State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

EQUITABLE
Close access and completion gaps.

$ AFFORDABLE
Lower costs for students.

BEST STATE FOR EDUCATION

TRANSFORMATIVE
Expand prosperity.

Pathways to Opportunity:
The Virginia Plan
for Higher Education
2022 Annual Report

December 2022

SCHEV

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OVERVIEW

The *Code of Virginia* vests the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) with the responsibility to develop a statewide strategic plan that reflects statutory goals for higher education in the Commonwealth, identifies a coordinated approach to such state and regional goals, and emphasizes the future needs for higher education in Virginia. Approved in January 2021, *Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education* (*The Plan*), identifies trends that the Commonwealth must address if it is to continue to prosper and succeed.

SCHEV is required by statute to submit an annual report on progress toward the statutory goals. The 2022 Annual Report summarizes the three statutory goals, key findings from an assessment of where Virginia stands relative to the statutory goals, as well as upcoming and recent activities that directly support *Pathways to Opportunity.*
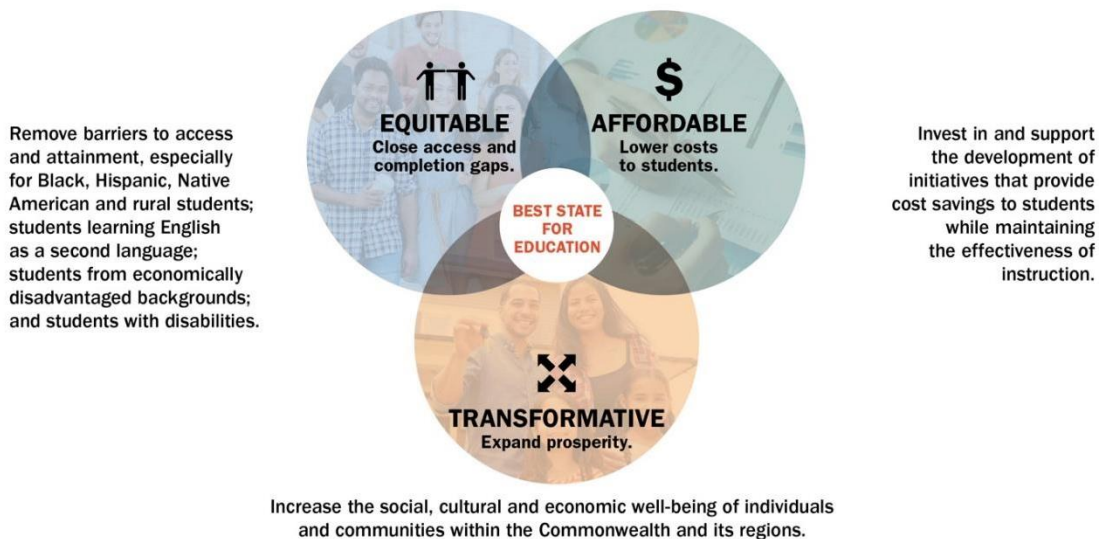
BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

Background

The *Code of Virginia* vests the State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV) with the responsibility to develop a statewide strategic plan that reflects statutory goals for higher education in the Commonwealth, identifies a coordinated approach to such state and regional goals, and emphasizes the future needs for higher education in Virginia. Approved in January 2021, *Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education* (*The Plan*), identifies trends that the Commonwealth must address if it is to continue to prosper and succeed.

Through input from higher education partners, *The Plan* is intended to help guide a vision for Virginia's future through a common framework. The framework is built on the premise that all partners in higher education must work together to help Virginia, its citizens and its regions. In essence, higher education serves as a critical nexus, transforming learners, cultivating talent and offering pathways to opportunity.

Goals

The framework, derived through a strategic planning process, includes three intrinsically connected goals of equitable, affordable and transformative higher education. When achieved, the three goals will result in Virginia being the "Best State for Education" by 2030 and will mean a 70% educational attainment rate for all 25- to -64 year-old working-aged Virginians.

Remove barriers to access and attainment, especially for Black, Hispanic, Native American and rural students; students learning English as a second language; students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds; and students with disabilities.

EQUITABLE Close access and completion gaps.

AFFORDABLE Lower costs to students.

BEST STATE FOR EDUCATION

TRANSFORMATIVE Expand prosperity.

Invest in and support the development of initiatives that provide cost savings to students while maintaining the effectiveness of instruction.

Increase the social, cultural and economic well-being of individuals and communities within the Commonwealth and its regions.

Ten strategies serve as broad methods to achieve *The Plan*'s goals and the bases for the biennial initiatives. Five measures assess progress toward achieving the three goals.

Purpose of Report

The Plan's 70% attainment target focuses on a 2030 timeline. However, achieving the goals and vision will require innovation, collaboration and long-term work to resolve complex and persistent issues. The higher education community is one of many stakeholders that must step up to address these complex issues. To that end, this annual report summarizes key findings, recent activities and upcoming initiatives that support *Pathways to Opportunity*.

2022 FINDINGS

In order to effectively identify and address barriers to achieving the three goals, SCHEV disaggregated data pertaining to the five measures (attainment, enrollment, awards, borrowing and wages) for the following subgroups: race/ethnicity, income, GO Virginia regions and gender. SCHEV does not have access to all subgroup data (e.g., data pertaining to English language learners and students with disabilities). SCHEV is working to address these data limitations.

Data from the 2019-2020 academic year served as the baseline from which to measure progress toward achieving *The Plan's* three goals. With the two-year time lapse of data, as well as barriers that have persisted for many years, it will take more than six years to close these gaps. But, if the Commonwealth is actively working on these goals, improvement should be evident over time. Progress will be tracked, identifying improvements as well as where work needs to continue.

The following summarizes key findings from the most recent measures data for the 2020-2021 academic year. The key findings identify data relative to the baseline and whether the data indicate improvements, movement in the wrong direction or no change. Here it is worth acknowledging that year-over-year changes will not likely be significant but gradual, ideally in a positive trajectory.

With the exception of the attainment data, the four other measures reference data for <u>all undergraduate</u> students in Virginia. Refer to Appendix B for further explanation and detailed charts illustrating the key findings.

Key findings from the most recent data (2020-2021):

Attainment: The percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds with an associate degree or higher. Attainment gaps exist in every subgroup (race/ethnicity, income, region and gender). The gaps highlight the breadth and complexity of this issue. Those with the lowest attainment within each subgroup:

- By race/ethnicity - Black (unchanged from 2019-2020).
- By region of origin - Southside and Southwest Virginia (unchanged from 2019-2020).
- By income - Lower income (unchanged from 2019-2020).
- By gender – Men. However, the male attainment rate increased by two percentage points over the 2019-2020 academic year.

Total attainment increased two percentage points compared to the 2019-2020 baseline academic year.

Enrollment: Fall headcount of public and private undergraduates. The following undergraduate enrollment gaps exist:

- By race/ethnicity – Black, Hawaiian Islander/Pacific Islander, Non-Resident Alien and White (unchanged from 2019-2020).
- By region of origin – Hampton Roads, Richmond (new this year) and Shenandoah Valley.
- By income – Middle income (unchanged).
- By gender – Men (unchanged).

Awards: Undergraduate degrees and credentials produced each year. Success gaps may exist when the percentage of total awards is less than the percentage of enrolled students. Identified success gaps may include:

- By race/ethnicity – Asian (new this reporting period), Black, Multi-Race (unchanged). Hispanic/Latinx exhibited a success gap in 2019-2020 but not for the 2020-2021 academic year.
- By region of origin – Greater Richmond, Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia (unchanged).
- By income – Lower income (unchanged).
- By gender – Men (unchanged).

Borrowing: Average debt of graduates. Those groups with the largest percentage of undergraduates who are borrowing include:

- By race/ethnicity – Black and Race/Ethnicity unknown.
- By region of origin – Hampton Roads.
- By income – Middle income.
- By gender – Women.

The above groups with the largest percentage of undergraduates who are borrowing remained unchanged from 2019-20 to 2020-21. However, the average loan amount decreased across the board for each group with the exception of Greater Charlottesville which shows an increased average annual loan amount.

Wages: Graduates' wages 10 years after graduation. Those groups with the widest wage gaps include:

- By race/ethnicity – Black and American Indian/Native Alaskan (unchanged) and Non-Resident Alien (new this reporting period).
- By region of origin – Southwest and Southside (unchanged).
- By income – Lower income (unchanged).
- By gender – Women (unchanged).

