



Richard Bland College
BOARD OF VISITORS

THE FUTURE OF RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE

Phase One Report and Recommendations

TO: Commonwealth of Virginia’s Secretary of Education, Secretary of Finance, Chair of House Committee on Appropriations, Chair of Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations

FROM: Kevin Massengill, Rector, Richard Bland College Board of Visitors

DATE: June 29, 2026

I. Executive Summary

Pursuant to Section 21.1 of the Code of Virginia, and consistent with the charge set forth by the General Assembly in the 2025 Appropriations Act, the Richard Bland College Board of Visitors submits this inaugural report documenting the Board’s due diligence in investigating options for the future of Richard Bland College (College, RBC or Bland). This report fulfills the first of three required annual submissions and reflects the Board’s commitment to independent, data-informed governance; transparency and accountability; and optimization of the Commonwealth’s investment in Bland to promote regional and statewide economic development.

Legislative and Policy Context

In 2023, the General Assembly directed the Secretary of Education to coordinate with Richard Bland College and its stakeholders to explore options for the institution’s future. That effort culminated in a report prepared by the Boston Consulting Group and issued by Secretary of Education Aimee Guidera in August 2024. One recommendation was the creation of an independent Board of Visitors charged with a dual mission:

- To oversee rapid improvement in key student success and financial performance metrics; and
- To substantively explore and evaluate alternative structural, partnership, and consolidation options to ensure long-term viability.

In 2025 the General Assembly established an independent, nine-member Board of Visitors and directed it to explore options for Bland’s future and report annually on its due diligence over a three-year horizon, with final recommendations due June 30, 2028. This report documents the Board’s Year-One efforts and establishes a rigorous foundation for subsequent phases of exploration, evaluation, and implementation of strategic priorities.

Governance Transition and Strategic Focus

The inaugural Richard Bland College Board of Visitors assumed governance responsibility in July 2025 during a period of significant transition, including impending changes in state administration leadership and in the College presidency. Despite these transitions, the inaugural Board and, subsequently, a reconstituted Board appointed in March 2026 have acted with urgency and continuity of purpose.

The Board has affirmed independent governance as an essential prerequisite for fulfilling its statutory mandate and has focused its work on:

- Establishing best-practice policies, bylaws, and executive oversight practices;
- Monitoring RBC’s longitudinal performance metrics related to enrollment, retention, graduation, post-transfer outcomes, and cost per degree;
- Hiring and onboarding an interim president and launching the search for a permanent president;
- Advancing a disciplined, phased approach to evaluating the College’s future;
- Approving an [18-24 month strategic plan](#) that prioritizes the identification and delivery of industry-recognized credentials and micro-credentials to address exigent workforce gaps.

Within a higher education environment marked by enrollment pressure, fiscal constraints, shifting labor-market demands, and increased scrutiny of public return on investment, the Board’s overarching goal is to ensure that Richard Bland College is strategically aligned with market and workforce needs, financially sustainable, and deeply mission-centered in service to students and economic development in Virginia’s Gateway region and across the Commonwealth.

Phase One: Establishing a Baseline for Decision-Making

During Year One, the Board adopted and executed Phase One of a three-phased framework designed to ensure that all future structural and partnership decisions are grounded in evidence and aligned with General Assembly priorities.

Phase One focused on four interrelated components:

1. Establishing Baseline Performance Metrics

The Board affirmed a set of longitudinal key performance indicators—enrollment, persistence, retention, graduation, post-completion outcomes, and financial

efficiency—that will be used consistently to evaluate institutional health and the relative merits of all future options.

2. Internal Inventory of Programs and Partnerships

The Board reviewed Richard Bland College’s academic portfolio and extensive K-12/university/business partnership ecosystem. RBC’s primary identity as a two-year, residential, university-parallel institution was reaffirmed, with associate degrees intentionally designed to deliver critical “soft skills” while minimizing credit loss and cost for students transferring to four-year institutions for degrees leading to a wide array of careers. The College maintains more than forty (40) university transfer partnerships, as well as robust collaborations with K–12 systems, healthcare providers, industry, and nonprofit partners. Notably, in April 2026, Bland entered into a joint admission program with its primary transfer partner, Virginia Commonwealth University, to reduce cost and further streamline the transition.

