State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

EQUITABLE
Close access and completion gaps.

$ AFFORDABLE
Lower costs for students.

BEST STATE FOR EDUCATION

TRANSFORMATIVE
Expand prosperity.

Pathways to Opportunity:
The Virginia Plan
for Higher Education
2023 Annual Report

December 2023

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 2023 Annual Report summarizes the three statutory goals, key findings from an assessment of where Virginia stands relative to the statutory goals, as well as upcoming and recent activities that directly support *Pathways to Opportunity (The Plan).*
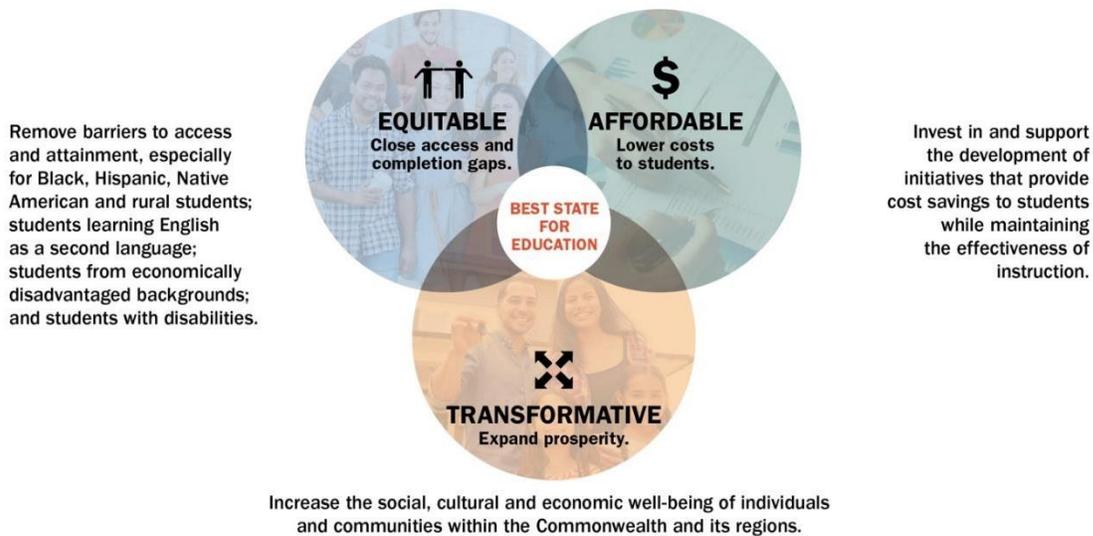
BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

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.

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.

Remove barriers to access and attainment, especially for Black, Hispanic, Native American and rural students; students learning English as a second language; students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds; and students with disabilities.

EQUITABLE Close access and completion gaps.

AFFORDABLE Lower costs to students.

BEST STATE FOR EDUCATION

TRANSFORMATIVE Expand prosperity.

Invest in and support the development of initiatives that provide cost savings to students while maintaining the effectiveness of instruction.

Increase the social, cultural and economic well-being of individuals and communities within the Commonwealth and its regions.

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, recent activities and upcoming initiatives that support *Pathways to Opportunity*.

2023 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 will start collecting data pertaining to students with disabilities.

Data from the 2019-2020 academic year served as the baseline from which to measure progress toward achieving *The Plan's* three goals. Given the ambitious goals and yearly tracking of progress, improvement should be evident over time. Year-over-year changes will not likely be significant but gradual, ideally in a positive trajectory.

The following summarizes key findings from the most recent measures data for the 2021-2022 academic year. The key findings identify data relative to the baseline and whether the data indicate improvements, movement in the wrong direction or no change.

With the exception of the attainment data, the four other measures reference data for all undergraduate students in Virginia. Refer to Appendix B for further explanation and detailed charts illustrating the key findings.

Summative findings: The most recent data (2021-2022) were largely unchanged from the baseline year (2019-2020) data with a few notable changes – persistent attainment gains, a few declines (male enrollment/black degree awards) and overall decrease in the percent of students borrowing and increase in overall wages 10 years post-completion.

2023 Summative Findings

- Attainment Gains of 2%

- Large gains among:
  - ➢ White Males & Females
  - ➢ Middle Income

- Male Enrollment Decrease of 1%

- Degrees Awarded to Black Students Decreased by 1%

- Decrease in Student Borrowing

- Average Loan Amount Steady

- Wage Increases for Majority of Subgroups

Key findings from the most recent data (2021-2022):

Attainment: The percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds with an associate degree or higher. While total attainment increased two percentage points from 2019-20 to 2021-22, 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 (unchanged from 2019-2020). **White attainment increased by five percentage points** since 2019-2020 (from 54% to 59%).

- By region of origin - Southside and Southwest Virginia (unchanged from 2019-2020).

- By income - Lower income (unchanged from 2019-2020). **Middle income attainment increased by four percentage points** from 2019-2020 (from 37% to 41%).

- 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: Fall headcount of public and private undergraduates. The following undergraduate enrollment gaps exist:

- By race/ethnicity – Black, Hawaiian Islander/Pacific Islander and White (unchanged from 2019-2020). The percent of enrolled non-resident alien students decreased one percentage point from 2019-2020 (from 3% to 2%).

- By region of origin – Hampton Roads and Shenandoah Valley (unchanged from baseline). Richmond (unchanged from 2020-2021).

- By income – Middle income (unchanged). The percent of enrolled low income students decreased one percentage point from 2019-2020 (from 24% to 23%).

- By gender – Men (unchanged). **The percent of enrolled male students decreased one percentage point** from 2019-2020 (from 44% to 43%).

Awards: 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 – **Black (percent of total awards decreased one percentage point).** The percent of total awards decreased from 14% to 13% while the percent of enrolled black students held constant. Multi-Race (unchanged). Hispanic/Latinx exhibited a success gap in 2019-2020 but not for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years. In 2020-2021, an Asian gap existed and closed in 2021-2022.

- By region of origin – Greater Richmond, Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia (unchanged).

- By income – Lower income (unchanged).

- By gender – Men (unchanged).

Borrowing: Average debt of graduates. Those groups with the largest percentage of undergraduates who are borrowing include:

- By race/ethnicity – Black decreased by seven percentage points since 2019-2020 (from 46% to 39%) and Race/Ethnicity unknown decreased by eight percentage points (from 42% to 34%) compared to 2019-2020. Generally, the percentage borrowing decreased in most every group when compared to the 2019-2020 baseline. Average loans stayed largely within $1,000 of the 2019-2020 base year.

- By region of origin – Hampton Roads. However, the percentage borrowing in Hampton Roads has decreased by six percentage points when compared to 2019-2020 (from 35% to 29%).

- **By income – Middle income. However, the percentage borrowing has decreased by 13 percentage points when compared to 2019-2020** (from 67% to 54%).

- By gender – Women. The percentage borrowing has decreased by four percentage points when compared to 2019-2020 (from 34% to 30%).

The above groups with the largest percentage of undergraduates who are borrowing remained unchanged from 2019-20 to 2021-22. However, the percentage of students borrowing decreased across the board for each group.