Compared to the prior reporting period, median wages increased across most groups despite the persisting gaps identified above. Those groups that experienced decreased median wages this reporting period include: Non-Resident Alien, Hispanic, Southwest, Roanoke/New River/Lynchburg, Greater Richmond, Shenandoah and Middle Income.

SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

Biennial Initiatives

The biennial initiatives derive from a combination of stakeholder input during the strategic planning process and throughout 2021. Each initiative supports one or more of *The Plan*'s goals and strategies. The identified initiatives strike a balance, reflecting broad themes of *Pathways to Opportunity,* while being specific enough for SCHEV to implement. The following table references the biennial initiatives approved by Council in 2021 along with broad biennial budget recommendation themes.

Biennial Initiatives	Budget Recommendation Themes

Goal 1: Equitable – Close Gaps

- Form an enhanced partnership between VDOE and SCHEV through the commitment of a shared goal to increase post-secondary enrollments to include a shared position and strategic planning.

- Identify and assess hybrid learning access gaps and quality issues, as well as potential solutions, and define SCHEV's role in addressing these findings.

- Identify critical student-support-services issues and formulate recommendations that will positively affect the student experience, persistence and completion.

- Increase aid to institutions with a focus on institutions with the largest gaps in unmet need for low- and middle-income groups.

- Support institution efforts focused on increased student success initiatives that close gaps in completion.

Goal 2: Affordable – Lower Cost to Students

- Determine strategies to better assess higher education costs and implement approaches to allocate limited public resources to institutions through the cost and funding need study.

- Identify improvements in the transfer process (e.g., transfer-grant program, dual enrollment); facilitate formal transfer alliances and coordinate a unified communication campaign to improve two-year community college student connectivity with and transition to four-year institutions.

- Educate new legislators and administration on the value, needs and priorities of higher education.

- Fund an initiative focusing on institutional collaboration and innovations to improve equitable student persistence and completion.

- Set aside funding to support outcomes from the cost and funding need.

- Support increases to financial aid.

- Continue one-time funding provided in FY 2022 as part of ongoing support to the institutions.

- Provide state support for increased costs at institutions to help offset tuition increases, including maintenance reserves.

- Support collaborative initiatives, such as the Virginia Virtual Library (VIVA) and other initiatives to improve efficiencies.

Goal 3: Transformative – Expand Prosperity

- Facilitate collaboration between the Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE) and institutions of higher education, and identify new ways to integrate VOEE tools and resources with SCHEV initiatives and processes—these may include: use of graduate outcomes survey results; development of labor market criteria for evaluating academic programs and assessing the need for proposed academic programs; and relationship building between higher education and business.

- Advance equity in higher education by fostering a culture of inclusion that supports DEI efforts on campus and tells the institutional and SCHEV stories of how "Equity Works."

- Provide funding for talent development through new programs in high-demand fields, internships and work-based learning opportunities.

- Support institutional initiatives targeted to improve the campus culture/equity, grow research and support outreach.

- Identify additional policies that could be enhanced/removed to support institutions while ensuring state needs are met.

Recent Activities

SCHEV has engaged in various activities that directly support *Pathways to Opportunity*. The following summarizes some of these efforts as they relate to *The Plan* and its three goals.

Three such activities support all three goals.

SCHEV Website Redesign**:** SCHEV launched its new [website](#) to improve information access and ease of use with a particular focus on student users. In addition, the site includes research data dashboards.

Higher Education Data Disaggregation**:** SCHEV has started to improve data disaggregation with the development of a [progress tracker](#) for *The Plan's* three goals via five measures. SCHEV also is identifying existing gaps in data and working to remedy such gaps to the extent possible.

Ongoing Collaboration With Other Organizations**:** SCHEV continues to strengthen and expand collaboration with other organizations in ways that relate to cost, quality and access. Some of the examples below illustrate innovative and enhanced partnerships and collaboration.

Goal 1 - Equitable higher education

S1. Expand postsecondary opportunities and awareness to Virginians who may not view higher education as an option.

College Access and PK-12 Outreach: SCHEV and the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) combined College Access and PK-12 Outreach team initiated a statewide college access campaign entitled "Level Up Virginia" in partnership with VA529 and the Virginia College Access Network (VirginiaCAN). The Access team worked with Vantage Point Consulting to research best practices in other states and create an action plan for Virginia's access efforts. SCHEV staff are currently working with Granicus to launch a student- and family-facing website to spread the word.

Over 100 Virginia public high schools with 50% or more free/reduced priced lunch participated in 1-2-3 Go! Campaign activities (College Nights in Virginia, Virginia College Application Week, Super FAFSA Project and Decision Day VA). SCHEV and Educational Credit Management Corporation (ECMC) sponsor these events to help students and families prepare, apply and pay for postsecondary education. SCHEV continues to target higher FAFSA completion rates through statewide FAFSA completion training, simultaneous FAFSA and tax filing assistance and one-on-one FAFSA completion assistance (both in-person and virtual).

In addition, to boost early exposure to postsecondary pathways, SCHEV's Access team is working with 12 postsecondary institutions in Virginia to bring about 6,500 middle school students from low-income communities onto 12 college campuses this academic year.

GEAR UP Virginia**:** As part of its statewide college access initiative, SCHEV launched its fourth GEAR UP Virginia program, serving a cohort of 8,119 students in 40 middle and high schools within 13 high-need school divisions. This $24.7 million federal college access grant provides college preparatory services and skills development to students and supports them through their first year of college. Student services include college campus visits, tutoring, mentoring, STEM-themed summer camps, financial aid workshops, career planning, college advising and the GEAR UP Virginia scholarship. GEAR UP Virginia also offers professional development for educators in computer science teaching strategies, social emotional learning, data-driven instruction, family engagement and virtual instruction.

S2. Advance digital access, adoption and literacy, as well as high-quality, effective remote-learning programs.

Virtual Library of Virginia's (VIVA) Open and Affordable Community Forum**:** In October, members of SCHEV's Open Virginia Advisory Committee (OVAC) presented a panel discussion regarding open education and learning technology solutions that can address (COVID) learning loss. VIVA is a consortium of the nonprofit academic libraries within the Commonwealth of Virginia, including all of Virginia's public colleges and universities, as well as 32 private institutions and the Library of Virginia. OVAC makes recommendations to SCHEV regarding initiatives and policies that may facilitate the adoption of open educational resources by the public institutions. OVAC also organizes events such as workshops and conferences to facilitate inter-institutional networking and the sharing of best practices.

Open educational resources (OER) and practices are often used in courses with the goal of improving learning outcomes for new students, setting the stage for success in their later academic careers. In the hands of skilled teachers, OER has the potential to transform the classroom experience by: promoting representational diversity, helping to create for all new students a sense of belonging, which can enhance their well-being and academic achievement; engaging new students in active and authentic learning through the inclusion of rich media and interactive assignments; encouraging new students to think of themselves as scholars and researchers, contributing to rather than simply consuming from the knowledge commons.

In this panel, faculty described their own recent experiences in using OER to enhance the learning experience for new students, especially in light of reported learning gaps due

to COVID disruptions in K-12 education. Panelists addressed a number of questions relating to this topic, including the following: have faculty noticed such gaps with incoming students in the past year and if so, what open educational or open learning strategies have helped bridge these gaps? Do faculty anticipate lasting changes in learner preparedness or expectations due to COVID-19 disruptions? What overall strategies or practices have proven most effective in setting new students on the path to academic success?

S3. Strengthen student support services for persistence and completion: mental health, mentoring, career services, social, student basic needs, information technology, disability support and other services.

GEAR UP Single Point of Contact**:** In partnership with Project Hope Virginia and ECMC, SCHEV's Access team is working with 20 postsecondary institutions to promote Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) on college campuses. SPOCs are supportive campus administrators who are committed to helping students from foster care or experiencing homelessness to address and overcome challenges associated with foster care, housing insecurity and other basic needs.

Disabilities Access to Higher Education Advisory Committee**:** SCHEV's Disabilities Access to Higher Education Advisory Committee released an action plan endorsed by SCHEV Council. "The Action Plan To Address Higher Education Barriers Faced by Students with Disabilities" identified a series of goals and work that the committee will undertake over the next few years pertaining to: data collection, access and success in higher education for students with disabilities. Work is currently underway to collect student-level data on self-identified disabilities to understand barriers to higher education access and success for this student group.

Additional near-term work includes developing and implementing guidelines for accommodation practices for: standardized testing; enhanced consistency across and within institutions; regulatory relief for students' utilization of accommodations thereby reducing barriers to access and success; and systematized information about accommodations.