3. External Review of Workforce Needs

Consistent with Virginia workforce priorities and the SCHEV strategic plan, the Board examined state labor market projections and high-growth occupational fields. This review confirmed increasing student demand for flexible delivery models and short-term credentials, alongside continued demand for strong transfer preparation in high-need sectors such as information technology, business, healthcare, education, and the social sciences.

4. Gap Analysis and Alignment Assessment

A crosswalk of existing programs with Virginia’s top in-demand fields demonstrates that Richard Bland College’s liberal arts transfer focus is well aligned with workforce needs, particularly as preparation for high-demand bachelor’s degrees. The analysis also identified clear opportunities for Phase Two exploration, including expansion of dual enrollment conversion, online education, and workforce-aligned short-term credentials.

Key Findings

The Board’s Year One due diligence led to several core findings:

- Richard Bland College is mission-differentiated within Virginia’s higher education ecosystem and continues to deliver strong value through high-quality, affordable transfer pathways, complementing the mission of community colleges.
- Bland’s existing academic model aligns with current and projected workforce needs, particularly when viewed as foundational preparation for high-demand four-year degrees.
- Future sustainability will depend on strategic, smart growth—especially through enrollment expansion, program delivery innovation, and carefully selected alliances and/or partnerships.

- Any consideration of consolidation or alternative structural arrangements must be evaluated against clear performance, student success, financial, and regional impact criteria.

Next Steps

With Phase One complete, the Board is prepared to move into Phase Two: Exploration and Evaluation. This will include engaging Jade Solutions to conduct a comprehensive market feasibility study, identify and prioritize strategic opportunities, and develop a multi-criteria framework and implementation roadmap for future action. Findings from Phase Two will be presented in the June 30, 2027 report. Phase Three will focus on implementation and outcomes.

Conclusion

The Board of Visitors embraces its responsibility to lead Richard Bland College through a disciplined, transparent, and student-centered evaluation of its future. This first-year report demonstrates that the Board has established a strong foundation for decision-making and is proceeding deliberately, consistent with legislative intent. The Board remains committed to ensuring that Richard Bland College continues to provide measurable value to students, supports regional and statewide workforce and economic development, and fulfills its distinctive mission as an affordable gateway to baccalaureate attainment and a provider of high-demand, industry-recognized credentials in the Commonwealth.

II. Background and Context

As a component of rigorous strategic planning and on the basis of [extensive research conducted by Huron Consulting](#) about [“future state” opportunities for Richard Bland College](#), in 2021 President Debbie Sydow escalated conversations with W&M board leadership and General Assembly representatives about the [documented need for independent board governance as a missing link for driving educational solutions](#) in the Virginia Gateway Region and statewide. Eventually, in response to a request of the 2022 General Assembly (via the appropriations act), Bland submitted a report in November 2022 entitled [Richard Bland College: A Model for Higher Education Innovation](#). [Collectively, all of these reports](#) document the need for an independent governing board to guide future development of RBC as a unique provider of industry-recognized credentials in support of regional and statewide economic development.

During the same time period, in response to demographics shifts and other forces impacting higher education and to support data-informed decision making at all levels of Virginia higher education operations, governance and policy, Governor Glenn Youngkin’s Secretary of Education (SoE), Aimee Guidera, directed the State Council for Higher Education (SCHEV) to engage the Boston Consulting Group to create “fact packs” for each institution of higher education (IHE) to compel rigor in the 2023 six-year planning process. The so-called fact packs were to be the first step toward an in-depth, rigorous analysis of the performance and financial health of each college and university, accompanied by recommendations for the future that would inform subsequent

six-year plans. This would, it was believed, result in a virtuous cycle whereby higher education outcomes would improve and, simultaneously, state investment would decrease.

Richard Bland College, typically under the radar, attracted the attention of the new Youngkin administration by proposing a bill in the 2023 General Assembly session—consistent with its mission and strategic plan—that would sever control of W&M’s governing board and establish a new, dedicated Richard Bland College governing board. That bill fared well but ultimately did not make it to the Governor’s desk in 2023.

