

## **Institutional Effectiveness & Planning - June 2025**

This update provides an overview of Richland Community College's ongoing efforts to build a robust institutional effectiveness framework, work that lays the foundation for improving student learning outcomes.

Guided by our mission to empower individuals through learning and to forge partnerships that grow communities, we are aligning our systems, data structures, and planning processes to better support student achievement.

The Institutional Researcher role was formally reestablished as a Cabinet-level position in January 2024, but this work is not new. The mission-aligned work has been carried out by faculty, staff, and standing committees for many years. These committees have been vital in ensuring that assessment, strategic planning, and program improvement efforts have not stalled, especially during times of transition. Their ongoing contributions have helped to sustain institutional progress.

With our core values as our foundation, we are not only building for compliance, we are building for transformation. This update outlines the systems-thinking approach guiding our work, highlights key accomplishments from the past year, and previews the strategies now underway to support long-term, measurable improvements in student learning. Systems thinking recognizes that student success is not the result of any single initiative, but rather the outcome of many interconnected efforts, all working together in alignment. Equally important, it is the people (faculty, staff, and administrators) whose collaboration and shared purpose bring these systems to life.

### **Strategic Planning: The Framework for Alignment**

Richland's 2024-2026 Strategic Plan provides structure and alignment for campus initiatives, connects planning with measurable outcomes, and creates shared language across departments and divisions.

Campus Participation Highlights from the 2024 Strategic Plan Annual Report

- 67% of 2024 metrics were met or exceeded
- 68% of full-time faculty and staff engaged in at least one Implementation Strategy during 2024

Currently, much of the data used to evaluate our progress are *lagging indicators*, outcomes that are only visible after a semester or academic year concludes. As we mature in our planning and assessment processes, we aim to shift toward the use of *leading indicators*, real-time metrics and early warning signs that will allow us to make proactive adjustments to improve institutional initiatives as they unfold. By focusing on leading indicators, we

have the opportunity to make choices, shift resources, and improve student outcomes in the process.

### **AchieveIt & Next Phase of Strategic Planning**

In 2025, Richland will begin implementing **AchieveIt**, a centralized planning and performance tracking platform that will serve as the digital hub for strategic goal monitoring. Improvements with AchieveIt:

- **Real-time tracking** of implementation strategies and measurable outcomes
- **Direct alignment** of each strategy with relevant data sources, evidence, and timelines
- **Improved communication and visibility**, with clearer updates to leadership and stakeholders
- **Campuswide integration** of ancillary plans (e.g., Equity, Facilities, Retention), supporting a more unified planning ecosystem
- **Custom dashboards and reports**, allowing departments to visualize progress and identify gaps at a glance
- **Streamlined reporting**, reducing manual efforts and improving consistency
- **Built-in accountability tools**, including task assignments, reminders, and progress alerts to keep initiatives on track

These improvements will help us better evaluate initiatives and programs (like New Student Orientation, student engagement efforts, non-academic supports, and more), particularly those whose data sources live outside our traditional academic data systems.

### **Standing Committees and Sustained Institutional Efforts**

Richland Community College's commitment to institutional effectiveness is grounded in active, campuswide participation. Our standing committees play a vital role in advancing this work, serving as hubs of collaboration, reflection, and action. These groups foster cross-functional communication and provide a structured environment for evaluating what's working, identifying areas for growth, and implementing meaningful change.

- **Retention, Persistence, & Completion Committee**  
Focuses on student success across the academic journey, identifying barriers and recommending strategies to support completion and credential attainment.
- **Student Learning Outcomes & Assessment Committee (SLOA)**  
Guides the development and implementation of student learning assessment practices, supporting continuous improvement in academic and co-curricular programs.

- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging/Accessibility Committee (DEIB/A)**  
Promotes inclusive, equitable practices across the College, ensuring all students have access to a welcoming and supportive learning environment.
- **Academic Standards Committee**  
Oversees curriculum, academic policy, and instructional quality, aligning academic expectations with institutional goals and student success
- **College Council**  
Serves as a representative body supporting cross-campus communication, planning, and shared governance. It helps ensure that strategic priorities are communicated and coordinated across departments.

## Accreditation

Accreditation is another ongoing campus-wide activity that promotes accountability, continuous improvement, and institutional integrity.

In February 2024, Richland welcomed a peer review team from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) for a comprehensive reaffirmation visit. The site visit reflected the collective efforts of faculty, staff, and administrators across the College, demonstrating a strong commitment to collaboration, transparency, and continuous improvement. The process required self-reflection, evidence gathering, and the ability to demonstrate how mission, planning, and outcomes are aligned at every level.

As a newly appointed Cabinet-level Institutional Researcher, this experience provided an invaluable opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of Richland's systems and culture. It was both a learning experience and a source of inspiration. Faculty and staff demonstrated deep pride and a strong sense of ownership of Richland's mission and values throughout the process.

The peer reviewers noted significant progress in key areas (such as strategic planning). This feedback and the reaffirmation process reinforced the direction we are heading with integrated strategic planning. While accreditation is often seen as a compliance requirement, Richland is leveraging it as an opportunity to transition from compliance to a fully integrated system of continuous improvement.

## Campus Culture and Strengths-Based Leadership

In alignment with our commitment to institutional effectiveness, Richland is launching a strengths-based leadership initiative in partnership with Gallup's Clifton Strengths. This approach supports a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement by helping

individuals and teams recognize and apply their natural strengths in ways that align with institutional goals.

### **Looking Forward**

As we approach the final year of the 2024-2026 Strategic Plan, Richland is focused on advancing alignment, visibility, and impact.

Key institutional effectiveness priorities include:

- Fall 2025: Launch of Clifton Strengths campuswide initiative to support team development and alignment with institutional goals.
- Fall 2025-Spring 2026: Rollout of AchieveIt integrated strategic planning software
- Throughout 2025-2026: Continued development of institutional dashboards and data visualizations to support transparency and decision-making
- Late 2026: Finalization of next Strategic Plan, building on lessons learned and expanding integrated planning processes
- Reinforcement of campuswide alignment with mission, vision, and values
- Remaining flexible and responsive to evolving student, workforce, and community needs

All of these efforts, from collaborative planning to strengths-based leadership, are grounded in mission-based purpose: to support student success through institutional alignment, accountability, and shared vision.