

**The RBC-W&M Promise Scholars Partnership:
Securing the Bridge from Richard Bland to William & Mary
for High-Achieving, High-Need Students**

Overview

Building on the success of the initial 2017 agreement and 2023 extension, William & Mary (W&M) and Richard Bland College (RBC) enter this agreement to continue offering a program intended to improve access, affordability and outcomes for in-state students from low-income backgrounds who begin their college education at RBC and transfer to W&M.

**Section I
The Promise Scholars**

Each spring semester, beginning in spring 2024, RBC will select up to 15 high-achieving, first-year, in-state students enrolled at RBC who are Pell Grant recipients and have committed to attending W&M. Prior to the fall semester of their second year at RBC, these students will be designated by RBC as Promise Scholars who are admitted provisionally to W&M for their third and fourth years. At the time of their selection, RBC will share Promise Scholars' student data with W&M, and the two institutions will continue sharing student data for these students for purposes of evaluating the program, expediting transfer admission and creating student records for transfer admission.

**Section II
Residential Component**

Promise Scholars will have the opportunity to live in a designated dormitory at RBC in their second year. This is intended to foster community among the group and to facilitate peer-to-peer support. RBC will provide special programming and enrichment opportunities to the Promise Scholars in residence. W&M, in turn, will guarantee on-campus housing for Promise Scholars in their first year after transferring to W&M.

**Section III
Scholarships**

Promise Scholars will receive a merit scholarship from W&M in the amount of \$2,000 for their second year at RBC. This award from W&M will come in addition to existing financial aid and scholarships already provided by RBC (i.e., the W&M scholarship will not supplant other components of the financial aid package).

Furthermore, this award will be renewable for four subsequent semesters at W&M at an increased level of \$3,500, again contingent on Pell grant eligibility, with the intent to offset their W&M student loans entirely. Students who do not complete a degree within four semesters of enrolling at W&M would be able to continue and would still qualify for need-based financial aid as per standard procedures, but this additional scholarship would not continue.

Students matriculating as degree candidates to W&M under the provisions of this agreement will pay tuition to W&M. Students seeking in-state tuition privileges may apply for them when applying for admission to W&M. Transfer students should follow Office of Financial Aid deadlines for submitting the FAFSA and CSS profile. The Office of Financial Aid considers transfer students in the same category as returning students who are first-time aid recipients at W&M.

Beginning in the fall 2024 semester, RBC will award up to 15 scholarships in the amount of \$2,000 to first-year, Pell-eligible students in order to identify and enroll some Promise Scholars prior to their second year at RBC.

Section IV Academic Coursework through the Bridge Program

Promise Scholars will co-enroll in W&M classes via the Bridge Program between W&M and RBC. Scholars will have access to a broad range of W&M courses, excluding COLL 100 and 150 courses, with advising a key component in selecting appropriate courses for any individual. All Scholars must meet the requirements of the Bridge Program, which include:

1. Completion of a minimum of 15 (fall start) credit hours of approved general education coursework at RBC.
2. These minimum credit hours must have been taken at RBC since graduating from high school and apply toward the Associate in Arts (AA) or Associate in Science (AS) degree.
3. Continuous enrollment at RBC in all semesters not including summer until completion of the associate's degree.
4. Achieving a cumulative GPA of not less than 3.25 (on a 4.0 scale) at RBC and a 2.7 cumulative GPA (B-) in co-enrolled courses at W&M.

Section V Guaranteed Admission

Admission to W&M for Promise Scholars shall be guaranteed as long as the students satisfactorily complete the following requirements, which largely mirror those of the existing Guaranteed Admission Agreement between W&M and RBC and the existing co-enrollment agreement (Bridge Program). The requirements for guaranteed admission to W&M of Promise Scholars are as follows:

1. They have completed an AA or AS degree at RBC within the past year, without enrolling at another institution, and are recommended by RBC.
2. They have achieved a cumulative GPA of not less than a 3.25 (on a 4.0 scale) in their RBC courses. If courses are repeated, the original and repeated course grades will be included in the calculation of the GPA.

3. They earn a minimum of 45 credit hours of the total required for the transfer-oriented associate's degree at RBC (not via transfer credit) following graduation from high school.
4. Although provisionally admitted to W&M under the terms of this agreement, students are required to submit the application for admission, as well as their transcript from RBC and other institutions attended along with all other documents required by the Office of Undergraduate Admission at W&M. Application materials are due by March 1, and the application fee will be waived. Acceptance is conditional upon receipt of a final transcript from RBC and verification by RBC that the student has meet the conditions outlined above.
5. Students who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents and whose native language is not English are required to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The Committee on Admission looks for the following scores:
 - 100 and above – internet-based TOEFL
 - 250 and above – computer-based TOEFL
 - 600 and above – paper-based TOEFL
6. Eligibility for admission under the terms of this agreement is contingent upon meeting high standards of personal conduct. Conviction of a felony or other evidence of behavior inconsistent with the community standards and Honor Code of W&M may be grounds for denying admission or rescinding an offer of admission.
7. Admission to W&M under the terms of this agreement does not imply admission to degree programs in the Raymond A. Mason School of Business or School of Education. Students intending to enroll in these programs are encouraged to discuss prerequisites and other requirements well in advance of admission.