Subsequently, the 2023 General Assembly (via the appropriations act) directed Governor Glenn Youngkin’s Secretary of Education (SoE), Aimee Guidera, to coordinate with Richard Bland College and its key stakeholders to explore options for the future of Richard Bland College and deliver a report by December 30, 2023 that would inform Bland’s 2024 legislative strategy. Utilizing the RBC fact pack as a baseline, Secretary Guidera engaged the [Boston Consulting Group to interview Bland stakeholders and draft a final report](#) that was submitted to Governor Youngkin and key legislators in August 2024, well after adjournment of the 2024 General Assembly. Affirming Huron’s findings, the creation of an independent Board of Visitors for Richard Bland College was recommended by the Secretary of Education. It was recommended that this governing board be directed to improve key student and financial outcomes and to explore options for consolidation.

The 2025 General Assembly in Section 21.1 of the Code of Virginia established a nine-member Board of Visitors for Richard Bland College and directed the Board to submit annual reports on its due diligence in investigating options for the future of Richard Bland College, with the first report due on June 30, 2026; a second report due on June 30, 2027; and a final report due on June 30, 2028.

To help guide and support the Richard Bland College Board’s exploration of strategic opportunities and viable options for the future, in August 2025, Dr. Eileen Strempe¹ was engaged as a consultant to work directly with the rector and board, the president, executive staff (president’s cabinet and president’s council), Faculty Assembly and national experts in higher education mergers and acquisitions to conduct due diligence and draft a report for submission on or before June 30, 2026.

The inaugural nine-member Richard Bland College Board of Visitors appointed by Governor Glenn Youngkin began their service in July 2025. In March 2026, a new Richard Bland College Board of Visitors was appointed by Abigail Spanberger to fill nine vacant board seats (resulting from 2026 General Assembly rejection of Youngkin appointees). The new Richard Bland College Board of

¹ Dr. Strempe’s publications include *Beyond Free College: Making Higher Education Work for 21st Century Students*. Co-author with Stephen Handel, Rowman & Littlefield Press, 2021; *Transition and Transformation: New Research Fostering Transfer Student Success*. Co-editor with Stephen Handel, University Press of North Georgia, 2018; and *Transition and Transformation: Fostering Transfer Student Success*, Co-editor with Stephen Handel, University Press of North Georgia, 2016.

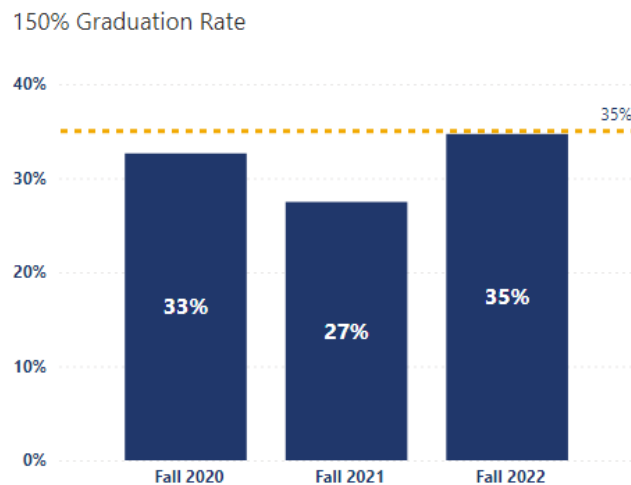
Visitors was sworn in at a campus orientation on March 26, and at the April 22, 2026 meeting, officers were elected to constitute the Executive Committee of the Board.

The reconstituted Richard Bland College Board of Visitors is focused on continuing to improve and monitor executive-level metrics (FTE enrollment, retention and graduation rates; post-completion outcomes; and cost per degree) that have been in place since 2014. This is within the context of the current complex environment facing higher education, ranging from decreased enrollment, increased competition, declining state support, and a continued focus on the American public’s perceived value and return on investment of higher education.