SCHEV/Virginia Mental Health Access Program (VMAP) Webinar**:** SCHEV partnered with VMAP to deliver a webinar for continuing medical education (CME) credit on "Managing Anxiety in College-Aged Youth." More than 60 on-campus health center practitioners from over 20 Virginia higher education institutions (public and private) registered to attend the training. The training enabled the participants (e.g., physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants) to better diagnose, treat and manage common mental health disorders to serve as a relief valve for counseling centers and mental health professionals to handle the most

urgent, complex and ongoing needs. Participants expressed interest in additional training webinars on ADHD, multiple medication management and other topics.

Virginia Mental Health Workforce Pilot**:** SCHEV in consultation with the Virginia Health Care Foundation, awarded Higher Education Mental Health Workforce Pilot Grants to six universities: Christopher Newport, George Mason, James Madison, Longwood, Radford and Virginia Tech. The General Assembly appropriated $500,000 annually for the next two years to support the Virginia Mental Health Pilot. The pilot serves the dual purposes of: 1) expanding mental health services to students on an institution's campus while 2) increasing the mental health workforce pipeline overall by offering supervised clinical hours for candidates who seek to become licensed clinical social workers (LCSWs) or licensed professional counselors (LPCs).

Each grant award will underwrite the salary and benefits of an onsite LCSW or LPC candidate for two years. The hosting universities will hire, training and supervise the LCSW/LPC candidates to work at on-campus mental health care facilities until licensed.

"What Matters Most" (Student Issues and Support Services) Report**:** One of Council's biennial initiatives aims to strengthen student support services by identifying critical student issues and formulating recommendations that will positively affect the student experience, persistence and completion. The initiative is referred to as "What Matters Most." The report, a culmination of a year-long study, identified four issues critical to ensuring an educational and personal experience conducive to students staying enrolled and completing their degrees: (1) college/life preparedness, i.e. expectation setting; (2) basic needs, i.e. food and housing; (3) sense of belonging, i.e., engaging in campus life; and (4) mental health and well-being, i.e. access to mental-health services.

With these issues as a baseline, the report details the challenges faced by institutions of higher education when addressing the issues, and offers recommendations for the institutions and the state that could improve students' curricular and extracurricular experiences, as well as their overall success in college.

At the state/system level, the report's cross-cutting recommendations provide necessary structure for ongoing implementation, collaboration and innovation across the four student-issue areas via a statewide consortium of student affairs vice presidents.

At the institution level, issue-specific recommendations include actions such as expanding eligible student usage of supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) benefits and providing additional mental health resources to students, faculty and staff.

Goal 2 - Affordable higher education

S4. Align tuition and fees, financial aid and state appropriations such that students have broader access to postsecondary opportunities regardless of their ability to pay.

Cost and Funding Need Study**:** In July, SCHEV published a report on the Higher Education Cost and Funding Needs Study, concluding Phase 1, the planning phase, of the work. The report achieved a number of accomplishments, including providing more context for trends of higher education funding in Virginia, surveying the other states' base funding methods, identifying efficiency and effectiveness strategies, as well as establishing a conceptual framework for a new model of costs and funding needs.

Now in Phase 2, the design phase, SCHEV and Op-Six staff (Six-Person Operating Advisory Committee that reviews/provides feedback on institutions' six-year operating plans) have been working on two concurrent tracks: Refining the selection and use of sets of comparison institutions and defining the model's parameters. This work will continue through May 2023. Phase 3 should start in June 2023 in hopes that the model can inform, at least directionally, budget decisions for the 2025-26 biennial budget. The comparison institutions will be using a stress test of the model's results. SCHEV staff are working with the Governor's office to incorporate their priorities for the incentives and performance component of the model, as well as relevant aspects of the six-year plan process, such as enrollment projections and capacity building.

Pell Initiative: The Virginia General Assembly has assigned SCHEV to work with public institutions to improve the enrollment and retention rates of low-income and Pell-eligible students. SCHEV was provided $250,000 in the first year to secure a consultant who will work with institutions with below average Pell enrollments and $25 million in the second year to fund initiatives that will improve overall success for low-income students. Awarding of the initial grant to the institutions will take place in spring 2023.

Financial Aid Simplification: Following SCHEV's review of financial aid program administration, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) conducted its own review of state financial aid programs. JLARC's recommendations closely mirror those of SCHEV with the primary goal to reduce the number of state programs and simplify the student awarding process. If implemented, these changes promise to make state financial aid easier for students to understand and reduce administrative burden on the institutions. Both outcomes will make state financial aid more effective and efficient.

Expanded Financial Aid for Undocumented Students: The 2021 General Assembly session expanded prior legislation to allow certain previously ineligible students to

have access to state financial aid programs beginning in 2022- 23. This legislative change promises to greatly improve access and affordability for more students residing in Virginia. SCHEV contracted with a vendor, Regent Education, Inc., to create a state-based student financial aid application (the Virginia Alternative State Aid Application) that, like the FAFSA, produced an expected family contribution (EFC) equivalent. The EFC is used to calculate need so students can be considered for state need-based aid. Over 1,000 students completed the 2022-23 application.

Education Loan Ombudsman: Since the creation of the Office of the Education Loan Ombudsman (2018), more than 500 Virginians received assistance with student loans, ranging from general questions about the types of loans to assistance with loan repayment options to settling discrepancies with a loan servicer. Data collected on borrower cases identified three main issues for Virginia education loan borrowers: (1) understanding the complexity of the loans; (2) troubleshooting eligibility issues with the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program and the Limited Waiver that expired in October; and (3) applying for the president's Debt Cancellation program (which is now paused).

With funding from the General Assembly, the Loan Ombudsman's office partnered with a vendor to create an online loan education course called Virginia Student Loan Help. The site is organized based on the three primary audiences: high school students exploring funding options; college students preparing for repayment; and loan borrowers in repayment. Federally held loans have been in administrative forbearance since March 2020, with a return to repayment contingent on litigation aimed at halting the debt cancellation program. The Student Loan Advocate will spend the next year preparing borrowers for the payment restart, along with helping many borrowers become acclimated to a new loan servicer as a result of changes at the federal level.

S5. Cultivate affordable postsecondary education pathways for traditional, non-traditional and returning students.

Transfer BOOST: SCHEV is working with several two- and four-year institutions to pilot a new initiative, Transfer BOOST. The initiative develops affordability guarantees for transfer students, with an emphasis on reaching students from underrepresented groups. Institutions anticipate these guarantees will be available to students starting fall 2023.

Common curricula in engineering, education, computer science and business have been implemented at community colleges statewide, and common curriculum development is underway in 18 additional transfer disciples, engaging faculty and deans from every two-year and four-year public college and most four-year private colleges.

Over 100 discipline-specific transfer guides, applicable to all 23 community colleges and to 12 different four-year colleges, are part of the Transfer Virginia fall 2022 portal update. The transfer guides incorporate the common curricula and provide students with a curricular and extracurricular path from community colleges to specific majors at each four-year school.

TransferVA: The Transfer Virginia Portal has been accessed almost half a million times by students, advisors, and others seeking information about transfer opportunities within Virginia.

 A new website was created to provide context and resources for two-year and four-year administrators and faculty working on Transfer Virginia courses, curriculum and portal files. This central location facilitates collaboration among public and private two- and four-year colleges.

Get Skilled, Get a Job, Get Ahead: In summer 2021, the G3 – Get Skilled, Get a Job, Get Ahead program went into effect. G3 makes tuition-free community college available for low- and middle-income students who pursue jobs in high-demand fields. SCHEV was involved in the design and funding of this program which supports The Plan's equitable and affordable goals.

During the 2021-2022 academic year, 11,084 VCCS students received $14.9 million in G3 tuition assistance. The support resulted in 1,719 G3 students earning 2,320 associate degrees, certifications and diplomas. During the same timeframe, 2,020 G3 Workforce Credential Grant (WCG) students completed 2,592 WCG programs and 1,160 earned 1,500 credentials. Nearly 70 percent of the G3 program completions were in healthcare, manufacturing and skilled trades.

S6. Update and reform funding models and policies to improve equity, affirm return on investment and encourage increased and consistent levels of state funding.

SCHEV hired the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) to assist with a review of cost and funding needs in Virginia. SCHEV created a web page to track the status of the program and submitted the final report for the planning phase of the cost study on July 1, 2022. Phase 2 work will continue through spring 2023.

S7. Foster program and administrative innovations that enhance quality, promote collaboration and improve efficiency.