Wages: Graduates' wages 10 years after graduation. 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).

Despite the persisting gaps above, when compared to the prior reporting period, **wages did increase across all groups except for Race Unknown (decreased compared to 2019-2020 median from ~ $64,900 to $63,400) and Hispanic which stayed flat (median at ~$65,000).**

SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

Biennial 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 first slate of priority initiatives in September 2021. In turn, those biennial priority initiatives aligned with applicable budget and policy recommendations necessary to implement those actions. Appendix C provides details about these priority initiatives, their relationship to The Plan's strategies and the status/completion of supporting actions over the past two years.

After an iterative input process, on October 24, 2023, Council endorsed the newest slate of initiatives that replace the 2021-2023 initiatives. Upon adoption, staff implementation began immediately. The new slate of priority initiatives and supporting actions to implement can be found in Appendix D.

The following section summarizes select, related activities in 2023.

Recent Activities

SCHEV engages in various activities that directly support *Pathways to Opportunity*. The following information summarizes some of these efforts as they relate to *The Plan* and its three goals.

Goal 1 - Equitable higher education

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

College Access and PK-12 Outreach

SCHEV successfully implemented several key initiatives as part of its ongoing partnership with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Office of Specialized Student Services:

- Established a Memorandum of Understanding that facilitated a shared position, the Postsecondary Access & Success Specialist, to bridge secondary and postsecondary transitions.

- Secured funding through various sources, including the federal Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate programs (GEAR UP) grant, Virginia529's Access and Affordability Initiative and the General Assembly's investment in the Guidance to Postsecondary Success Program.

- Administered the GEAR UP Virginia grant, serving **12 of Virginia's highest need school divisions** and assisting **over 8,000 students** with college preparation interventions and financial aid including: tutoring and mentoring; summer programs, targeted teacher professional development; financial aid workshops; college visits; career and college counseling; academic services; and outreach.

Source: https://www.levelupvirginia.org/about-us/gear-up

- Unveiled the Level Up Virginia initiative to coordinate statewide college access programming. This initiative includes various student-facing events like College Nights in Virginia, Virginia College Application Week, FAFSA Next and Decision Day VA, professional development for educators and a Middle School Campus Visit Project.
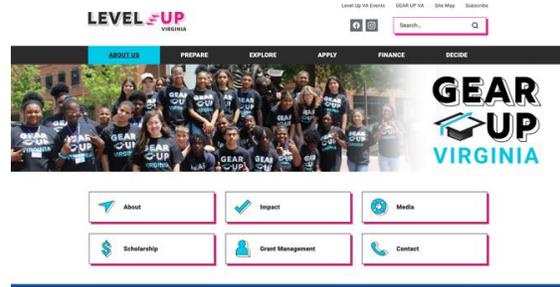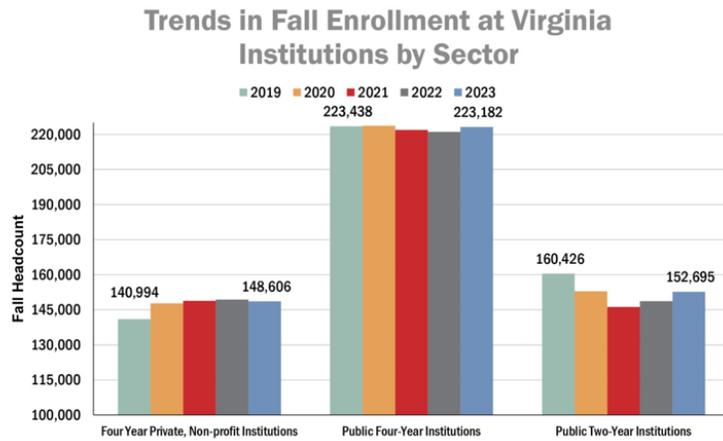
- Launched the levelupvirginia.org website, a comprehensive resource for students, families and educators.

- Convened a 10-member advisory board, with representatives from SCHEV, VDOE, VA529, higher education, K-12 and college access organizations to guide the above efforts and work to develop a shared enrollment goal, a FAFSA completion goal and an associated collaborative work plan.

College Decision-Making, Access and Enrollment

In December, SCHEV released its analyses on college decision making and enrollment. "What We Know About College Decision Making" compiles data from nearly a dozen research reports to provide insight into the decision process of high school students. More than 75% of Virginia high school students plan to pursue some level of post-secondary education after graduation, but the analysis notes that many factors influence that decision including costs, stress, career uncertainty and opportunity costs. In addition, students from low-income families report that each step in the decision process is filled with various obstacles and uncertainty.

Next steps include obtaining additional insight from Virginia high school students to identify and understand the reasons behind students' choices, particularly those who opt not to pursue higher education after high school. Such insight can

Trends in Fall Enrollment at Virginia Institutions by Sector

2019 2020 2021 2022 2023

223,438   223,182

140,994   148,606

160,426   152,695

Four Year Private, Non-profit Institutions   Public Four-Year Institutions   Public Two-Year Institutions

Source: SCHEV, E02 Fall Headcount & Early Enrollment Estimates
Data accessed November 2023.
Public two-year data still repliminary and doest not include non-credit workforce training

inform future institutional and state-level access efforts and outreach.

Enrollment at Virginia's colleges and universities largely recovered this fall from the significant drop that occurred during and immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a recent SCHEV Insight analysis. In fall of 2023, Virginia institutions reported 524,483 students enrolled, 375 fewer, or just 0.07% than in 2019. The number of students enrolled at public four-year institutions this fall is roughly the same as before the pandemic. Enrollment at private non-profit institutions exceed 2019 levels by about 5% while the public two-year institutions are down roughly 5%.

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

SCHEV/Online Virginia Network Alumni Data

SCHEV successfully matched the universe of identified Some College, No Degree (SCND) students with data from the National Student Clearinghouse and AlumniFinder to identify **142,622 Virginia residents** who have earned at least one credit since 2010 and have not completed a college credential. Next, a VCU team will conduct a survey of those individuals to identify what it would take to get those Virginia residents to complete their degree through the Online Virginia Network (OVN). OVN includes Virginia's community colleges and the online learning platforms for three universities: Old Dominion, George Mason and James Madison. OVN strives to help more people finish their degree online in Virginia. Earlier this year, OVN provided an overview of their work to Council.

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

Virginia Higher Education Mental Health Workforce Pilot

The two-year higher education mental health workforce is a combined workforce and mental health initiative established by the General Assembly in 2022. Appropriated funds underwrite the salary and benefits of an onsite licensed professional counselor or licensed clinical social work candidate at on campus mental health care facilities until licensed. In late 2022, competitive pilot grants were awarded to six public universities: Christopher Newport, George Mason, James Madison, Longwood, Radford and Virginia Tech.

Year one preliminary impacts conclude:

- The six candidates have collectively: served **425 students**; completed more than **1,965 clinical hours;** and obtained **2,285 hours of supervision** in the first 12 months, thereby <u>doubling the impacts</u> reported in June 2023.