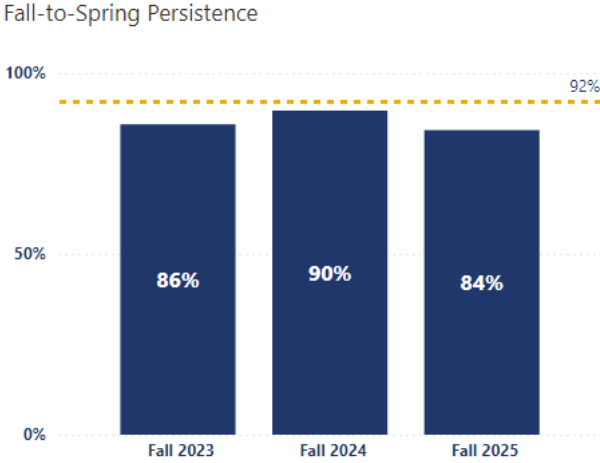
In keeping with General Assembly priorities, the Board’s goal is to ensure that the College is strategically aligned to fulfill its mission and provide market-driven, industry-recognized credentials in Virginia’s Gateway region and across the Commonwealth. To support its strategic goals, the Board has implemented a three-phased process to explore, evaluate and execute strategic alliances, partnerships and collaborative/alternative options with a clear focus on student enrollment and outcomes. The goal is to continually expand Richard Bland College’s contribution to regional and statewide workforce and economic development and to document its impressive ROI for the Commonwealth.

III. Performance Metrics

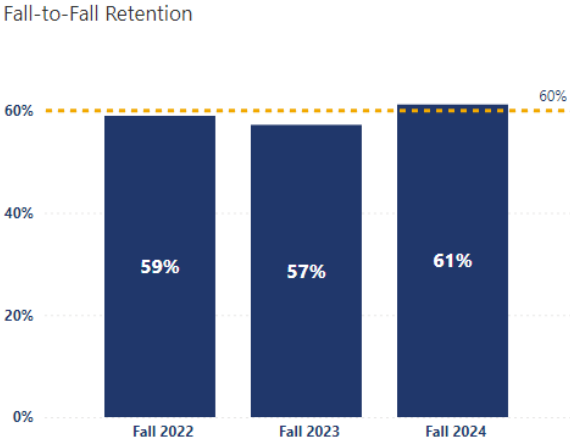
The Richard Bland College Board of Visitors has established key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor the College’s status and progress within a longitudinal framework. Representative dashboards are included below for reference.



Note that the 150% graduation rate depicted above does NOT include Verto students; however, they are included in IPEDS data.

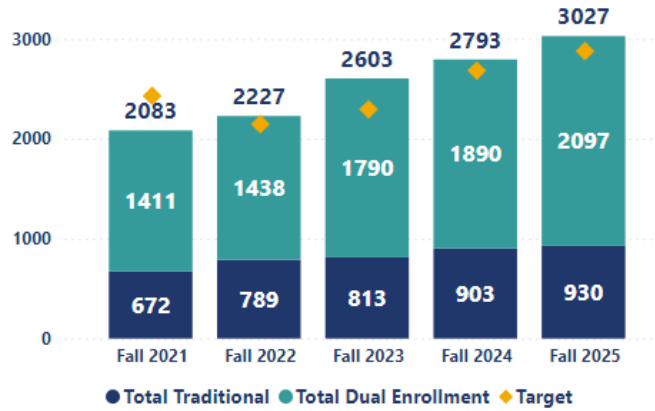


Fall-to-Spring Persistence reflects first-time full-time degree seeking students. These data are as of March 30, 2026.



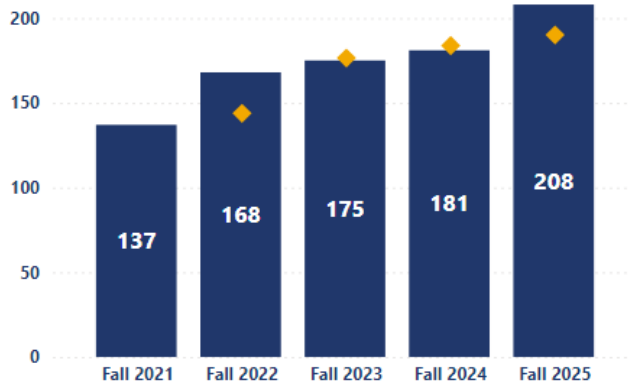
Fall-to-Fall Retention is for first-time full-time degree seeking students.