Fund for Excellence and Innovation: SCHEV's Fund for Excellence and Innovation (FFEI) was established during the 2016 General Assembly session to focus on two primary activities: (1) to stimulate collaborations among public school divisions, community colleges and

universities and to expand affordable student pathways and (2) to pursue shared services and other efficiency initiatives at colleges and universities that lead to measurable cost reductions.

In spring 2022, the first FFEI competition under *The Pathways to Opportunity Plan* focused on one part of the equitable goal: to remove barriers to attainment, especially for Black, Hispanic, Native American and rural students; students learning English as a second language; students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds; and students with disabilities. The competition was inspired by the University Innovation Alliance, a national consortium committed to increasing the number and diversity of college graduates. That grant competition yielded three awards: (1) Patrick & Henry Community College and Ferrum College; (2) Radford University and New River Community College; and (3) UVA-Wise and Mountain Empire Community College.

The 2023 competition will share the same focus. Teams awarded a "Collaborative Equitable Attainment Grant" are expected to take a deep dive into the student data for at least two Virginia institutions of higher education (at least one of which must be public); identify gaps in attainment for some or all of the populations targeted by *The Plan*; use the resulting analysis and a methodology of their choice to find out what is and what is not serving students; conduct literature searches; design and conduct a pilot intervention to address a chosen gap in attainment; and assess the impact of the pilot intervention and share the results.

Miscellaneous Activities/Programs: Additionally, multiple programs and activities referenced throughout this report foster program and administrative innovations that enhance quality, promote collaboration and improve efficiency. These are summarized/cross-referenced below.

- College Access – FAFSA Completion Training (page 8)
- Disabilities Access in Higher Education Advisory Committee Guidelines for Accommodation Practices (page 10)
- Recommendations from "What Matters Most" Report (page 11)
- Financial Aid Simplification (page 13)
- TransferVA and Transfer Admin Portal Resources (page 14)
- Constructive Dialogue Institute Community of Practice Cohort (page 18)
- SCHEV/VOEE Collaboration (page 18)

Goal 3 - Transformative higher education

S8. Support experiences that improve students' employment outcomes, income and community engagement.

Innovative Internship Fund and Program**:** In 2018, the Virginia General Assembly appropriated funding to SCHEV to stimulate public colleges and universities to develop partnerships to provide innovative paid internship opportunities for their students. In 2019, the effort expanded and enacted into law as the Innovative Internship Fund and Program (Va. Code § 23.1-903.4). In 2020, through a partnership with the Virginia Chamber Foundation, the program was rebranded as the Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership (V-TOP).

The purpose of the program is to expand paid and/or credit-bearing student internships and other work-based learning opportunities in collaboration with Virginia employers. The program comprises institutional grants and a statewide initiative to facilitate the readiness of students, employers and institutions of higher education to participate in internship and other work-based learning opportunities.

The FY2023 program budget is $5 million, which will increase to $12 million in FY2024. The first two full-time, dedicated V-TOP staff were hired in November 2022.

Highlights of recent activities include progress on the following readiness resources for employers, students and educational institutions.

Employer Readiness and Supportive Services (in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce)

- Virginia Intern Day (inaugurated on July 28, 2022), Top Employers for Interns Awards and social media recognition event celebrating interns, employers and educational partners.
- Employer toolkit and online modules for guidance on starting an internship (published November 2022).
- 1st and 2nd year experience offers employers the opportunity to engage with students earlier and offers flexibility in the type of tasks interns can perform (under development, will launch summer 2023).
- Support services for employers delivered by regional grantees (ongoing in five regions); all nine regions will be funded by summer 2023.
- Staffing agency provides human resource support for small employers (contract signed December 1, 2022).
- Matching funds for small employers (eligibility criteria under development).

Student Readiness

- [Student modules for career-ready competencies](#) (published November 2022).
- Student modules for seeking work-based learning (in progress, estimated completion date June 30, 2023).
- 1st and 2nd year experience (iGROW with V-TOP) (will launch summer 2023).

Institutional Readiness

- Vision grants to institutions (eight grants awarded to date).
- Professional development (15 individuals supported; multiple conference presentations conducted).
- Transformation of Federal Work-Study into internships, on and off campus (toolkit published December 2022, grant competition scheduled for spring 2023).

Virginia is the first state to combine all these elements together into a cohesive program. With the participation of over 250 people on various working groups and advisory panels, V-TOP addresses barriers to work-based learning faced by employers, students and educational institutions. V-TOP will support the creation of 100,000 new internship slots by 2023. Virginia will be known as the top state for talent, with the most internship-ready students, employers and institutions of higher education.

Day of Dialogue**:** SCHEV staff organized a "Day of Dialogue" on civic learning and engagement, held at James Madison University on June 2. More than 100 people from at least 30 Virginia colleges and universities attended in person; dozens more attended via livestream. Attendees heard from a variety of speakers and shared their own experiences, ideas and resources in facilitated breakout discussions. Data generated at the event is being used to inform decisions about future activities to support the development of students' civic knowledge and skills.

One initiative that emerged from the Day of Dialogue is a partnership with the Constructive Dialogue Institute (CDI) involving a cohort (to be determined) of public two- and four-year institutions. With the support of CDI staff, students at participating institutions will complete a series of research-based learning modules designed to improve their ability to interact productively with people whose opinions differ from their own. Planning is underway in spring 2023 for implementation in the 2023-24 academic year.

S9. Improve the alignment between post-secondary academic programs and labor market outcomes.

Virginia Educated Graduate Outcomes Survey**:** A yearlong effort with VCU researchers culminated in the release of [survey findings](#) which include satisfaction of college graduates, student debt, mobility, employment and recommendations from graduates on ways to

improve the student experience. This year, SCHEV developed an action plan that identified priority survey data to further analyze over the next year, including those pertaining to experiential learning and internships.

Virginia Office of Education Economics: During the 2021 General Assembly session, the passage of SB 1314 created an office of education and labor market alignment (Virginia Office of Education Economics, or VOEE) to provide a unified, consistent source of analysis for policy development and implementation related to talent development. This legislation served to implement a core recommendation of SCHEV's Higher Education and Workforce Alignment Project.

SCHEV participates in a VOEE work group to identify efficiencies and formalize collaboration such as data sharing and report production. VOEE continues to have regular discussions with SCHEV and other stakeholders as it develops its supply/demand modeling tool.

S10. Cultivate a climate of inclusion and innovation through scholarship, research, a diverse faculty and other programming.

SCHEV continues to host dialogues with communication officers at Virginia's institutions regarding interest in gathering and sharing stories that celebrate the transformation of individuals, families and communities through higher education.

COVES Policy Fellowship**:** SCHEV received a Commonwealth of Virginia Engineering and Science (COVES) Policy Fellow. The fellowship, supported by the Virginia Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine (VASEM), selects a graduate student or postdoctoral fellow to serve as a science adviser over a 12-week period. This summer, the COVES Fellow, a clinical psychology doctoral student, assisted with the literature review and various stakeholder interviews for "What Matters Most," SCHEV's report of student issues impacting their higher education experience, persistence and completion.

APPENDIX A: VIRGINIA'S PROGRESS TOWARD 70% EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY 2030

The overarching target of *Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education* is 70% post-secondary educational attainment by 2030.

Virginia Education Attainment incl. certificates (25-64)

Year	Lumina Stronger Nation	SCHEV Estimates
2013	46.1%	53.2%
2014*	50.6%	54.2%
2015	51.1%	54.4%
2016	52.2%	55.3%
2017	53.9%	56.0%
2018**	57.0%	56.5%
2019	57.4%	56.9%
2020***	X	58.3%

- Points needed to reach 70%: 12%
- Years left: 10
- Points needed per year to reach 70%: 1.2%
- Historic points per year: 0.7%
- With 10 years remaining until 2030, Virginia needs to add 1.2 points per year.
- Virginia has averaged .07 points per year since 2015.
- Projected Rate by 2030: 65.7%

*First year Stronger Nation included certificates.

**First year Stronger Nation included certifications.

***Experimental weights; Lumina did not release attainment data for this year due to experimental weights.
For details on those weights refer to Appendix B.

APPENDIX B: ASSESSING PROGRESS

The following charts derive from SCHEV and American Community Survey (ACS) data. Each of the five measures include data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, income, GO Virginia regions and gender.

Data from the 2019-2020 academic year serve as a baseline from which to measure progress toward achieving *The Plan's* three goals. With the two-year time lapse of data, as well as an ongoing pandemic and inequities that have persisted for much of Virginia's history, it will take more than six years to close these gaps. However, if the Commonwealth actively works on these goals, improvement should be evident over time. *The Plan's* progress tracker will identify those improvements, as well as where work needs to continue.

