



RICHMOND

COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Future in Focus

2036

-- RICHMOND COMMUNITY COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLAN --



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A Message from the President

BRENT BARBEE

It gives me great pleasure to be president of a college that is fulfilling its mission to enhance the quality of students' lives and to be a driving force in supporting economic development in the communities it serves. However, this is not done in a vacuum. It takes the leadership of our Board of Trustees, the hard work of our talented faculty and staff, the trusted investment from our donors and the support from the community.

We set a goal 15 years ago to become a destination college. RichmondCC officially became a destination school by surpassing the benchmark of enrolling 20 percent of students from outside the Richmond and Scotland County service area. Programs such as the Electric Utility Substation & Relay Technology, Electrical Lineworker, Surgical Technology, and 911 Communications & Operations has attracted interest statewide and nationwide.

Over the past 10 years, we have implemented a major shift

in several curriculum programs over to continuing education, which has enhanced access to these programs while accelerating time-to-employment and lowering overall costs. In other words, we are better aligning to the needs of the workforce and making career training more affordable and more accessible to more students.

In making these changes, we have not altered our student-centered approach and our investment in quality instructors. This can be seen in the 20 percent increase in the graduation rate for degree-seeking students; 71 percent of students completing career plans; and 95 percent of our graduates reporting they would recommend RichmondCC to others looking to achieve their educational and career goals.

During the past decade, we faced major challenges such as a cybersecurity breach, and of course, the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to innovated approaches to these challenges and college-wide collaboration, RichmondCC

emerged stronger, more flexible and more determined to serve our employees, our students and our communities.

As we enter the next 10-year strategic planning phase, we are rolling out new projects and new partnerships. We look forward to the grand opening of the Hendrick Center for Automotive Training at the Hamlet Campus, growing our CDL offerings with the newly completed Truck Driver Training Facility in Scotland County, and supporting multi-million-dollar economic development projects in both Richmond and Scotland County.

These are exciting times for our college, and I could not be prouder to lead our employees and our students as we continue achieving great things. It takes all of us working together to be the change agent that we need to be, to keep the bar set high and to remain one of the best community colleges in the state.



A Message from the Board of Trustees Chair

CLAUDIA S. ROBINETTE

As Chair of the Board of Trustees, it is my honor to serve such a dedicated college that keeps the students and their needs at the forefront of any initiative or strategy. This student-centered approach to college leadership has opened new doors for students to achieve their educational and career goals and put the college on a rising tide for growth and development.

The Board of Trustees is proud of the achievements the college has made over the past 10 years, and we trust RichmondCC will continue to make higher education accessible to everyone through strategic planning and exceptional leadership and staffing.





Strategic Plan

At Richmond Community College, we hold ourselves accountable for the success of all of our students.

We are driven to show we care, and we take an active role in making their college experience more personable.

The relationship built between the instructors and students establishes the foundation for achievements.

The advancement and success of our students leads to a more productive and employable community.

At RichmondCC, we provide educational offerings that are innovative and adaptive. We continuously adapt to job market demands and focus on community partner needs for new programs. From our highly demanded curriculum and continuing education programs to our meticulously kept campus grounds, RichmondCC is the community leader for a brighter tomorrow. And it all begins here, using our mission and vision statements as our guide toward accomplishing the outcomes established for our College.



—SINCE 1964—
RICHMOND
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



RichmondCC's Mission

RichmondCC's mission is to offer educational opportunities, cultural enrichment, and workforce development and training that will enhance the quality of students' lives and support economic development in Richmond and Scotland counties.

RichmondCC's Vision

Through the talent and dedication of our employees, RichmondCC will be the premiere community college in North Carolina. We will set the gold standard for student learning and services, driving the engine of economic development for Richmond and Scotland counties.