Enrollment

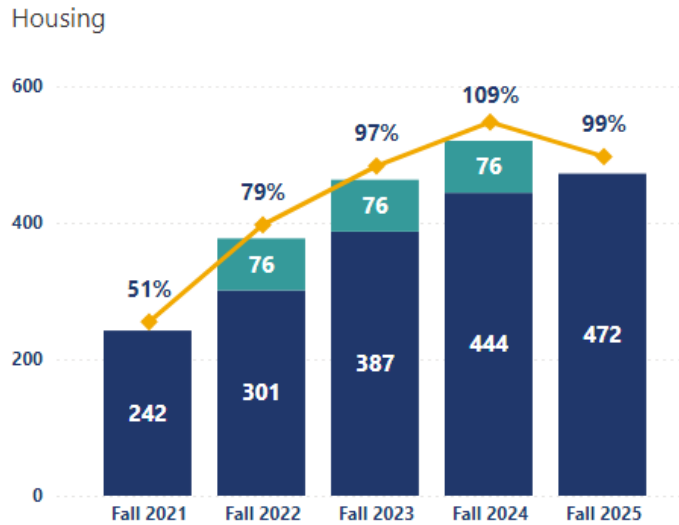


Enrollment counts reflect all students. The numbers differ from IPEDS in fall 2021 due to VERTO students being included in IPEDS and fall 2022 due to Prior Year Revisions not being posted publically. Note that there are slight differences from IPEDS in other terms; for example, fall 2023-fall 2025, due to a small number of audits that are included here but are not reflected in IPEDS data.

Athletes Enrolled



Athlete enrollment by Fall Term for all sports.



Housing numbers based on accounting charges by Fall Term. Fall 2022-Fall 2024 numbers reflect 76 housing slots leased by Virginia State University for those years.

IV. The Future of Richard Bland College: A Phased Approach – Phase One

Newly established amid an impending gubernatorial transition and a transition in the RBC presidency, the first nine members of the RBC Board of Visitors were appointed by Governor Glenn Youngkin. This Board led by Rector John Rathbone put into place an effective governance framework based on standards of best practice; implemented a robust short-term plan to maintain focus and momentum during a period of transition; and clarified the roles, responsibilities and expectations of College boards (Board of Visitors and Foundation Board of Directors) and key leadership. For example, the Board appointed in 2025 established board bylaws, board policies, an [18-24 month strategic plan](#), and an updated 2026 campus master plan. In addition, they utilized a professional search firm, Academic Career and Executive Search, to conduct the search for an interim president to follow President Debbie Sydow.

Understanding the importance of its charge from the General Assembly, this Board also conducted extensive due diligence and adopted a three-year, phased approach to the review and exploration of options for the future of Richard Bland College. Phase One contains four main components:

1. Establish a baseline. Richard Bland College has developed strategic baseline metrics (section two, above) that will be used to identify, prioritize and evaluate all options and to ensure the decisions will create value for the college and all key stakeholders (students, faculty, staff, alumni, community, Commonwealth, et al).

2. Conduct an internal review and inventory of programs and services. This inventory will include all programs and pathways available at RBC—and via existing partnerships with regional and statewide institutions—that prepare students for university transfer and careers (section four, below).
3. Conduct an external review of workforce needs and educational program options available to students in the region and state. Review the inventory of current workforce needs in the region/state (section five, below) and available options.
4. Crosswalk the external review with an inventory of programs and pathways available at Richard Bland College (and via existing partnerships with regional and statewide institutions) to prepare students for university transfer and careers. This will create a gap analysis (section six, below).

V. Internal Inventory of Educational Solutions

Richard Bland College’s niche and identity is as a two-year, residential, university-parallel experience. Its associate degrees are designed to prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions in Virginia and beyond, while minimizing credit loss and reducing overall cost. In the age of advanced technologies like artificial intelligence, the liberal arts education and degrees that Bland offers are now more crucial than ever as employers seek employees with strong communication and computation skills, intellectual curiosity, adaptability, critical reasoning, a disciplined work ethic, and the capacity to collaborate effectively.