- Select, related feedback includes:
  - *"For the first time in recent history, the wait time for a session was never more than three business days."*
  - *"The candidate provided 50 hours of intake crisis coverage and allowed for 35 additional initial therapy appointments that otherwise would not have been provided."*
  - *"… licensed staff can now concentrate on providing services and interventions to high-needs and high-risk students."*

AT-A-GLANCE
The Mental Health Pilot has… ● **Funded an onsite LPC/LCSW candidate at six public universities.** ● **Provided services to 425 students.** ● **Led to the completion of 1,965 clinical hours.** ● **Resulted in 2,285 supervision hours.** ● **Supported Virginia by hiring residents and graduates of Virginia master's programs.**

- Students have had <u>consistently positive experiences</u> receiving services from the six candidates (based on student-client satisfaction survey data).

- The pilot institutions hired candidates who graduated from Masters of Counseling (5) and Masters of Social Work (1) programs at Virginia higher education institutions. All candidates are Virginia residents.

- Based on the year one results as of December 2023, SCHEV staff reached the opinion that the program should be: (i) advanced from pilot status to permanent status and (ii) funded sufficiently to underwrite at least one candidate at each four-year public institution.

Virginia Mental Health Access Program

SCHEV continued to collaborate with the Virginia Mental Health Access Program (VMAP) in in the development of webinars for continuing medical education credit. Course development took place in 2023 and registration opened in early December. During the 2024 spring semester, SCHEV and VMAP will deliver two separate webinars (ADHD on January 17 and Depression on May 15). The webinars, designed for on-campus health care professionals, aim to improve the participant's ability to diagnosis and treat these common conditions in college-aged youth. This front line training expands the capacity of campus-based mental health services to students. **More than 60 on-campus health care professionals participated** in the May 2022 training on anxiety.

Goal 2 - Affordable higher education

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.

Pell Initiative

SCHEV awarded nearly **$25 million** to the four-year public institutions to address and improve success rates among low-income Pell-eligible students. The funded initiatives will take place over a four-year period of time. In August 2023, the General Assembly approved an additional **$12.5 million** to be awarded during the current year. With these additional funds, SCHEV will work with Virginia's two-year colleges and some of the four-year institutions who had lower cost initial proposals.

Expanded Financial Aid for Undocumented Students

 Virginia provided access to state aid for undocumented students beginning with the 2022-23 award year. SCHEV contracted with a vendor, Regent Education, Inc., to create a state-based student financial aid application (the Virginia Alternative State Aid Application - VASA) that, like the FAFSA, produced an expected family contribution (EFC) equivalent. Over 1,000 students completed the 2022-23 VASA application; more than **1,674 students have completed 2023-2024 applications to date.** This year, Regent is making changes to the VASA application

to remain consistent with the new federal FAFSA. The new VASA application will be available no later than mid-January 2024.

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

Transfer Virginia

Transfer Virginia, a collaborative initiative between Virginia's two-year and four-year institutions, SCHEV and VCCS, provides transparency and access through the college transfer process from two-year colleges to specific majors at four-year schools. Highlights and activities this year include:

- Updating the Transfer Virginia portal with **nearly 200 transfer guides**, applicable to all 23 community colleges and to 16 different public and private four-year colleges.

- Onboarding the remaining four public and six private four-year institutions.

- Implementing common curricula in 12 new disciplines, while reviewing and developing common curricula in an additional 18.

Source: https://www.transfervirginia.org

- Tracking Transfer Virginia portal usage: the portal is averaging **~ 8,000 new unique users each month**.

- Launching Transfer Boost in collaboration with HCM Strategists and selecting five to six institutions to improve completion rates for underrepresented students through transfer guarantee practices.

- Conducting research to evaluate the qualification threshold for the Transfer Grant.
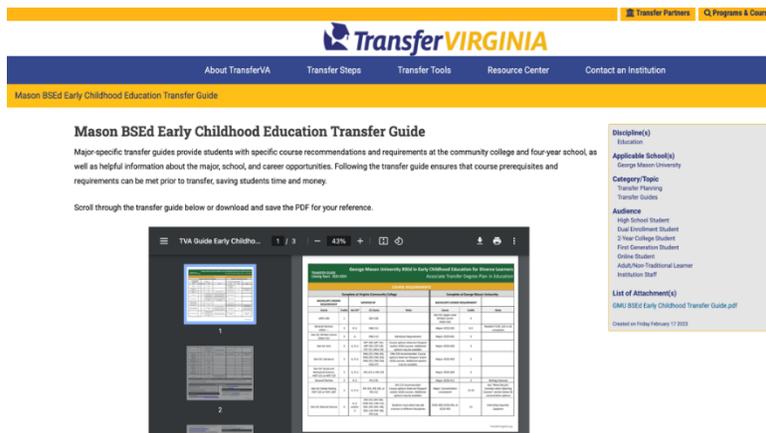
Get Skilled, Get a Job, Get Ahead

The G3 – Get Skilled, Get a Job, Get Ahead program makes tuition-free community college available for low- and middle-income students who pursue jobs in high-demand fields. SCHEV was involved in the design and funding of this program which supports *The Plan's* equitable and affordable goals.

Highlights from the 2022-2023 academic year report indicate:

- **69% (8,772)** of the G3 students enrolled in credit programs that lead to a postsecondary degree or certificate, while **31% (3,904)** were enrolled in noncredit Workforce Credential Grant (WCG) programs that lead to a third-party licensure or certification. 82 students enrolled in both credit and WCG programs during the year.

- **48% of the enrollments were in healthcare programs**, while the remaining 52% consisted of enrollments in information technology, manufacturing and skilled trades, early childhood or public safety.

- **84%** of G3 students enrolled during Fall 2022 **continued or completed** during the year.

- The median wage of Academic Year 2022 G3 academic program completers increased by **95% from pre- to post-completion (more than $11,000 higher** than those who left prior to completion).

VCCS G3 Awards and Completions (AY 2022-23)

		Awards
Credit Programs	Assoc. of Applied Science	1,125
	Certificate (1-2 years)	257
	Certificate (<1 year)	1,358
	Diploma	59
	Sub-total	2,799
WCG Noncredit Programs	Third-Party Credential	1,996
	WCG Course Completions	3,177
	Sub-total	5,173
Total		7,972

	Pre-Enrollment Wages		Post-Completion Wages	
	# Students	Median Wages	# Students	Median Wages
Completers	888	$19,216	1,138	$37,498
Non-completers	2,120	$18,648	2,547	$26,352

Source: https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2023/RD387/PDF

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

General Assembly Investments in Higher Ed

Due to the General Assembly's unprecedented state investments made in higher education in the last two years, tuition and fee increases at Virginia public institutions have remained low for the last three years. In the 2022 session, the Governor and General Assembly provided the largest state investment in higher education in history – **more than $1 billion** in additional general fund for the 2022-24 biennium.

The large investment included partial funding for annual salary increases (five percent). To mitigate the need to raise tuition and fees to support the salary increases, the state provided **$143 million per year** to institutions' affordable access funds and **$245 million in additional aid** to support students. The most recent data (including already enacted and Fiscal Year 24 budget amendments) from SCHEV's analysis of the Appropriations Act identifies the **$80 million** increase in Education and General funds that impacts tuition. Financial aid funding for students increased **42%** from FY2023 to FY 2024.