RichmondCC's Values Statement

RichmondCC values above all else:

Our Students

Our Employees

Our Community

Our values are:

INTEGRITY - Fairness and Honesty in All We Do

LEADERSHIP - Inspiring Others to Succeed

DIVERSITY - Of People And Ideas

TEAMWORK - Achieving Our Goals Together

INNOVATION - Never Settling for What Is

PERSEVERANCE - Continuously Striving and Overcoming Adversity

EXCELLENCE - Doing Our Best to Be the Best

ACCOUNTABILITY - Ownership of Performance and Results



Successes & Achievements

—2016-2026—

Student Success & Academic Outcomes

- Student-to-Faculty Ratio exceeded benchmarks every year (14:1), demonstrating the college's ongoing student-centered approach and investment in full-time instructors.
- Graduation rate for first-time degree-seeking students jumped from 57% to 73%, supported by predictive analytics, increased faculty and advisor contact, and required career planning.
- Graduate satisfaction remained exceptionally high, with 95% recommending RichmondCC.
- Exceeded the original benchmark of 50% for students securing employment or transfer acceptance prior to graduation, achieving a result of 64%. The new Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) goal is set to 70%.
- Significant growth in students with documented career plans, reflecting the success of career-based advising.
- Increased student enrollment from outside the service area, culminating in meeting the destination school goal (>20%) in the final year.

Workforce Development & Short-Term Training Expansion

- Implemented a major shift of multiple curriculum programs into Continuing Education, enhancing access while accelerating time-to-employment and lowering overall costs.
- Launch of and change to short-term training (CE) for high-demand programs, including:
 - Surgical Technology
 - Welding, Machining, and Industrial Systems (to CE)
 - Medical Assisting (to CE)
 - Automotive Technology (launching 2026, expected to strengthen destination-school goal)
- Programming alignment with regional workforce needs, creating short-term, high-demand credential pathways.
- Strong employer partnerships (e.g., Scotland Healthcare, Hendrick Automotive, N.C. 911 Board, Energy companies) strengthened or newly formed, resulting in:
 - Employer-supported facilities and equipment
 - Employment pipelines
 - Program design informed directly by workforce needs
- Students increasingly securing employment before graduation, especially in fields like Electric Utility Substation and Relay Technology, Electrical Line Worker, Surgical Technology, Nursing, and 911 Communications.



Institutional Stability, Growth & Innovation

- 100% SACSCOC compliance maintained throughout the period.
- Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) implemented successfully with strong institutional engagement.
- Scholarships doubled, expanding financial support for students.
- Full-time employee count nearly doubled, strengthening organizational capacity.
- Employee turnover remained low (11.4% vs. goal of <15%) and employee longevity strong (8.3 years vs. goal of >6).
- Improved proactive student support, including early alerts, targeted outreach, and expanded mental health services.
- Creation of guaranteed admission pathways with leading NC universities.

Adaptability & Institutional Resilience

Pandemic Response

- Transitioned the entire college to online delivery within one week during statewide shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Innovated instructional and support approaches to ensure students, especially in health programs, could remain on track.
- Retention and completion outcomes held stronger than national averages post-COVID-19 trends.



Cybersecurity Response

- Improved institutional cybersecurity awareness and training, leading to a more vigilant and security-conscious workforce.
- Regular training was established as standard practice.

Strengthened Internal Systems & Culture

- Exceeded employee learning goal (>25% participation), driven by consistent communication and job-aligned training opportunities.
- Campus culture of recognition and support demonstrated through:
 - Longevity awards
 - Shared leave program
 - Provided equal-dollar bonuses to all employees — issued when budgets allowed — ensuring every staff member received the same bonus amount regardless of role.
 - Free course each semester for employees
- Professional development engagement strengthened, with initiatives supporting cross department collaboration and job readiness.

