The Richmond Promise

A Strategic Plan for the University of Richmond, 2009–2014
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The ambitious plan laid out below is called The Richmond Promise. It stands on five interlocking commitments, each of which reinforces the others. As the plan comes to fruition the University of Richmond promises:

-- a learning environment unlike any other in higher education, offering students an extraordinary combination of traditional strengths in the liberal arts with law, business, leadership studies, and continuing education.

-- a distinctly integrated student experience, coordinating a rich and innovative life for students inside and outside of the classroom, with excellent programs as varied as international study, arts, and athletics.

-- a defining spirit of opportunity and welcome to excellent students, faculty, and staff of all means and backgrounds, sustained through a bold program of financial aid, a dedication to fairness in all that we do, and an authentic culture of inclusivity that seeks and prizes diversity of experience, belief, and thought

-- a determination to engage as a meaningful part of the Richmond community, of the nation, and of the world, drawing on our long commitment and well-established foundations for such work

-- a commitment to operate as a model institution of higher education, sustaining a superb faculty and staff and administering the institution with the highest standards of innovation and professionalism.

As the detailed goals and measures that follow reveal, The Richmond Promise is challenging. Success will demand focus, discipline, and effort in every aspect of our work together. It will require support and dedication from many people.

The Richmond Promise acknowledges the University’s heritage of fostering religious freedom and marks the next step on our path of creating openness and opportunity. It rededicates all of us to the University's Statement of Mission, which declares that “a Richmond education prepares students to live lives of purpose, thoughtful inquiry, and responsible leadership in a global and pluralistic society.” Such a mission defines us as a private university dedicated to the public good, and we embrace that definition.

Now it is our turn, standing at the beginning of a new century filled with challenge and hope, to fulfill the University’s mission. The Richmond Promise is our pledge that we will do our best.
Principles, Goals, and Action Steps

The principles, goals, and action steps below are the product of many conversations, stretching for more than a year, with students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends of the University. Working groups comprised of more than seventy-five colleagues developed specific goals and action steps, while more than twenty open forums and a website offered opportunity for a broad range of commentary. The principles that we – the University community – have outlined below establish how we intend to pursue the University’s mission for the next five years. The goals provide direction, and the action steps will be regularly reviewed to ensure that they are the most effective means of achieving our goals.

**Principle I: The University will have an academic enterprise that will be connected, innovative, rigorous, and personal, ensuring student success and fostering faculty growth.**

The University of Richmond has, as a foundation of its undergraduate curriculum, an unwavering commitment to the liberal arts. We seek to ensure that our students appreciate different modes of inquiry, engage in lifelong learning, and communicate effectively both orally and in writing. We seek to develop in our students skills in critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, intercultural effectiveness, and ethical decision-making. We offer unparalleled opportunities for undergraduate research in the sciences and across the curriculum. We prepare our students for a changing and increasingly diverse nation, one in which an understanding of the world is an essential element of preparation.

We will build on our strong liberal arts foundation to make the University of Richmond an even more innovative environment, one that challenges and excites students, faculty and staff. We will provide paths of traditional disciplinary excellence and paths of distinctive educational exploration, forged through full partnerships among our unique configuration of schools (Arts and Sciences, Business, Law, Leadership Studies, and Continuing Studies). Many of our students seek more interdisciplinary, community-based, and problem-based courses and many of our faculty want to expand their teaching and scholarship across disciplines. Staff members are also eager to expand the innovative ways in which they are involved with learning, inside and outside the classroom. To meet these needs of our students, faculty, and staff, and to serve as a new model of higher education, we will create new paths and connections across schools and disciplines in accordance with the University’s strong commitment to faculty governance.

The following goals and action steps will result in the University of Richmond becoming an international model for a high quality, innovative, interdisciplinary education.

**Principle I: Goal 1: Capitalize on interdisciplinary and cross-school connections to provide students a distinctive education.**

**Action Steps:**

I.1. (i). Redesign the curriculum to make accessible the full range of curricular offerings across the schools, to include a guarantee that all undergraduate students may take at least one upper-division course in two schools outside the school of their major.

I.1. (ii) Provide faculty lines to support innovative programs.
I.1. (iii) Create new majors, minors, concentrations, and certificates to complement traditional and interdisciplinary majors, and evaluate existing programs to ensure continued viability and strength.

I.1. (iv) Provide an innovative shared first-year academic experience for all undergraduates.

I.1. (v) Increase opportunities for shared, interdisciplinary classroom experiences throughout an undergraduate’s college career.

