



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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Members of the General Assembly
General Assembly Building
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Members of the 2024 General Assembly:

I am pleased to submit the enclosed report titled, Annual Report on the Distribution of Information Concerning Post-Graduate Opportunities for High School Students.

House Bill 1299 and Senate Bill 738 from the 2022 regular session of the Virginia General Assembly required that the Virginia Department of Education issue a report each year describing the dissemination of specific information regarding post-graduate opportunities, as identified in Code of Virginia § 22.1-206.1.

Please direct questions to Dr. Andrew Armstrong, Associate Superintendent of Programs, by email at andy.armstrong@doe.virginia.gov.

Sincerely,

Lisa Coons

LC/

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION CONCERNING POST- GRADUATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Code of Virginia § 22.1-206.2



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LEGISLATIVE DIRECTIVE

The 2022 General Assembly passed [House Bill 1299](#) and [Senate Bill 738](#), which require the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to collect and distribute to school boards and publicly post on its website information that assists high school students in making more informed decisions about their futures after graduating from high school. It should also ensure that such students are aware of the costs and benefits of different educational and certificate programs.

The bills direct the VDOE to consult with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) to collect and compile such information annually and update its distribution materials accordingly. The bills further require the VDOE to post and distribute the information to school boards, with any relevant updates, no later than October 1 each year, and provide an annual update to the General Assembly on how such information was distributed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The benefits and positive outcomes for earning a postsecondary degree or credential have been well researched by the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce. Graduates with postsecondary education (degree or credential) have higher average earnings for each level of college degree; are more likely to have health insurance, pay taxes, vote, and volunteer; and are less likely to receive unemployment benefits or need public assistance benefits. According to research from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, out of the 11.6 million jobs created in the post-recession economy, 11.5 million went to workers with at least some college education. Of these jobs, 8.4 million went to workers with a bachelor's degree or higher (Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, *America's Divided Recovery: College Haves and Have Nots*, 2016).

While more education typically leads to higher earnings, career outcomes can vary based on various factors. High-demand, high-wage employment can be accessed through pathways other than four-year college degrees, including through the military, registered apprenticeships, specialized certifications, and associate's degrees. These pathways frequently provide sustainable wage employment at a fraction of the cost of a four-year college degree.

At the end of August, the Virginia Board of Education adopted a new accountability structure, the School Performance and Support Framework, that included the 3E Readiness Framework. This framework outlines the high school needs for dual enrollment, advanced middle school and high school college credit-bearing coursework, high-demand industry recognized credential pathways, and military readiness factors. Regardless of locale and socioeconomic status, the process of exploring, preparing, applying, and executing a postsecondary plan should start in elementary school with career exploration activities and build in middle school with continued deeper career exploration activities and the creation of the academic career plan to guide 3E Readiness pathways upon entry to high school. In high school, students should have outcome-based experiences that deepen these middle school explorations and components of the academic career plan. HB1299/SB738 laid the foundation for these steps and required that students and families have additional context on the postsecondary options available to students, including

costs and benefits, allowing them to make informed decisions on investing in education beyond high school. Further, the legislation required that parents and students have access to information on the several different career options and opportunities available after graduation from high school. New expectations from the 3E Readiness Framework, HB1087's re-design of career exploration and the academic career plan, and the deepening of training and supports for schools will help further the minimum requirements outlined in HB1299/SB738.

STATE AGENCY COLLABORATION

The VDOE has partnered with SCHEV to create the [Postsecondary Opportunities for High School Students webpage](#), which includes resources and data pertaining to HB1299/SB738 and provides students and families with college-going options and support. Using the Virginia Longitudinal Data System and reports released by SCHEV, including the [Virginia Student Loan Help resource](#), information and data is provided on the average cost of institutions, student success indicators, financial aid debt information, postgraduate wages, and federal and state programs for financing higher education. Students and families have the option to view much of this information for individual institutions in addition to across types of institutions. The Virginia Student Loan Help resource offers the additional benefit of learning modules to educate students on financing higher education.