Career Alignment & Advising Enhancements

- Shift to career-based, goal-driven advising, helping students begin with a clear end in mind.
- 71% of students completed career plans, reflecting improved advising practices and early integration of career conversations. The goal is set at 90% in the new strategic plan.
- Expansion of career fairs, recruitment opportunities, including program-specific employer events, and increasing job placement for graduates.
- Collaboration among advising, faculty, student services, and workforce development improved alignment between program outcomes and employment pathways.

Community & Regional Impact

- RichmondCC officially became a destination school, meeting the benchmark of >20% of students coming from outside the Richmond and Scotland counties service area.
- Programs such as Electric Utility Substation & Relay Technology, Electrical Lineworker, Surgical Technology, and 911 Communications attracted statewide interest.
- Strong performance on North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) performance measures, meeting or exceeding system averages in most categories.
- Expanded regional attainment of associate degrees, with notable gains in Scotland County.
- Demonstrated a positive return on investment for students, with a nine year return on investment (ROI) of 23.2% compared to the 13% benchmark.
- Growth in K-12 partnerships and adult learner outreach, supporting long-term regional educational attainment.

Evaluation of Benchmarks & Evolving Measures of Success

- Student ROI surpassed the benchmark, highlighting the long term value of RichmondCC programs, with all graduates finishing debt free.
- Shift in understanding credential attainment, recognizing that many students obtain industry-recognized credentials and employment in lieu of an associate degree.
- Growing recognition that skill-based employment outcomes may be a more relevant measure of success than degree completion alone.
- Destination-school benchmark validated the strength of short-term, employer-demand programs as key enrollment drivers.
- Based on experience, the college identified the need to update future benchmarks to reflect:
 - workforce responsiveness
 - short-term training
 - continuing education outcomes
 - employment placement
 - regional economic impact
 - emerging one-college model integration





Lessons Learned

— 2016-2026 —

Retention Must Be Centrally Prioritized

- Retention is both a growth driver and a persistent challenge; benchmarks for fall-to-fall and spring-to-fall were consistently difficult to meet.
- COVID 19 pandemic exposed how quickly retention can decline and how long recovery takes, especially for working, nontraditional students.
- Early alerts, proactive outreach, and individualized student support are essential—not optional—for improving persistence.
- Integrating career planning into advising strengthened student engagement and increased graduation outcomes.

Short-Term, Industry-Aligned Training Drives Enrollment and Employment

- Students will travel from outside the service area when programs are:
 - high demand, high wage
 - short-term
 - tied directly to employer needs
- Programs like Electrical Line Worker and Surgical Technology proved that short-term credentials provide strong return on investment (ROI) for students.
- Credential attainment should be industry driven. Certain industries and employers value skills and job readiness more than long-term degree attainment, suggesting a need to shift measures of success from “degree completion” to “livable wage employment.” This can be measured by whether graduates find jobs related to their program, earn livable wages, and work full time when possible. Some job quality information may come from graduate surveys and employer feedback, even when state data is limited.
- Continuing Education (CE) programs must be fully included in future goals, metrics, and planning, excluding CE creates an incomplete picture of Richmond Community College’s impact on the local workforce and economy. Therefore, enrollment targets, retention, and completion goals need to be identified for CE programs.



Flexibility, Agility, and Rapid Innovation Are Essential

- The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the college’s ability to move online in one week, highlighting the importance of flexibility and agility.
- The institution must be prepared to quickly respond to:
 - legislative or policy changes
 - cyberattacks
 - state-level initiatives
 - shifting workforce demands
- Sustained institutional success requires rapid adaptation and the ability to “pivot” within days, not semesters.

Strong Employer Partnerships Are Key to Program Success

- Deep collaboration with local and regional business and industry improve:
 - program relevance
 - student employment outcomes



- curriculum design
- equipment and facility investments
- enrollment
- Industry partnerships that lead to co-developed programs result in immediate job placement for completers.
- Industry relationships also help the college stay ahead of workforce trends and curriculum change needs but require continuous cultivation.

