

VCCS Six-Year Plan Strategies

Creating a Culture of Completion and Addressing Virginia's Hiring Challenge

This document provides an overview of the major strategies included in the VCCS Plan. The narrative is revised to reflect funding appropriated by 2016 Acts of Assembly. Other funding in support of these initiatives will continue to be pursued from multiple sources including state, federal, gifts, and grants and through reallocation of existing resources.

Priority 1: Triple Community College Degree, Diploma and Certificate Completion by 2021: (a) Create Structured Pathways to Success, (b) Implement Stackable Credentials, (c) Improve Student Readiness and Onboarding, (d) Increase Change Management Capacity among Campus Leaders, (e) Invest in Outcomes-Based Funding, (f) Establish Veterans Advising Programs and (g) Increase Community College Designations as Cybersecurity Institutions of Excellence [Priority 1 - \$6.6 million in FY 2017 and \$9.1 million in FY 2018]

Post-secondary credential attainment is the priority for higher education in Virginia. In addition to Executive Order Twenty-Three which calls for increased attainment of STEM-H credentials and SCHEV's strategic objective of achieving a 60.5% degree attainment (associates degree or higher) for individuals ages 25-64 by 2030, the VCCS State Board for Community Colleges has adopted a bold strategic goal of tripling credentials earned by 2021. To meet this goal, VCCS will identify and scale best practices for student success in programs that lead to credentials with workplace value across the Commonwealth.

Students who complete a degree will gain skills that make them more employable, higher paid, and stronger contributors to the workforce and community. A person who obtains a two-year degree can net an additional \$500,000 (\$28,750 additional in state taxes per student) in a lifetime. First generation students can double their previous income with a degree. While lower levels of education have been linked to increased levels of crime, poverty, unemployment, and uninsured healthcare, higher education attainment is positively correlated with higher levels of volunteering, voting, donating blood and civic engagement.

To increase student success, with a particular emphasis on students in underserved populations, the VCCS will use appropriated state funds towards priority implementation of one or more of the following strategies (*\$2.42 million in FY 2017 and \$2.02 million in FY 2018*)

- Create Structured Pathways to Success that clearly map program pathways, keep students on track, and avoid overspending financial aid funds and state resources on courses that don't count. Many new community college students do not know what they want to major in, but they are forced to select a program of study in order to be eligible for financial aid. Without a clear plan for completion, they take unnecessary courses that exhaust their financial aid eligibility and extend their time to completion. Recent research analyses (Community College Research Center, MDRC's study of CUNY/ASAP, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Completion by Design) indicate that

colleges that develop structured program pathways with limited elective options and that provide intensive support services have significantly increased student retention and completion outcomes.

VCCS Structured Pathways to Success strategies will include the following:

- Meta-Majors: By grouping similar program majors into a smaller number of meta-majors (such as health sciences, STEM, business technologies, arts & humanities, and public safety), colleges will create more efficient schedules that provide students with foundational courses while helping them explore careers and program majors. VCCS colleges will analyze program requirements across several similar majors to create class schedules that guide and optimize students' enrollment. Upon admission, a student will be guided through assessments to identify a broad career field of interest and will select a meta-major upon enrollment. After completing 15 hours in the meta-major, students will be required to select a specific program major and degree level.
- Redesigned Math Pathways: VCCS wants to better align math requirements with the needs of programs of study rather than defaulting students in to college algebra (which is not required for most careers). Math pathways will be aligned with meta-majors. Examples include calculus for STEM, technical math for applied technologies, statistics for allied health and social sciences, statistics and brief calculus for business, and quantitative math for liberal arts pathways. VCCS will convene math and program faculty from Virginia community colleges and four-year universities to review and revise these pathways.
- Co-requisite Developmental Math: VCCS's developmental education redesign has already proven that more students are placing college ready and completing college-level English and math in one year than were doing so before the redesign. The developmental English redesign allows students who place near college-ready to co-enroll in college English and a supplemental developmental course; as a result, 70% more students are completing college English in their first year. VCCS will implement a similar co-requisite developmental math course for students who place near college-ready in math to support their acceleration into college math.
- Develop Policies and Practices that Promote Credential Stacking and Completion in Support of Virginia's Credential Attainment Goal – VCCS will leverage faculty and administrator expertise to develop policies and practices that promote efficient credential attainment by removing barriers to completion and stacking curriculum, embedding credentials in coursework, and articulating credit for industry certifications earned. Consideration will be given to implications for accreditation. Recognized third party credentials that help standardize the curriculum across the