The charts below summarize key findings from the 2020-2021 data in the progress tracker. The key findings identify the gaps as the first step in the work to close them over time. With the exception of the attainment data, the four other measures reference data for all undergraduate students in Virginia. Additional analysis by program area can be performed using the tracker.

Here it is important to note the challenges of the 2020 ACS data. The ACS Census survey data collected during this time aligned with the Covid-19 pandemic. Accurate estimates rely on a representative sample with weights to project the sample to the population. Typically, the sample is collected throughout the calendar year. However, starting in mid-March 2020, the pandemic limited the ability to reach households and caused higher nonresponse bias than usual. As a result, the U.S. Census did not release standard one-year estimates and instead released "experimental data." The experimental data represents an unstable sample with experimental weights. Details about the data collection modifications and data implications can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzg_-WnQLqA&t=418s. ACS data are used to calculate the attainment, enrollment and awards measures.

2020-2021 Academic Year Key Findings

Attainment

The Plan includes an overarching attainment objective (Appendix A) as well as an attainment measure. The 70% overarching attainment objective includes the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds with a postsecondary certificate, certification or higher.

The Plan's attainment measure is defined as the percentage of 25- to 64- year-olds with an associate degree or higher. The target for this measure is to close gaps in attainment of selected groups. Currently, attainment is at 52% for all 25- to 64- year olds in Virginia with an associate degree or higher; this marks an increase over the previous reporting period attainment rate of 50% (2019-2020). While the increase marks movement in the right direction, disaggregated data reveal persistent attainment gaps.

Attainment gaps continue to occur in every subgroup (race/ethnicity, income, region and gender). The gaps highlight the breadth and complexity of this issue. Data indicate additional solutions are needed to address specific subgroup barriers and needs.

Those who have the lowest attainment within each subgroup are:

- By race/ethnicity - Black (36%) - unchanged from 2019-2020.
- By region of origin - Southside (25%) and Southwest Virginia (26%) - unchanged from 2019-2020.
- By income – Lower income (25%) – unchanged.
- By gender - Men (48%) – Still a lower rate than for women. However, the male attainment rate increased by two percentage points over the 2019-2020 academic year.

Those who have attainment gains compared to the 2019-2020 baseline academic year within each subgroup are:

- By race/ethnicity - Total attainment (52%) increased two percentage points from 2019-2020.
- By gender - Men (48%) increased by two percentage points over the 2019-2020 academic year.

Attainment by Race/Ethnicity

Group	Attainment
All	52%
Am Ind/AK Nat (NH)	47%
Asian (NH)	82%
Black (NH)	36%
HI'an/PI (NH)	71%
Hispanic/Latinx	48%
International	42%
Multiracial	54%
R/E Unk. (NH)	55%
White (NH)	54%
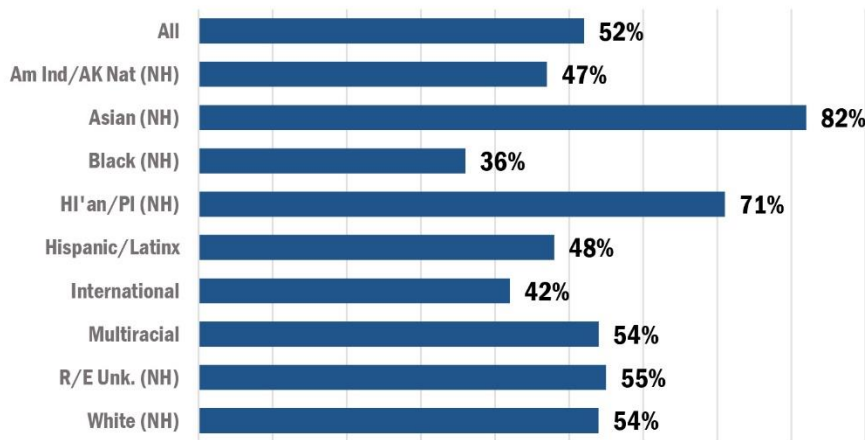
Attainment by Region of Origin

Region	Attainment
Greater Charlottesville	40%
Greater Fredericksburg	34%
Greater Richmond	33%
Hampton Roads	41%
Northern Virginia	60%
Roanoke/New River/Lynchburg	37%
Shenandoah Valley	34%
Southside	25%
Southwest Virginia	26%
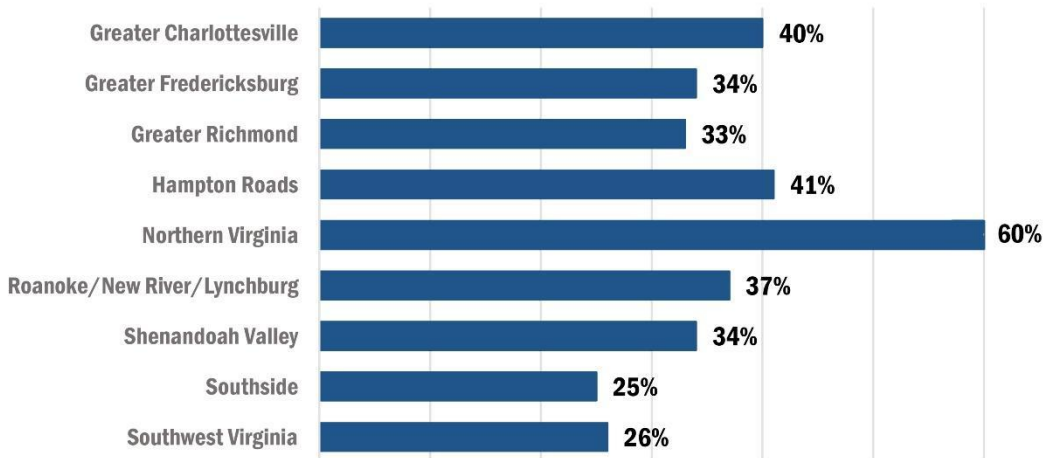
Attainment by Income Level

Income Level	Attainment Rate
Lower Income	25%
Middle Income	41%
Upper Income	68%

Attainment by Gender

Gender	Attainment Rate
Men	48%
Women	56%
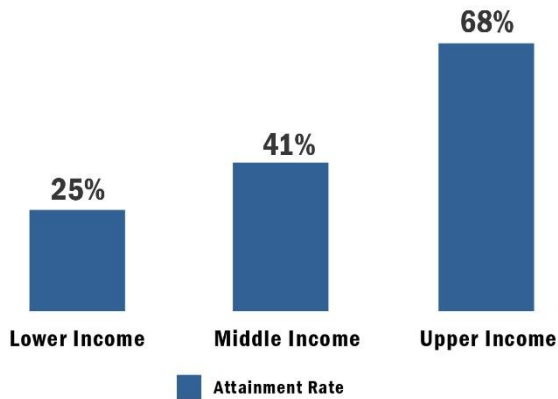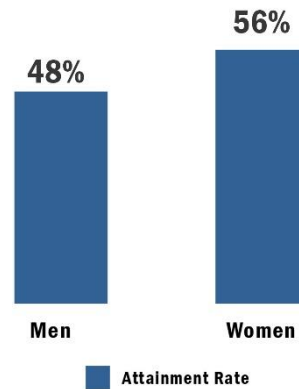
Enrollment

The Plan's enrollment measure is defined as the fall headcount of public and private undergraduates. The target is to close enrollment gaps of selected groups to reflect the population; in visual terms of the below charts, the gray bars should be at least as long as the blue bars.

The following undergraduate enrollment gaps continue to persist in comparison to the 2019-2020 academic year baseline data:

- By race/ethnicity – Black, Hawaiian Islander/Pacific Islander, Non-Resident Alien and White (unchanged from 2019-2020).
- By region of origin – Hampton Roads , Richmond (new this year) and Shenandoah Valley.

- By income – Middle income (unchanged). Upper income has not been included as a gap with the assumption that a portion of those in unknown income levels are actually upper income. Students are classified with unknown income if they did not complete a FAFSA. This could be due to a lack of need for financial aid, students who are undocumented or those who exclusively pursue private loans or alternate ways of financing higher education costs.
- By gender – Men (unchanged).

Here it is worth noting that in some instances the differences between the percentage of enrolled students and percentage of the population bars are diminishing (suggestive of "closing gaps"). However, the changes are minor (one to two percentage points) and in some cases the result of declining population versus increased enrollment. These subtle changes could potentially be attributed to (or artifacts of) the 2020 ACS experimental survey data as explained previously.