Benchmarks Must Evolve with the Institution

- Some legacy benchmarks (e.g., ROI for taxpayers from a 2015 report, student-to-faculty ratio) no longer reflect strategic priorities.
- Measures tied to system office criteria can shift, sometimes disadvantaging the college despite strong internal performance.
- The transition toward a one-college model requires new metrics that fully incorporate Continuing Education.
- Degree-attainment benchmarks do not capture the reality of short-term credential success or students leaving early for employment.

Organizational Capacity Has Grown—and Must Continue Growing

- The college nearly doubled its full-time workforce, strengthening operations and support.
- Maintaining a strong pool of full-time faculty is crucial, but recruitment is increasingly difficult due to:
 - mobility of the modern workforce
 - competitive private-sector wages
 - rising benefits costs
- Full-time faculty provide consistency and accountability, which directly supports student success.

Technology Readiness and Cybersecurity Are Critical

- The cyberattack highlighted how dependent the college is on network infrastructure.
- It also proved the importance of:
 - ongoing security training
 - vigilance in email and web behavior

- strong IT systems and redundancies
- Upcoming system transitions and investment in technology (e.g., to Canvas Learning Management System, Customer Relationship Management System, Banner) are opportunities to improve online retention and standardize delivery, increase enrollment, and create a more personalized student communication approach.

Campus Culture, Employee Investment, and Professional Development Matter

- High employee longevity and low turnover reflect a culture of belonging and support.
- Recognition programs, shared leave, and equitable bonuses contribute to morale.
- Employees value development opportunities, but access must be broadened and scheduling improved.
- Organizational health is tied directly to employee satisfaction and professional growth.

Student Support Must Be Holistic, Proactive, and Career-Aligned

- Students benefit from:
 - career-based advising
 - early identification of barriers with corresponding interventions
 - mental health support
 - clear career pathways aligned with academic programs
- The shift toward “start with the end in mind” advising improved career-plan completion rates and strengthened student motivation.



Program Mix Must Continually Evolve to Stay Competitive

- The college successfully phased out programs that were no longer viable while expanding high-demand programs.
- Prioritize development and implementation of new programs to keep pace with changing labor market demands.
- With increased online educational competition, RichmondCC must remain innovative to remain a destination institution.

Data Integrity and Inclusion Are Essential

- Inaccurate or incomplete data, especially for Continuing Education (CE), makes it difficult for the college to measure success in this area. Many external state and federal measures exclude CE. Continuing Education has not been tracked and monitored the same way as curriculum programs. As a result, limited CE data exists, however, the college is developing a more robust and inclusive tracking system.
- System office changes in performance-measure definitions require continuous monitoring to avoid misinterpretation.
- The college will need strong internal performance measures to ensure consistent tracking over the next decade, especially as external measures continue to change.
- Validity of self-reported data (e.g., Graduate Survey outcomes) must always be considered in decision-making.

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Future In Focus



RichmondCC has invested in institution-wide planning and assessment. WEAVE is a tool specifically designed for institutions of higher education to assist with their institutional effectiveness. Institutional effectiveness at RichmondCC occurs at the institutional level and at the individual planning unit level.

Planning at the institutional level sets the direction for the data informed institution as a whole by providing a framework for planning at the “unit” level. It assists with identifying priorities for the institution. It is systematically reviewed and modified as appropriate from year to year.

At the unit level, outcomes are designed to fulfill the mission of the institution at the program or department level. The Institutional Effectiveness and Improvement Department, a part of Student Services, ensures alignment between unit objectives and those of the college mission. This is reviewed periodically throughout the planning year with final results being reviewed at the close of the academic year. How these results will be used is documented along with a plan for implementation. Once implementation occurs, each area “closes the loop” by documenting the outcome of the initiated strategy.

Planning Outcomes

Planning incorporates data obtained from internal assessment of objectives using data generated internally and externally to the institution. Decisions are made based on data generated from this internal assessment and results. After the results are collected, data is analyzed, and the use of results are documented. Findings that indicate a need for improvement are integrated into the plan for the next year’s planning and assessment cycle. Programs from every area of the college have planning outcomes.

Program Reviews

Every 3 – 5 years each program assesses its program learning outcomes. These objectives are aligned with individual courses or program components where students are introduced to concepts or skills, have experience with the concepts or skills, and which course(s) or program component(s) a student should show a mastery of the concepts or skills. This provides an opportunity to identify where students may require additional supports as they work toward mastery.

Student Learning Outcomes

Unlike planning, which is completed more at the departmental level, student learning outcomes are measured in every curriculum program. Student learning outcomes focus on the knowledge, skills and abilities students should acquire in their program of study. Each student learning outcome is specific to students in that program and is measurable. It is the College’s preference for programs to establish a three-year cycle of student learning outcomes.



Annual Cycle Assessment

Annual cycle assessments are completed by the individual planning units and program units and reviewed by the Institutional Effectiveness and Improvement department, as well as the executive leadership member and immediate supervisor of each unit or program. For the student learning outcomes, each outcome is analyzed, and discussions are held among program instructors, department chairs/program coordinators and deans of the affected program. For the planning objectives, the planning unit manager along with his or her immediate supervisor, and often the member of the leadership team responsible for the planning unit, analyze the results.

Two questions are addressed while analyzing the actual results of each outcome/objective. The first question is, "What is the plan now that the results are known?" The second question is, "How is the program/unit going to implement the plan?"

Full Cycle Review

A full report on the achievements of the strategic plan is presented to the Leadership Team and the Board of Trustees every year. A comparison to the benchmarks set forth in the institutional goals is presented along with an overview of planning and student learning outcomes for the same three-year time period. Strategies the College is working on to achieve the set benchmarks are addressed at this time.





A 10-Year Strategic Planning Projection

- Since 1964, RichmondCC has been a reliable and steadfast pillar upholding Richmond and Scotland counties. The forward-thinking leadership has advanced RichmondCC so that it favorably compares with other premiere colleges in North Carolina and the Southeast. It is not a coincidence that RichmondCC is one of the fastest growing community colleges in North Carolina. It is the credit-worthy foundation of experienced faculty and staff that are key components in what we can be for our students, community, and business partners.
- In 2024, a new president, Brent Barbee, took over the leadership helm. His focus was to restart the momentum we had gained prior to the COVID pandemic with a focus on accountability, agility, and expansion of academic programs providing living wage, in-demand, career opportunities to continue the economic growth of our communities.

The goal is for more citizens to have opportunities for future careers. With the increase in artificial intelligence, competition with online education, and a widening skills gap, the College must be vigilant in taking each student as they are and getting them to their desired career. During this time, more students are facing mental health challenges, financial crises, and a rapidly changing technological landscape.

- Now, we enter a new chapter where we prepare to build upon the success we have achieved. Once again, our president and Board of Trustees tasked us with the development of a 10-Year Strategic Plan that will move RichmondCC to a more self-supportive, economic development center for our region, making our college and students, and Richmond and Scotland counties, stronger and more successful.
- To develop our next strategic plan, it was imperative to not only listen to the voices of our students, employees, and Board of Trustees, but also to look at the community landscape through an environmental scan. The Planning and Accountability Council, consisting of employees across the College, read through community reports, surveys, census findings, economic impacts, and a plethora of current information to determine where RichmondCC can be and what our impact should look like over the next 10 years. Our mission, vision, and values remain the same. Our strategy needs some adjustments, and additional targets must be addressed.
- Three-year benchmarks will be administered to monitor the progress on meeting the plan’s outcomes. With every strategic plan, adjustments are made to ensure measurable goals become sustainable outcomes.



