suffered from a lack of understanding of Richard Bland’s context among Board members, limited connection to Richard Bland’s local community and stakeholders, and less time to dedicate to Richard Bland’s key strategic questions and decisions • A shared Board of Visitors may drive slower the launch of new programs and initiatives due to having less of the Board’s time and attention • William & Mary is also not getting the full attention of a focused Board of Visitors; the Board’s expertise (e.g., financial management) must be split across institutions today • William & Mary’s Board of Visitors may not be best equipped to weigh Richard Bland’s strategic options

Option 2: Report to the Board of Visitors of a different Virginia public higher education institution	
Benefits	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>n/a</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without intent for strategic integration or deep partnership of the institutions, this option has no clear advantages vs. other options

Option 3: Join the Virginia Community College System (VCCS)

Benefits	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Virginia Community College System is already set up for two-year institutions; its structure enables individual institutions to maintain their own identity (with governance that includes a local advisory board for each community college), while facilitating shared best practices, initiatives, and services across institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the large scale of VCCS and its own strategic challenges, there is a risk that Richard Bland joining the system may distract VCCS from other high-priority initiatives, or that VCCS faces operational difficulties with Richard Bland integration • Pursuing this option might raise additional questions about the role of Richard Bland in the system; this option would require substantial additional diligence to determine the best option as there is not currently a clear path forward

Additional strategic considerations for joining the Virginia Community College System (VCCS)

Benefits	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VCCS is a seemingly natural fit for Richard Bland given it houses all other two-year public institutions • Many of the initiatives that Richard Bland considers unique are also similar to programs and priorities at VCCS, suggesting opportunity for potential synergy³². For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Richard Bland is focused on dual enrollment to increase the number of high school students enrolled in college courses; a main priority of VCCS is the Governor’s aim to ensure all high school students graduate with either a college-level associate degree or industry-recognized credentials ○ Richard Bland is building new programs and facilities in high- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are significant differences between Richard Bland and VCCS in terms of their academic and financial models; there would be significant time and potentially cost needed to determine the best strategic path and then implement it • VCCS faces its own significant strategic challenges which merit focused attention; it is unlikely that having Richard Bland join the system would address these at scale • It is unclear how being a part of VCCS would help Richard Bland address its most significant strategic challenges

³² From crosswalk of [six-year plans of both Richard Bland and VCCS](#), supplemented with qualitative interviews and desktop research

demand technical fields, including advanced manufacturing; VCCS has significant support among employers, associations, and General Assembly members for FastForward that accelerates the path toward well-paying jobs through a pay-for-performance model

- Richard Bland is working to track not just graduation, but also post-grad employment outcomes; VCCS has career coaches in 180 of the 386 public high schools in Virginia helping students develop career plans, understand college and educational options, enroll in college, apply for financial aid, and provide other supports that help them successfully matriculate
- Both institutions are working to better track local industry needs and developing industry-higher ed partnerships, including for experiential and hands-on learning
- Richard Bland is exploring innovative learning modalities; VCCS is using a “hyflex” model to teach adult learners, use classroom schedule that fits their needs, adopt onboarding so students can enroll in days, increasing credit for prior coursework, also has outcomes-based funding
- There may be potential for Richard Bland to serve as an innovation campus within VCCS, partner with Brightpoint Community College to better serve Petersburg, or both
- Richard Bland could benefit from VCCS efficiencies; potential for Richard Bland to

<p>lower its operational costs through shared services and collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VCCS already has the capability and infrastructure for overseeing many institutions under one system 	
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Option 4: Integrate with a Virginia public four-year institution, combining management under a single existing Board of Visitors	
Benefits	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If/when there is a clear path forward for strategic integration of Richard Bland with a four-year institution, merging governance would be a meaningful step in the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is risky to move too quickly into a four-year integration without a clearly-defined strategic path for which the four-year institution is best suited for that integration, how that integration would be implemented, and what objectives and synergies would be achieved

Additional strategic considerations for integrating with a Virginia public four-year institution	
Benefits (of Virginia State University, for illustrative purposes)	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both institutions operate in the same geographic region (13 miles apart); an integration could enable both institutions to better serve the Petersburg region • There is potential to build on significant existing collaboration between the institutions, e.g., Virtual Technical & Professional School, University College, housing agreement, proposed Lab School • Greater scale could enable operational efficiencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic integration of two institutions takes a lot of attention and resources, may be disruptive and costly, and can detract from work on strategic challenges that both Richard Bland and any potential partner each face • Before moving forward, the Commonwealth and Richard Bland would need to thoroughly understand the interest and commitment of a potential partner and ensure aligned objectives for the integration • Additional consideration would need to be made for how best to mitigate any potential negative impacts on transfer pathways between Richard Bland and any

	other four-year institutions if it were to integrate with one institution
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Option 5: Create a newly constituted Board of Visitors to govern Richard Bland

Benefits	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An independent Board of Visitors can be more focused on Richard Bland’s strategy and performance, can take action more quickly, and minimize barriers to implementation • A new Board of Visitors can have a more optimal composition with members who understand the local context, have relationships to further the needs and aspirations of Richard Bland, and have the expertise to address Richard Bland’s unique model, challenges, and opportunities • Separating governance allows the William & Mary Board of Visitors to increase its focus on the strategic questions facing William & Mary • An independent Board of Visitors maintains optionality on the longer-term strategic path of Richard Bland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A disruption of the current governance structure could divert time and attention from a focus on continued strategic progress, especially given that Richard Bland is already operationally independent • Creating independent governance could be perceived as conveying that Richard Bland’s challenges have been addressed, and take urgency away from its strategic choices and the aggressive pursuit of sustained viability and impact