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity
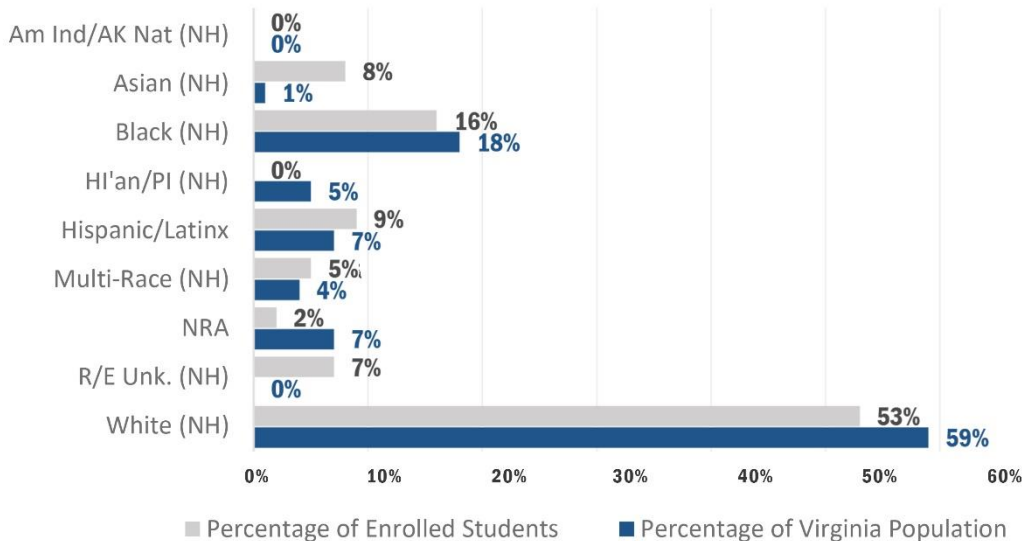
Note: Total undergraduate enrollment for American Indian/Alaska natives in Virginia is 1,120; Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander is 802. Total population of American Indian/Alaska Natives is 7,103. Total population Unknown/non-Hispanic is 19,891.

Enrollment by Region of Origin

Greater Charlottesville
- Percentage of Enrolled Students: 5%
- Percentage of Virginia Population: 5%

Greater Fredericksburg
- Percentage of Enrolled Students: 6%
- Percentage of Virginia Population: 6%

Greater Richmond
- Percentage of Enrolled Students: 14%
- Percentage of Virginia Population: 15%

Hampton Roads
- Percentage of Enrolled Students: 18%
- Percentage of Virginia Population: 20%

Northern Virginia
- Percentage of Enrolled Students: 35%
- Percentage of Virginia Population: 30%

Roanoke/New River/Lynchburg
- Percentage of Enrolled Students: 9%
- Percentage of Virginia Population: 9%

Shenandoah Valley
- Percentage of Enrolled Students: 5%
- Percentage of Virginia Population: 6%

Southside
- Percentage of Enrolled Students: 4%
- Percentage of Virginia Population: 4%

Southwest Virginia
- Percentage of Enrolled Students: 4%
- Percentage of Virginia Population: 4%

■ Percentage of Enrolled Students   ■ Percentage of Virginia Population

Enrollment by Income Level

Unknown Income
- Percentage of Enrolled Students: 44%

Upper Income
- Percentage of Enrolled Students: 18%
- Percentage of Virginia Population: 54%

Middle Income
- Percentage of Enrolled Students: 15%
- Percentage of Virginia Population: 26%

Lower Income
- Percentage of Enrolled Students: 23%
- Percentage of Virginia Population: 20%

■ Percentage of Enrolled Students   ■ Percentage of Virginia Population

Enrollment by Gender

Men
- Percentage of Enrolled Students: 43%
- Percentage of Virginia Population: 50%

Women
- Percentage of Enrolled Students: 57%
- Percentage of Virginia Population: 51%

■ Percentage of Enrolled Students   ■ Percentage of Virginia Population

Awards

The Plan's awards measure is defined as the undergraduate degrees and credentials produced each year. The target is to close award gaps of selected groups to reflect enrollment. In visual terms of the below charts, the blue bars should be at least as long as the gray bars.

Success gaps may exist when the percentage of total awards is less than the percentage of enrolled students; e.g., when the blue bars are shorter than the gray bars.

Identified success gaps may include:

- By race/ethnicity – Asian (new this reporting period), Black, Multi-Race (unchanged). Hispanic/Latinx exhibited a success gap in 2019-2020 but not for the 2020-2021 academic year. This could be attributed to the ACS experimental data and potentially being under-sampled.
- By region of origin – Greater Richmond, Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia (unchanged).
- By income – Lower income (unchanged).
- By gender – Men (unchanged).

Degree/Certificate Awards by Race/Ethnicity

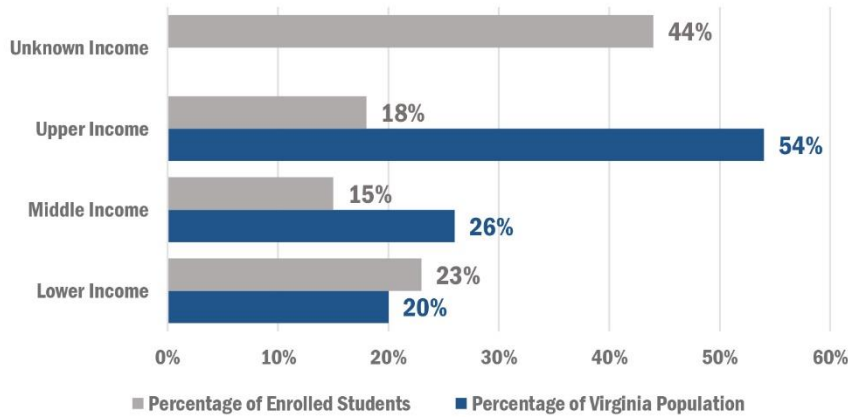|	Percentage of Enrolled Students	Percentage of Total Awards
Am Ind/Alaskan Nat.	0%	0%
Asian (NH*)	8%	7%
Black (NH*)	16%	13%
Hispanic/Latinx	9%	9%
Hawaiian and Pacific Islaner (NH*)	0%	0%
Multiracial (NH)	5%	4%
NRA	2%	3%
R/E Unknown (NH*)	7%	7%
White (NH*)	53%	56%
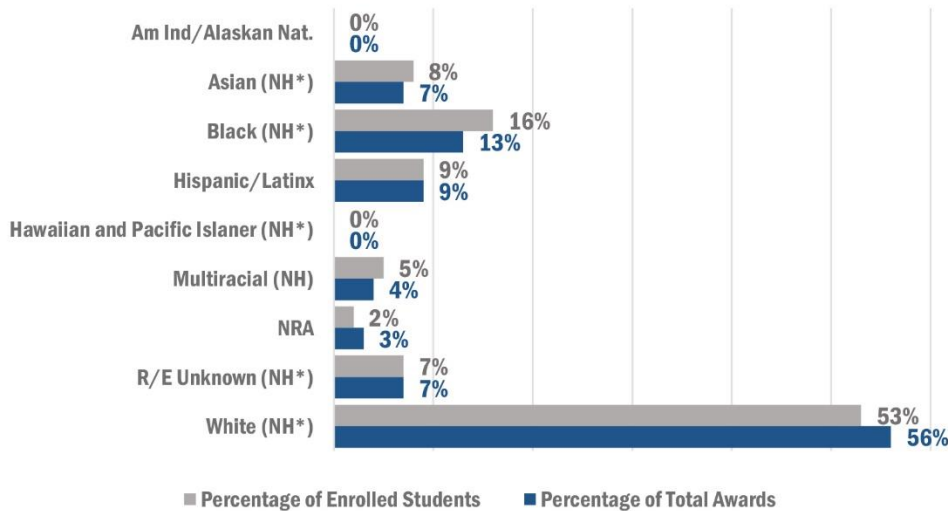
Note: Total undergraduate awards for American Indian/Alaska natives in Virginia is 200; Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander is 161.