I.1. (vi) Revise the general education and graduation requirements to include attention to our local and international contexts.

I.1. (vii) Create greater opportunities for community engagement linked to academic coursework.

I.1. (viii) To ensure implementation of these action steps, establish and charge a representative ad hoc faculty task force to propose a revised undergraduate first-year experience, general education framework, and upper-division curricular opportunities consistent with an integrated academic enterprise.

**Principle I: Goal 2:** Enrich faculty intellectual lives, including increased support for interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship, so as to make the University of Richmond the destination of choice for the highest quality faculty.

**Action Steps:**

I. 2. (i) Establish a development center to enhance teaching skills, support scholarship, foster collegiality, and provide expertise on course design and pedagogical strategies for interdisciplinary, international, and innovative approaches to teaching, learning, and scholarship.

I. 2. (ii) Provide course development grants for interdisciplinary course development and provide full teaching credit for faculty who team teach.

I. 2. (iii) Review and revise, where appropriate, appointment, promotion and tenure policies to reward—alongside high-quality teaching and scholarship in traditional fields and modes of inquiry—high-quality interdisciplinary and cross-school teaching and/or scholarship and/or community based learning pedagogy and research.

I.2. (iv) Revise annual compensation policies to include recognition not only of outstanding traditional modes of teaching and scholarship, but also of outstanding teaching and scholarship that is interdisciplinary, cross-school, research-based, or community-based.

**Principle II: The University of Richmond will be a diverse and inclusive community, strengthened intellectually and socially by the range of knowledge, opinion, belief, and political perspective and background of its members, whether of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability status, age, religious, economic, or geographic origin. Students will therefore be prepared to contribute to a diverse and global society.**

The University of Richmond is faced with significant challenges to create a truly diverse and inclusive learning environment. While focused efforts have been underway since 2003 through the Common Ground initiative, much remains to be accomplished. The following goals and action steps can lead to results that will benefit the entire university community.

**Principle II: Goal 1:** Ensure an open and inclusive campus environment that welcomes and benefits from people of diverse backgrounds, encourages the exchange of ideas from diverse
perspectives, promotes social and academic interaction among people from a broad range of backgrounds, promises full access to places and programs, and opposes intolerance and educates against exclusion, so as to prepare students to function effectively in a diverse community.

**Action Steps:**

II. 1. (i). Provide targeted funding to expand and market multicultural social events, create more physical spaces that encourage informal interactions, and support initiatives that promote inclusivity.

II. 1. (ii). Conduct an independent review of the university’s accessibility (both physical and programmatic) for persons with disabilities and implement needed changes.

II. 1. (iii). Assess cost/benefit of establishing cultural advisor positions in the residences halls, the Law School, and the School of Continuing Studies.

II. 1. (iv) Recognize staff and faculty who promote diversity and inclusivity in their professional activities through University compensation and reward systems.

II. 1. (v). Provide a confidential point of contact for students, faculty, and staff to express concerns and to help ensure that their concerns are addressed appropriately.

**Principle II: Goal 2:** Recruit and retain faculty, staff, and senior management with substantially increased proportion of underrepresented minorities, so as to attain the critical mass needed for a diverse community.

**Action Steps:**

II. 2. (i). Establish a policy and employ a full range of methods (including opportunity funds as appropriate) for hiring a diverse workforce at all levels.

II. 2. (ii). Evaluate vice presidents, deans, chairs, and staff supervisors on their efforts and results in building diverse workforces.

II. 2. (iv). Establish community-building opportunities for new hires with new hires at other area colleges and universities, including partner hire programs.

II. 2. (v). Provide incentives for faculty to develop courses and non-credit programs that enhance learning about non-majority groups and cultures.

**Principle II: Goal 3:** Recruit, retain, and graduate a student body with a substantially increased proportion of currently underrepresented minorities, so as to strengthen the learning environment and to expand the university’s reach.

**Action Steps:**

II. 3. (i). Establish a summer ”signature” conference for talented, underrepresented minority rising sophomore and junior high school students.

II. 3. (ii). Train students and alumni to serve as “Admission Partners,” assisting in the recruitment and yield of prospective underrepresented minority students through on-and-off-campus programs.

**Principle III:** *The University will be accessible and affordable for students who can most benefit from, and contribute to, the educational environment.*

The University of Richmond is committed to ensuring that its education is accessible to academically talented, diverse, and engaged students and to providing students a transformative experience. To increase its access and affordability, the University will need not only to
implement innovative programs, but will also need to ensure that students and their families are fully aware of the opportunities available to them. The following goals and action steps are intended to take the University to a new level of access and affordability.