In addition to the collaboration to meet the requirements of HB1299 and SB738, the VDOE and SCHEV have also partnered to jointly support a cross-agency position, the Postsecondary Access and Success Specialist (PASS). This position supports multiple efforts to facilitate postsecondary access between K-12 and postsecondary, and provides resources, training, and technical assistance that support **all** students' pursuit of postsecondary employment, enlistment, or enrollment pathways, including supporting students who have been traditionally underrepresented.

DISTRIBUTION OF POST-GRADUATE INFORMATION

The VDOE distributed the information on post-graduate opportunities detailed in HB1299/SB738 through the [Virginia Education Update Newsletter](#), which was released in August 2024 and distributed to division superintendents, division directors, principals, and teachers for use in their communities to provide resources to students and families. Through that newsletter, VDOE also announced updates and new resources to the [Level Up Website](#), which is a college access resource for students and parents established in 2023 that supplements the information on the [Postsecondary Opportunities for High School Students webpage](#). Between August and September of 2024, the Level Up website hosted 5,149 users for 11,036 views, with users exploring the VASA application, Virginia College Application Week, and Gear Up. Appendix A contains the resource links contained on the Postsecondary Opportunities for High School Students webpage separated by the required items listed in HB1299 and SB738.

A recent resource developed by SCHEV and the National College Attainment Network is [Cardi](#). Cardi is a chatbot that is designed specifically for Virginia to simplify the path to higher education with personalized guidance for creating a Student Aid ID and completing the new FAFSA form. The resource was shared with school personnel through a VDOE newsletter

release in August 2024, and with students and parents through the Level Up Website. This resource is currently only funded through November 2024.

VDOE and SCHEV will continue to distribute the information in a variety of additional methods, including agency newsletters, presentations to school personnel, school counseling state organizations, Virginia college access programs, and at Career and Technical Education (CTE) events. As VDOE works to implement HB 1087, the 3E Readiness Framework, and expanded career exploration and academic career plan requirements, the department will work to provide training, resources, and technical assistance with school divisions. These opportunities will be in close coordination with Virginia Works, the Secretary of Education's office, SCHEV, and the Virginia Community College System (VCCS). Among this work is the ongoing development of training for all Virginia high school counselors and postsecondary advisors to provide systematic, consistent, and clear resources to students and families related to the unique benefits of dual enrollment coursework and access.

CONCLUSION

The process of preparing, applying, and paying for postsecondary education is often confusing for students, including students who are under-represented in postsecondary programs in the Commonwealth. With information constantly changing it is important to have a resource available that students can access with relevant information that has been analyzed and updated annually. The [webpage](#) created through HB1299 and SB738 has provided that vehicle for students. From July 2023 to August 2024, the VDOE postsecondary opportunities for high school students experienced 4,695 views from 3,607 unique users.

Annual updates to the required items will be coordinated between VDOE and SCHEV with new and additional information added as needed. Coordination efforts will continue to align HB1299/SB738 information on the VDOE website with Level-Up Virginia, the new statewide college access campaign. All critical postsecondary information, including Level-Up Virginia, VCCS, SCHEV, military pathways, and VDOE links, will be housed in an enhanced VDOE webpage that will be visualized and aligned to the 3E Readiness framework pathways. The VDOE, VCCS, SCHEV, and all branches of the military will continue to coordinate efforts to provide information on postsecondary pathways that meet students where they are, serving to guide students to best-fit postsecondary opportunities, careers, and meaningful lives.

APPENDIX

The following resources have been shared with school boards and publicly posted on VDOE's website. Applicable resource links are under each of the required items listed in HB1299/SB738.

1. To the extent available from SCHEV or other entities or sources, the most in-demand occupations in the Commonwealth, including entry wages and common degree levels required or encouraged for entering such occupations, and lists of offerings at institutions of higher education that offer such programs.

