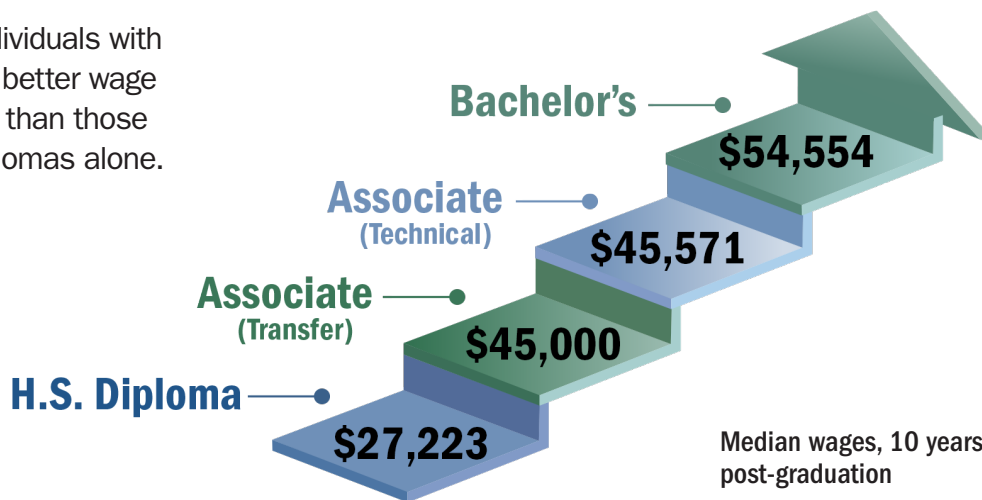


# THE VIRGINIA PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION Update

**Q:** Does higher education pay?

**A:** Wages increase with educational attainment.

After graduation, individuals with degrees experience better wage outcomes over time than those with high-school diplomas alone.



Median wages, 10 years post-graduation

## Findings

**MEDIAN WAGES:** Ten years after graduation from a Virginia institution, students with a bachelor's degree can expect to earn a median annual wage twice that of someone with a high-school diploma only. (Wage earnings vary by degree level and major type.)

**SUSTAINABLE WAGES:** Three years after graduation, 72% of Virginia graduates working in the Commonwealth earn sustainable wages (above \$23,540).

**CREDENTIALS:** Individuals with a workforce credential (industry certification or state licensure) earn one-third more than those without: \$1,007 per week vs. \$747, respectively.

**TAXPAYER BENEFITS:** People with degrees pay more in taxes and need less government support. On average, associate and bachelor's degree-holders paid an additional \$172,128 and \$381,051 in net taxes over their lifetimes, respectively, compared to just \$25,938 for those with a high-school diploma.

**HEALTH & OTHER BENEFITS:** Individuals with an associate degree or above are 38% more likely to have employer-provided health insurance and those with a bachelor's degree or above are 72% more likely to have a retirement plan.

*Sources: SCHEV staff analysis of wages; Bureau of Labor Statistics; Lumina Foundation, "It's Not Just the Money: Benefits of College Education to Individuals and Society," U.S. Census Personal Income tables.*

## Considerations

**PROMOTE VALUE:** Programs and resources for Virginia's secondary and adult students can help educate them on the important opportunity costs associated with higher education.

**INCREASE GUIDANCE:** Higher education pays off over the lifetime of an individual. Supporting efforts to help students identify careers that align interests and meet demand will grow the economy.

**SUPPORT CREDENTIALS:** Workforce credentials such as industry certifications can position an individual for better earnings and employment outcomes.

**ABOUT THIS SERIES** A five-part series highlighting the Virginia Plan for Higher Education's Annual Report — a statewide plan for the Commonwealth to be the best-educated state by 2030. Learn more at [www.schev.edu/VaPlanReport](http://www.schev.edu/VaPlanReport)

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STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA