



# CHARTING NEW HORIZONS

**2023-2025**  
STRATEGIC PLAN

 **RICHMONT**  
GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

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# Letter from the President

In my sixth year as president, I am still privileged to lead the finest graduate-level, specialized, Christ-centered University in our nation. When I arrived in 2017, there were dreams and aspirations in our community, but not a shared vision on how to pursue them. That changed with the formulation of Richmond's first self-created strategic plan, *In Pursuit of Excellence: 2019-2021*. After a three-year implementation timeline, interrupted by the COVID-19 epidemic, a tremendous foundation was laid. Virtually all transformational projects articulated in this plan were accomplished. Richmond emerged stronger, more cohesive, and more impactful from the experience.

Yet when it comes to providing an unparalleled learning environment for our students, faculty, staff, and friends, we continue to emphasize innovation. Once more, we engaged in thorough soul-searching conversations across the University. Exciting new ideas were put forward, fresh priorities deliberated, and future horizons imagined. The best ideas were identified by a strategic planning committee, discussed and polished by Trustees and senior leadership, and incorporated into this fresh edition of a strategic plan. Its title, *Charting New Frontiers: 2023-2025*, makes clear


its core theme. For if Richmond attained and sustained a level of excellence in the prior plan, we are dedicated to build upon this foundational work by pursuing even greater ambitions.

After all, advancing the Kingdom requires limitless passion, energy, and aspiration. To settle for less minimizes our mission. A sentiment heard often during our planning process worthy of mention was: we will never know how high we can take Richmond if we don't aim for the stars.

President Blessings and Best Wishes,



Timothy Quinnan Ph.D.



"Where there is no vision, the people perish"

*Proverbs 29:18*

# Mission & Vision

## Mission

Richmont Graduate University provides Christ-centered education & research that advances God's work of healing, restoration, and transformation in the lives of individuals, churches and communities.

## Vision

Richmont Graduate University will become an internationally recognized leader in Christian counseling and ministry education and a university of first choice for top students, faculty and staff.

# Richmont's Defining Values



## Pursue Innovation

*"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31)*



## Sustain Excellence

*"But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also." (2 Corinthians 8:7)*



## Cultivate Community

*"...Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind...not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:1-4)*



## Emulate Christ

*"Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children." (Ephesians 5:1)*



## Foster Wellness

*"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)*



## Embrace Diversity

*"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)*

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# Integration: Our Guiding Star

## Theology In Motion

Exemplifying a Christian faith that brings reconciliation and healing to a broken world is the guiding star of Richmond. The world-transforming love at the heart of the gospel compels us always in a twofold direction: We must be ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20) and strive to become all things to all people (1 Cor. 9:22). These biblical affirmations mean that our University sees no inherent conflict between the church and the academy, or between faith and science, for Christ is Lord of all (Matt. 28:18; Rev. 19:16). In every academic discipline, new discoveries and insights are to be cherished and faithfully examined, as they reveal more of God's deep wisdom woven throughout his creation.

From the earliest days of Christianity, this all-encompassing view of God's truth has been championed. Ancient Christian thinkers, in their engagements with Greco-Roman ideas, saw "seeds of the Word," as elements of truth, scattered, waiting to be found and connected to their true source. All truth is God's truth, for God is truth (John 14:6).

Such a stance empowers our University to be deeply concerned about human beings, who are made in God's image, and also about how best to honor them through scientifically rich scholarship and service. Our Christian witness is thus deeply integrative. Integration refers to exploring and seeing together the mutual truth to which faith and science both attest, resulting in a fuller, richer, and more nuanced vision of reality. In many ways, "integration" is simply theology made practical. It is applying the deep affirmations of the historic Christian faith to the empirical world of human life, whether in ministry, counseling, or other domains of learning, helping, and healing.

This practical and integrative outlook means that the faculty and staff of Richmond strive to serve and study fearlessly. A robust view of God's truth means we have nothing to fear in the pursuit of truth, for the love of God casts out fear (1 John 4:18). And so we boldly research and fiercely love the good world of our creator and all his image-bearers that dwell within it, so that the hope of the gospel might be proclaimed in manifold witness.