Program	General Fund Appropriations (in millions)		FY 2023 to FY 2024 Annual Change	
	FY 2023	FY 2024	Amount	Percent
E&G	$2,203	$2,283	$80	4%
Financial Aid*	$473	$671	$198	42%
Other Higher Ed	$322	$339	$18	6%
Total	$2,998	$3,294	$296	10%

Note: *includes Higher Education Student Financial Assistance program; Two-Year College Transfer Grant; Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents program; Tuition Assistance Grant; New Economy Workforce Credential Grant; Pell Initiative, HBCU financial aid etc.

Source: https://schev.edu/research-publications/reports-publications/2022-23-tuition-fees-report

Cost and Funding Needs

SCHEV staff proposed the Council recommend funding to address base budget disparities at three institutions. Staff based its proposal on peer groups established in SCHEV's Cost Study for Higher Education. Addressing base budget disparities establishes an evenhanded base appropriation for all institutions and serves as a starting point for future discussions of a funding model for higher education. This adjustment supports Council's new priority initiative and staff's support of the work of the joint subcommittee on Higher Education Funding Policies, to review and improve funding models.

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

Fund for Excellence and Innovation

Established in 2016, SCHEV's Fund for Excellence and Innovation (FFEI) focuses on two primary activities:

1. Stimulate collaborations among public school divisions, community colleges and universities and to expand affordable student pathways and

2. Pursue shared services and other efficiency initiatives at colleges and universities that lead to measurable cost reductions.

In Fall 2023, the third competition focuses on The Plan's third goal: TRANSFORMATIVE. Teams of institutions and educational organizations submitted proposals in December; the award announcement will occur in January 2024.

Of particular interest in the 2023 FFEI grant competition are proposals that further the creation and coordination of student-focused AI activities within postsecondary education, and/or between postsecondary and secondary education, in: (i.) student outreach; (ii.) academic integration; and/or (iii.) labor-market alignment related to artificial intelligence. The goal is furthering the readiness of Virginia's current students and future generations for work and life involving artificial intelligence in support of The Plan's transformative goal and [Executive Directive Five](#) (ED5).

Management and analyses of outcomes from the prior FFEI rounds are underway. Staff recommend providing an update to Council on the prior rounds and new round in 2024.

Miscellaneous Activities/Programs

Multiple programs and activities referenced throughout this report foster program and administrative innovations that enhance quality, promote collaboration and improve efficiency. These are summarized/cross-referenced below.

- College Access (page 6)
- SCHEV/VMAP Medical Professional Training (page 8)
- TransferVA portal and resources (page 10)
- V-TOP (page 14)
- Constructive Dialogue Institute Community of Practice Cohort (page 16)

Goal 3 - Transformative higher education

S8. Support experiences that improve students' employment outcomes, income and community engagement.

Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership (V-TOP)

In 2018, the Virginia General Assembly appropriated funding to SCHEV to stimulate public colleges and universities to develop partnerships to provide innovative paid internship opportunities for their students. In 2019, the effort expanded and enacted into law as the Innovative Internship Fund and Program ([Va. Code § 23.1-903.4](#)). Through a partnership

with the Virginia Chamber Foundation, the program was rebranded in 2020 as the Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership (V-TOP) and later included the Virginia Business Higher Education Council (VBHEC).

V-TOP intends to expand paid and/or credit-bearing student internships and other work-based learning opportunities in collaboration with Virginia employers. The program comprises institutional grants and a statewide initiative to <u>facilitate the readiness of students, employers and institutions of higher education</u> to participate in internship and other work-based learning opportunities. A summary of V-TOP ongoing activities is provided in the adjacent graphic. <u>The Federal work-study transformation grants, work-ethic curriculum grants, staffing agency, matching funds for small businesses, mentorship training and data governance all launched in 2023.</u>

Focus on Readiness | What Does V-Top Do Exactly?

INSTITUTIONAL READINESS
- Regional collaborative grants to institutional partnerships in all nine GO Virginia regions
- Vision (presidential) grants
- Grants for transforming Federal Work Study (FWS) into internships, as well as a FWS toolkit
- Work-ethic curriculum grants
- Scholarships for practitioners' professional development

STUDENT READINESS
- Free online modules for career-readiness
- Student internship toolkit
- Annual statewide "Virginia Intern Day" recognition
- V-TOP's website (www.virginiatop.org)
- Regional events to connect with employers

EMPLOYER READINESS
- Free online modules for employer-readiness
- Employer internship toolkit
- Staffing agency to support small businesses' back-office WBL activities
- Matching funds for small businesses with paid interns
- Mentorship training for intern supervisors
- Recognition of Top Employers for Interns" during "Virginia Intern Day"

STATE AND REGIONAL READINESS
- Establishing standards and metrics for internships and other work-based learning
- Consultations with state, regional, and institutional stakeholders

Moving forward, current activities will be assessed and scaled. The program budget will increase from $5 million to **$12 million** in FY2024. Two additional full-time V-TOP staff were hired in 2023 resulting in **four total full-time staff dedicated** to scaling V-TOP, assessing progress, measuring success and strategically planning for V-TOP's next areas of emphasis.

Day of Dialogue

SCHEV staff organized a "Day of Dialogue" at the University of Mary Washington on June 5, 2023. Day of Dialogue events facilitate cross-institutional conversations about high-quality civic learning and engagement. More than **60 higher education leaders attended** the event with the intention to explore best practices for community and civic engagement and establish a shared framework that includes strategies to foster effective dialogue across differences on campus. The next Day of Dialogue event is scheduled for May 30, 2024, at Virginia Tech.

Staff also are in the early stages of identifying appropriate contacts at the Virginia Department of Education, school divisions and K-12 social studies associations. These

contacts will present to Council and provide a clearer picture of how civics is taught in Virginia.

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

Development of Teacher Preparation Degree Programs

Pending Council's endorsement of the new slate of priority initiatives, staff developed a process to create and distribute specialized guidance for program proposals that streamlined required information, and specified that the primary justification for the proposed academic program must document *both* (i.) that the proposed degree program would address a licensure/endorsement area for which there is a current shortage in Virginia, *and* (ii.) that the proposed degree program would enable the proposing institution to increase its production of educators in that licensure/endorsement area. This process resulted in a November submission deadline and a commitment to present approval of proposed programs to Council in March 2024. The initiative addresses the persistence of teacher shortages as indicated in a recent JLARC report.

Miscellaneous Activities/Programs

SCHEV continues ongoing coordination and collaboration with the Virginia Office of Economics on its education and workforce alignment data dashboard and supply/demand models.

Multiple programs and activities referenced throughout this report support the alignment between post-secondary academic programs and labor market outcomes. These are summarized/cross-referenced below.

- Higher Education Mental Health Workforce Pilot (page 9)
- G3 high-demand program enrollment (page 12)
- FFEI focus on student pathways in AI (page 14)
- V-TOP work-ethic curriculum grants to bolster durable skills (page 15)

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

Constructive Dialogue Institute Learning Communities

SCHEV and the Constructive Dialogue Institute (CDI) partnered with **12 colleges** and universities to implement campus-wide dialogue initiatives to boost inclusion, free

expression and civil discourse. Eleven institutions have begun implementation. Richard Bland College is expected to implement in 2024.