Promise Scholars who do not meet the minimum standards outlined in this agreement still may seek admission to W&M through the traditional transfer student application process.

Section VI

Academic Requirements after Admission to W&M

Students admitted to W&M with a RBC AA or AS degree will be granted junior academic standing, defined as a minimum of 54 credit hours of coursework toward the Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BS) degree.

The RBC transcript will be reviewed on a course-by-course basis, and specific credit will be granted for courses identified on the "Transfer Courses" tool on Transfer Virginia website (<https://www.transfervirginia.org/courses/transfer>) as equivalent to those at W&M, provided that the student earned a grade of "C" (2.0) or higher. When necessary to reach junior standing, additional elective credits will be granted.

Credits applied toward the associate's degree but not earned at RBC will be reviewed in accordance with W&M's academic policy as outlined in the Undergraduate Catalog (<https://catalog.wm.edu/>). This review will be based on original, official transcripts or score reports sent directly to W&M. Other types of credit, such as military training, ACE recommendations and CLEP, will be assessed in accordance with W&M policy at the time of student matriculation.

Although there is no maximum number of credits that may be accepted in transfer, all students must earn at least 60 credits in residence at W&M in order to receive a W&M degree. Co-enrolled courses completed through W&M via the Bridge Program count as in residence.

Students admitted under the provisions of this agreement are considered to have completed lower-division general education and proficiency requirements at W&M with the exception of a COLL 150 course, one COLL 200 course (the remaining nine credits are waived) and the Foreign Language and Arts proficiency requirements.

The Foreign Language requirement and the Arts proficiency requirement may be fulfilled prior to matriculation, in accordance with the W&M Undergraduate Catalog. The final COLL 200 course must be taken in residence at W&M post-matriculation.

Note that the College Curriculum also includes three upper-division requirements: COLL 300 (In the World), COLL 350 (Difference, Equity, and Justice) and COLL 400 (Capstone). In rare cases, pre-matriculation transfer credit may be granted for COLL 300, but COLL 350 and 400 must be taken in residence at W&M by all students.

Students must abide by all other provisions and regulations set forth in the W&M Undergraduate Catalog at the time they complete their Promise Scholar Information Form prior to the first co-enrollment course.

Students admitted under the terms of this agreement must declare a W&M major with the Office of the University Registrar by the end of their first semester of full-time study. Students are bound by the major requirements in place at the time they declare their major.

The Raymond A. Mason School of Business and the School of Education have their own application process, so students should contact those schools directly for more information.

RBC courses may be used to fulfill major requirements, if they have W&M equivalents as designated on the Transfer Virginia's "Transfer Courses" tool linked above. Courses awarded academic credit but designated as "elective" may not be used to satisfy major requirements.

Section VII Contributions of Partner Institutions

W&M shall fulfill the following obligations in support of this agreement, excluding the additional cost of the need-based financial aid for which Promise Scholars qualify at W&M independent of this agreement:

1. \$2,000 merit scholarships for up to 15 Promise Scholars at RBC in their second year of study (a maximum total of up to \$30,000 per year).
2. Provide guaranteed housing for up to 15 Promise Scholars transferring from RBC to begin their third year of study at W&M.
3. \$3,500 per enrolling transfer students in additional grant aid to replace loans (maximum of \$105, 000 for 30 students).
4. Ongoing coordination with RBC staff to coordinate advising, orientation and other on-campus opportunities for Scholars prior to their transfer to W&M. This specifically includes coordination of Scholars' Bridge Program Letter of Intent and the March 1 deadline for transferring Scholars to have completed their application to W&M.

RBC shall fulfill the following obligations in support of this agreement, excluding the additional cost of the need-based financial aid for which the students qualify at RBC independent of this agreement:

1. \$2,000 merit scholarships, beginning in the fall of 2024, for up to 15 Promise Scholars at RBC in their first year of study (maximum of \$30,000 per year).
2. The opportunity for Promise Scholars to live in a designated dormitory during their second year at RBC.
3. Ongoing coordination with W&M staff to coordinate advising, orientation and other on-campus opportunities for Scholars prior to their transfer to W&M. This specifically includes coordination of Scholars' Bridge Program Letter of Intent and the March 1 deadline for transferring Scholars to have completed their application to W&M.

Section VIII Term of Agreement

RBC and W&M officials will review this agreement after three years, with the first review cycle scheduled prior to the fall 2026 semester, and may be reviewed annually thereafter. During the review of this agreement, the respective institutions may consider renewal, modification, expansion or gradual discontinuation of the Promise Scholars Partnership. Written notice of any action other than renewal, including termination, by either party shall be provided to the other party at least 60 days in advance of the start of the fall semester at RBC.

In the event of the agreement's termination, students already registered as Promise Scholars may continue to take advantage of its terms. The Transfer Virginia course tool will be updated upon any curriculum changes and upon any addition or deletion of course in the RBC Master Course File, without executing a new memorandum of understanding.



Katherine A. Rowe
President
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Date



Debbie L. Sydow
President
Richard Bland College

Date