In the following pages, you will observe this deep commitment to the integration of theology and our empirical world guiding Richmond's strategic initiatives and mission forward into an aspirational next season.

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# Developing the Strategic Plan

## Introduction

The mission of Richmond Graduate University is to provide Christ-centered education and research that advances God's work of healing, restoration, and transformation in the lives of individuals, churches, and communities. Richmond's leadership ensures the advancement of this unique mission that has shaped Richmond's history and culture through the development and implementation of an informed strategic plan. After completing the 2019–2021 iteration of its strategic plan, Richmond's leadership began their efforts of preparing for the next iteration in 2022 by forming the Strategic Planning Executive Committee.

### The Strategic Planning Executive Committee



**Dr. Timothy Quinnan**  
*President*



**Dr. Josh Rice**  
*Provost; Dean of the  
School of Ministry*



**Dr. Kathleen Bazile**  
*Assistant Professor -  
School of Counseling*



**Peter Brindley**  
*Director of Institutional  
Effectiveness*



**Mel Meyer**  
*Executive Assistant and  
Project Manager*



**Dr. Sam Youngs**  
*Senior Consultant;  
Adjunct Professor of  
Church History &  
Theology*

# Developing Our Strategic Plan

## Current Administrative Council

Amanda Blackburn, *VP of Student Affairs*

Amy Estes, *Executive Director of University Advancement*

Cara Cochran, *Dean of the School of Counseling*

Darwin Blandon, *VP of Information Technology*

DeVon Mills, *Clinical Director of the Richmond Trauma Center*

Jama White, *Assistant Dean of Clinical Affairs*

Josh Rice, *Provost; Dean of the School of Ministry*

Lorrie Slater, *Director of Henegar Counseling Center*

Peter Brindley, *Director of Institutional Effectiveness*

Roxanne Shellabarger, *VP of Administration*

Tim McPherson, *VP of Finance*

## Current Board of Trustees

Ann Keller, *Chair*

Vivian Ta, *Vice Chair*

Tom Decosimo, *Treasurer*

Janie McNabb

Karen Loritts

David Aycock

Flynn Broady

James Jackson

Angie Smith



# Developing Our Strategic Plan

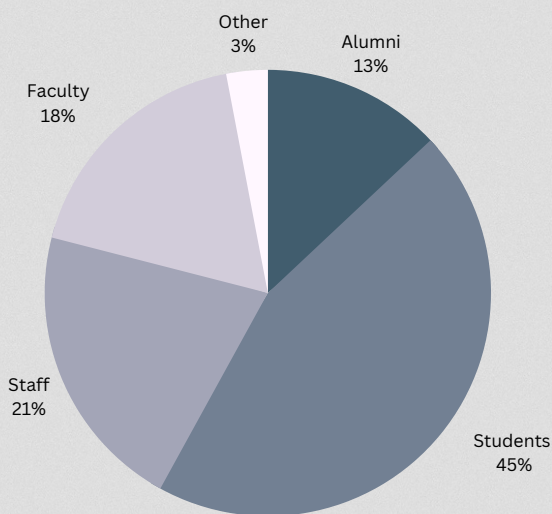
## The Process

In order to best inform Richmond leadership as to the feelings, opinions, and hopes of stakeholders, the Strategic Planning Executive Committee formed the Strategic Planning Committee, a larger, more robust group of Richmond's leadership team comprised of administrators, faculty, deans, and members of the Board of Trustees. Throughout the planning process, this group leveraged data to steer the development of the strategic plan and ensure that all of Richmond's constituents' needs were well represented.

The Strategic Planning Executive Committee began an environmental scanning and data gathering process (qualitative and quantitative) to ensure that the Strategic Planning Committee could make recommendations from recent and relevant data that included all of Richmond's stakeholders. Data was gathered via the Community Conversations – Strategic Planning Survey, and a series of in-person Richmond Community Conversations. Both of these data gathering mechanisms were presented to and included students, staff, alumni, faculty, administrators, external partners, and the board of trustees. Richmond Community Conversations were hosted on the Atlanta and Chattanooga campuses as well as online. For reaching those constituents no longer closely affiliated with Richmond on-ground, the strategic planning survey was disseminated via e-mail and completed via remote access. The survey option was also available to faculty, staff, students, administrators and alumni who could not join in-person community conversations.

