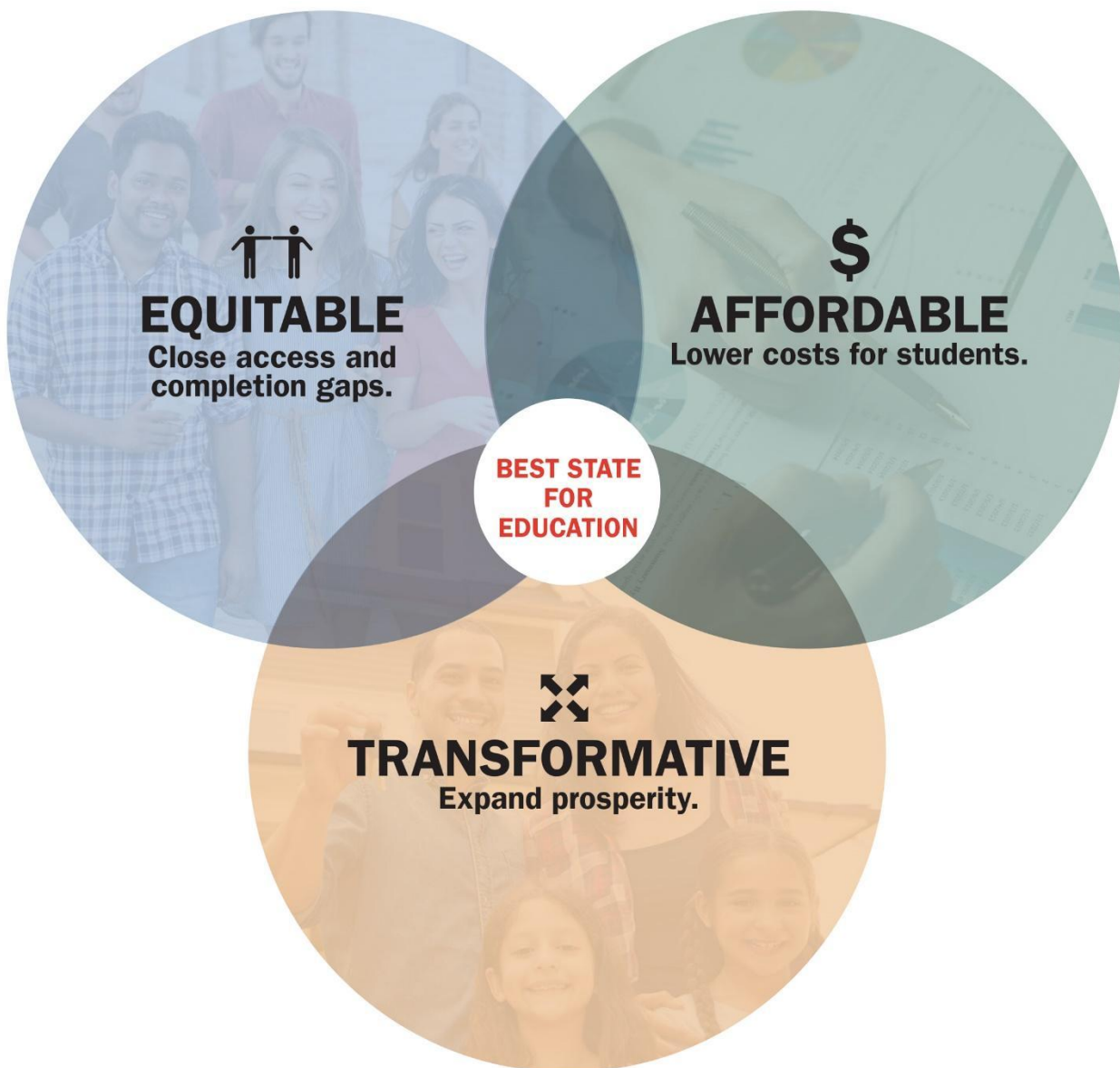


# State Council of Higher Education for Virginia



## *Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education 2025 Annual Report*

December 2025



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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 2025 Annual Report summarizes the three statutory goals, key findings from an assessment of where Virginia stands relative to the statutory goals, as well as recent activities that directly support *Pathways to Opportunity* (*The Plan*).



## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

### Background

*The Plan* creates a framework for action by Virginia’s higher education partners for up to six years. 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.

*The Pathways to Opportunity* plan was published in January 2021 and its development process was unique as the process took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the resultant plan was still inclusive of stakeholder input and addressed both the potential short- and long-term issues associated with the pandemic and social justice issues that arose during that same time. Below are some of the themes that emerged in the development process.

Stakeholders said that The Plan should:

- Emphasize the importance of equity as a specific goal and underlying element of The Plan.
- Ensure that The Plan’s vision, target, goals, strategies and measures are linked closely.
- Enable clear connections between The Plan and SCHEV’s day-to-day work and organizational commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Adopt deliberate and boldly aspirational goals in light of the pandemic and social justice issues.

