

Annual Progress Report

September 2025



VIRGINIA
**TALENT +
OPPORTUNITY
PARTNERSHIP**

CREATING PATHWAYS TO PROFESSIONS

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 1

Executive Summary.....2

Types of Internship Programs.....4

 Credit-Bearing Internships4

 Non-credit Internships Through the Matching Grants5

 Institutional Grants.....7

Career Readiness Initiatives 12

 V-TOP Modules 12

 Virginia Intern Day: Top Employers for Interns 14

 Mentorship Training for Employers and Students..... 15

 Professional Development Scholarships for Institutions and Students 15

Future Strategies 17

 Expanding the Definition of Work-Based Learning (WBL) 18

 Why This Matters 18

Executive Summary

The purpose of the Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership (V-TOP) is to expand paid and credit-bearing student internships and other work-based learning (WBL) opportunities in collaboration with Virginia employers. The program includes 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.

As enacted during the 2023 legislative session, § 2.2-2037 stipulates and requires:

The Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Advancement and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia shall jointly develop and implement strategies and collaborate with employers and higher education institutions to grow and expand the Innovative Internship Program established pursuant to § 23.1-903.4. The strategy shall include key measures of success, and they shall jointly develop an annual progress report that shall include information on the number of students placed in internship programs, the type of internship programs, and the number and type of participating employers. The report shall be delivered to the General Assembly, the Secretary of Education, and the Secretary of Labor annually by September 30.

This annual report from the Innovative Internship Program and Fund, also known as the Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership (V-TOP), details initiatives implemented throughout fiscal year 2025 to fulfill the program's purpose and goals. Initiatives include institutional grants, matching grants and modules to develop internship and career readiness for students, employers and institutions.

Through those initiatives, V-TOP was able to identify 45,572 students who participated in some type of internship (e.g., credit-bearing, non-credit, zero-credit; **see Table 1**).

Table 1. Number of Students Identified as Participating in an Internship by V-TOP Initiative

Initiative	Total Number of Students Identified as Participating in an Internship
Credit-Bearing Data	24,092
Matching Grant	248
Data Collection Grant	16,339
Student Support Grant	659
Impact Grant	4,234

Additionally, V-TOP experienced several successes in implementing initiatives throughout fiscal year 2025, including:

- A 4.3% increase in credit-bearing internship participation in AY 23-24 compared to the previous year (AY 22-23).
- Identified 5,314 students as completing a paid internship, with an average hourly wage of \$17.82.
- Supported 263 new student interns through the matching grants program, an increase of 216% from FY 24.
- Engaged 248 new employers through the matching grants program, an increase of 66% from FY 24.
- Administered 42 new grants to institutions through the Impact Grant to support increasing internship opportunities in Virginia.
- Supported interns in the high-demand occupation areas of: Healthcare, Information Technology and Production.