- [Virginia Career Works](https://virginiacareerworks.com/workforce-credential-grant/)
(<https://virginiacareerworks.com/workforce-credential-grant/>)
This website was created through the collaboration of eight state agencies to meet workforce needs through assisting job seekers in finding jobs, employers in recruiting Virginia's talent, and policymakers in locating the information they need to make solid decisions.
- [Virginia Job Outlook](https://www.vec.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-Jobs-Outlook.pdf)
(<https://www.vec.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-Jobs-Outlook.pdf>)
This report, produced by the Virginia Employment Commission, provides detailed insights into the job market in Virginia, including projected job growth, entry wages, and common degree requirements.
- [Virginia Student Loan Help](https://www.virginiastudentloanhelp.org/home/exercises/career-sort.cfm?cales&ucode=SCHEVHS&&firstlogin=1)
(<https://www.virginiastudentloanhelp.org/home/exercises/career-sort.cfm?cales&ucode=SCHEVHS&&firstlogin=1>)
Managed by SCHEV, this tool helps students explore career options, including information on various occupations, expected salaries, and the educational paths required to pursue them. It also lists the average cost of institutions of higher education listed by type of institution.
- [Key Facts About Higher Education](https://www.schev.edu/about/key-facts-about-higher-education/key-facts-accessible-version)
(<https://www.schev.edu/about/key-facts-about-higher-education/key-facts-accessible-version>)
This resource, provided by SCHEV, offers essential data on the cost of attending various types of higher education institutions in Virginia, including public, private, and community colleges.
- [Virginia Education Wizard](https://www.vawizard.org/wizard/home)
(<https://www.vawizard.org/wizard/home>)
Developed by VCCS, this online tool helps users explore educational pathways, compare costs, and plan for college expenses.
- [Cardi: Financial Aid Chatbot](https://learn.mainstay.com/hey-cardi/)
(<https://learn.mainstay.com/hey-cardi/>)
Created by Mainstay in partnership with SCHEV, Cardi is a chatbot that provides personalized assistance with financial aid questions and college planning.

- [Virginia Student Loan Help's College Explorer](https://www.virginiastudentloanhelp.org/home/exercises/colleges.cfm?calcs&ucode=SCHEV&firstlogin=1)
(<https://www.virginiastudentloanhelp.org/home/exercises/colleges.cfm?calcs&ucode=SCHEV&firstlogin=1>)
Managed by SCHEV, this tool allows students to compare colleges based on various criteria, including costs, and wage and employment outcomes, to help make informed decisions about their education.
- [Virginia Office of Education Economics](https://www.vedp.org/voee)
(<https://www.vedp.org/voee>)
This office offers valuable insights, such as high-demand occupations and wage outcomes, which can guide students in aligning their education with the job market.
- [College Scorecard](https://collegescorecard.ed.gov)
(<https://collegescorecard.ed.gov>)
Managed by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE), this tool provides data on costs, graduation rates and potential earnings for different colleges, helping students make informed choices.
- [College Navigator](https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/)
(<https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>)
Managed by USDOE, this tool offers a detailed search tool that allows students to compare colleges based on criteria such as program offerings, location and student loan default rates.
- [Federal Student Aid's Data Center](https://studentaid.gov/data-center/)
(<https://studentaid.gov/data-center/>)
Managed by USDOE, this site offers information on federal financial aid programs, including available loans and grants, participating colleges, and student loan default rates.

2. The federal and state scholarship, merit, and need-based aid programs available to students for attending institutions of higher education.

- [SCHEV: Paying for College](https://schev.prod.govaccess.org/students/paying-for-college)
(<https://schev.prod.govaccess.org/students/paying-for-college>)
This SCHEV resource provides comprehensive information on various financial aid options available to Virginia students, including scholarships, grants, and loans.
- [Virginia Student Loan Help](https://www.virginiastudentloanhelp.org/home/index.cfm?firstlogin=1)
(<https://www.virginiastudentloanhelp.org/home/index.cfm?firstlogin=1>)
Managed by SCHEV, this site offers guidance on managing student loans and finding financial aid resources.
- [Level Up Virginia: Finance](https://www.levelupvirginia.org/finance)
(<https://www.levelupvirginia.org/finance>)

Created by SCHEV and VDOE, this platform offers financial literacy resources to help students understand the costs of higher education, how to manage their finances, and information on federal and state financial aid programs.

3. To the extent available from SCHEV or other entities or sources, the average monthly student loan payment and the average total amount of student loans for individuals who attend institutions of higher education, with such information distinguished by type of institution, to the extent that the VDOE and the Council can determine such information.