**Principle III: Goal 1:** Recruit, retain, and graduate a student body with a substantially increased proportion of low-income and first-generation students, so as to strengthen the learning environment and to ensure that the University is accessible to the highest quality students regardless of their means or background.

**Action Steps:**
- **III. 1. (i).** Review current admission policies to consider the pros and cons of moving to an optional standardized test admission policy; expanding articulation agreements with Virginia Community Colleges; and changing the University’s policies regarding credit for Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and dual enrollment credit to ensure that our credit policies do not discourage students from applying to and enrolling at the University.
- **III. 1. (ii).** Offer support and assess the effectiveness of innovative and affordable pre-college programs targeted to select high school students to increase their interest in and preparedness for success at the University of Richmond.
- **III. 1. (iii).** Expand partnerships with organizations (e.g. Posse Foundation, Questbridge) that assist in increasing the enrollment of low-income, first-generation, and/or underrepresented minority students.
- **III.1. (iv).** Offer support and assess the effectiveness of programs aimed at assisting underrepresented minority, first-generation college, and low income students to be retained and graduated at or above the rates of the student population as a whole.
- **III.1. (v) Recognize staff and faculty efforts to recruit, retain, and graduate low-income and first-generation students.

**Principle III: Goal 2:** Invest in making the University more affordable to low-income and modest-income students and in making its pricing policies and costs to families transparent and understandable, so as to increase the number of students from families in those categories.

**Action Steps:**
- **III. 2. (i).** Develop and fund a new need-based financial aid program which will guarantee traditional domestic undergraduate students that they will not pay more than a specified amount for tuition, room, and board, based on their family income (up to $150,000).
- **III. 2. (ii).** Develop and fund a new need-based financial aid program for Virginia traditional domestic undergraduate students with total family income of $125,000 or less so as to make the cost of attending the University of Richmond more competitive with the Commonwealth’s public universities.
- **III. 2. (iii).** Expand the financial aid budget for international students, with the objective of increasing enrollment of international students to 10 percent of the fall undergraduate entering class by 2014.
- **III. 2. (iv).** Provide two scholarships (tuition and room/board) per school district for outstanding students from the Richmond, Chesterfield, Petersburg, Hanover, and Henrico public school districts, who meet specified criteria.
- **III. 2. (v).** Reduce student indebtedness in the Law School by expanding targeted financial aid.
III. 2. (vi). Extend University financial aid support to enable the School of Continuing Studies to meet 100 percent of demonstrated financial need of evening college students and to fund scholarships for SCS students working in the public sector and non-profits.

III. 2. (vii). Extend University financial aid support to complement the G.I. Bill grant aid so that all eligible veterans can enroll tuition free.

III. 2. (viii). Design a marketing campaign to ensure awareness and transparency of the University’s pricing policies for families.

Principle IV: The University will be intentionally engaged with the city of Richmond and the wider region. Community engagement will be both a method to shape students within a civic-minded campus culture and a means to contribute the intellectual capital and skills of faculty, staff, students, and alumni to the identified needs of the larger community.

The University of Richmond has a long and proud history of community engagement, much of it at the grass roots levels, that has had a transformative impact both on our students and on the community at large. Yet significant opportunities exist for the university to increase that impact by being more focused, more strategic, and more coordinated in its community engagement efforts. The goals and action steps that follow are intended to increase integration, intentionality, and impact.

Principle IV: Goal 1: Expand the organizational culture of community engagement, so as to increase and broaden the participation in university engagement activities.
Action Steps:
IV.1. (i). Require all units to include community engagement in their planning and annual reports.
IV.1.(ii) Provide support for community-based learning opportunities that occur in Richmond as well as communities outside of Richmond and outside of the United States.
IV. 1. (iii). Create an infrastructure to enable the University to earn the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. These steps include tracking and assessing community engagement efforts; developing mechanisms for the community, students, and faculty to provide input into our community engagement planning; and revising, where appropriate, tenure, promotion and reward structures to recognize community engagement.

Principle IV: Goal 2: Focus time, talents, and resources around an identifiable community need (or limited number of needs), so as to increase the visible impact of the university’s engagement.
Action Steps:
IV. 2. (i). Conduct a comprehensive community needs assessment and then identify area(s) of focus.
IV. 2. (ii). Pursue grant funding for projects designed to maximize the university’s impact on the community and provide the necessary support (financial, transportation, release time) to ensure impact.