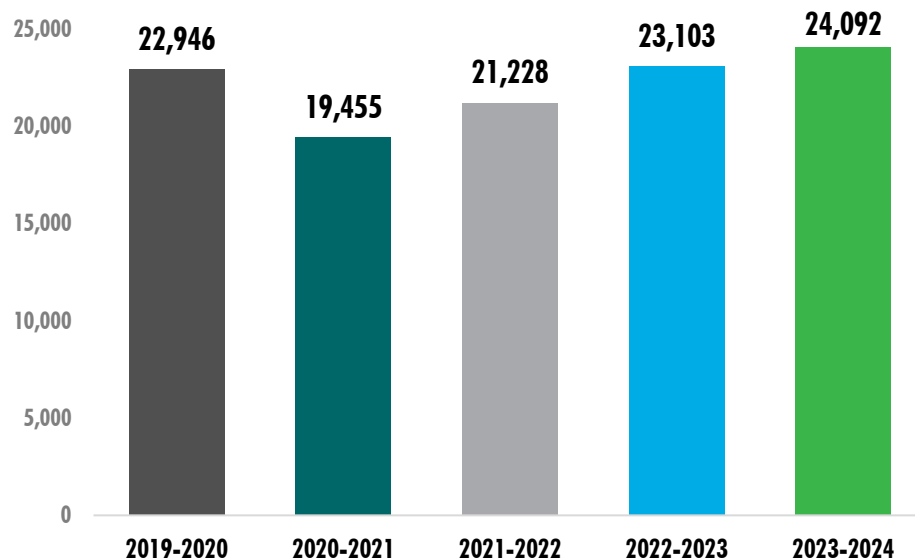
Types of Internship Programs

Credit-Bearing Internships

Students in Virginia can participate in credit internships through their institutions, so that students may receive course credit for their internship participation. Faculty or staff members of record lead these courses in collaboration with employers. Two-year and four-year public and nonprofit private institutions in Virginia who participate in TAG submit course-level and student-level data to SCHEV annually. V-TOP works with the SCHEV Policy Analytics team to identify internship courses using a course-type tag or title that includes "internship" or a similar variation.

In AY 23-24, 24,092 students across 57 institutions participated in a credit-bearing internship (**See Figure 1**). This was an increase of +4.28% from the previous academic year (23,103).

Figure 1. Number of Students Enrolled in a Credit-Bearing Course by Academic Year



Of the students participating, 58.9% were undergraduates and 41.1% were graduate students. In addition, most of these students completed their credit-bearing internship in the spring semester of AY 23-24 (40.9%).

A majority of the undergraduate students who completed credit-bearing internships were seniors (68.1%), which is consistent with AY 22-23 findings. This finding is also consistent with national data, which suggests that seniors are the most likely undergraduate year to

complete an internship compared to other undergraduate years (Strada National Survey of College Internships, 2023).

While credit-bearing internship data offers several insights into internship participation in Virginia, there are limitations. One drawback is that information about employers, industry-type or location of internship is not collected due to the current reporting structure. However, institutions overwhelmingly report that credit-bearing internships are the most reliable source of internship data when compared to non-credit opportunities.

Non-credit Internships Through the Matching Grants

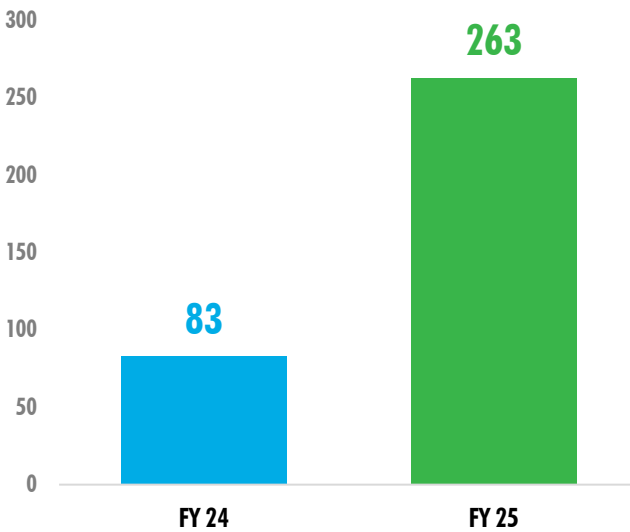
V-TOP supported small to midsize employers of 150 or fewer with free recruitment and hiring assistance, and through the matching funds program covered 50% of student intern wages and subsidies, such as housing, transportation or clothing assistance. To help support this initiative, VTOP contracted with iQuasar, a Northern Virginia company with 18+ years of experience providing recruitment, IT solutions and digital marketing for public and private small- and medium-sized businesses and government contractors. The staffing agency's support provides:

- A centralized system for tracking internship placement activities.
- Small businesses with hiring and recruitment assistance.
- A consistent cadence for processing student payroll.