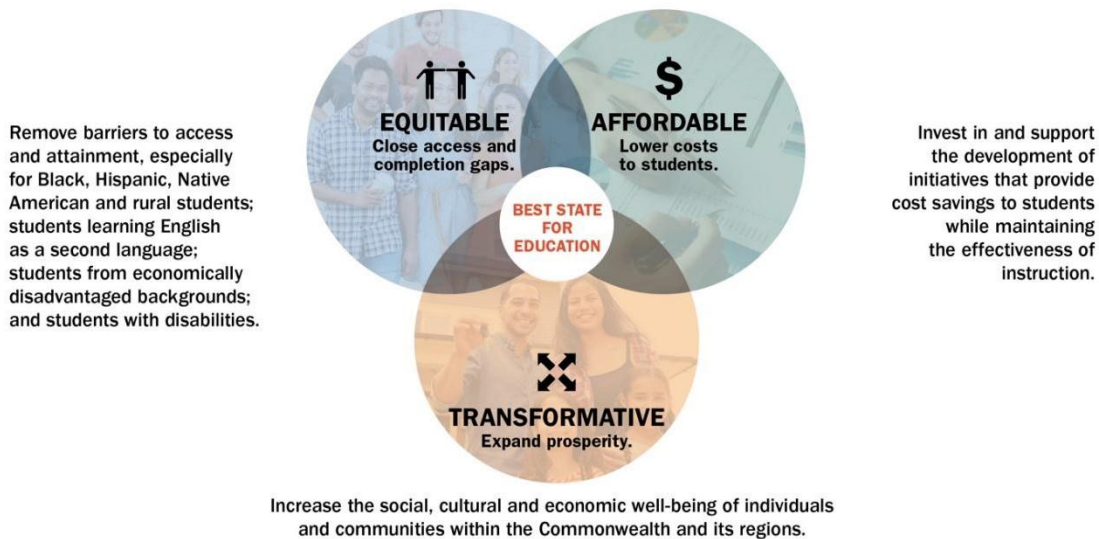
From this input, SCHEV adopted the following framework that served as the foundation for *Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education*.

Vision/Goals	Measure	Definition	Target
<b>Vision: Best state for education</b>	<b>Attainment</b>	<b>Percent of 25- to 64-year-olds with a postsecondary degree or credential</b>	<b>70% attainment by 2023</b>
<b>Equitable:</b> Close access and completion gaps	Attainment	Percent of 25- to 64-year-olds with a postsecondary degree or credential	Close gaps in attainment of selected groups
	Enrollment	Fall headcount of public and private undergraduates	Enrollment reflects Virginia’s population
<b>Affordable:</b> Lower costs to students	Awards	Undergraduate degrees and credential produced each year	Undergraduate degrees and credentials awarded each year reflect enrollment
	Borrowing	Average debt of graduates	Close gaps in borrowing by selected groups
<b>Transformative:</b> Expand prosperity	Wages	Graduates’ wages 10 years after graduation	Close gaps in median earnings of selected groups

SCHEV assesses and reports progress to the General Assembly annually. The findings below constitute SCHEV's final progress report for the *Pathways to Opportunity Plan*. SCHEV is required by statute to revise/develop a new plan at least every six years to ensure it stays relevant to the needs of Virginians. SCHEV is in the process of finalizing the next statewide strategic plan for Virginia higher education the development of which took place over the last 12 months.

## 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.



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**

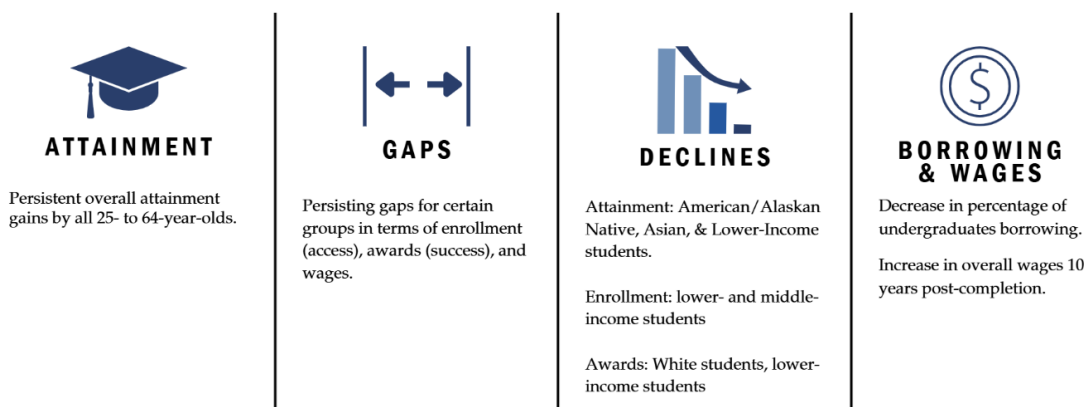
*The Plan's* 70% attainment target focuses on a 2030 timeline. However, achieving the goals and vision requires innovation, collaboration and long-term work to resolve complex and persistent issues. The higher education community is one of many stakeholders that must step up to address these complex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

## KEY FINDINGS

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. In 2024, SCHEV started collecting data pertaining to students with disabilities.

### Summative Findings

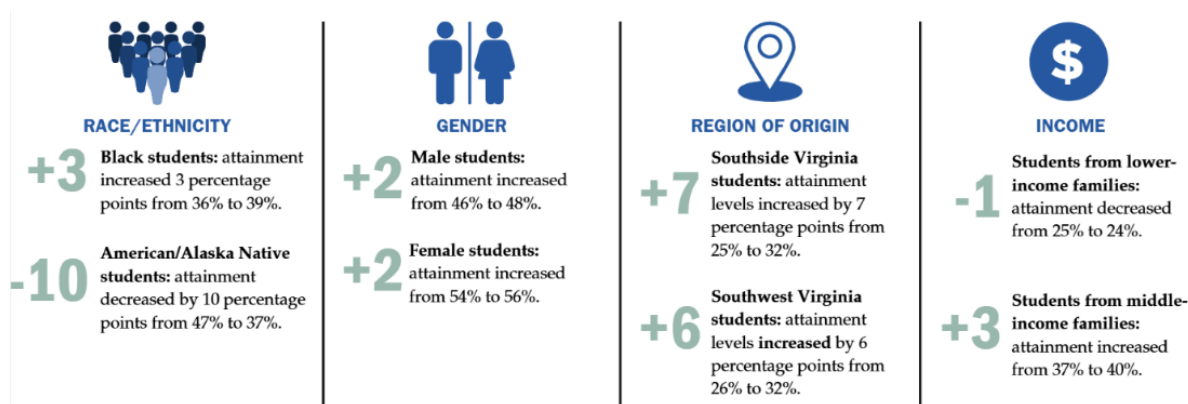
The most recent data (2023-2024) were largely unchanged from the baseline year (2019-2020) data with a few notable changes:



- Gains: Persistent overall attainment gains.
- Gaps: Persisting for certain groups in terms of enrollment (access), awards (success) and wages.
- Declines in: American/Alaskan Native, Asian and lower income attainment; lower income and middle-income percentage of enrolled students; white percentage of enrolled students; white percentage of degrees awarded; decreased percentage of degrees awarded across all income groups.
- An overall decrease in the percentage of students borrowing and increase in overall wages 10 years post-completion.

## Attainment

The Plan's attainment measure is defined as the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds with an associate degree or higher. While total attainment increased three percentage points from 2019-20 to 2023-24, 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, as well as notable changes or gains, are identified below:

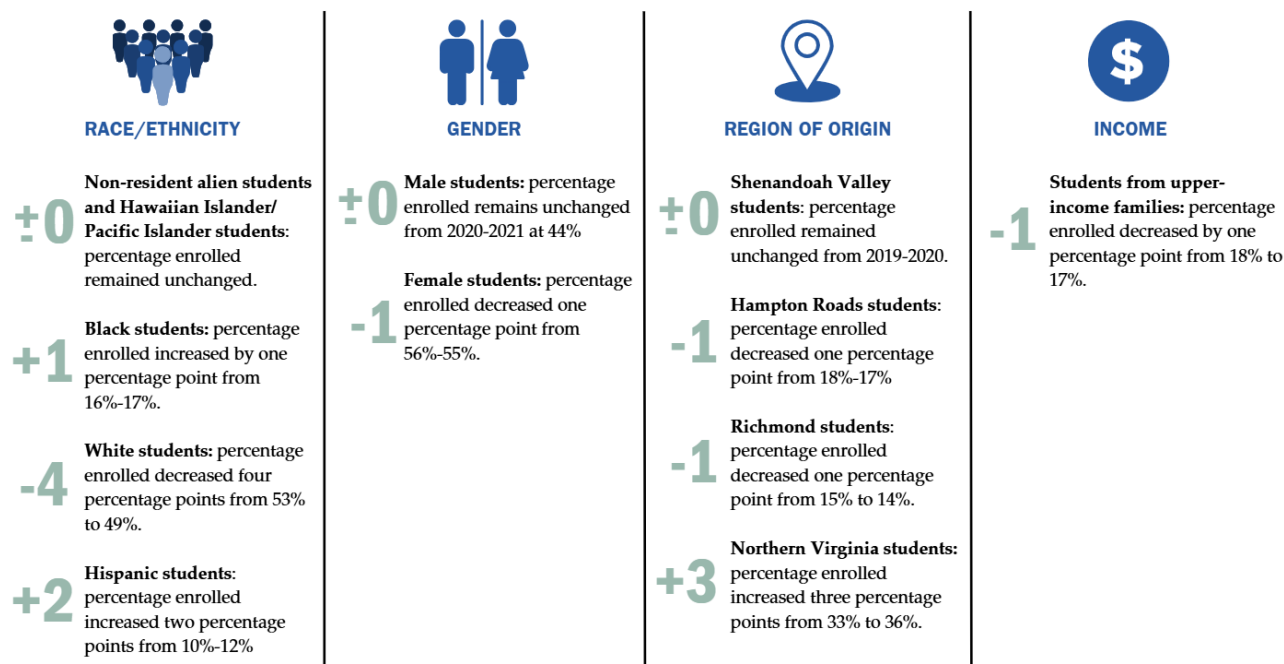


- By race/ethnicity - Black attainment increased three percentage points (from 36% to 39%). American Indian/Alaska Native attainment decreased 10 percentage points (from 47% to 37%).
- By region of origin - Southside and Southwest Virginia increased to 32% from 25% and 26% respectively.
- By income - Lower income decreased one percentage point (from 25% to 24%). Middle income attainment increased by three percentage points from 2019-2020 (from 37% to 40%).
- By gender – Men. However, both male and female attainment increased by two percentage points over the 2019-2020 academic year (males from 46% to 48% and females from 54% to 56%).

## Enrollment

The Plan's enrollment measure is defined as the Fall headcount of public and private undergraduates. The following 2023-2024 undergraduate enrollment gaps continue to persist in comparison to the 2019-2020 academic year baseline data:





- By race/ethnicity – Hawaiian Islander/Pacific Islander and non-resident alien students (unchanged from 2019-2020). White enrollment decreased four percentage points in 2023-2024 (from 53% to 49%) compared to the baseline year. Black enrollment increased by one percentage point compared to the baseline year (from 16% to 17%). Hispanic enrollment increased two percentage points (from 10% to 12%). While the percentage did not change (rounds to zero), the number of enrolled American Indian/Alaskan Native students decreased from 1,142 to 1,084 (2019/20 to 2023/24).
- By region of origin – Shenandoah Valley (unchanged from baseline). Hampton Roads enrollment decreased by one percentage point (from 18% to 17%) compared to the baseline year. Greater Richmond experienced a one percentage point decrease in enrolled students (from 15% to 14%). Northern Virginia experienced a three-percentage point increase in enrolled students (from 33% to 36%).
- By income – Upper income percentage enrolled decreased one percentage point from 2019-2020 (from 18% to 17%).
- By gender – Men (unchanged). Women decreased by one percentage point from 56% to 55%.