- [SCHEV Institution Profiles](https://research.schev.edu/Institutions)

(<https://research.schev.edu/Institutions>)

These profiles, provided by SCHEV, include detailed information on student loan debt, including average monthly payments and total loan amounts for graduates from different institutions.

- [Virginia Student Loan Help](https://www.virginiastudentloanhelp.org/home/index.cfm?firstlogin=1)

(<https://www.virginiastudentloanhelp.org/home/index.cfm?firstlogin=1>)

This resource offers tools and information to help students understand and manage their student loan debt, as well as detailed information on institutions' student loan debts.

- **To the extent available from SCHEV or other entities or sources, the average student loan default rate for students who attend institutions of higher education, to the extent that the VDOE and the Council can determine such information.**

- [SCHEV's Institution Profiles](https://research.schev.edu/Institutions)

(<https://research.schev.edu/Institutions>)

Provides detailed data on the student loan default rates for graduates from various higher education institutions in Virginia.

- [Virginia Student Loan Help](https://www.virginiastudentloanhelp.org/home/index.cfm?firstlogin=1)

(<https://www.virginiastudentloanhelp.org/home/index.cfm?firstlogin=1>)

This site includes information on student loan default rates and offers guidance on avoiding default.

- **To the extent available from SCHEV or other entities or sources, information relating to the availability of paid internship and externship opportunities for students attending institutions of higher education with such information distinguished by major or area of study.**

- [Virginia Talent and Opportunity Partnership \(Virginia TOP\)](https://virginiatop.org/)

(<https://virginiatop.org/>)

A partnership between the Virginia Chamber Foundation and educational

institutions, administered by SCHEV, Virginia TOP (V-TOP) aims to enhance work-based learning experiences for students through internships and externships.

- [State Corporation Commission](https://scc.virginia.gov/pages/College-Recruitment-and-Internship-Program)
(<https://scc.virginia.gov/pages/College-Recruitment-and-Internship-Program>)
This program, run by the Virginia State Corporation Commission, offers college recruitment and internship opportunities,

- **The average time that it takes to complete degrees offered by institutions of higher education.**
 - [Commonwealth Degree & Certificate Completion Scorecard](https://research.schev.edu/completions/completion_scorecard.asp)
(https://research.schev.edu/completions/completion_scorecard.asp)
This scorecard, provided by SCHEV, tracks the average time students take to complete their degrees and certificates.
 - [SCHEV's Institution Profiles](https://research.schev.edu/Institutions)
(<https://research.schev.edu/Institutions>)
These profiles offer detailed data on completion times for various programs at Virginia's higher education institutions.
 - [Virginia Student Loan Help](https://www.virginiastudentloanhelp.org/home/index.cfm?firstlogin=1)
(<https://www.virginiastudentloanhelp.org/home/index.cfm?firstlogin=1>)
This resource includes information on completion rates and offers advice on staying on track to graduate on time.

- **Median annual wages for individuals who graduate from institutions of higher education, distinguished by degree level.**
 - [Guide to the Post-Completion Wages of Graduates](https://research.schev.edu/info/Reports.Guide-to-the-Post-Completion-Wages-of-Graduates)
(<https://research.schev.edu/info/Reports.Guide-to-the-Post-Completion-Wages-of-Graduates>)
Provided by SCHEV, this guide offers detailed information on the median annual wages of graduates from various degree programs.
 - [SCHEV's Institution Profiles](https://research.schev.edu/Institutions)
(<https://research.schev.edu/Institutions>)
These profiles include wage data for graduates, broken down by degree level and field of study.
 - [Virginia Student Loan Help](https://www.virginiastudentloanhelp.org/home/index.cfm?firstlogin=1)
(<https://www.virginiastudentloanhelp.org/home/index.cfm?firstlogin=1>)
This site offers tools and information to help students understand their potential earnings after graduation.

- **To the extent available from SCHEV or other entities or sources, the average starting salary for individuals who complete career and technical education programs in the Commonwealth.**

This webpage offers resources to help students make informed decisions about their education and career paths.