**Community Conversation Participation**

N = 136



Surveys and in-person discussions focused on an examination of the university's mission, and gathered perceptions on how effectively it is carried out, how accurately it portrays who we are today, and their perspective on the accomplishments of the last iteration of the strategic plan. In addition, perspectives were gathered regarding how these aligned with constituent-identified core values. Participants were given an opportunity to provide feedback on six proposed strategic plan themes/values as well as suggest additional ones to be considered. Lastly, both the in-person conversations and survey gathered specific ideas on initiatives that would operationalize those themes.

One hundred and thirty-six individuals participated in the community conversations in-person, online, or via survey. Thirteen percent (13%) of participants were identified as alumni, forty-five percent (45%) were identified as students, twenty-one percent (21%) were identified as staff, eighteen percent (18%) were identified as faculty and an additional three percent (3%) were identified as stakeholders of Richmond Graduate University.

Based on these community-wide discussions, five (5) strategic aspirations with accompanying principal initiatives were identified toward forging the next generation priorities that would propel the University into the future and enhance the transformative experience that is an integral part of Richmond's culture. These are outlined further in the following pages.

# Richmont's Position within Broader Trends in Higher Education

## Key Trends in Higher Education

- Value of Education
- Fiscal Sustainability
- Sociopolitical Issues
- Technology Advancement

A consideration of market conditions and challenges is vital to any strategic planning process. By understanding our unique niche within the higher education landscape, we can anticipate emerging challenges and position Richmont to meet them as a leader, not a reactor, to vital needs in Christian graduate education. Doing so will lead to a vibrant, prosperous university. In planning a thriving future for Richmont Graduate University, administrators have monitored four key trends in higher education, and identified implications for Richmont's future.

First, the need for mental health professionals and Christian leaders has dramatically intensified. The United States Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) reports that 150 million Americans live in federally designated "Health Professional Shortage Areas" (HPSAs) which include a shortage of mental health providers. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration estimates that by 2025, the U.S. will need over 40,000 licensed counselors to keep up with demand. The reality is equally stark when it comes to Christian leadership, as a recent Gallup poll indicated that a majority of pastors would prefer to leave local church ministry. The same downward trend is seen in graduate school enrollment for schools who train Christian leaders. While none of us celebrates these daunting statistics, Richmont's focus on excellence and professional training is uniquely poised to meet these challenges. Therefore, we must equip ourselves to expand our footprint in order to be a part of the solution to these crises.



Second, participation in graduate programs is on the rise. The US Department of Education reports that enrollment in graduate programs has been markedly growing in the United States since 2008, and is projected to remain on an upward trend. In most statistical analyses, the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated this course, likely related to "the great resignation" as many Americans reconsidered their careers. In the State of Georgia, for example, undergraduate enrollment has been on the decline, while graduate enrollment has increased. This represents a positive trend for Richmont as a graduate-level institution. Yet it also indicates increased competition, as traditional universities look to shore up their undergraduate program losses with graduate program gains. This is especially seen in the rise of counselor education programs, especially at for-profit universities. Richmont, then, must continue to communicate our distinct calling to train top-notch professionals in a nurturing environment who will excel in the field.

## Richmont's Position within Broader Trends in Higher Education

Third, pedagogical innovation across a range of modalities continues to be the norm. Gone are the days of the “sage on the screen” or the lectern dispensing information that students regurgitate on exams. Although exams remain important to many components of counselor education, students are hungering for a more holistic, integrated approach to their classroom experience. “Show me” has become just as important as “tell me.” Active learning and the “flipped classroom” are quickly becoming normative. Richmont must continue to revisit the cutting room floor of classroom methodology as we seek to train the whole student.