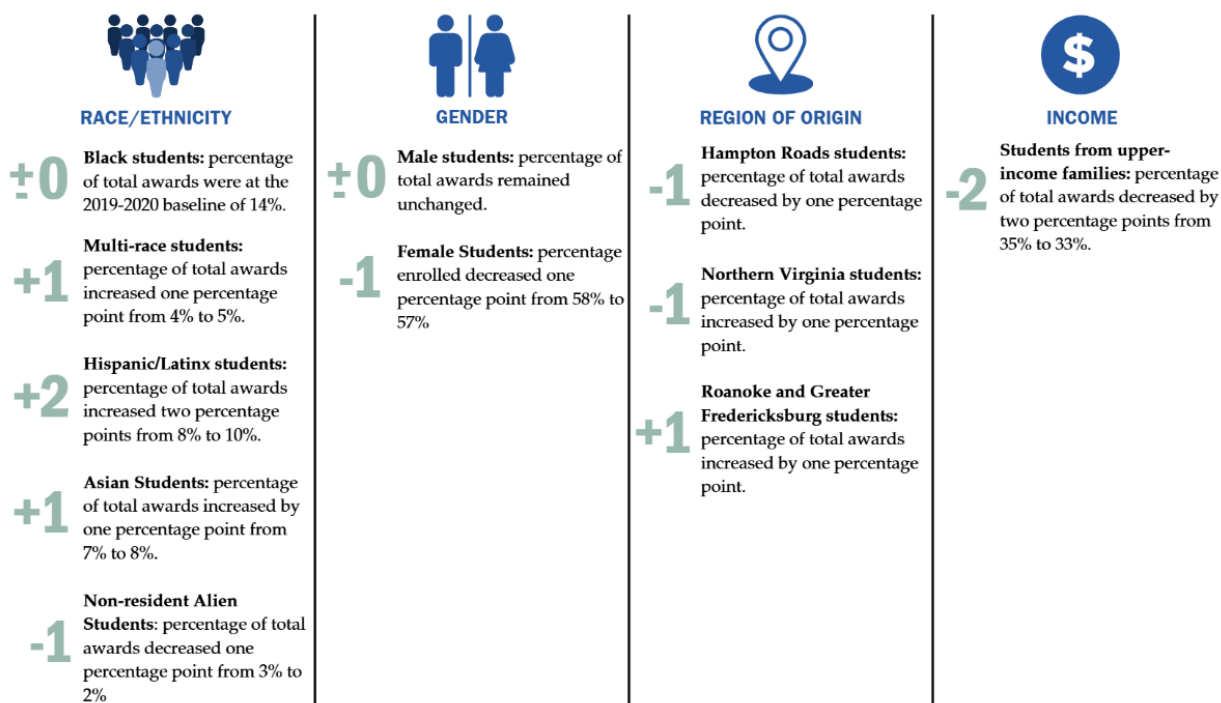
Here it is worth noting that in some instances the differences between the percentage of enrolled students and percentage of the population bars are diminishing (suggestive of



“closing gaps”). However, the changes are minor (one to two percentage points) and in some cases the result of declining population versus increased enrollment.

## Awards

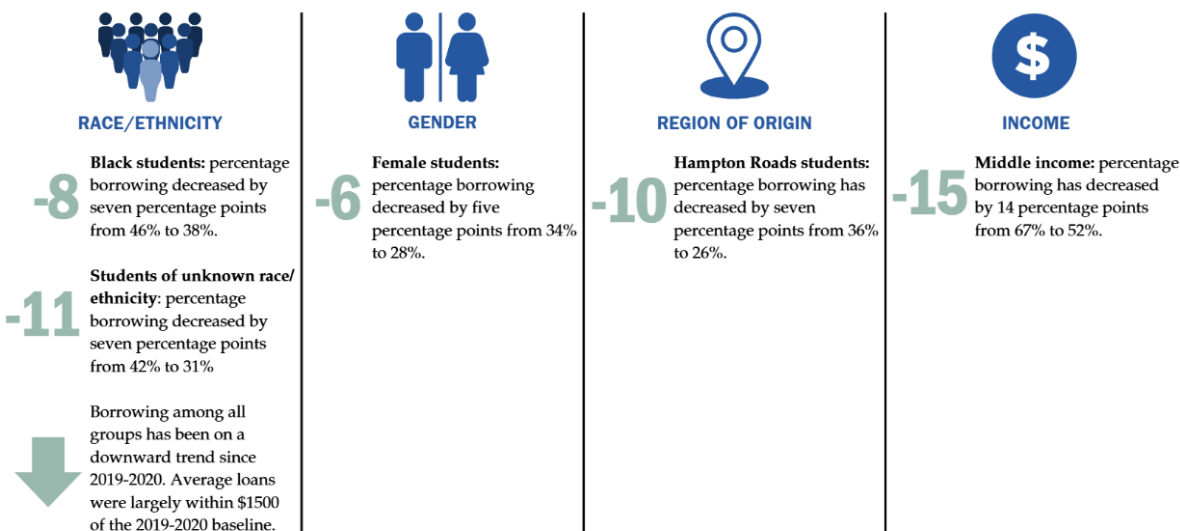
The Plan’s awards measure is defined as undergraduate degrees and credentials produced each year. Success gaps may exist when the percentage of total awards is less than the percentage of enrolled students. Identified success gaps may include:



- By race/ethnicity – Non-resident alien decreased one percentage point (from 3% to 2%). Black remained unchanged (at 14%). Multi-Race (increased one percentage point from 4% to 5%, closing the success gap). Degrees awarded for Hispanic/Latinx students increased two percentage points (from 8% to 10%) from the baseline year. Asian increased one percentage point from 7% to 8%.
- By region of origin – The following regions each experienced one percentage point gains: Roanoke and Greater Fredericksburg. Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia each decreased by one percentage point in percentage of awards.
- By income – Upper income decreased by two percentage points from 35% to 33%.
- By gender – Men no change. Women decreased one percentage point (from 58% to 57%).