Commonwealth will be embedded in occupational and technical tracks to create Stackable Credentials. (*\$100,000 reallocation of existing resources in each year*)

- Implement Enterprise Student Support System Solution- Community colleges students' onboarding processes are often confusing for underserved and first-generation college students, especially in colleges with student-to-advisor ratios of 1500 to 1. As a result, 48% of students who submit applications do not complete the enrollment process. Additionally, 40% of students who do enroll drop out during the first semester, and 60% who complete one semester fail to return in subsequent semesters. Due to funding limitations, community colleges cannot add enough personnel to improve the student onboarding and retention processes.

Enterprise technology solutions can provide customized, just-in-time information to students to streamline admissions and registration processes while freeing up frontline staff to provide support to underserved, at-risk students. Students who prefer self-service options will not have to come to campus, stand in long lines, or run around campus from office to office to complete their registrations. By keeping students on track and providing advisors with updated information about these students, colleges can increase enrollment yields and improve retention and progression. The VCCS has started to provide these types of solutions with a consolidated financial aid/student accounts help desk implemented on July 1, 2015.

- Identify Additional Measures of College Readiness, such as completion of the Advanced Studies diploma or SOL scores. VCCS placement testing policy requires all degree-seeking students to take the Virginia Placement Test, even those who graduate in the top of their high school class. Research from Community College Research Center indicates that other measures can better predict a student's success in college. VCCS plans to conduct research and develop policies to support multiple measures for placement. In partnership with Virginia's Department of Education, VCCS will develop and implement technology tools to support the seamless downloading of high school transcript data to support these placement decisions. In addition, VCCS will improve data sharing with VDOE to better align student pathways for career technical majors, explore the option of providing the Virginia Placement Test to rising high school juniors in the Standard Diploma track, and partner with school divisions to remediate students who are not college-ready. (*\$250,000 reallocation of existing funds in each year*)
- Scale Proved Student Success Strategies System-Wide through a Year-Long, Cohort-Based Professional Develop Student Success Leadership Institute designed to support comprehensive institutional change. To build the foundation for achieving the Complete 2021 completion goal, a culture shift needs to take place on each campus. We cannot expect dramatic changes in student success outcomes if

we continue to do business as usual. To prepare campus administrators and faculty leaders for the change process, the VCCS will provide professional development focused on increasing data-informed decision-making strategies and removing unintended student success barriers. A team from each college will learn from national experts, evaluate their individual college data, examine current policies and practices on their campus that might be barriers for student success, and develop an action plan for implementing change strategies to support increased student retention and completion. (*\$200,000 reallocation of existing funds in FY 2017*)

- Incentivize Outcomes-Based Funding with a new allocation in FY 2018. Many states have moved to Outcomes-Based Funding Formulas to Increase Accountability for State Funding. With community college completion as the number one priority, the VCCS has created a funding formula that incentivizes college completion by rewarding colleges for achieving momentum point measures that lead to achievement of degrees, diplomas, and certificates. VCCS has engaged in an extensive 18-month effort to develop the model, which will be implemented in FY 2017 with a reallocation of \$37 million from the existing E&G funding. Without increasing the E&G funding, some colleges whose performance improves during the implementation year may lose money if they do not improve as much as other colleges. New funding will provide motivation to achieve the full impact of outcomes-based funding and reward colleges that have achieved the following student success outcomes used in the funding formula:
 - Completion of developmental education courses
 - Completion of gateway math and English courses with a C or better
 - Retention of students who return the next semester and subsequent semesters
 - Progression of students who earn 12 or 24 college level credits with a GPA 2.0
 - Completion of a degree with additional points for underserved populations
 - Student transfer to a four year institution after completing at least 16 credits

A portion of new state funding will be distributed to the colleges through the outcomes-based funding formula and dedicated to support student success programs. (*\$2.9 million in FY 2017 and \$5.8 million in FY 2018*)

- Establish Veterans Advising Programs (VERITAS) creating seven new veteran's representative positions at each of the seven colleges with the greatest enrollment of military veterans. The veteran's representative will be a dedicated position located in a veteran's resource center. The representative, preferably a veteran with postsecondary educational experience, will work with students to provide support services from pre-enrollment to graduation. The representative ideally will possess a deep understanding of military culture/experiences coupled with a successful postsecondary educational career. Additionally, the representative will work closely with other support service areas on the campus including the GI certifying official,

admissions, advising, orientation, tutoring, and registration. (*\$1.1 million in both FY 2017 and FY 2018*).