Small businesses in Virginia that employ 250 or fewer personnel and that have limited-to-no internal human-resource functions can receive assistance from the staffing agency in recruiting and onboarding students for internship opportunities. In addition, Virginia-based small businesses with 150 or fewer employees may be eligible for a matching grant of 50% of a student's wage plus FICA and any subsidies, such as housing, transportation, clothing or meal allowances. To qualify, a business must: (i) be registered with the Virginia State Corporation Commission; (ii) be a non-profit or for-profit organization; and (iii) complete a "Developing an Internship Program" training session.

During FY 25, 263 students across 41 institutions were hired as interns through the matching grants program. These internships were non-credit, paid positions designed to expand access to work-based learning opportunities, a 216% increase from the previous year (FY 24), when 83 students were hired as an intern (see Figure 2).

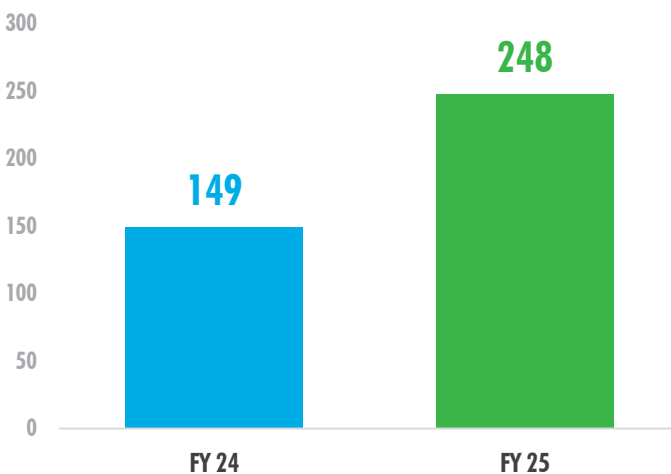
Figure 2. The Number of Students Hired as Interns Through the Matching Grants increased by 216%



Participating Employers in Matching Grants Program

In addition to an increase in the number of students hired, the number of employers who were approved to participate in the matching grants program, and those who hired an intern increased in FY 25. About 248 employers went through the steps to become eligible to participate in the matching grants program, representing an increase of 66% from the previous year (See Figure 3). Out of those 248 employers, 129 hired an intern in FY25.

Figure 3. The Number of Employers who Engaged in Matching Grants Increased by 66%



Of the 129 employers who hired an intern in FY25, about 79% of them were a for-profit business, with non-profit organizations comprising the remaining 21%. The industry type of employers who hired through the matching grants varied.

The top industries were:

1. Consulting – Business
2. Economic Development
3. Non-Profit
4. Manufacturing
5. Food & Beverage

Outcomes from Matching Grants Program

On average, students who were hired as interns through the matching grants program participated in their internship for about 3.6 months, or one semester. Of the 263 students who were hired in FY 25, 118 (or 44.8%) completed their internship during summer 2025, 69 in the fall and 68 students in the spring semester. Additionally, 100% of matching grant internships were paid, with students earning an average of \$18.13 per hour, well above Virginia’s minimum wage. Multiple students received pay increases over the course of their internship.

Students and employers who participated in the Matching Grants program in FY 25 were asked to complete a survey about their experience. The surveys were distributed in May 2025. In total, 28 students (out of 116 active interns) and 31 employers completed surveys.

Both students and employers reported positive benefits from participating in the Matching Grants program. About 78% or more of student interns shared that their understanding of the industry, training they received and confidence in the workplace was above average or higher after completing the internship. Over 50% of student interns said that their internship helped them gain experience in communication, professionalism, teamwork, career development and critical thinking. Over 85% of employers shared that their intern’s skills at the end of the internship and contributions to the team were “above average” or higher. Additionally, 90% of employers indicated they would consider hiring their intern as a full-time employee.

Institutional Grants

V-TOP implemented various institutional grant programs to enhance data collection, remove financial barriers for students and broaden access to internships and work-based learning opportunities throughout Virginia. Institutional grants also helped to capture

types of internships, which include credit-bearing, non-credit, zero-credit and other transcriptable internships or work-based learning opportunities.

Data Collection Grant:

The data collection grant assisted institutions in collecting, compiling and reporting data on students' internships. Grant funds were distributed in FY 24, and the grant period ended in FY 25. This one-time grant was only available to public institutions in Virginia. Twelve public institutions received up to \$100,000 each in V-TOP funding to support collecting, compiling and reporting data on students' internships.

The data collection grant provided funding to institutions to support data collection and tracking of student internships on and off campus. As a result of the grant funding, 100% of the 12 institutions created and implemented a tracking mechanism for student internships.

Tracking mechanisms include:

- Career Works
- Symplicity
- Handshake
- Qualtrics surveys
- 12Twenty
- uConnect

Across the 11 institutions who reported, 16,339 students were identified as completing an internship between February 2024 to February 2025. Of those internships, 5,051 were identified as a paid internship, with an average pay rate of \$17.90 per hour.

Half of the institutions were able to report on students who were offered full-time employment through their internships. These students were graduating and interested in gaining full-time employment. It was reported that 192 students became full-time employees through their internships. This was about 33.1% of graduating students in the sample gaining full-time employment through their internship.

Grantees also tracked their interactions with employers on campus. Across seven institutions that reported, about 25,089 employers recruited students for internships at their respective institutions.

Across the 10 institutions that reported, students completed their internships with employers representing more than 59 industries. Most frequent industries that hosted student interns across reporting institutions included:

- Food & Beverage
- Government - Local, State & Federal
- Healthcare
- Manufacturing
- Information Technology

Grantees reported that one major success of the data collection grant was funding for new positions, infrastructure and tracking mechanisms. Almost all the grantees had no tracking mechanism in place to collect data on internships. The grant allowed for a centralized approach to better understand internships for some of the reporting institutions. For other institutions, the foundation for a centralized approach has been built, but more work is needed.

Student Support Grant:

The student support grant assisted students who experienced a barrier in completing or participating in an internship. Grant funds were distributed in FY 24, and the grant period ended in FY 25. This one-time grant was only available to public institutions in Virginia. Twelve public institutions received \$100,000 each in V-TOP funding to assist students who experienced a funding barrier to complete their internship.

In the final report, institutions reported that from February 2024 through February 2025:

- The grant removed barriers for students, such as clothing, housing and transportation.
- 659 students obtained an internship through grant assistance, earning an average hourly wage of \$17.66.
- 56 students became full-time employees through an internship.

Many grantees reported that 100% of the funds went directly to supporting high-need students, some of whom would not have been able to participate in an internship without the help of the student support grant funds. One student who was supported by the grant reported, *"The grant funding is essentially and the only reason I was able to take this internship opportunity in the first place. Had I not received funds, I would have had to forgo this internship in favor of a job that was paid but provided no field/career experience."*

Impact Grant:

This grant assisted institutions in developing and implementing coordinated plans to expand internship and work-based learning participation. V-TOP offered several levels of funding to institutions: Vision, Capacity-Building and Scaling. Funds for this grant were

distributed in FY 25. The vision grant was open to public and four-year private, non-profit institutions participating in the Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG) program. The capacity-building grant was open to four-year public, four-year private, non-profit institutions who already received a vision grant, and Richard Bland College. The scaling grant was open to four-year public institutions. All grant levels were open to two-year public institutions that are a part of the Virginia Community College System. This grant series will be available again to institutions for application in November 2025.

In total, 42 institutions were awarded an [impact grant](#) to expand internship and work-based learning participation. Two private institutions were awarded Vision Grants (\$25,000 each), 14 public and private institutions were awarded the Capacity-Building Grant (up to \$150,000 each), and 3 public institutions were awarded the Scaling Grant (up to \$250,000 each). Additionally, the Virginia Community College System received the Vision and Capacity-Building Grant (23 institutions).