(NH*) = Non-Hispanic

Degree/Certificate Awards by Region of Origin

Region	Percentage of Enrolled Students	Percentage of Total Awards
Greater Charlottesville	4%	5%
Greater Fredericksburg	6%	7%
Greater Richmond	14%	13%
Hampton Roads	18%	16%
Northern Virginia	35%	32%
Roanoke/New River/Lynchburg	9%	10%
Shenandoah Valley	5%	6%
Southside	4%	5%
Southwest Virginia	4%	5%

■ Percentage of Enrolled Students ■ Percentage of Total Awards
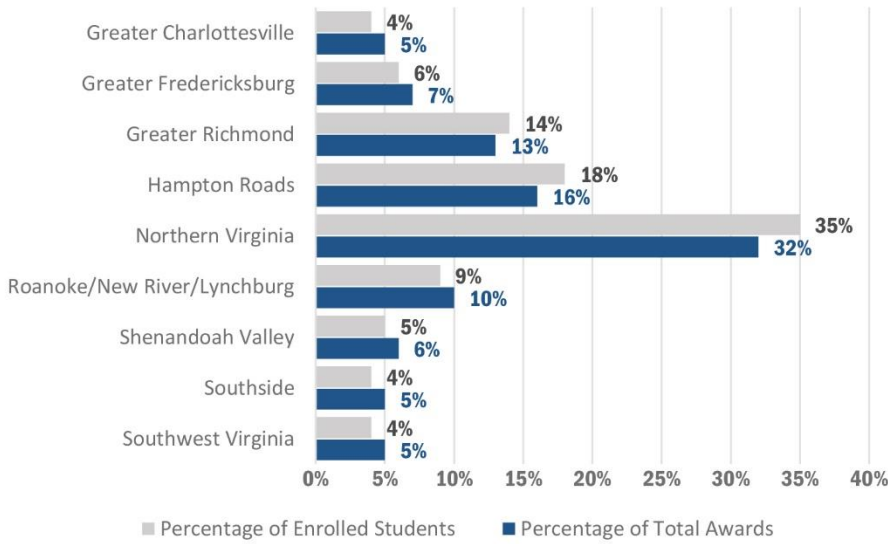
Degree/Certificate Awards by Income Level

Income	Percentage of Enrolled Students	Percentage of Total Awards
Unknown Income	44%	24%
Upper Income	18%	36%
Middle Income	15%	18%
Lower Income	23%	21%

■ Percentage of Enrolled Students ■ Percentage of Total Awards

Degree/Certificate Awards by Gender

Gender	Percentage of Enrolled Students	Percentage of Total Awards
Men	43%	41%
Women	57%	58%

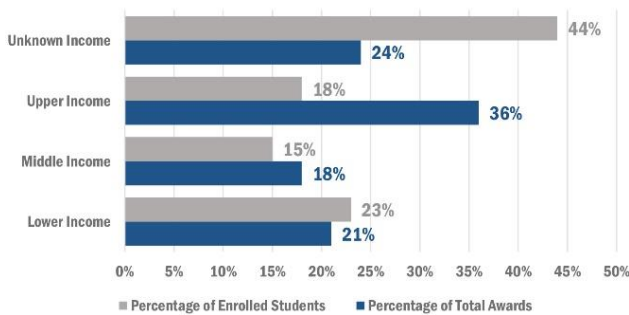■ Percentage of Enrolled Students ■ Percentage of Total Awards
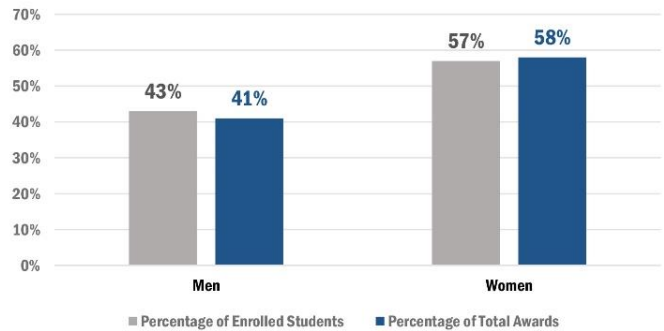
Borrowing

The Plan's borrowing measure is defined as the average debt of graduates. The target is to close gaps in borrowing of selected groups.

Borrowing is a barometer of affordability which is complex (e.g., not all debt is bad). Average borrowing is shown on an annual basis and includes students who borrowed $0 and that used federal or private loans for higher education.

Those groups with the largest percentage of undergraduates who are borrowing include:

- By race/ethnicity – Black (41%) and Race/Ethnicity unknown (36%).
- By region of origin – Hampton Roads (32%).
- By income – Middle income (59%).
- By gender – Women (32%).

The above groups with the largest percentage of undergraduates who are borrowing remained unchanged from 2019-20 to 2020-21. However, the average loan amount decreased across the board for each group with the exception of Greater Charlottesville which shows an increased average annual loan amount. The decrease in borrowing could possibly be attributed to: Virginia's moderated tuition and fees; SCHEV's student loan advocate work; more generous Pell grants; national trends and increased awareness. Data for four-year bachelor's degree students trend similarly this reporting period.

Student Borrowing by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Average Loans	Percentage Borrowing
Am Ind/AK Nat (NH)	$7,237	31%
Asian (NH)	$7,330	24%
Black (NH)	$7,169	41%
HI'an/PI (NH)	$7,437	28%
Hispanic/Latinx	$7,618	29%
Multi-Race (NH)	$8,200	31%
NRA	$17,217	1%
R/E Unk. (NH)	$7,204	36%
White (NH)	$8,642	28%
All	$7,994	30%

(NH) = Non-Hispanic
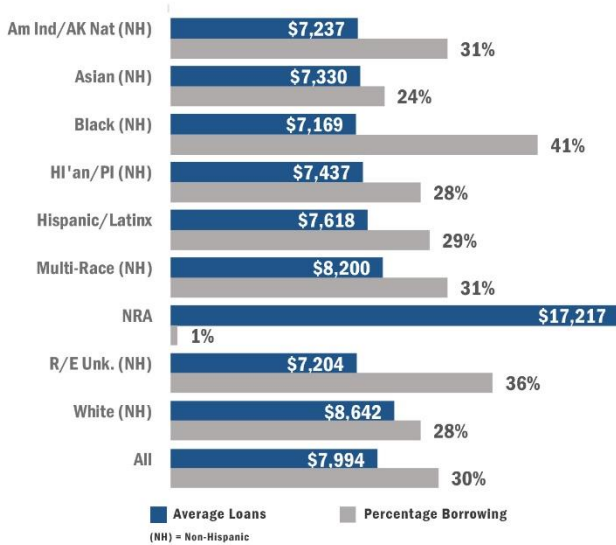
Student Borrowing by Region of Origin

Region of Origin	Average Loans	Percentage Borrowing
Southwest Virginia	$7,143	15%
Southside	$7,445	24%
Shenandoah Valley	$8,098	26%
Roanoke/New River/Lynchburg	$7,756	28%
Northern Virginia	$7,629	23%
Hampton Roads	$7,428	32%
Greater Richmond	$7,848	30%
Greater Fredericksburg	$8,295	28%
Greater Charlottesville	$8,163	23%

Student Borrowing by Income Level

Income Level	Average Loans	Percentage Borrowing
Unknown Income	$16,474	2%
Upper Income	$9,121	60%
Middle Income	$7,432	59%
Lower Income	$6,871	47%

Student Borrowing by Gender

Gender	Average Loans	Percentage Borrowing
Men	$8,168	28%
Women	$7,881	32%
Unreported	$6,961	5%
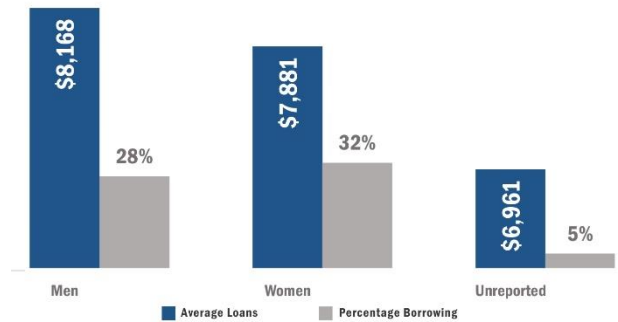
Wages

