



**Richard Bland College**  
of WILLIAM & MARY

**REPORT OF THE RBC FACULTY REPRESENTATIVE**  
**April 2020**

**Dr. Tiffany Birdsong**

**W&M Board of Visitors, RBC Faculty Representative**

**Faculty Innovation**

*"If we teach today's students as we did yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow." – John Dewey*

With the recent changes we have all been faced with, the faculty have put forth great effort to adjust their approach to teaching in order to provide our students with the most valuable educational experience possible. Following a robust week of trainings in March on best practices for online and remote instruction the faculty launched into this new frontier with enthusiasm. The students have overwhelmingly reported positive experiences learning and interacting with the faculty in this new way. While much of the faculty's efforts on campus have been devoted to this shift, faculty continue to take on additional projects and initiatives focused on pedagogical innovation, experiential learning, and student success. Below is a selection of some of these activities.

**Publications**

Dr. Vanessa Stout and Dr. Eric Earnhardt published a peer-reviewed article in *Teaching Sociology*. In this study, they examined how popular culture can be a powerful tool for teaching difficult subject matter such as race and ethnicity. In place of a traditional lecture, they had students watch the popular Cartoon Network series, *Teen Titans* and asked that they use the characters' interactions from this series as examples to construct definitions of racism and discrimination. The result of this study indicated that students may be more comfortable recognizing and sharing about fictional characters' behavior as a way of discussing challenging topics. After sharing the fictional examples, students were able to effectively link events from the series to the subsequent lecture about race and racism.

**Developing a High-Impact Internship Program for Richard Bland College and its Community**

As part of the Innovative Internship Fund Grant, Dr. Tiffany Birdsong is working in close collaboration with the RBC Development Office to launch an innovative internship program in fall 2020. WorkIT @ RBC is designed to prepare students for the workforce by connecting them with internships in the local community, with a special emphasis on employment in the tech sector. Utilizing the career readiness competencies established by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) students will receive specialized coursework and training to prepare them for a successful transition into the workplace. The WorkIT @ RBC team is committed to developing student leaders in the tech sector and beyond through specialized coursework, community partnerships, and fostering a pipeline of talented students to meet the unique needs of employers in our community.

**Newly approved courses for fall 2020**

BIO 104-Environmental Science: This course provides a comprehensive overview of environmental science. By using an "earth systems" approach, students will recognize society and the environment as an interrelated system. Students will understand the many environmental issues affecting our world and the environmental impacts behind current and past world topics.

PSY 218- Abnormal Psychology: This course provides an overview of psychopathology. The course will review theoretical concepts of mental illness, diagnosis, classification, and treatment of common mental disorders. Case study will be used to engage students in an experiential way. This course will also address legal, ethical, and cultural issues pertaining to the assessment and treatment of mental illness

**COVID-19 Management Team meetings**

President Sydow has convened COVID-19 Management Team meetings on a weekly basis since mid-March to address the issues facing our students and the college community at large. These meetings have included stakeholders from across campus, with significant faculty participation from Department Chairs, Faculty Assembly Chair and Vice-chair, and the Acting Director of Academics. We have focused our conversations on how best to support our students through their academic journey during these unprecedented times. The COVID-19 management team meetings have allowed for thoughtful collaboration and transparent communication, which has been a great source of support for the entire campus community.