Your Goals - Provide Individualized Approaches to Student Success

We will develop a career plan with each student and implement support and services to assist students in meeting their goals and overcoming obstacles. We will achieve this goal through our dedicated employees. We will build relationships with every student by having a majority of our students taught by full-time faculty members. Our relationships with students will maintain high retention and graduation rates. We want our graduates to be proud of RichmondCC and recommend others to attend. We will assist students in achieving their goals by knowing where they are going prior to graduation.

| BENCHMARKS |

- Student to faculty ratio < 17:1 (currently 14:1)
- Full-time faculty teach at least 80% of curriculum courses and 83% or more of offered sections
- Retention Rates: Fall to Fall >65%; Spring to Fall >75% (currently 63% and 71%)
- Greater than 70% of completers will have accepted employment or accepted transfer prior to graduation (QEP measurement: current rate 64%)
- Greater than 98% of graduates will recommend their program to others (currently 95%)
- Exceed the lowest peer threshold and success rate for socio and economically diverse student populations (SACSCOC measurement: currently meeting or exceeding 6 of 8 measures)
- Graduation of first-time, full-time IPEDS cohort will be at least 50% (currently 41%)
- Greater than 80% of returning and new students will complete the FAFSA (currently 77%)
- Withdrawal <10% of students from at least one class. (currently 13%)

Your Career - Prepare Students for Rewarding Careers and Futures

We will offer relevant programs in a variety of formats and partner with students to achieve their potential. This will be accomplished by encouraging a culture with a focus on education and career development. Education is a lifelong endeavor in which our employees will lead by example with highly educated faculty, encouraging professional development for all employees, and having an environment where employees want to stay at RichmondCC. We will have high standards for our career and technical performance, producing students who are ready for the job market. We will commit to each student's success through our Career and Transfer Center.

| BENCHMARKS |

- Greater than 25% of employees will take at least one RichmondCC course per year. (currently 26%)
- Greater than 50% of full-time employees will participate in optional professional development offerings per year. (currently 41% for faculty; staff will be tracked)
- Less than 15% employee turnover (currently 11.4% 2023-2024)
- Greater than 6 years average faculty longevity. (currently 8.3 years)
- Greater than 90% of students are utilizing the Career and Transfer Advising Center (QEP measure: currently 37%)
- Increase female enrollment in STEM programs to 38% and male enrollment in health and education programs to 13%. (currently 32% and 9%)
- 40% or more of RSHS and SHS graduates will complete a credential at RichmondCC within 3 years following high school graduation. (currently 16.5%)
- Develop new, intense, short-term occupational programs with recognized credentials.

Your Community - Serve Our Local Communities

We will cultivate cultural enrichment opportunities and promote economic development, entrepreneurship, and job creation. RichmondCC will be a destination college and impact our local economy by bringing in at least 20 percent of our students from outside of our service area, assisting with creating and keeping jobs in Richmond and Scotland counties, and being a catalyst for students to improve their financial futures. We will meet or exceed performance expectations while contributing to the quality of life of our communities through education and cultural enrichment and being a hub for community activity.

| BENCHMARKS |

- Destination school, by maintaining a greater than 20% of students, in all areas, attending from outside of our service area. (currently 20.2% of curriculum students and 42.6% of continuing education students)
- Meet or exceed the NCCCS average on each performance measures for student success. (Currently 5 out of 7 met, 2024 measurements.)
- Meet or exceed the national rural average of populations 25 years and older having at least an associate's degree. National average is 35.0% (currently Richmond County is 28.4% and Scotland County is 25.5%)
- Increase the number of students receiving scholarships to 30% (currently 26%)
- Offer at least 4 continuing education workshops related to substance abuse and/or mental health classes for employees and community each year.
- Increase number of curriculum students from Richmond and Scotland counties that start at RichmondCC to finish at RichmondCC to 60% (currently 41%)





Richmond Community College Strategic Plan - Future in Focus 2036 -

Contributors

Richmond Community College Board of Trustees
Richmond Community College Executive Leadership Team
Planning and Accountability Council 2024, 2025, and 2026

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