- Increase Community College Designations as Cyber-Security Institutions of Excellence with appropriated funding. Currently, three Virginia community colleges (Northern Virginia, Lord Fairfax, and Tidewater) have been designated a NSA Centers of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance (CAE/2Y). The 2016 Appropriation Act provides funding to establish a cybersecurity program director for the VCCS, and curriculum development support to help all of Virginia's community colleges offer coursework in cybersecurity. These resources will assist in identifying additional needs necessary to ensure all community colleges become cybersecurity centers of excellence. (*\$280,000 in FY 2017 and \$152,000 in FY 2018*)

Priority 2: Addressing Virginia's Hiring Challenge

In response to a directive in item 213 #1c of the 2015 Appropriation Act, Chancellor Glenn DuBois led a series of more than 20 town hall meetings across the Commonwealth in which more than 1,500 Virginia business and other community leaders identified outcomes based solutions to expand the number of workforce training credentials and certifications to a level needed to meet the demands of Virginia's workforce. Based on evidence from the Chancellor's town hall tour, the analysis of economists, surveys of business, and research conducted by JLARC, it is clear that the Commonwealth's businesses face a significant challenge in hiring skilled workers, particularly for occupations that require more than a high school diploma and less than a bachelor's degree.

With broad support from Virginia's business community, industry organizations, chambers of commerce, a bi-partisan coalition of legislators, and the Governor in response to the recommendations in "Workforce Credentials: The Pathway to Virginia's New Middle Class," legislation approved in the 2016 Session established a first-in-the-nation funding formula for noncredit workforce training leading to industry credentials, based on performance and outcomes rather than enrollments. The 2016 Appropriation Act includes general fund support of \$4.0 million in FY 2017 and \$8.0 million in FY 2018 in the SCHEV budget to fund the new Workforce Credentials Grant (WSC) program.

The WSC program will provide funding to address this persistent hiring challenge, and allow Virginia's community colleges to:

Expand Capacity in Pathways to Industry Certifications and Licenses that Bridge the Skills Gap – First, but by no means the only, concern identified by business and community leaders is a persistent skills gap experienced by business in filling middle-skill occupations – particularly those occupations that require more training and education than a high school diploma but less

than an associate's degree. These skills are most frequently captured and signaled by the possession of an industry certification or license and most efficiently attained through noncredit workforce training, which currently receives a very modest amount of state investment. With direction and support from the business community, Virginia's Community Colleges will pursue a funding formula that, after an initial investment to initiate and expand needed short-term training programs, invests only when students of Virginia's Community Colleges successfully complete training and go on to earn an in-demand or high-demand industry certification or license, thereby creating a pay for performance model of funding the short-term industry certifications and licenses most sought by Virginia's employers of middle-skill workers.

Expand Need-Based Financial Aid for Noncredit Instruction Leading to In-Demand and High-Demand Industry Certifications and Licenses – The same Chancellor-led town hall tour and engagement of more than 1,500 business and other community leaders that was precipitated by a directive in item 213 #1c of the 2015 Appropriation Act also identified a strong need for additional need-based financial aid for noncredit instruction leading to in-demand and high-demand credentials, thereby addressing what may be termed the affordability gap. Building on the \$1,075,000 investment made by the General Assembly and Governor – at the request of SCHEV – in the starting in FY 2016, the expansion will bring what is now a pilot at six colleges to the full system of 23 community colleges and provide much needed access to training for low- and modest-income Virginians who seek the skills needed to gain access to middle-class wages thereby enhancing Virginia's income tax withholdings, the primary source of revenue in the Commonwealth. (*\$900,000 in additional state aid will increase non-credit financial aid to \$2.0 million in FY 2017*).