CDI hosted three in-person training sessions in different regions of Virginia in Fall 2023. Faculty/staff and student leaders at any Virginia institution were invited to attend at no cost. These trainings addressed how to incorporate dialogue skills into classes and student activities. Although the trainings occasionally referenced CDI's own *Perspectives* program, it was not based on an assumption that participants were using *Perspectives*. Seven students and **104** faculty/staff participated across the three sessions. A student at Sweet Briar College wrote about her experience of the training in a column on Sweet Briar's website.

SCHEV has committed to funding the CDI cohort at the same level again in 2024-25. Discussions are underway to identify institutions that want to continue in the program and to invite others that want to join, as funding allows.

In 2024, faculty and staff from participating institutions will be invited to a "community of practice" to share experiences, challenges and seek support from each other, from CDI and access a library of resources.

Plans are underway for a faculty learning community focused on civil discourse in Spring 2024, sponsored by SCHEV and the Virginia Educational Development Collaborative, and which is open to all Virginia faculty/staff. In addition, SCHEV will convene at least one to two meetings for faculty and staff from cohort institutions to share what they learned through their participation in the program this year.

Virginia's Indigenous Nations and Higher Education

A concerted effort has been made to include Virginia's Indigenous Nations and bring together representatives from the tribes and college campuses. A convening of this group occurred in March with nine of Virginia's 11 tribes participating. A diverse core workgroup continues to meet routinely to work toward improving relations and creating a fluid exchange of resources between the tribes and the institutions to improve access to higher education, and collaboration/insight on research work pertaining to indigenous nations among other topics.

APPENDIX A: VIRGINIA'S PROGRESS TOWARD 70% EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY 2030

The overarching target of *Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education* is 70% post-secondary educational attainment by 2030.

Virginia Education Attainment incl. certificates (25-64)

Year	Lumina Stronger Nation Estimates	SCHEV Estimates
2013	46.1%	53.2%
2014*	50.6%	54.2%
2015	51.1%	54.4%
2016	52.2%	55.3%
2017	53.9%	56.0%
2018**	57.0%	56.5%
2019	57.4%	56.9%
2020***	X	58.3%
2021	59.3%	X

Points needed to reach 70%: 11

With 9 years remaining until 2030, Virginia needs to add 1.2 points per year.

* First year Stronger Nation included certificates.

** First year Stronger Nation included certifications. https://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/#/progress/state/VA

*** Experimental weights; Lumina did not release attainment data for this year due to experimental weights. For details on those weights refer to Appendix B.

APPENDIX B: ASSESSING PROGRESS

The following charts derive from SCHEV and American Community Survey (ACS) data. Each of the five measures include data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, income, GO Virginia regions and gender.

Data from the 2019-2020 academic year serve as a baseline from which to measure progress toward achieving *The Plan's* three goals. With the two-year time lapse of data, as well as an ongoing pandemic and inequities that have persisted for much of Virginia's history, it will take more than six years to close these gaps. However, if the Commonwealth actively works on these goals, improvement should be evident over time. *The Plan's* progress tracker will identify those improvements, as well as where work needs to continue.

The charts below summarize key findings from the 2021-2022 data in the [progress tracker](). The key findings identify the gaps as the first step in the work to close them over time. With the exception of the attainment data, the four other measures reference data for all undergraduate students in Virginia. Additional analysis by program area can be performed using the tracker.

Summative Findings: The most recent data (2021-2022) were largely unchanged from the baseline year (2019-2020) data with a few notable changes, below:

- **Persistent attainment gains** (two percentage points) by all 25- to 64-year olds and specific, **larger gains by white males and females and middle income** compared to the baseline year (2019-2020).

- **Decline in male enrollment** (one percentage point) compared to 2019-2020.

- **Degrees awarded to black students decreased** one percentage point compared to 2019-2020.

- Decrease in the percentage of undergraduate students borrowing with the average loan amount staying generally the same.

- **Wages increased** across the board (for almost every subgroup) compared to the prior year (2020-2021) and baseline year (2019-2020).

2023 Summative Findings

- Attainment Gains of 2%

- Large gains among:
  - ➢ White Males & Females
  - ➢ Middle Income

- Male Enrollment Decrease of 1%

- Degrees Awarded to Black Students Decreased by 1%

- Decrease in Student Borrowing

- Average Loan Amount Steady

- Wage Increases for Majority of Subgroups

2021-2022 Academic Year Key Findings

Attainment

The Plan includes an overarching attainment objective (Appendix A) as well as an attainment measure. The 70% overarching attainment objective includes the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds with a postsecondary certificate, certification or higher.

The Plan's attainment measure is defined as the percentage of 25- to 64-year-olds with an associate degree or higher. The target for this measure is to close gaps in attainment of selected groups. Currently, attainment is at 52% for all 25- to 64-year olds in Virginia with an associate degree or higher; this marks an increase over the previous reporting period attainment rate of 50% (2019-2020). While the increase marks movement in the right direction, disaggregated data reveal persistent attainment gaps.

Attainment gaps continue to occur in every subgroup (race/ethnicity, income, region and gender). The gaps highlight the breadth and complexity of this issue. Data indicate additional solutions are needed to address specific subgroup barriers and needs.

Those who have the lowest attainment within each subgroup are:

- By race/ethnicity - Black (36%) - unchanged from 2019-2020. **White attainment increased by five percentage points** since 2019-2020 (from 54% to 59%).

- By region of origin - Southside (25%) and Southwest Virginia (26%) - unchanged from 2019-2020.

- By income - Lower income (25%) - unchanged from 2019-2020. **Middle income attainment increased by four percentage points** from 2019-2020 (from 37% to 41%).

- By gender - Men (48%) – Still a lower rate than for women. 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%).

Those who have attainment gains compared to the 2019-2020 baseline academic year within each subgroup are:

- By race/ethnicity - **White (59%) up five percentage points** from 2019-2020 (as also reported in the 2022 annual report).

- By gender - Men (48%) and women (56%) increased by two percentage points over the 2019-2020 academic year.

