



**Richard Bland College**  
of WILLIAM & MARY

**REPORT OF THE RBC FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE**  
**April 2024**

**Dr. Daniel P. Franke**

RBC Committee, W&M Board of Visitors

**Faculty Development continued, Spring 2024**

Richard Bland College faculty continue to pursue professional development throughout the spring semester through the popular “Lunch and Learn” sessions held just prior to Faculty Assembly in the last Thursday of each month. The March “Lunch and Learn” session focused on how to request faculty development funds, especially professional development involving travel, while remaining compliant with state rules. The program was well received. The Academics Book Club continues to read *Becoming a Student-Ready College: A New Culture of Leadership for Student Success*.

While the faculty warmly congratulated Dr. Tiffany Birdsong on her selection as an American Council on Education Fellow for 2024-2025, there has been wonderment as to how Academics will survive without her amazing talent and presence. The consensus is that we will just have to manage, and we look forward to hearing about her experience with this well-deserved opportunity.

Dr. Jena Zarling, Associate Professor of Sociology, through the award of an RBC Creativity Contract, has achieved certification in grant writing, grant management, and IRB chair training through the CITI Program. The faculty look forward to her term as Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), where she is already making a positive impact on helping RBC research projects maintain the highest professional standards.

**CDI (Constructive Dialogue Institute): update**

The Richard Bland College Task Force on using CDI Curriculum continues to evaluate materials. Dr. Franke can report that so far students find the six-lesson program useful in promoting dialogue on sensitive topics, and the curriculum has potential for teaching students how to discuss sensitive historical topics as well. Mr. Isaiah Lucas, Director of Residence Life & Housing, is looking at ways to incorporate this CDI program into Residence Life programming.

**RBC Faculty Grant Recipient**

Dr. Daniel Franke, Associate Professor of History, was awarded a Franklin Grant of \$4,000 from the American Philosophical Society, “the oldest learned society in the United States,” to support his research in Germany this summer to study medieval Germany and the crusades.

### **RBC Faculty Research Spotlight**

Three RBC faculty members have received Research Incentive Awards from the Office of the Vice President to support faculty research projects: Dr. David Morgan (Physics): 3-D Visualization in Science & Math; Dr. Mary Gurnick (Chemistry), Radio-Carbon Dating; and Professor Michelle Delano (Art): Create & Apply Learning of STEAM Lab Art.

Dr. Katie Bjorkman, Assistant Professor of Mathematics, has a forthcoming paper in *The Learning Assistance Review* titled “Peer Tutoring and the Identity of Belonging.”

Dr. Daniel Franke and his co-editor, Dr. John Hosler of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, have submitted to an international roster of experts their manuscript of *The Routledge Handbook of Medieval Military Strategy*, comprising 31 chapters, and covering 5 continents. It has been described by a reviewer as “a major contribution not only to strategic studies but also to our understanding of medieval warfare as a whole.” The expected publication is in November.

Dr. Mary Gurnick, Professor of Chemistry, traveled to the Canary Islands with VCU faculty and students to study mapping ancient agricultural areas using GPS and soil sampling to distinguish pastures from cultivation. Dr. Gurnick is studying the feasibility of starting a similar study abroad opportunity through iRBC.

### **RBC Faculty Community Outreach and Student Research**

Dr. Adam Zucconi and Dr. Franke joined the Dinwiddie County VA250 Committee this semester where they are helping to plan and implement Dinwiddie County’s celebrations for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American independence. They will be recruiting RBC students to help in these endeavors, using the new History 297 Research Fellowship course, approved in March, as a means to provide interested students with real, hands-on skills in public history, public service, and local government.

### **RBC Faculty and Student Activities**

Dr. Jamia Davis and Government Relations Officer Terelle Robinson took fourteen (14) Promise and Honors students to New York City during Spring Break, March 12-15, for cultural enrichment, visiting Broadway, Rockefeller Center, the Statue of Liberty, and more.

Dr. Miller took twelve (12) students to Savannah, Georgia, for his annual Alternative Spring Break trip. The students were a diverse group including three from Korea, one from Vietnam, and one from Ukraine. The students participated in a walking history tour of downtown Savannah where they learned about revolutionary war heroes, the Girl Scouts, Civil War history, and even cinematic history (*Forrest Gump*). Students also participated in a history tour—capped with a lighthouse tour—on nearby Tybee Island. In addition to learning about the history of the area, students explored Oatland Island Wildlife Refuge, seined the ocean to look for marine organisms, and let the wind blow through their hair in an unforgettable dolphin tour. One of the final highlights of the trip was volunteering at Union Mission. Students helped sort and hang clothes for an open closet provided to the homeless community, and they donated the remaining food to their shelter. The trip was a memorable experience filled with learning, fun, and giving back to the new community that they learned to live in, in four short days.

On February 18, Dr. Franke took students from the RBC History Club on the second half of the annual Siege of Petersburg Driving Tour. Students explored events from the Battle of Wheldon Railroad on RBC

Campus in August 1864, to the events on April 2, 1865, finishing at Fort Gregg and Sutherland's Station on Route 460. On April 6, the History Club conducted their biannual visit to Colonial Williamsburg.

In May, Dr. Katie Heffernan, Assistant Professor of Biology, will be leading five students on a dinosaur dig at the Hanksville Burpee Dinosaur Quarry, hosted annually by the Burpee Museum in Hanksville, Utah. Students will learn proper excavation techniques for fossils in the quarry, and protection for transport to the lab.

### **New RBC Lecture Series**

Dr. David McCarthy organized the inaugural lecture in the new RBC History Lecture Series, which occurred on April 9. Dr. Benjamin P. Anderson of the Maggie Walker National Historic Site gave a well-attended talk on this towering African American figure of Virginia history in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thanks to the RBC Foundation and Development Office, particularly Jeff Brown and Katelinn Davis, for their enthusiastic and generous support of this initiative. The RBC History Faculty plan to host one lecture per semester. The next visiting speaker will be in November.