Impact grant awardees reported in the interim report that from January 2024 through July 2025:

- **4,234** students engaged in an internship (n = 16 reporting institutions).
- **622** students participated in a paid internship (n = 9 reporting institutions).
- **3,424** students engaged in a work-based learning activity (n = 12 reporting institutions).
- **485** students became full-time employees through an internship (n = 7 reporting institutions).
- Top five industries where students engaged in an internship:
 - Healthcare
 - Automotive
 - Information Technology
 - Consulting – Business
 - Higher Education

In addition to tracking V-TOP standard metrics, grantees are using the Impact Grant funds to:

- Hire key personnel to solely support student and employer engagement in internships and work-based learning activities.
- Develop Internship Centers.
- Develop new credit-bearing internship courses.
- Provide professional development to staff and faculty.
- Develop or maintain employer and community partnerships.

Regional Collaborative Grants:

This grant supports [regional collaborative](#) efforts to connect employers to students and ensure the readiness of employers, students and institutions. This grant was available to public institutions and higher education centers. Eight public institutions and one higher education center received \$125,000 each to engage employers and students across the Commonwealth.

Across nine regions, 190 events were held to engage employers, students and institutions, and facilitate the readiness of those stakeholders in FY 25. These events were intended to connect regional employers to students, create networking opportunities and promote work-based learning in the region.

Each region also maintained a stakeholder group, hosting meetings between two to 11 times throughout the year. Major accomplishments from regional stakeholder groups included:

- Served as an advisory group; provided feedback, support, promoted events and networked on behalf of regions.
- Helped plan or co-host V-TOP events.
- Created implementation plan for region.

Career Readiness Initiatives

V-TOP Modules

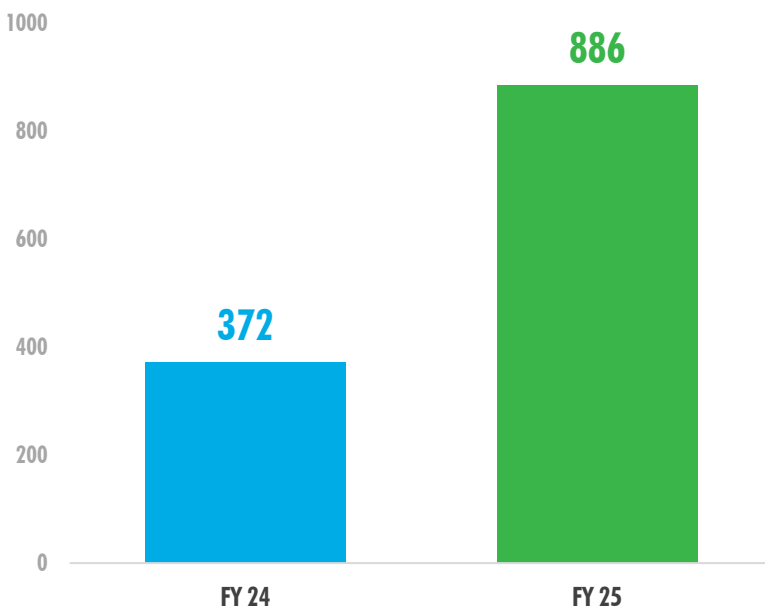
To help promote the purpose of facilitating the readiness of students, employers and institutions of higher education to participate in internship and work-based learning, V-TOP developed and maintains free courses for students, employers and educators. Each course contains modules that help each stakeholder prepare for or develop an internship opportunity.

V-TOP offers several courses about internship readiness for employers, educators and students:

Developing an Internship Program: Designed for employers, this course walks businesses through how to host a successful internship program.

In total, there were approximately 1,352 individuals enrolled in the “Developing an Internship Program” course. Of those enrolled, 886 identified as a business or organization. Approximately 514 new businesses or organization enrolled in the “Developing an Internship Program” course compared to FY 24. Course enrollment increased approximately 138.2% compared to FY 24 enrollment (See Figure 4).