Fourth, models of integration at the intersection of Christian spirituality and mental health are advancing. The model-building era that provided heuristic tools for grasping and utilizing this intersection is waning as students desire more clinical, hands-on training in integration, while empirical studies are also growing. If we are to continue in our role as an institution that provides public thought leadership, Richmont must both respond to this student need and create groundbreaking published research that advances the field.



"150 million Americans live in federally designated Health Professional Shortage Areas"

"Richmont...must continue to...train top-notch professionals"

"Students desire more clinical, hands-on training"

"Students are hungering for a more holistic, integrated approach"



# Strategic Aspirations

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Prioritize Academic Innovation

02

Enhance the Student Experience and Success

03

Pursue an Inclusive and Diverse Community

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Promote the Richmond Difference

05

Grow Physical and Financial Resources



# Prioritize Academic Innovation

**INTELLECTUAL VITALITY** IS THE HEART OF OUR UNIVERSITY. RICHMONT STRIVES TO ATTAIN EXCELLENCE IN ITS PEOPLE, PROGRAMS AND PROCESSES. WE SELF-PERCEIVE AS LEADERS IN THE FIELD, NOT FOLLOWERS. AS SUCH WE EMBRACE ACADEMIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP, CUTTING-EDGE THINKING, AND OPERATIONAL INNOVATION AS MEANS TO ELEVATE OURS INTO A UNIVERSITY OF FIRST CHOICE FOR TOP STUDENTS, SCHOLARS, AND STAFF.

## Implementation Timeline



**Establish a Center for Excellence in Faculty Research and Teaching**

**Create a communications team within the Office of the President and Provost to enhance channels of internal communication regarding vital institutional and academic news**

**Commence an annual research showcase celebration for faculty to share their professional, peer-acknowledged publications, projects, or presentations to the University community**

**Launch the Next Generation Initiatives internal grant competition to pilot original programs which support teaching, research, or student success innovation**

**Task Academic Affairs Committee with exploring viable online undergraduate degree-completion programs with partner institutions, as well as future Master's-level degree programs beyond present offerings in the Schools of Counseling or Ministry**

**Introduce a doctorate in Counselor Education**

# Enhance the Student Experience and Success

AS A **PERSON-CENTERED** UNIVERSITY, RICHMONT WILL PROVIDE ITS STUDENTS WITH HOLISTIC GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES. INTENTIONAL EXPERIENCES DESIGNED TO HELP STUDENTS EVOLVE ACROSS ALL DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS- SPIRITUAL, PHYSICAL, COGNITIVE, PROFESSIONAL, INTERPERSONAL, CALL TO CHRISTIAN SERVICE AND JUSTICE- WILL FURTHER FACILITATE THEIR LIFE AND CAREER SUCCESS.

## Implementation Timeline



Institute a student-led all-University service day or project addressing an urgent community need

Redesign campus security procedures, implement changes to ensure student and staff safety, and train select personnel at both campuses in emergency medical response techniques

Expand the Richmond Student Retreat experience for third year students and secure a multi-year sponsor to support its enhancement

Create and implement a student intern experience for students interested in higher education administration

Develop, implement, and assess the impact of a Peer Mentorship Program for all schools, modalities, and campuses

Extend RGU's THRIVE program to maintain, create, and implement evidence-based programs and services that promote positive change in students' health & wellness knowledge, skills, and behaviors

# Pursue an Inclusive and Diverse Community

THE SOUL OF THIS UNIVERSITY IS ITS PEOPLE. AS IN ALL GOD'S HANDIWORK, WE DISCERN MAJESTY IN THE RICHNESS OF CREATION AND SEEK TO EMBRACE IT MORE FULLY. **CREATING SPACE FOR THE UNDERREPRESENTED**, THE DISADVANTAGED, THE BROKEN AND THE STRONG, ALL UNITED IN A COMMON SEARCH TO FIND THEIR PERSONAL MISSION, WILL ENHANCE THE SPIRIT OF OUR LEARNING COMMUNITY AND BETTER REFLECT THE WORLD THAT WE SERVE.