## Borrowing

The Plan's borrowing measure is defined as the average debt of graduates. Those groups with the largest percentage of undergraduates who are borrowing include:



- By race/ethnicity – Black decreased by eight percentage points since 2019-2020 (from 46% to 38%) and Race/Ethnicity unknown decreased by 11 percentage points (from 42% to 31%) compared to 2019-2020. Generally, the percentage borrowing decreased in most every group when compared to the 2019-2020 baseline. Average loan amounts increased but stayed largely within \$1,500 of the 2019-2020 base year.
- By region of origin – Hampton Roads. However, the percentage borrowing in Hampton Roads has decreased by 10 percentage points when compared to 2019-2020 (from 36% to 26%).
- By income – Middle income. However, the percentage borrowing has decreased by 15 percentage points when compared to 2019-2020 (from 67% to 52%).
- By gender – Women. The percentage borrowing has decreased by six percentage points when compared to 2019-2020 (from 34% to 28%).

The above groups with the largest percentage of undergraduates who are borrowing remained unchanged from 2019-20 to 2023-24. However, the percentage of students borrowing decreased across the board for each group.

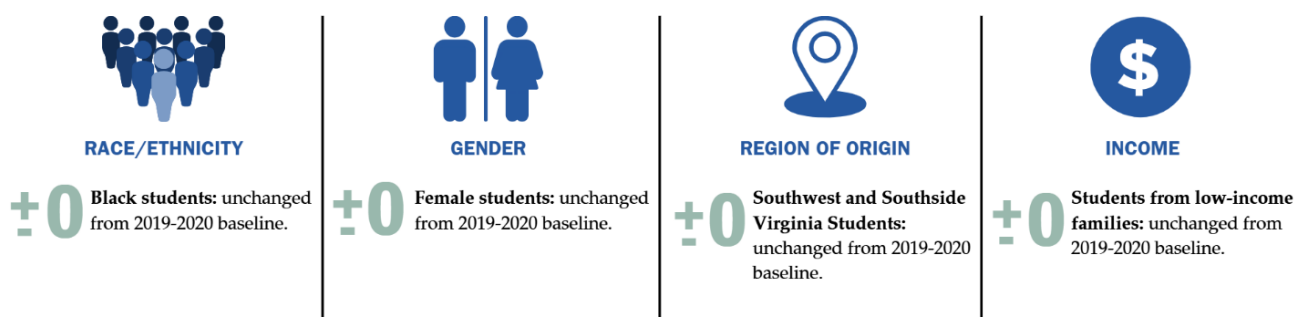
## Wages

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 (unchanged).
- By region of origin – Southwest and Southside (unchanged).
- By income – Lower income (unchanged).
- By gender – Women (unchanged).

## FINAL UPDATE ON THE PATHWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY PLAN PRIORITY INITIATIVES

*The Pathways to Opportunity Plan* creates the framework for statewide action for up to six years via its vision, goals and strategies. However, The Plan's strategies to achieve the goals, given their generality, are not actionable in and of themselves. Priority initiatives serve as Council's means to implement the strategies and work toward the goals set forth in The Plan. Council approved the second slate of priority initiatives in October 2023. In turn, those biennial priority initiatives aligned with applicable budget and policy recommendations necessary to implement those actions. This section details these priority initiatives and their relationship to The Plan's strategies.

### GOAL 1 – EQUITABLE: CLOSE ACCESS AND COMPLETION GAPS

#### Plan Strategy

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

#### Plan Biennial Initiative

**I.1: Promote Access to Postsecondary Education:** Develop, implement and collaborate on a variety of strategic activities, including marketing, professional development, and direct student and family programming (such as mentoring, summer bridge programs, counseling and advising via [GEAR UP](#)), to improve awareness and access to a variety of postsecondary education opportunities for Virginia's low-income and underserved students.

#### Previously Reported Actions (August 2024)

1. **Level Up Virginia:** Launched the [LevelUpVirginia.org](https://LevelUpVirginia.org) (student-and-family-facing) website, highlighting multiple postsecondary pathways, connecting students and families to local college access advisors and providing a calendar of college-going events.

Created an active social media presence and distributed a quarterly newsletter for both Level Up Virginia (statewide initiative) and GEAR UP Virginia (focused on a cohort of students in 12 of Virginia's high-need school divisions).

2. **SCHEV/VDOE Access Strategic Plan:** Partnered with VDOE staff to host a series of financial aid webinars; mailed 29,000 FAFSA-reminder postcards to low-income families; launched a Virginia FAFSA chatbot; shared FAFSA public service announcements with 60 radio stations; implemented a second year of middle school campus visits (bringing approximately 4,000 middle schoolers from low-income communities onto college campuses); and awarded a \$181,575 AmeriCorps planning grant, partnering with University of Virginia to study the feasibility of a statewide college advising corps.

The GEAR UP Virginia grant served 5,609 students, now in grades 10 through 12, offering tutoring, job site visits, campus visits, financial aid counseling, best match and fit advising, summer camps and family events.