The Plan's wages measure is defined as graduates' wages 10 years after graduation. The target is to close gaps in earnings of selected groups.
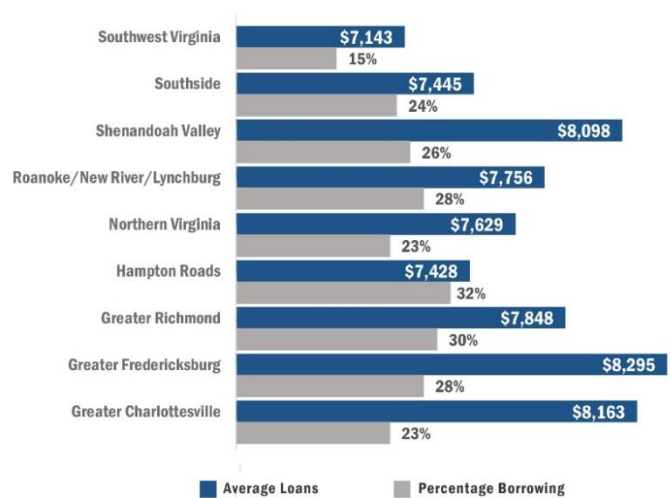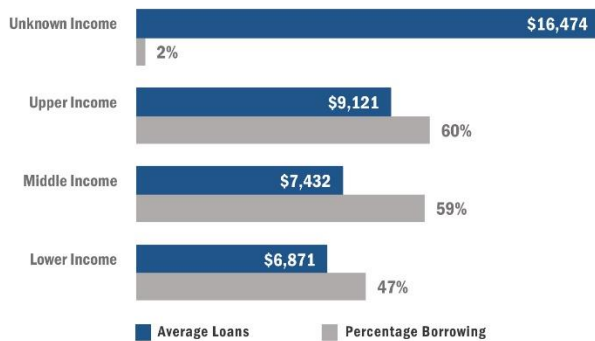
Wages are the individual earnings of graduates, not household earnings, 10-years post completion. While wages signal prosperity in a financial sense, other aspects of prosperity (civic engagement, happiness, etc.) also exist; however, such data are less reliable or are more difficult to access and measure.

Even though wide gaps in wages are not "levers" that higher education can control in terms of long-term outcomes, such gaps are worthy of attention because they persist within each subgroup. These gaps signal that some groups are not experiencing the same social mobility benefits of higher education as other groups.
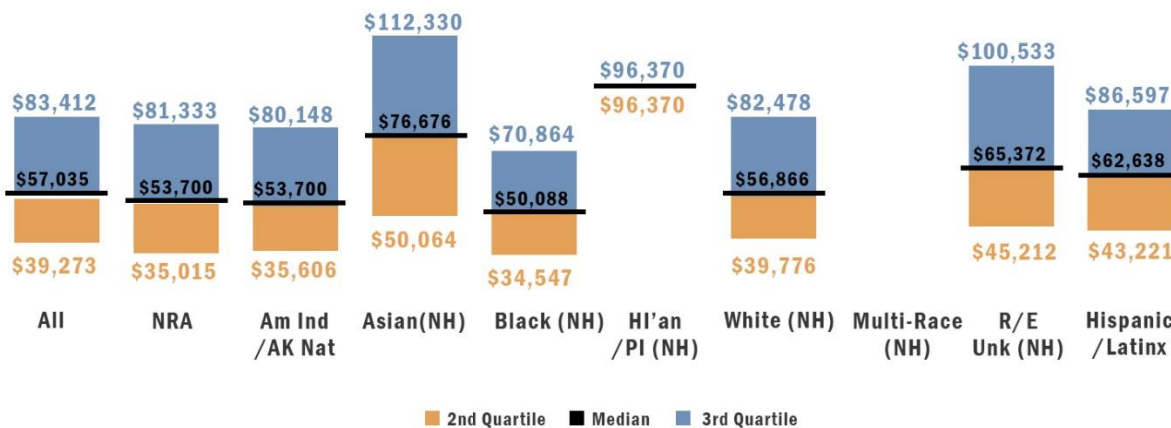
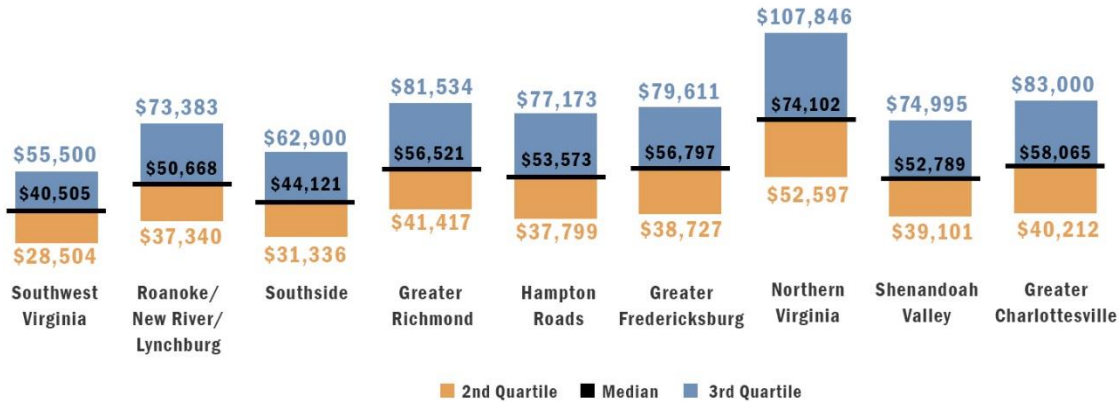Those groups with the widest wage gaps include:

- By race/ethnicity – Black and American Indian/Native Alaskan (unchanged) and Non-Resident Alien (new this reporting period).
- By region of origin – Southwest and Southside (unchanged). There appears to be a strong connection between region of origin and earnings.
- By income – Lower income (unchanged).
- By gender – Women (unchanged).

Compared to the prior reporting period, median wages increased across most groups despite the persisting gaps identified above. Those groups that experienced decreased median wages this reporting period include: Non-Resident Alien, Hispanic, Southwest, Roanoke/New River/Lynchburg, Greater Richmond, Shenandoah and Middle Income.

Graduate Wage Outcomes by Race/Ethnicity, 10 years Post-completion

	2nd Quartile	Median	3rd Quartile
All	$39,273	$57,035	$83,412
NRA	$35,015	$53,700	$81,333
Am Ind /AK Nat	$35,606	$53,700	$80,148
Asian(NH)	$50,064	$76,676	$112,330
Black (NH)	$34,547	$50,088	$70,864
HI'an /PI (NH)		$96,370	$96,370
White (NH)	$39,776	$56,866	$82,478
R/E Unk (NH)	$45,212	$65,372	$100,533
Hispanic /Latinx	$43,221	$62,638	$86,597

Legend: 2nd Quartile, Median, 3rd Quartile

Graduate Wage Outcomes by Region of Origin, 10 years Post-completion

Region	3rd Quartile	Median	2nd Quartile	Lower
Southwest Virginia	$55,500	$40,505		$28,504
Roanoke/New River/Lynchburg	$73,383	$50,668		$37,340
Southside	$62,900	$44,121		$31,336
Greater Richmond	$81,534	$56,521		$41,417
Hampton Roads	$77,173	$53,573		$37,799
Greater Fredericksburg	$79,611	$56,797		$38,727
Northern Virginia	$107,846	$74,102	$52,597	
Shenandoah Valley	$74,995	$52,789		$39,101
Greater Charlottesville	$83,000	$58,065		$40,212

■ 2nd Quartile ■ Median ■ 3rd Quartile

Graduate Wage Outcomes by Income Level, 10 years Post-completion

Income Level	3rd Quartile	Median	2nd Quartile
Lower Income	$68,741	$47,491	$31,904
Middle Income	$77,492	$54,165	$39,337
Upper Income	$92,596	$62,876	$45,182
Unknown Income	$89,329	$61,445	$41,726

■ 2nd Quartile ■ Median ■ 3rd Quartile
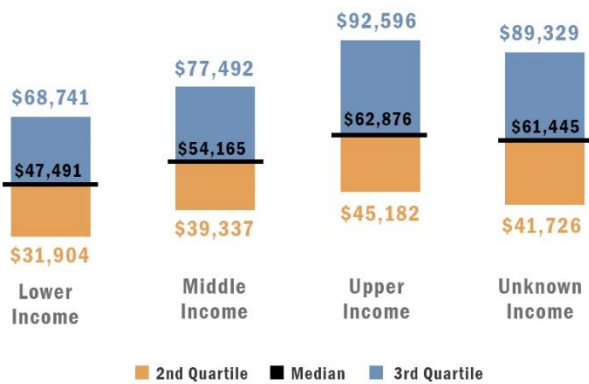
Graduate Wage Outcomes by Gender, 10 years Post-completion

Gender	3rd Quartile	Median	2nd Quartile
Men	$100,269	$67,22	$45,270
Women	$72,832	$52,108	$35,842
Unreported	$123,461	$72,443	$30,898

■ 2nd Quartile ■ Median ■ 3rd Quartile