

REPORT OF RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE

**Status Update for Governance
Transition to the Richard Bland
College Board of Visitors
(Chapter 607, 2025)**

TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA



SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 10

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
2025**



Richard Bland College

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

A REPORT TO THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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

Prepared by: Dr. Debbie L. Sydow, President, for submission by December 31, 2025

Executive Summary

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

I. Governance Transition Team and Planning

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

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

II. Board Infrastructure and Effectiveness

To support the inaugural BoV, Richard Bland College has:

- Prepared a robust Board orientation program held on August 27, 2025.
- Engaged with AGB, SACSCOC, and AG college counsel to define board roles and responsibilities as part of the Board orientation program.
- Created a BoV webpage and email (bov@rbc.edu).
- Scheduled regular 2025-26 board meetings (8/27/25, 9/24/25, 1/28/26, 4/22/26).
- Hired a Chief of Staff and a part-time Strategic Planning and Governance Specialist.

- Adopted Bylaws via Board action on August 27, 2025.
- Designed Board evaluation program to measure performance relative to role and responsibilities, which went into effect at the September 24, 2026, meeting.

III. Institutional Identity and Messaging

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

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

IV. Legal, Logistical, and Compliance Measures

Key legal and operational steps include:

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

V. Cultural Realignment and Traditions

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

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

- Updated library consortium agreement, academic calendars, etc.

VI. Foundation Board Integration

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

- Foundation Board retreat on September 3, 2025, included invitations to Visitors with a focus on roles and responsibilities of each board.
- Scheduled joint social events to foster collaboration, including September 3, 2025, Foundation Board retreat, Pecan Festival, Awards of Distinction event, etc.
- Board of Visitors adopted a resolution on August 27, 2025, to authorize the president to request that the W&M Foundation transfer the Sutherland Fund to RBC's Foundation. Funds were transferred from W&M Foundation to RBC's Foundation in October of 2025.
- Board of Visitors will act on Resolution to Delineate the Relationship, Roles, and Responsibilities of the Board of Visitors and the Foundation Board of Directors during the January 28, 2026 meeting.

Guiding Philosophy

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

Remaining Steps

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

Conclusion

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

Appendices



August 2025 BOV
Agenda.pdf

August 2025 BOV Agenda



August 2025 BOV
Minutes.pdf

August 2025 BOV Minutes



RBC Board of
Visitors Bylaws.pdf

RBC Board of Visitors Bylaws



September 2025
BOV Agenda.pdf

September 2025 BOV Agenda



September 2025
BOV Agenda.pdf

September 2025 BOV Draft Minutes



January 2026 BOV
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January 2026 BOV Draft Agenda



BOV Members &
Bios.pdf

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Change Committee October 2025