## Implementation Timeline



Establish a task force to improve minority faculty recruitment and retention

Conduct a review of Human Resource Office hiring procedures to ensure diverse candidate pools

Perform a curricular audit focusing on bringing diverse and inclusive voices into learning material

Create and implement a Minority Fellows Program (for ABD Faculty candidates)

Identify diversity & inclusion training needs and create regular opportunities to address them

Pursue partnerships with groups who work in the field of diversity and inclusion (such as OneRace)

Develop, implement, and assess impact of a strategic engagement plan for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion meant to increase faculty, staff, and student engagement with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion across all campuses and modalities

# Promote the Richmond Difference

FOR MORE THAN EIGHTY YEARS RICHMONT HAS PROVIDED A **UNIQUE, CHRIST-FOCUSED MODEL OF GRADUATE EDUCATION** THAT NO OTHER INSTITUTION CAN REPLICATE. IT'S "CLASSROOM TO CLINIC" APPROACH REMAINS THE BEST-IN-CLASS. DEFINING THAT EXPERIENCE CLEARLY AND COMPELLINGLY AND MESSAGING IT TO WIDER AUDIENCES IS CRUCIAL TO FUTURE SUCCESS.

## Implementation Timeline



Refocus marketing/public relations efforts on institutional strengths and differentiating qualities

Launch a RGU Podcasting studio to broadcast our cutting-edge research, curricula, collaborations, community service and other unique accomplishments

Forge and formalize an academic partnership with a renowned international university in an initial step toward a global presence

Expand town-gown relations by incentivizing civic organization involvement of staff and faculty to broaden public awareness of the University

Further diversify the Board of Trustees in terms of vocation, influence/affluence, and cultural status

Build a robust slate of continuing education offerings and recruit prominent scholars to lead them

# Grow Physical and Financial Resources

BUILDING THE CAPACITY TO EXECUTE THIS PLAN REQUIRES MORE CAPITAL—FINANCIAL, PHYSICAL, AND HUMAN. WE WILL WORK INTELLIGENTLY TO EXPAND OUR ENDOWMENT, CULTIVATE RESOURCE-RICH PARTNERSHIPS, SECURE MORE FOUNDATION AND GRANT SUPPORT, AND GROW OUR CAMPUS INFRASTRUCTURE TO ASSURE THAT **WE DETERMINE OUR DESTINY.**

## Implementation Timeline



Establish a campus master facility planning group

Develop and market a campus facilities rental plan for suitable community partners

Engage real estate agencies in Atlanta and Chattanooga to search for potential expansion sites in both regions

Consolidate current multi-platform reporting software into one student and faculty-friendly format.

Conduct a feasibility study to determine readiness for a future capital campaign

Commission a study to make recommendations on how to achieve a generational tuition reduction to lessen student financial burden

# Implementing the Plan

While vision and values are vital, the success of this strategic plan relies on teamwork, actionable process, and successful assessment of achievement. Each of the objectives outlined in the prior pages will be assigned to a Richmond faculty, staff, or administrator to plan, oversee execution, and evaluate. Action steps, **Key Performance Indicators**, and methods of measuring achievement will be identified for each of the objectives. Team leads will work alongside the Department of Institutional Effectiveness to ensure that momentum is maintained and progress is reported.

Richmont's institutional effectiveness process fortifies the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The process of planning, assessment, evaluation, and operational implementation is a cornerstone of Richmont's culture. The Strategic Plan, as laid out in this document, provides direction and works tandem with institutional effectiveness which involves the entire University in the process of looking at **Key Performance Indicators** and employing data-driven assessment and decision-making toward identifying areas of success and improvement.

This strategic plan was written to provide guidance, not limitation. Richmont's mission, vision, values, key aspirations, and the objectives outlined in the prior pages are crucial to the growth and success of the University and its students. The framework defined in these pages acts as impetus for all faculty, staff, and administrators to be creative and intentional in their influence on moving the University toward our collective vision.



"The success of this strategic plan relies on teamwork, actionable process, and successful assessment of each achievement."