### **Updated actions to implement initiative (August 2025)**

1. **Level Up Virginia:** Staff contracted an external LevelUpVirginia.org website review. Level Up Virginia events expanded to 142 high schools serving 38,504 students (compared to 88 schools in 2020 serving 20,279 students).
2. **SCHEV/VDOE Access Strategic Plan:** SCHEV partnered with VDOE staff to host a series of financial aid webinars; mailed 29,500 FAFSA-reminder postcards to low-income families; replaced the Virginia FAFSA chatbot with a text line monitored by humans; piloted a FAFSA completion portal with 10 high schools (giving them student-level FAFSA completion data for better targeted outreach), shared FAFSA public service announcements with 60 radio stations; implemented a third year of middle school campus visits (bringing approximately 8,000 middle schoolers from low-income communities onto nine college campuses); and partnered with VirginiaCAN and VASFAA to send 28 school counselors and 24 financial aid professionals to state access and financial aid conferences.

The GEAR UP Virginia grant served 6,220 students, now in grades 10 through 12, offering tutoring, job site visits, campus visits, financial aid counseling, best match and fit advising, summer camps and family events.

## **Plan Strategy**

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

### **Plan Biennial Initiative**

**I.2: Support Online Virginia Network (OVN) Market Survey:** Gather insight on Virginia higher education alumni including those who obtained some college and no degree and their interest in completing a degree through OVN.

### **Previously Reported Actions (August 2024)**

1. **OVN/VCU outreach survey and analysis:** Completed by the Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory at the Wilder School of VCU.

A total of 243 former Virginia college students that have not completed a degree responded and the full report was forwarded to OVN for their consideration and action.

### **Updated actions to implement initiative (August 2025)**

1. **OVN/VCU outreach survey and analysis:** Completed.

## Plan Strategy

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

### Plan Biennial Initiative

I.3: Develop Resources for Mental Health and Disabilities Supports: Partner to deliver additional resources to institutions and support front line professionals that provide mental health services to students and/or assist students with disabilities.

### Previously Reported Actions (August 2024)

1. **SCHEV Mental Health Pilot:** Prepared Annual Report for the General Assembly outlining impacts of the round one Higher Education Mental Health Workforce Pilot Program during its first year (of two years). The report indicates the pilot is increasing counseling capacity and reducing staff burnout at counseling centers.
  - With additional funds from the General Assembly in FY25 and FY 26, issued a Round Two Call for Proposals and selected five pilot programs to receive Round Two grant funds.
2. **SCHEV/Virginia Mental Health Access Program Collaborative Training:** Partnered to provide two training webinar(s) to on-campus healthcare professionals to diagnose, treat and manage common mental health disorders: ADHD (January 2024) and Depression/ Suicide Risk (May 2024). More than 60 on-campus healthcare professionals attended each webinar for continuing medical education credits.
3. **Disabilities Access to Higher Education Action Plan:** The Disabilities Access to Higher Education Advisory Committee developed a “Best Practice Guidelines for Accommodation Practices” for institutions to use.

Staff formed a work group of experts to conduct the study on determining eligibility for accommodations as directed by SB21/ HB509.

The report will be submitted to the General Assembly by October 1.

### Updated actions to implement initiative (August 2025)

1. **SCHEV Mental Health Pilot:** SCHEV submitted the [2025 Annual Report](#) on the Mental Health Pilot to the General Assembly. As of May 1, 2025, the LCSW/LPC candidates supported through this pilot have collectively served 1,446 individual student-patients and completed more than 8,750 clinical hours. The addition of the candidates has resulted in: (a) decreased appointment wait times for students; (b) improved staff morale at the on-campus counseling and health centers; and (c) sparked the candidates’ interest in continuing to work at the higher education institution(s) post-licensure, two taking permanent positions at the pilot institutions.
2. **SCHEV/Virginia Mental Health Access Program Collaborative Training:** Completed. All training previously completed in 2024.

3. **Disabilities Access to Higher Education Action Plan:** SCHEV, in consultation with the SB21/HB509 workgroup, prepared a [report](#) with recommendations from the study. This led to a phase II study bill, HB 1805, currently underway by SCHEV and a different workgroup.

Concurrently, SCHEV's Disabilities Access to Higher Education Advisory Committee developed and released a series of resources in July in support of the SB 21/HB 509 report: "Best Practice Guidelines for Accommodation Practices" and "SB 21 Student Survey Questionnaire Template."

#### Corresponding Resources

- [How to use the Best Practice Guidelines](#)
- [Best Practice Guidelines for Accommodation Practices](#)
- [Best Practice Guidelines for Accommodation Practices Excel Review Tool](#)

#### Corresponding Resources

- [SB 21 Student Questionnaire Transmission Information](#)
- [SB 21 Student Survey Questionnaire Template](#)

## GOAL 2 – AFFORDABLE: LOWER COSTS TO STUDENTS

### Plan Strategy

**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.**

#### Plan Biennial Initiative

**I.4: Establish consensus on higher education cost and funding needs:** Build consensus around higher education cost and funding needs in accordance with [work done last year](#) (SB 800 2023 budget amendment).

#### Previously Reported Actions

1. **Technical assistance:** In July 2022, SCHEV published a Cost and Funding Needs Study. The report represented a broad consensus among stakeholders for a framework to measure costs, but its publication failed to produce an operational model.

Council might recommend that the Commonwealth build on this framework to produce a working model for the next budget cycle, including an evaluation of the current "base adequacy formula," pending the outcomes of a study on institutional efficiency and effectiveness being conducted by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) and a legislative joint subcommittee on higher education funding policies set to review and improve funding models beginning in December.

#### Updated actions to implement initiative

1. **Technical assistance:** In the 2023 Special Session, the Higher Education Funding Policies Joint Subcommittee was authorized to review college costs, specifically, (i) prioritize the review of funding



related to operations and financial aid; (ii) provide recommendations to improve funding models; and (iii) develop a short- and long-term plan for phased implementation of any recommendations.

While the JLARC recommendations are now available, the joint subcommittee has not met. Council may consider further research and recommendations with consideration of the JLARC findings and input from key stakeholders and policymakers.