Principle IV: Goal 3: Centralize the leadership, coordination, and support for community engagement activities, so as to provide accountability for results.
Action Steps:
IV. 3. (i). Review and revise the administrative structure for community engagement, including consideration of a community advisory Board and a single point of accountability.

IV. 3. (ii). Conduct inventories and surveys to strengthen the relevance of community engagement activities (e.g. annual inventory and partnership mapping; five-year surveys of community needs matched to the university’s assets.)

IV.3. (iii). Measure and assess the impact of all major community engagement activities against university established criteria.

IV. 3. (iv). Consolidate and expand (as warranted by assessment) support and recognition for community engagement activities.

**Principle IV: Goal 4:** Identify and embrace model practices so as to ensure that the University is best engaged with the community in its capacity as a major employer in the region.

**Action Steps:**

IV. 4. (i). Develop policies and benefits (such as parental leave, flexible time, childcare and eldercare support) to make the University of Richmond the destination of choice for the highest quality faculty and staff.

IV.4. (ii). Provide training and professional development opportunities to ensure that staff have opportunities for increased responsibility and rewarding career paths regardless of their original position within the University.

IV.4. (iii). Develop and implement a campus sustainability plan to support the University’s environmental stewardship goals and the President’s Climate Commitment

**Principle V:** The University will offer its students a distinctive experience enhanced in meaningful ways by connections to the preceding principles.

The University of Richmond is known for its commitment to a personal, well-rounded student experience. Its optimal size and largely residential nature provide the foundation for further linking the academic experience and the overall student experience. That experience begins before matriculation, progresses while a student pursues a degree, and continues after graduation. The following goals and action steps are intended to integrate the previous principles into the total student experience.

**Principle V: Goal 1:** Enhance positive student engagement by integrating academic experiences with student co-curricular interests, so as to foster student satisfaction and success.

**Action Steps:**

V. 1. (i). Extend orientation to a week so as to include the first-year component of the Roadmap program, targeted social programs, programs to introduce the principles of the Strategic Plan, and extensive interaction with an academic advisor.

V. 1. (ii). Guarantee all full-time students at least one of the following opportunities: independent or faculty-directed research, an international educational experience, a community-based project, a public-service or career-based internship, regardless of their ability to pay all costs associated with the experience.

V. 1. (iii). Expand Living and Learning opportunities by increasing the number of students in the program, with instruction, social programs, and interest-based programs aimed at designated groups of residential students.
V.1. (iv). Establish the four-year Roadmap Program to enhance student success and foster purposeful, conscious academic and personal development.
V. 1. (v). Promote learning healthy lifestyles that inspire academic productivity and personal growth by revising the wellness graduation requirement; by improving and expanding areas for leisure activities; and by expanding and promoting opportunities for spiritual and emotional well-being.

Principle V: Goal 2: Increase and strengthen opportunities to promote shared experiences among students, staff and faculty from every part of the University, so as to strengthen the University’s sense of community.
Action Steps:
V. 2. (i). Conduct a comprehensive assessment to determine if student organizations and club sports are funded adequately.
V. 2. (ii). Design three to six new large unifying events; review existing events to assess their effect in creating a unified campus community; and strengthen designated current university traditions to increase the participation of students, faculty, staff, and alumni.
V. 2. (iii). Expand participation and spirit at athletic events with special emphasis on being purposeful about activities made possible by the new stadium.

Principle V: Goal 3: Increase student readiness for post-graduate life and prepare students to become active alumni, so as to strengthen graduates’ lifelong connections to the University.
Action Steps:
V. 3. (i). Create and market a “fifth-year experience” for new alumni to include such services as career development, wellness, the chaplaincy, and technology. These services would be promoted through a post-orientation program for new graduates.
V. 3. (ii). Develop a post-graduate mentorship program by partnering alumni and/or graduate students with junior and senior undergraduate students.
V. 3. (iii). Enhance the student on-campus employment experience by providing orientation and on-going development programs grounded in the principles of the strategic plan and the University’s mission. These programs will help ensure that the large number of student employees will be better ambassadors of the Richmond Promise.

Epilogue
The Richmond Promise will not be achieved by words alone. A companion document will identify those who are responsible for each aspect of the plan, provide timelines and a business plan for action, and supply metrics to measure how well we are fulfilling our promises.

Even as we do that work, the pursuit of our vision can begin immediately because that vision builds on existing commitments, accomplishments, and possibilities. The University of Richmond promises to be a university unlike any other. This call to action announces our commitment.