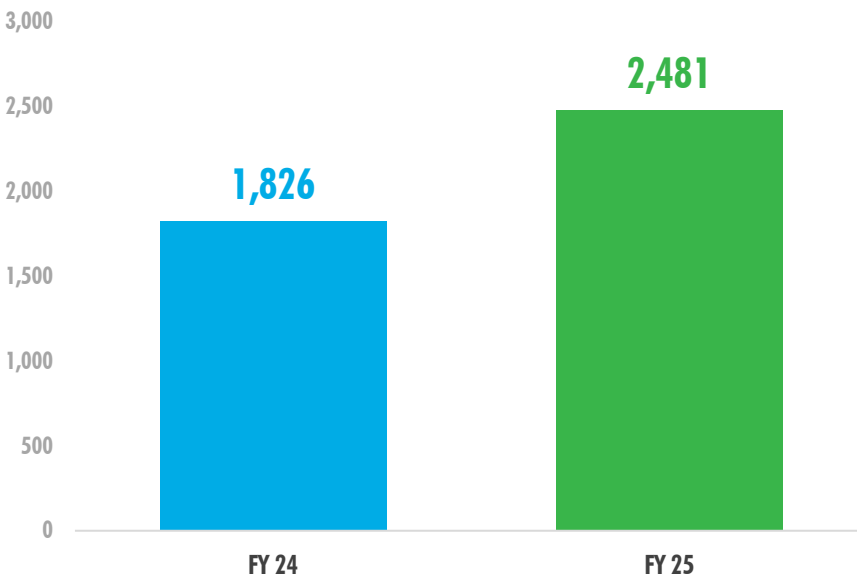
Figure 4. The Number of Employers who Enrolled in "Developing an Internship Program" Course Increased by 138%



Becoming a Career Champion: Designed for educators, this course supports educators in developing mentoring skills and practices to support students' career success. The "Career Champion" course for educators, faculty and staff launched in FY 25. Throughout the year, 84 educators enrolled in the course. Some institutions have integrated this resource into their training for staff.

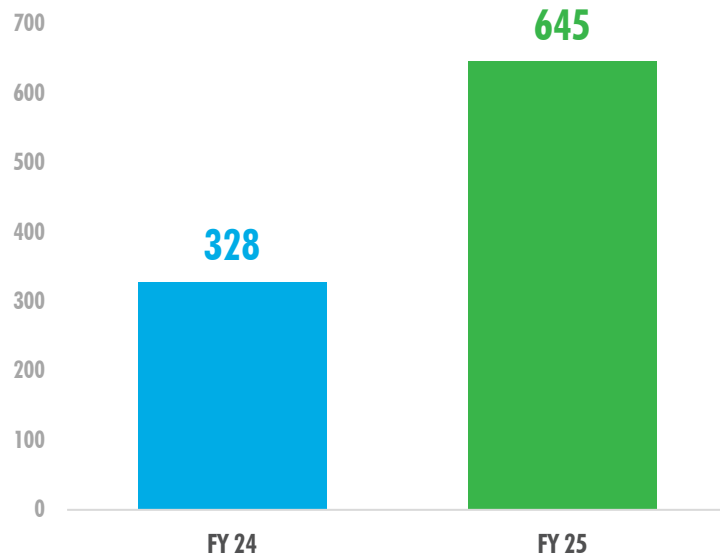
Developing Career Readiness Skills: Designed for students, this course helps students prepare for participating in an internship. Career Readiness has 2,481 students enrolled. Of those enrolled, approximately 655 students are new users, which is a 35.9% enrollment increase from FY 24 (See Figure 5). Multiple Virginia institutions integrated Career Readiness courses into existing curriculums or an add-on resource for students.

Figure 5. The Number of Students who Enrolled in "Career Readiness" Course Increased by 35%



Student Internship Toolkit: Also designed for students, this course covers how to create tools, such as a resume, and realize strategies for seeking an internship. Student Toolkit, which was launched in FY 24, has 645 students enrolled. Of those enrolled, 317 students are new users, which is a 96.6% enrollment increase from FY 24 (See Figure 6).