## Plan Strategy

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

#### Plan Biennial Initiative

- I.5: **Establish Pathway Maps as a means to lower the cost to students by ensuring a smooth transition from two-year to four-year institutions:** Create system-wide course equivalencies and complete pathways maps, strengthening pathways to the baccalaureate for transfer students as well as high school students.

#### Previously Reported Actions

1. **Common curriculum:** Completed work on common curriculum development of 28 disciplines through collaboration between SCHEV, the VCCS, as well as two- and four-year faculty and staff across the state.

There are two remaining curricula slated to be completed over the next academic year. Additionally, the three-year review process for the first phase disciplines will commence this Fall.

2. **Pathways maps and transfer guides:** Development of student facing transfer guides from completed pathway maps for each disciplinary major continues to grow with approximately 350 transfer guides created and upwards of 100 guides being developed each semester. These strengthen the pathway to the baccalaureate and are made publicly available via the Transfer Virginia portal.

#### Updated actions to implement initiative

1. **Common curriculum:** The two remaining curricula (music and cinema) will not be completed at this time due to vastly different requirements across the four-year colleges and few offerings at the community colleges. The three-year review for phase one disciplines (business, computer science, education, and engineering) concluded in Spring 2025. The next phase of review will not begin until approximately Spring or Fall 2027 as the community colleges are implementing discipline phases 2-4 in Fall 2025.
2. **Pathways maps and transfer guides:** There are currently approximately 475 transfer guides posted in the Transfer Virginia portal with additional guides awaiting return from the Spring 2025 review cycle.

[Home | Transfer Virginia](#)

## Plan Strategy

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

### Plan Biennial Initiative

- I.6: Report on student choices and outcomes to ensure commitment to completion and student success:** Produce report on public and private postsecondary education outcomes and transparently communicate the results. Similarly, assess factors influencing an individual's decision to pursue/not pursue higher education.

### Previously Reported Actions

1. **Biennial postsecondary education outcomes report:** The first version of this report is in the planning stages to be completed late in the Spring 2025.
2. **Assessment of college-decision making among high school students:** SCHEV contracted with ODU's Social Science Research Center to survey 631 high school seniors on their decision-making process to pursue or not pursue higher education.

Key takeaways are: 1) Results for Virginia resemble those from national/other studies, 2) Most frequent reasons for not going to college include cost, perceived value/return on investment, perceived necessity/utility of a college degree, and not enjoying school and 3) Sources of information and messaging may be different for college-bound vs. non-college bound students.

### Updated actions to implement initiative

1. **Biennial postsecondary education outcomes report:** Completed.  
[https://collegeoutcomes.schev.edu/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=FactPack.\\_Home&inpUNITID=233277&pagecalled=FactPack.\\_Home&rdRnd=30876](https://collegeoutcomes.schev.edu/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=FactPack._Home&inpUNITID=233277&pagecalled=FactPack._Home&rdRnd=30876)
2. **Assessment of college decision making among high school students:** Completed; see Council [presentation](#).

## Plan Strategy

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

### Plan Biennial Initiative

- I.7: Automate Database for Private Postsecondary Education:** Automate database to improve reliability and increase productivity in regulation of private postsecondary education.

## **Previously Reported Actions**

1. **New database development:** The selected vendor is currently working through the Virginia Information Technology Agency (VITA) Enterprise Cloud Oversight (ECOS) requirements before SCHEV can sign a contract.
2. **Centralized “system of record”:** This activity requires the development of the database.

## **Updated actions to implement initiative**

1. **New database development:** After about a year into the VITA process, we found that the original vendor did not meet VITA’s SOC II requirements. As a result, we identified a new vendor, completed the information-gathering phase, and have received their proposal. The vendor will now begin working through the VITA ECOS process, which must be completed before we can move forward with an official contract. We have confirmed that the new vendor meets the SOC II requirement.
2. **Centralized “system of record”:** No updates at this time.

## **GOAL 3 – TRANSFORMATIVE: EXPAND PROSPERITY**

### **Plan Strategy**

**S8: Support experiences that improve students’ employment outcomes, income and community engagement.**

#### **Plan Biennial Initiative**

**I.8: Scale Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership (V-TOP):** Scale the Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership, launch new V-TOP initiatives that address barriers to work-based learning and evaluate progress/success to expand the statewide effort.

## **Previously Reported Actions**

1. **Statewide staffing agency:** V-TOP engaged 149 small to mid-size employers in fiscal year 2024. Eighty-three students were placed in an internship during the inaugural phase of the program.
2. **Employer Matching Funds:** V-TOP provided more than \$50,000 in wage fund matches to small to mid-size employers, supporting 83 students in the program at an average rate of \$16 per hour.
3. **Academic Data Governance Workgroup:** Achieved three major outcomes: V-TOP compiled data reflecting three academic years from [2019 to 2022](#); provided guidance on categorizing credit-bearing internships to ensure consistency in reporting practices; and established a framework of definitions and standards for work-based learning terminology. This work is the foundation for evaluating student internship experiences across the state.

## **Updated actions to implement initiative**

1. **Statewide staffing agency:** V-TOP engaged 248 small to mid-size employers in fiscal year 2025. Two hundred and sixty-three students were hired as interns, ushering in an increase of 216% of students hired as interns compared to the previous year.
2. **Employer Matching Funds:** V-TOP provided more than \$700,000 in wage fund matches to small to mid-size employers, supporting 263 students in the program at an average rate of \$18 per hour.
3. **Academic Data Governance Workgroup:** In AY 23-24, 24,092 students across 57 institutions participated in a credit-bearing internship. This was an increase of +4.28% from the previous academic year (23,103).