Attainment by Race/Ethnicity

Category	Percent
All	52%
Am Ind/AK Nat (NH)	47%
Asian (NH)	82%
Black (NH)	36%
HI'an/PI (NH)	71%
Hispanic/Latinx	48%
International	42%
Multiracial	54%
R/E Unk. (NH)	55%
White (NH)	59%
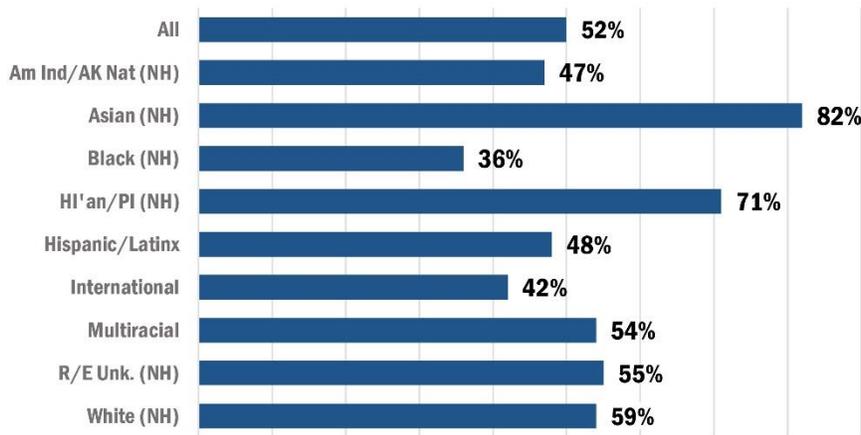
Attainment by Region of Origin

Region	Percent
Greater Charlottesville	40%
Greater Fredericksburg	34%
Greater Richmond	33%
Hampton Roads	41%
Northern Virginia	60%
Roanoke/New River/Lynchburg	37%
Shenandoah Valley	34%
Southside	25%
Southwest Virginia	26%
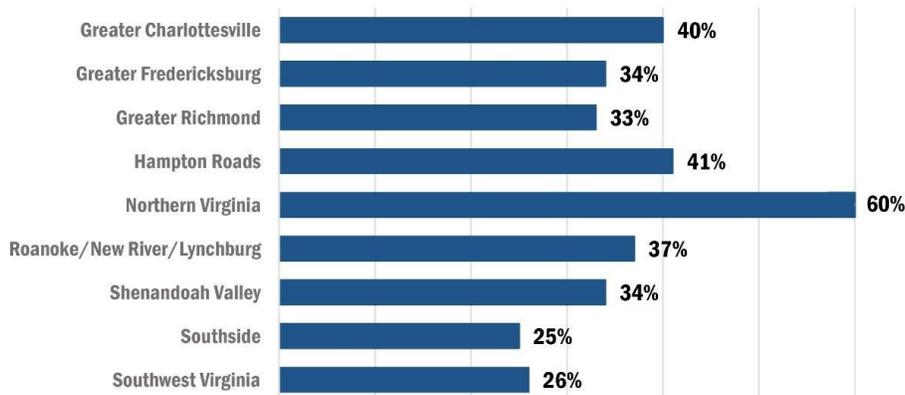
Attainment by Income Level
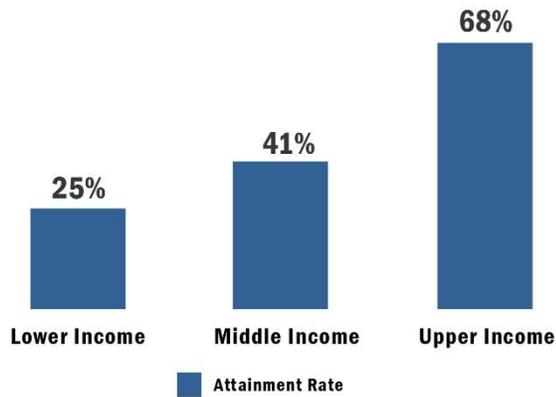
Attainment by Gender
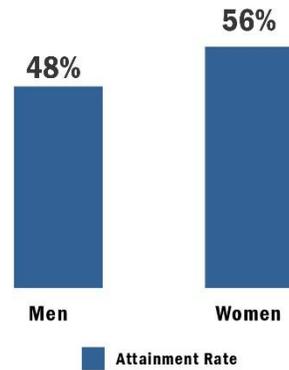
Enrollment

The Plan's enrollment measure is defined as the fall headcount of public and private undergraduates. The target is to close enrollment gaps of selected groups to reflect the population; in visual terms of the below charts, the gray bars should be at least as long as the blue bars.

The following undergraduate enrollment gaps continue to persist in comparison to the 2019-2020 academic year baseline data:

- By race/ethnicity – Black, Hawaiian Islander/Pacific Islander and White (unchanged from 2019-2020). The percent of enrolled non-resident alien students decreased one percentage point from 2019-2020.

- By region of origin – Hampton Roads and Shenandoah Valley (unchanged from baseline). Richmond (unchanged from 2020-2021).

- By income – Middle income (unchanged). The percent of enrolled low income students decreased one percentage point from 2019-2020 (from 24% to 23%).

- By gender – Men (unchanged). The percent of enrolled male students decreased one percentage point from 2019-2020 (from 44% to 43%).

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.

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

	Percentage of Enrolled Students	Percentage of Virginia Population
Am Ind/AK Nat (NH)	0%	0%
Asian (NH)	8%	1%
Black (NH)	16%	18%
HI'an/PI (NH)	0%	5%
Hispanic/Latinx	9%	7%
Multi-Race (NH)	5%	4%
NRA	2%	7%
R/E Unk. (NH)	7%	0%
White (NH)	52%	59%
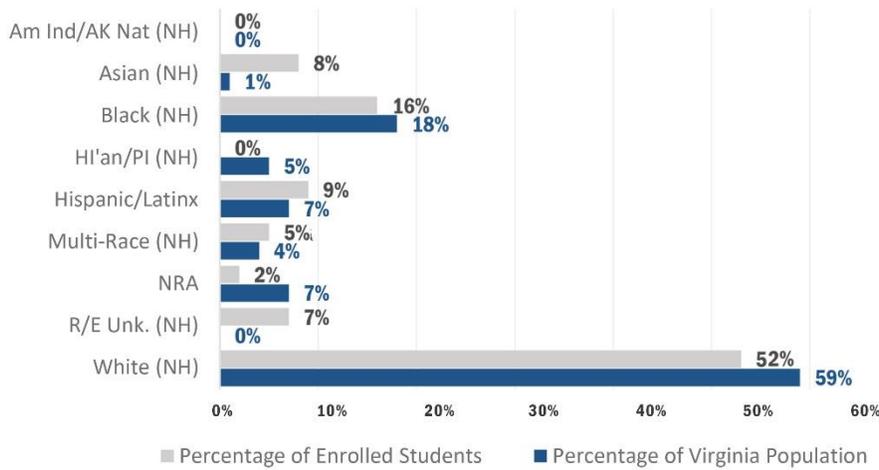
Note: Total undergraduate enrollment for American Indian/Alaska natives in Virginia is 1,263; Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander is 728. Total population of American Indian/Alaska Natives is 7,103. Total population Unknown/non-Hispanic is 19,891.