Figure 6. The Number of Students who Enrolled in "Internship Toolkit" Course Increased by 96%



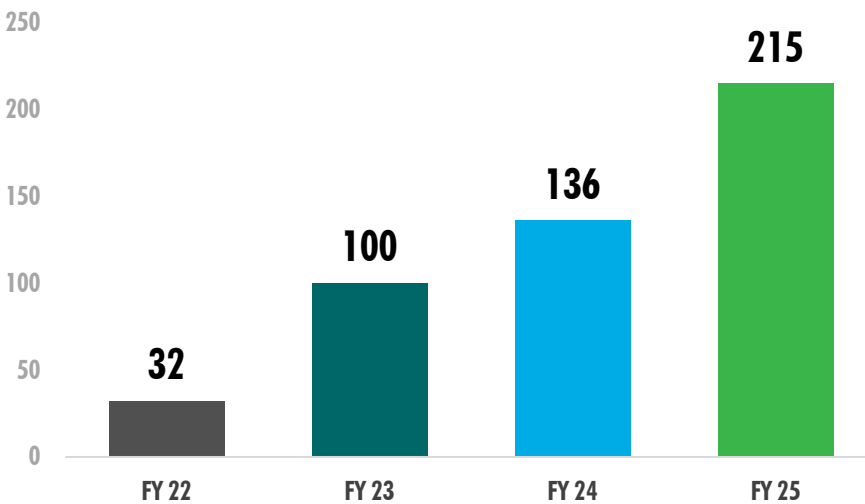
Stakeholders report benefiting from completing the modules, with one employer stating: “The modules made us think about how to better define our program goals and develop learning outcomes for the interns. The modules are essential whether you've previously hosted interns or are entertaining the idea for the first time.”

V-TOP is working in FY 26 to collect additional outcomes related to completing modules.

Virginia Intern Day: Top Employers for Interns

Annually, V-TOP hosts Virginia Intern Day to celebrate Virginia interns and Virginia top employers for interns. Top employers must be nominated and meet several criteria to be recognized as a top employer for interns. These employers provide high-quality internships to college students around the Commonwealth.

In FY 25, 215 employers were recognized as top employers for interns, an increase of 58% from FY24 (**See Figure 7**). Participation from Virginia employers has been steadily increasing over the past four years, as the program continues to grow.

Figure 7. The Number of Top Employers for Interns Recognized Increased by 58%

Top employers spanned the range of small (41.9%), mid-size (16.3%) and large businesses (41.9%). The majority (63%) of top employers hosted interns for an average of eight to 13 weeks, or the traditional length of a semester. Of the 215 top employers, 84% offered their intern a paid experience.

Top employers also offered benefits to their interns: 98% of top employers offered some type of mentorship to interns; 100% offered some type of perk to interns (e.g., volunteer opportunities, meetings with senior leadership, team lunches); and 65% of top employers offered some type of benefit to interns (e.g., paid volunteer or service learning time, paid time off, 401k contribution, paid sick leave).

Mentorship Training for Employers and Students

V-TOP partnered with [Mentor Virginia](#) to offer free training sessions to businesses and students to help them learn more about mentorship. The Mentor Virginia training sessions were designed to promote internship and career readiness for students, employers and educators throughout Virginia. In the training, employers learned “to expand the web of quality relationship support and social capital that students need.”

In total, 63 mentor training sessions were held in FY 25, with 944 participants across the sessions.

Professional Development Scholarships for Institutions and Students

Scholarships for professional development were offered to professionals whose career involves connecting students, institutions of higher education and employers with the goal

of expanding paid and credit-bearing internship and other work-based learning opportunities. It also awarded scholarships to graduate students majoring in Education, Counseling/School Psychology, Human Services/Social Work or Human Resources, preparing for careers that enhance work-based learning opportunities for students.

In FY 25, 16 educators were awarded professional development scholarships to support career professionals who work to increase work-based learning opportunities for students.

Educators were able to attend various conferences and summits to develop new network connections, access current recruitment and hiring trends, and learn and share best practices. Educators attended professional development events including the Virginia Association of Colleges and Employers Conference, the National Association of Colleges and Employers Conference and the Eastern Associate of Colleges and Employers Conference.