## **Plan Strategy**

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

#### **Plan Biennial Initiative**

- I.9: **Establish Criteria for High Demand Jobs:** In cooperation with the Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE) and institutions, work to establish criteria to define and incentives to address urgent labor market needs.

#### **Previously Reported Actions**

1. **Define “urgent labor market needs:”** SCHEV and VOEE are collaborating on a “Degree Program Alignment Report” that will identify labor market needs in Virginia for any identified potential degree program. The current anticipated timeline for release of the report is 4/1/2025.
2. **Incentive Development:** Awaiting outcomes of JLARC report on the efficiency of the higher education system and Academic Affairs Committee discussions on academic program evaluation priorities.
3. **Develop Teacher Preparation Degree Programs:** Round One, 2023-24, resulted in approval of 12 new education licensure degree programs for four institutions. Round Two will run in 2024-25 and culminate in approval of new degree programs at Council’s March 2025 meeting.

## **Updated actions to implement initiative**

1. **Define “urgent labor market needs:”** VOEE has completed its degree program profile for use in SCHEV’s new degree program approval process. It is now a required element for any new degree program submitted to Council for approval.
2. **Incentive Development:** Revised program approval process has been implemented. A revised program productivity review process is being developed with anticipated completion by the end of AY 2026. These process revisions must be completed prior to any incentive development.
3. **Develop Teacher Preparation Degree Programs:** Completed – March 2025 Council Meeting.

## Plan Strategy

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

### Plan Biennial Initiative

- I.10: Foster activities and partnerships that improve students' civic knowledge and their ability to contribute effectively to civic life.

### Previously Reported Actions

1. **Implementation strategies:** Fourteen institutions signed on as members of the 2024-25 SCHEV-Constructive Dialogue Institute (CDI) cohort (all 12 from 2023-24, plus two new ones).

Implementation has begun at several institutions that have incorporated CDI's *Perspectives* program into their orientation programming for new students.

2. **Community of practice:** Staff led a faculty learning community in Spring 2024 on "Integrating Dialogue Skills into Classroom Teaching," which included approximately a dozen faculty members from two- and four-year institutions.

Additionally, SCHEV is in regular communication with CDI staff and will coordinate a meeting of Virginia cohort representatives early in the Fall.

3. **Day of Dialogue events:** Completion of May 30 Day of Dialogue at Virginia Tech. Currently working with VMI and the College Debates & Discourse Alliance to offer another day-long program for Virginia educators on September 13, 2024, specifically on how to build a campus debate program using the non-competitive Braver Angels debate model.

4. **Presentations/ongoing discussions on this topic:** March 2024 presentation to Council about an initiative under way at Radford University to assess the civic awareness of incoming students so that university faculty and staff can design civic learning experiences that better meet students' needs.

### Updated actions to implement initiative

1. **Implementation strategies:** The SCHEV-CDI cohort had a successful implementation in 2024-25. Slightly fewer than 10,500 students participated in the program in Fall 2024 across the 14 cohort institutions, with an 88% completion rate. This is a substantial increase over Fall 2023, when just under 5,900 students participated with a 74% completion rate. Students in Fall 2024 demonstrated significant improvement on three key metrics: affective polarization, intellectual humility and finding common ground.

Unexpectedly (given the previous year's results), students decreased slightly in their sense of belonging and showed no change in negative conflict behaviors. These unusual findings were not unique to Virginia. The CDI research team suspects the November 2024 election may have influenced some of the results, especially considering that some institutions had completed their administration of the program before the election while others were still in process. Outcome findings were generally consistent across demographic groups based on gender, race/ethnicity, political views and sexual orientation.

Thirteen institutions have opted to continue in the cohort for the 2025-26 academic year.

2. **Community of practice:** A member of the CDI team convened four meetings of Virginia cohort representatives (including SCHEV) in AY25 to share experiences, strategies and concerns.
3. **Day of Dialogue events:** The College Debates & Discourse Alliance training at VMI in September 2024 drew more than two dozen faculty from both four-year institutions and community colleges across Virginia. As a result of that training, at least four institutions have introduced or expanded the use of debates in classroom and co-curricular settings. Three VCCS colleges teamed up to host the first intercollegiate community college debate in the nation in February 2025, involving more than 50 students and faculty.

The fourth Day of Dialogue on Civic Learning & Engagement was held at Longwood University in May 2025. As in past years, approximately 100 faculty and staff from dozens of institutions across Virginia participated. Responses to the post-event evaluation indicated that attendees were highly satisfied with the program and found great value in the presentations, discussions and networking opportunities.

4. **Presentations/ongoing discussions on this topic:** Council heard a follow-up presentation about Radford's initiative in May 2025.

Rectors of the public universities heard a presentation by SCHEV staff (Dr. Jodi Fisler) in August 2025 about initiatives related to civic engagement and civil discourse taking place throughout Virginia.

Virginia continues to participate as an active member of the Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement Coalition's Multi-State Collaborative, which now comprises 20 states.

**VA250's commemorations of U.S. independence:** As part of VA250's commemorations of U.S. independence, SCHEV has teamed up with VDOE, Braver Angels and the College Debates & Discourse Alliance (itself a partnership among the American Council of Trustees & Alumni [ACTA], Braver Angels and BridgeUSA) to coordinate a series of debates called "The Public Square." Public Square events will use the Braver Angels debate format and will bring together students from two- and four-year colleges, high school students, and local community members to debate timely issues that also touch on such long-standing themes as "a more perfect union" and "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." As of this writing, two Public Square events have been scheduled for Fall 2025, one at UVA and the other at VMI. At least five others are expected to be scheduled in Fall 2026. A culminating debate involving students from across the Commonwealth is being planned for Fall 2026, to be held in the Virginia State Capitol.