Enrollment by Region of Origin

	Percentage of Enrolled Students	Percentage of Virginia Population
Greater Charlottesville	5%	5%
Greater Fredericksburg	7%	6%
Greater Richmond	14%	15%
Hampton Roads	18%	20%
Northern Virginia	35%	30%
Roanoke/New River/Lynchburg	9%	9%
Shenandoah Valley	5%	6%
Southside	4%	4%
Southwest Virginia	4%	4%
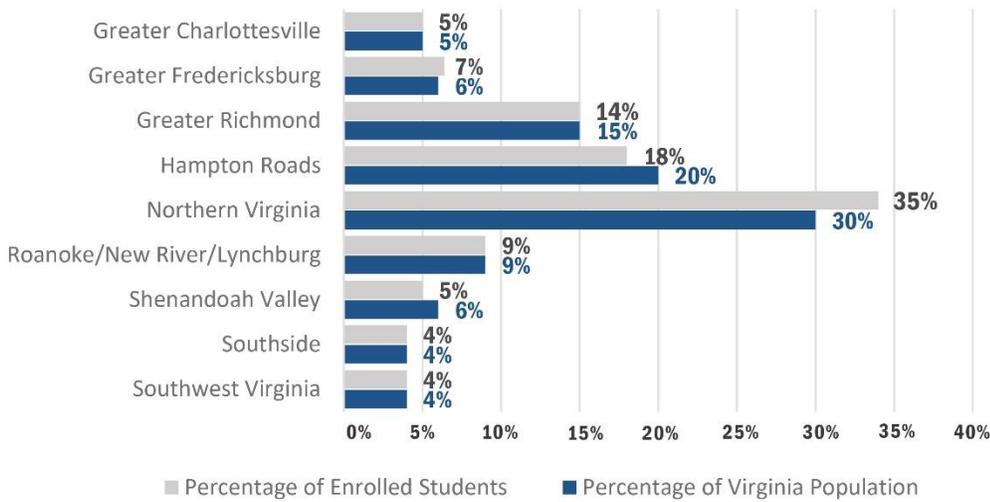
Enrollment by Income Level

	Percentage of Enrolled Students	Percentage of Virginia Population
Unknown Income	43%	
Upper Income	19%	54%
Middle Income	15%	26%
Lower Income	23%	20%

Enrollment by Gender

	Percentage of Enrolled Students	Percentage of Virginia Population
Men	43%	50%
Women	57%	51%
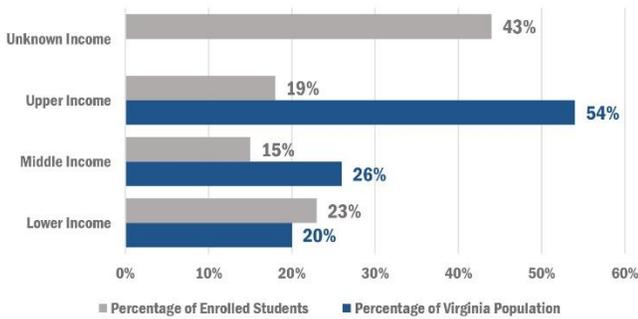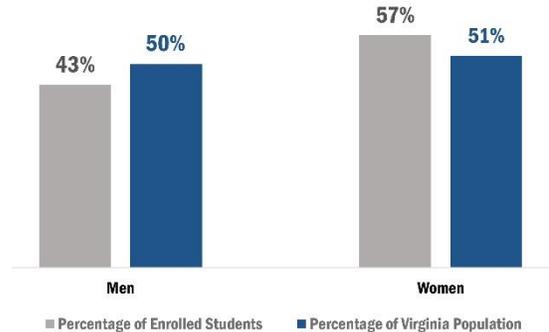
Awards

The Plan's awards measure is defined as the undergraduate degrees and credentials produced each year. The target is to close award gaps of selected groups to reflect enrollment. In visual terms of the below charts, the blue bars should be at least as long as the gray bars.

Success gaps may exist when the percentage of total awards is less than the percentage of enrolled students; e.g., when the blue bars are shorter than the gray bars.

Identified success gaps may include:

- By race/ethnicity – **Black (percent of total awards decreased one percentage point).** The percent of total awards decreased from 14% to 13% while the percent of enrolled black students held constant**.** Multi-Race (unchanged). Hispanic/Latinx exhibited a success gap in 2019-2020 but not for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years. In 2020-2021, an Asian gap existed and closed in 2021-2022.

- By region of origin – Greater Richmond, Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia (unchanged).

- By income – Lower income (unchanged).

- By gender – Men (unchanged).

Degree/Certificate Awards by Race/Ethnicity
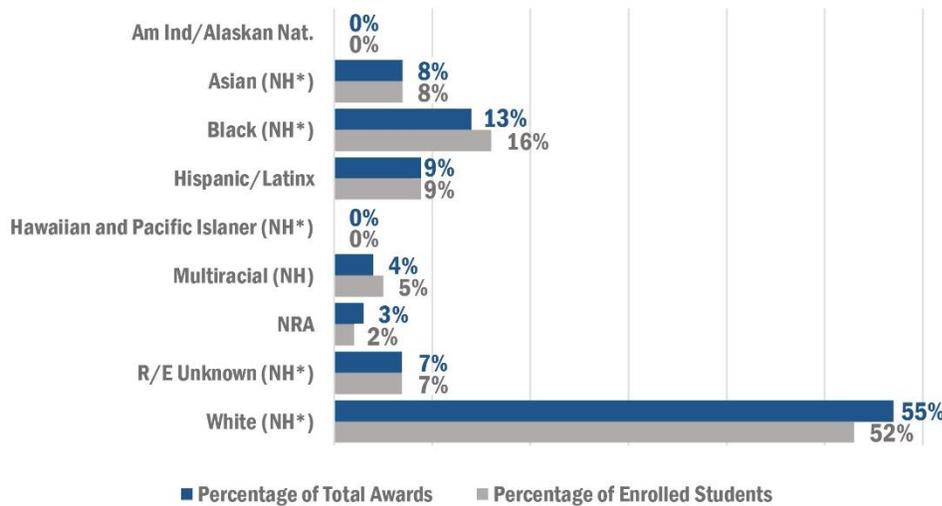
Note: Total undergraduate awards for American Indian/Alaska natives in Virginia is 236; Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander is 170.

Degree/Certificate Awards by Region of Origin

- Percentage of Enrolled Students
- Percentage of Total Awards
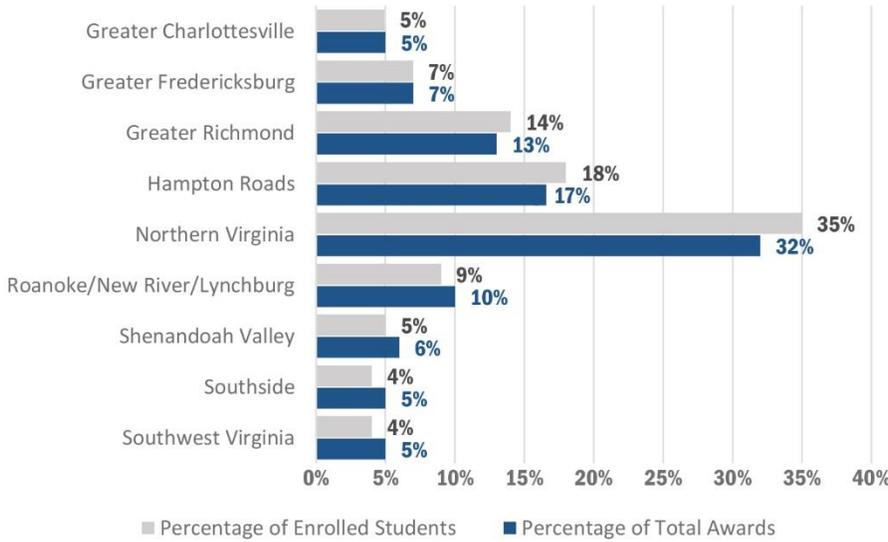
Degree/Certificate Awards by Income Level