- Address the Interest Gap – There is a significant gap between good-paying careers with job openings today and Virginians who are aware of and pursuing those opportunities. Targeted outreach and research-based communications efforts must be made to close this “Interest Gap” and connect individuals with the short-term training programs that will enable them to secure the middle class jobs available often within their own community. (*\$100,000 each year. Approved in the 2016 Appropriation Act in the Economic Development Services Program.*)
- Provide Business with a Ready-to-Work Workforce – In recent years the voice from business and industry has become louder that there is not only a shortage of technically skilled workers, but also a deficit of workers with the right soft skills or employability skills that makes even a technically competent candidate ready-to-work. Responding to increased concerns expressed by business leaders from across the Commonwealth, Virginia's Community Colleges are undertaking an initiative to (1) Identify sustainable strategies to promote a system-wide focus on and approach to addressing employability skills with students; (2) Identify the most effective and efficient models to teach, assess, and credential employability skills that could be reasonably implemented system-wide; and (3) Propose an outlined implementation

plan to include a timeline and activities. (*\$250,000 reallocation of existing funds in FY 2017*)

- Improve Industry Certification and License Tracking to Meet Virginia’s Credential Attainment Goal – Develop and implement sustainable strategies – inclusive of policy, technology, and data sharing agreements – to track industry certification and license completions of Virginia’s Community College students thereby setting the stage for further refining policy and practice that promotes efficient credential completion for in-demand and high-demand occupations to meet Virginia’s credential attainment goal. (*\$300,000 reallocation of existing funds in each year*)
- Respond to Virginia Business & Industry Training and Education Needs -- Leverage workforce partnerships and labor market analytics to predict employment needs across the Commonwealth and strategically implement degree, diploma, certificate, and certification programs to prepare individuals for middle-skill jobs that meet short- and long-term workforce and economic needs, in areas such as Cybersecurity, Computer & Information Systems Technology, Mechatronics, Healthcare, Engineering Technologies, Construction Technologies, Protective Services, and Transportation Technologies.

Priority 3: Ensure College Affordability and Transfer Success

- With rising tuition and book costs, community college students often lack the financial resources to enroll full-time and achieve their educational goals. Strategies that can help reduce college costs and help students manage resources more effectively include development of technology tools that facilitate credit for prior learning; implementation of “default” course enrollment technology tools; expansion of Open Education Resources, and development of “Aid like a Paycheck” financial aid models. [*Priority 3 - \$900,000 in FY 2017 and \$480,000 in FY 2018. Approved in the 2016 Appropriation Act in the Economic Development Services Program.*]

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- Create a Veteran’s Portal to provide veterans and military personnel with the ability to upload transcripts and identify credit-for-prior-learning options within VCCS. This technology will help recruit more veterans to Virginia’s community colleges while accelerating their pathway into the workforce. In addition to creating a Veteran’s Portal, VCCS will develop policies and guidelines for the awarding of credit for prior learning for students who have completed workforce industry-recognized credentials. (*\$900,000 in FY 2017 and \$480,000 in FY 2018*)

- Create Program of Study Course Enrollment Tools to ensure that students are not paying for unnecessary credits and to meet the U.S. Department of Education's financial aid requirements for programs of study. The Department of Education does not allow federal financial aid to be used for courses outside of a student's program of study; colleges that award financial aid for these courses are subject to audit penalties. VCCS proposes to create "default" course registration protocols in the student registration system so that students cannot enroll in courses outside of their program of study without an advisor's approval. Doing so will provide efficiencies while saving money for colleges and students. (*\$200,000 reallocation of existing funds in FY 2017*)
- Expand Open Education Resources across all VCCS colleges to save textbook costs and develop cost effective ways of maintaining the materials. Tidewater Community College's "Z Degree" is proven to save students money and increase course retention and program completion. (*\$200,000 reallocation of existing funds in FY 2017*)
- Increase State Aid. More than 41% of VCCS students received financial aid in 2013-14. State aid is especially important for students who fall into low or middle-income ranges and do not qualify for full federal aid. Recent data show almost \$102 million of unmet need exists for middle income students enrolling in the VCCS. Additionally, 79% of VCCS students classified as middle income have some level of unmet financial need.
- Develop "Aid like a Paycheck" Financial Aid Strategies to distribute smaller amounts of aid in periodic increments instead all at the beginning of the semester to help students progress academically and better manage their money. MDRC research studies show that "Aid like a Paycheck" results in higher rates of persistence, credit accumulation, and credential and degree attainment.
- Ensure Transferability of VCCS Courses. VCCS students in Virginia need to know that their credits will count when they transfer, and they should not have to pay for the same credits twice. VCCS will partner with SCHEV to conduct a study to understand what happens to transfer credit and ensure that courses designed for transfer do transfer for course credit. To improve course transfer success, VCCS will also partner with the transfer universities who accept the majority of VCCS transfer students to identify common courses that transfer for course credit to each of the senior institutions.