Richard Bland College associate degrees—the Associate of Arts Degree (A.A.) and the Associate of Science Degree (A.S.)—align with over forty university transfer partners, including:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| ▪ William & Mary | ▪ UVA Wise | ▪ Mary Baldwin University |
| ▪ University of Virginia | ▪ Virginia State University | ▪ Pfeiffer University |
| ▪ Virginia Tech | ▪ Virginia’s Community Colleges | ▪ Randolph-Macon College |
| ▪ Virginia Commonwealth University | ▪ Purdue University Global | ▪ Regent University |
| ▪ Longwood University | ▪ Averett University | ▪ Roanoke College |
| ▪ Christopher Newport University | ▪ Bluefield College | ▪ Shenandoah University |
| ▪ George Mason University | ▪ Bridgewater College | ▪ Southern Virginia University |
| ▪ James Madison University | ▪ Eastern Mennonite University | ▪ Southside Regional Medical Center Professional Schools |
| ▪ University of Mary Washington | ▪ Ferrum College | ▪ Saint Leo University |
| ▪ Old Dominion University | ▪ Hampden-Sydney College | ▪ Sweet Briar College |
| ▪ Norfolk State University | ▪ Hampton University | ▪ Virginia Union University |
| ▪ Radford University | ▪ Liberty University | ▪ Virginia Wesleyan University |
| | ▪ University of Lynchburg | |

In addition, Richard Bland College currently offers three certificates in Communications, Fine Arts, and Uncrewed Aerial Systems (UaS).

Virginia Code Title 23.1 (6), Chapter 28, requires Richard Bland College to file annually—on or before July 1—a report to the Chairs of the House Committee on Appropriations, the House Committee on Education, the Senate Committee on Education and Health, and the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations regarding the institution’s progress in exploring and expanding partnership opportunities for shared services and academic programming with other higher education partners. In accordance with this annual requirement, the College annually submits a progress report outlining its robust array of strategic partnerships. As detailed in the most recent report, in addition to [university partnerships](#), the College partners with K-12, industry, and others to offer:

- [Dual Enrollment](#)
- [iRBC International Student Program](#)
- [Health Careers-Bon Secours Partnership](#)
- [RBC Foundation Business Innovation Park](#)
- [RBC Health Zone University-Led Telehealth & STEAM-H Expansion](#)
- [Research, Innovation, and Grants](#)
- [Drone and Aviation Fellowship Program with Richmond Airport](#)
- [STEM Summer Camps](#)
- [Transfer Scholars Network](#)
- [University College](#)

Comprehensive documentation detailing each partnership is hyperlinked.

VI. Inventory of Current Workforce Needs

RBC monitors the workforce needs of the Commonwealth and identifies the State’s high-growth occupations from the Virginia Employment Commission.

Projected to 2026
VIRGINIA
JOB
OUTLOOK



Job opportunities in Virginia are expected to continue to expand.

Overall, employment in Virginia is projected to grow 10.1 percent by 2026 exceeding the national growth rate of 7.4 percent.

Which jobs are expected to grow or decline in Virginia?

This Job Outlook brochure lists a sampling of high-growth occupations by educational attainment and annual wages projected to 2026 as well as occupations that are projected to decline.

For more information, visit these websites:

- www.careerinfonet.org
- www.bls.gov/ooh
- www.VirginiaWorks.com

High-Growth Occupations by Educational Attainment:

Bachelor's Degree	Projected Job Growth to 2026	Median Annual Wage	Associate's Degree, Post Secondary Non-Degree Award, or Some College	Projected Job Growth to 2026	Median Annual Wage	High School Diploma or Equivalent	Projected Job Growth to 2026	Median Annual Wage
Software Developers, Applications	11,710	\$106,500	Nursing Assistants	7,861	\$26,590	Personal Care Aides	28,367	\$18,050
Management Analysts	10,686	\$96,770	Medical Assistants	4,352	\$32,260	Home Health Aides	5,926	\$21,770
Registered Nurses	9,341	\$66,060	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	3,794	\$42,310	Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	5,393	\$24,070
Accountants and Auditors	6,151	\$75,750	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	3,506	\$40,350	Customer Service Representatives	4,969	\$32,550
General and Operations Managers	6,099	\$122,730	Teacher Assistants	3,199	\$26,150	Receptionists and Information Clerks	4,617	\$28,770
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	5,149	\$67,210	Computer User Support Specialists	2,672	\$53,090	Sales Representatives, Services, All Other	3,420	\$62,520
Information Security Analysts	4,867	\$105,550	Dental Assistants	2,039	\$41,090	First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	3,275	\$33,590
Managers, All Other	4,589	\$127,100	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists	1,925	\$30,030	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	3,216	\$38,320
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	3,982	\$64,090	Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	1,369	\$43,220	Security Guards	3,107	\$32,240
Software Developers, Systems Software	3,731	\$119,430	Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	1,369	\$48,950	First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	2,556	\$55,930
Business Operations Specialists, All Other	3,549	\$79,830	Paralegals and Legal Assistants	1,368	\$49,700	First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	2,277	\$40,490
Computer Systems Analysts	3,537	\$96,450	Dental Hygienists	1,240	\$82,400	Nonfarm Animal Caretakers	2,223	\$22,380
Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	2,960	\$64,230	Phlebotomists	1,171	\$33,780	Fitness Trainers and Aerobics Instructors	2,066	\$41,490
Operations Research Analysts	2,958	\$105,770	Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics	1,037	\$33,110	Billing and Posting Clerks	1,964	\$37,120
Financial Managers	2,910	\$141,880	Massage Therapists	1,007	\$35,420	Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	1,769	\$52,820
Human Resources Specialists	2,187	\$70,840	Firefighters	973	\$50,160	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	1,731	\$62,970
Network and Computer Systems Administrators	2,114	\$89,990	Physical Therapist Assistants	920	\$60,940	Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers	1,694	\$29,080
Child, Family, and School Social Workers	2,037	\$46,490	Legal Support Workers, All Other	895	\$117,210	Childcare Workers	1,637	\$20,430
Computer and Information Systems Managers	1,947	\$160,950	Preschool Teachers, Except Special Education	782	\$32,440	Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	1,465	\$47,270
Training and Development Specialists	1,891	\$65,890	Medical Records and Health Information Technicians	753	\$37,290	Self-Enrichment Education Teachers	1,455	\$39,430