Future Strategies

Virginia's 2025 budget amendments made several adjustments to the Innovative Internship Fund and Program (the Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership). The budget language reads:

...In furtherance of the goal of providing all postsecondary students in Virginia with one or more paid internships during their undergraduate course of study, funding shall be used for: (a) institutional grants to enhance engagement with employers related to internship placement and to assist students in securing and successfully completing internships, including students that traditionally do not participate in such programs; (b) administrative and other expenditures to accomplish the purposes of the Innovative Internship Fund and Program and this paragraph.

The budget language also directs funds from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) to the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) to manage and oversee the matching grants program. SCHEV and VEDP have worked closely together to develop an MOU and begin transitioning the program.

In addition to the direction to provide institutional grants to support initiatives, the budget language also reads that:

...the Council shall (i) engage stakeholders from business and industry, secondary and higher education, economic development, and state agencies and entities that are successfully engaging employers or successfully operating internship programs; (ii) cooperate with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and identified partners in carrying out the authority's responsibilities under Item 113.T for employer-focused activities that expand availability of and access to paid and credit-bearing internships and corresponding pathways leading to full-time Virginia-based employment; (iii) explore strategies in Virginia and elsewhere on successful institutional, regional, statewide or sector-based internship programs; (iv) gather and report consistent data across institutions regarding current institutional internship practices, scale, and outcomes; (v) develop internship readiness educational resources, delivery methods, and outreach and awareness activities for students and institutional career development personnel; and (vi) pursue shared services or other efficiency initiatives, including technological solutions.

The focus of FY 26 for SCHEV and V-TOP has been on issuing institutional grants, such as the Impact Grant series and the Institution-led Regional Partners grant. These grants will help facilitate the increase and access to paid and credit-bearing internships and other work-based learning activities. SCHEV and V-TOP are also capitalizing on the

grants to increase the use of internship readiness educational resources, such as the V-TOP modules for students, employers and institutions.

Expanding the Definition of Work-Based Learning (WBL)

SCHEV and the Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership (V-TOP) are [expanding the definition of work-based learning](#) to better address the needs and goals of today's students. Traditionally, work-based learning has primarily focused on internships. However, SCHEV and V-TOP now promote a variety of strategies, including internships and "high-impact, low-lift" approaches, that integrate career development in more flexible and accessible formats for all students in Virginia. These strategies include:

- **Micro-internships** – short-term, paid professional projects that deliver real-world experience in a flexible format.
- **Project-based learning** involves classroom-embedded projects where students solve real-world problems, thereby building job-ready skills such as communication and problem-solving.
- **Transformed work-study jobs** – on-campus roles redesigned to include career-relevant tasks and structured professional development.

Why This Matters

Expanding work-based learning options allows more students to gain meaningful experiences without the barriers associated with traditional internships. According to a national survey, "97% of business leaders advocate for the expansion of work-based learning opportunities in colleges and universities" ([Northeastern University](#)). These strategies also promote equity and skill-building: over 80% of micro-internships hosted through [Parker Dewey](#) are completed by students from underrepresented backgrounds, and project-based learning has been shown to create "long-term, positive impacts enhancing key skills such as communication, cultural awareness, confidence, and self-efficacy" (University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute). Additionally, work-study jobs are convenient, reduce commuting time and "help fund a student's education while building transferable skills that enhance a resume" ([Indeed](#)).

By diversifying and reframing work-based learning, SCHEV and V-TOP are creating more pathways for students to connect their education with career opportunities.

V-TOP is also working closely with the V-TOP advisory board and the Virginia Office of Education Economics to develop and refine program metrics. These metrics will be finalized in FY 26 and will be reported in the next fiscal year.

SCHEV and V-TOP will continue to focus on legislation's expectations and directives of issuing institutional grants, providing internship readiness educational resources and engaging stakeholders.