Because the majority of students (71%) transfer before completing the associate degree, and many never complete a baccalaureate degree, VCCS will partner with senior institutions to implement "Reverse Transfer" technology tools and policies. According to National Student Clearinghouse, tens of thousands of Virginians have

some college but no degree. Reverse transfer and degree audit technology tools will enable the transfer of university credit back to the community college for the awarding of an associate degree for students who transferred before completing the degree. (*\$150,000 reallocation of existing funding in each year*)

Priority 4: Expand Institutional and Learning Analytics to Support Data-Informed Decision Making

With limited resources, VCCS needs to develop the capacity to identify and support students in the “murky middle,” those who have the potential for success but who meet identified risk factors for dropping out. Georgia State University and other colleges and universities have demonstrated significant increases in student completion with predictive analytic strategies that support development of structured, data-driven interventions such as course redesign, supplemental instruction, and learning communities.

Expand VCCS’s capacity to use and access data to describe and predict student entry, progression and completion through enhancing its current institutional predictive analytics capabilities. This system will work with Wizard, the SAILS early alert system, and Blackboard Learn data to measure and analyze student progression and outcomes. VCCS will also develop customized dashboards and reports to measure and analyze college performance toward VCCS accountability metrics and the state attainment goal and provide access for administrators and faculty to key indicators of student success. [*Priority 4- \$1.0 million in FY 2017 and \$1.3 million in FY 2018*]

Priority 5: Increase Faculty and Staff Salaries

This plan builds in modest salary increases of 3 percent in FY 2017 and 2 percent in FY 2018 to recognize the value and importance of faculty and staff in meeting the Complete 2021 strategic goal. (*3 percent salary increases for faculty and staff appropriated by the state in FY 2017.*)

Priority 6: Increase Educational Attainment in Rural Virginia for Economic Prosperity

Studies show that high school students who have had work experience prior to entering college are more successful in their postsecondary education and training. By exposing students to work-based learning, including soft skills development, coupled with the coaching goal of establishing credential plans, students will be more likely to know what credentials are required and to pursue them. The Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative is a joint program with the community colleges' foundations and the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education aims to (1) double the percent students in rural Virginia who earn a postsecondary credential and (2) cut in half the percent of rural Virginians who fail to earn a high school diploma by providing

full-time career coaches in rural high schools and providing a \$1,000 scholarships for use at a community college as an incentive for citizens who did not finish high school to obtain a GED. The full time coaches will expand career and postsecondary education planning services to earlier grades, engage with parents and facilitate student engagement in work-based learning. *[Priority 6 - \$250,000 each year. Approved in 2016 Appropriation Act in the E&G Program]*

Priority 7: Improve Efficiency and Effectiveness of Administrative Services to Focus Resources on Mission-Critical Programs

The VCCS has conducted a benchmarking study of administrative processes system-wide, which resulted in a list of initiatives that could improve business processes and operations. A more detailed evaluation identified the following initiatives to improve accountability and leverage opportunities in support of the VCCS strategic plan:

- Fully implement Strategic Sourcing to improve procurement process efficiency, leverage buying power with improved coordination, and provide expertise across system
- Implement Shared Services to deliver administrative and support services more effectively and perhaps at a lower cost.
- A preliminary roadmap has been developed with the schedule and estimated resources needed to roll out the shared services over a four to six year period. Beginning July 2016, the VCCS will launch its new Shared-Services Center in Daleville, Virginia. Led by the recently hired shared services director, the Center will deliver targeted financial, human resources and procurement services to community colleges and the system office in FY 2017, while continuing to plan and roll-out additional offerings into FY 2018. The initial investment in systems and process improvements would yield an ongoing opportunity to re-invest existing resources in mission critical and strategic operations and initiatives. The VCCS will reallocate resources to support Center operations and continued program implementations in FY 2017. *(Priority 7 - \$4 million reallocation of existing funds in FY 2017 and \$6.0 million in FY 2018)*