Virginia Employment Commission. *2026 Jobs Outlook*. Virginia Labor Market Information. Published 2026. PDF file. <https://prod-valmi.mt.gov/docs/Publications/LMI-Publications/VA-Jobs-Outlook/PDF/2026-Jobs-Outlook.pdf>.

College leadership monitors these high-growth job opportunities to assure the relevance of degree pathways. The continuous pursuit of these prospects is referenced in the [2026-28 Strategic Plan](#): “Analyze and pursue resolution of all barriers that impede delivery of a full range of high-demand programs and credentials.” The Board particularly notes the increasing interest and enrollment in short-term programs, with the National Clearinghouse finding that short-term credentials are currently experiencing the greatest enrollment growth at 6.6 percent.²

² Johanna Alonso, “Enrollment Growth Continues, Bolstered by Short-Term Credentials,” *Inside Higher Ed*, 11 Nov. 2025, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/admissions/traditional-age/2025/11/11/short-term-credentials-bolster-enrollment-boom>

VII. Gap Analysis

At the January 28th, 2026, meeting, the Board of Visitors adopted an updated [Richard Bland College strategic plan](#) that established priority goals for the next 18-24 months. The plan assures alignment with the SCHEV strategic plan and the Commonwealth's current workforce needs. A crosswalk of the College's existing educational offerings with the Virginia's top in-demand fields confirms that the current liberal arts transfer focus aligns with Commonwealth workforce needs. In addition to the crosswalk programs listed below, the College offers more generalized transfer pathways for students geared toward various 4-year degrees, including the General A.S., A.S in Physical Science, and A.S in Life Science.

VIRGINIA'S TOP IN DEMAND FIELDS

RICHARD BLAND COLLEGE ALIGNMENT

Information Technology & Computer Science Fields

Software Developers (Applications & Systems)
Information Security Analysts
Computer Systems Analysts
Network & Computer Systems Administrators
Computer & Information Systems Managers
Operations Research Analysts

A.S. in Math/Computer Science – foundational STEM courses required for CS/IT majors at 4-year institutions

Business, Management & Accounting Fields

Management Analysts

A.A. with social sciences coursework supporting economics/management transfer pathways

General & Operations Managers
Accountants & Auditors
Market Research Analysts
Financial Managers
Business Operations Specialists

A.S. in Business Administration (listed within RBC's Business, Management & Marketing fields)

Education Fields

Elementary School Teachers

A.S. in Behavioral Sciences → prepares students for Social Work, Counseling, Education

Secondary School Teachers

A.A. → standard transfer preparation for B.A. in Education at 4-year institutions

Healthcare

Registered Nurses

A.S. in Clinical Lab Sciences → strong foundation for transfer into BSN programs

Social Sciences & Human Services

Human Resources Specialists

A.S. in Behavioral Sciences → prepares students for Social Work, Counseling, Psychology

Child, Family, & School Social Workers

A.A. → suitable for transfer into Social Work, HR, Psychology, or Sociology bachelor's programs

This work built upon the Learner Success Laboratory's Comprehensive Self-Assessment conducted in 2021-22, when RBC created academic pathways (or meta-majors) that linked academic coursework to student academic goals. Meta majors are designed to ensure that students enroll only in credits that apply to their degree pathway, thereby reducing surplus credits (and expense) while enabling quicker degree completion. Accordingly, RBC created Six Meta-Majors:

- Advanced Manufacturing & Logistics
- Liberal Arts & Humanities
- Science & Technology
- Health & Biosciences
- Business & Entrepreneurship
- Education, Counseling, & Public Service

The gap analysis utilizes existing Meta-Majors and links them to career opportunities. This examination reveals that responding to previously identified opportunities, e.g., expanding the dual enrollment conversion rate, online education, and the potential growth of short-term credentials highly sought by today's students, will be central to ongoing exploration in Phase Two.

VIII. Subsequent Phases | Next Steps

Year One/Phase One has provided a robust framework for subsequent workplans and the additional reports mandated by code on June 30th, 2027, and June 30th, 2028.



Phase Two – Program Inventory and Gap Analysis. Richard Bland College is partnering with Jade Solutions to inform this second phase work, with a special emphasis on the short-term credentials most frequently sought by today’s students. Jade Solutions will conduct a comprehensive market feasibility study to guide the development of short-term credentials, certificates and workforce-aligned programs under the Richard Bland College Online Initiative. The scope of this work will involve a deep market landscape foundation and competitive mapping, dual-geography market sizing (under 75-90 miles from campus and Virginia statewide), an analysis of industry-specific opportunities (healthcare, business, IT, skilled trades, emerging fields), and an analysis of partnership provider opportunities. This work will also include in-depth employer interviews across target industries, provide market-driven enrollment and revenue projections, program investment analysis and cost structure, and a partnership vs build cost-benefit analysis. In summary, the engagement with Jade Solutions will result in a strategic prioritization framework and implementation roadmap that will set the stage for Phase Two.

Informed by market analysis data generated during Phase One, Richard Bland College will next inventory both its own offerings, as well as all regional higher education offerings (both public and private) that align with the market analysis conducted in Phase One to identify the gaps with the greatest market needs. This gap analysis will frame the internal examination of RBC’s capacity to offer these high demand programs/credentials/micro-credentials. This internal analysis will include a robust financial modeling in order to prioritize the potential offerings. The second

report, due summer 2027, will include a multi-criteria opportunity ranking framework and program portfolio recommendations.

Phase Three: Implementation of Recommendations. Richard Bland College leadership will conduct comprehensive due diligence as it seeks potential partners (higher education, industry and commercial). The college will evaluate potential strategic alliances, partnerships and collaborative/alternative options. This broad framework will inform the identification of potential partners, prioritize initial outreach, and guide due diligence to determine best option(s) for achieving strategic objectives. The Board of Visitors will review the framework, approve recommendations, and work with the president to develop a project plan that prioritizes pilot program development and partnerships in accordance with regional and statewide needs while simultaneously assessing alternative approaches/partners/third parties for achieving goals. The Year-Three report (June 30, 2027) will present the results of exploration and evaluation efforts and set forth a plan for ongoing exploration of strategic partnerships that advance the Richard Bland College mission and priority goals.

The Board of Visitors for Richard Bland College embraces the independent governance model and its responsibility to guide future direction with a focus on delivering educational solutions that align with workforce needs. Furthermore, the Board understands and appreciates that setting future direction for Richard Bland College requires vigilance in performing each of its governance duties. For example, with President Debbie Sydow's impending departure after 14 years of service, in January 2026, the Board named an interim president of Richard Bland College, Dr. Kenneth Alexander, effective July 1, 2026.

In summary, the Board's next steps will include the engagement of Jade Solutions to help identify potential strategic alliances, create a prioritization framework, and develop an implementation roadmap. The Board will continue to assure that Richard Bland College provides value to its students and aligns credentials with regional and state workforce needs, with the goal of continually deepening the College's contribution to economic development in the Gateway region and the Commonwealth.