- Percentage of Enrolled Students
- Percentage of Total Awards
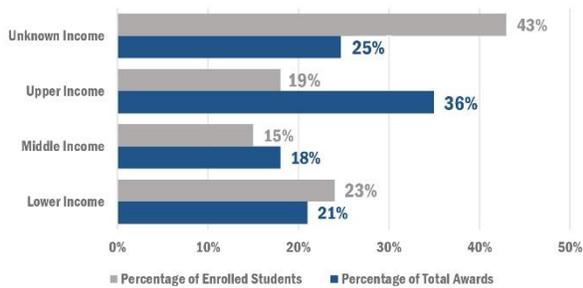
Degree/Certificate Awards by Gender

- Percentage of Enrolled Students
- Percentage of Total Awards
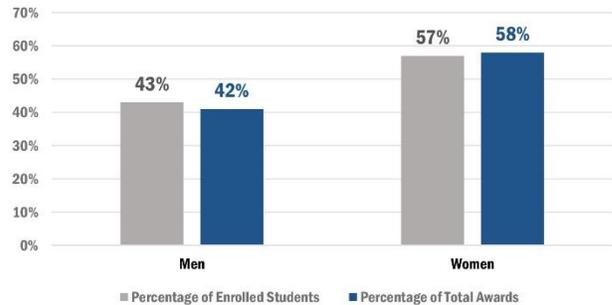
Borrowing

The Plan's borrowing measure is defined as the average debt of graduates. The target is to close gaps in borrowing of selected groups.

Borrowing is a barometer of affordability which is complex (e.g., not all debt is bad). Average borrowing is shown on an annual basis and includes students who borrowed $0 and who used federal or private loans for higher education.

Those groups with the largest percentage of undergraduates who are borrowing include:

- By race/ethnicity – Black (39% decreasing by seven percentage points from 46% to 39%) since 2019-2020 and Race/Ethnicity unknown (34%) decreasing by eight percentage points (from 42% to 34%) compared to 2019-2020.

- By region of origin – Hampton Roads (29%). However, the percentage borrowing in Hampton Roads has decreased by six percentage points when compared to 2019-2020 (from 35% to 29%).

- **By income – Middle income (54%). However, the percentage borrowing has decreased by 13 percentage points when compared to 2019-2020** (from 67% to 54%).

- By gender – Women (30%). The percentage borrowing has decreased by four percentage points when compared to 2019-2020 (from 34% to 30%).

During the 2021-2022 academic year, while the groups with the largest percentage of undergraduates who are borrowing have not changed, **the percentages borrowing decreased across the board.** The decrease in borrowing could possibly be attributed to: Virginia's moderated tuition and fees; SCHEV's student loan advocate work; more generous Pell grants; national trends and increased awareness. Data for four-year bachelor's degree students trend similarly this reporting period. Average loans stayed largely within $1,000 of the 2019-2020 base year.

Student Borrowing by Race/Ethnicity

	Average Loans	Percentage Borrowing
Am Ind/AK Nat (NH)	$7,883	29%
Asian (NH)	$7,560	23%
Black (NH)	$7,322	39%
HI'an/PI (NH)	$8,339	28%
Hispanic/Latinx	$7,766	26%
Multi-Race (NH)	$8,200	29%
NRA	$16,552	1%
R/E Unk. (NH)	$7,130	34%
White (NH)	$8,758	26%
All	$8,110	28%

(NH) = Non-Hispanic
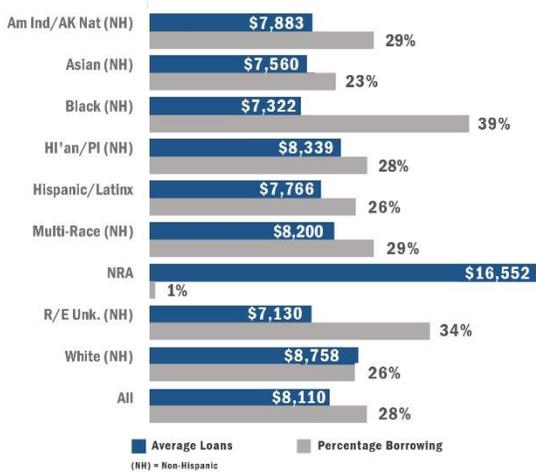
Student Borrowing by Region of Origin

	Average Loans	Percentage Borrowing
Southwest Virginia	$7,251	13%
Southside	$7,553	23%
Shenandoah Valley	$8,132	25%
Roanoke/New River/Lynchburg	$7,731	27%
Northern Virginia	$7,803	22%
Hampton Roads	$7,584	29%
Greater Richmond	$7,791	28%
Greater Fredericksburg	$8,369	27%
Greater Charlottesville	$8,395	22%
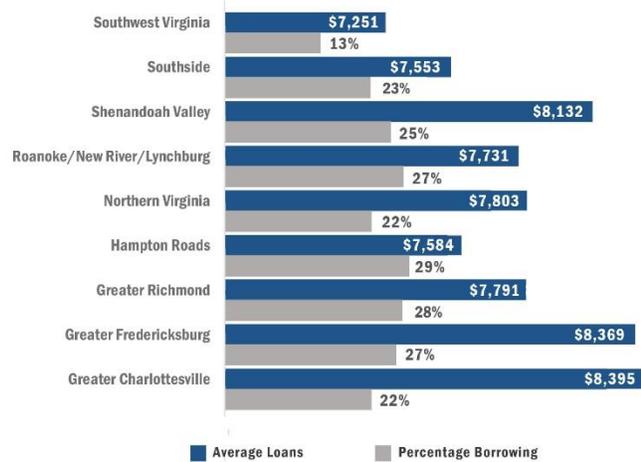
Student Borrowing by Income Level

	Average Loans	Percentage Borrowing
Unknown Income	$18,323	1%
Upper Income	$9,252	56%
Middle Income	$7,499	54%
Lower Income	$6,837	44%

Student Borrowing by Gender

	Average Loans	Percentage Borrowing
Men	$8,319	26%
Women	$7,973	30%
Unreported	$6,275	7%
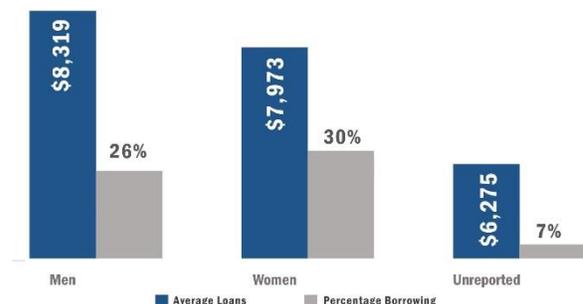
Wages

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).

Despite the persisting gaps above, when compared to the prior reporting period, **wages did increase across all groups except for Race Unknown (decreased compared to 2019-2020 median from ~ $64,900 to $63,400) and Hispanic which stayed flat (median at ~$65,000).**

Graduate Wage Outcomes by Race/Ethnicity, 10 years Post-completion
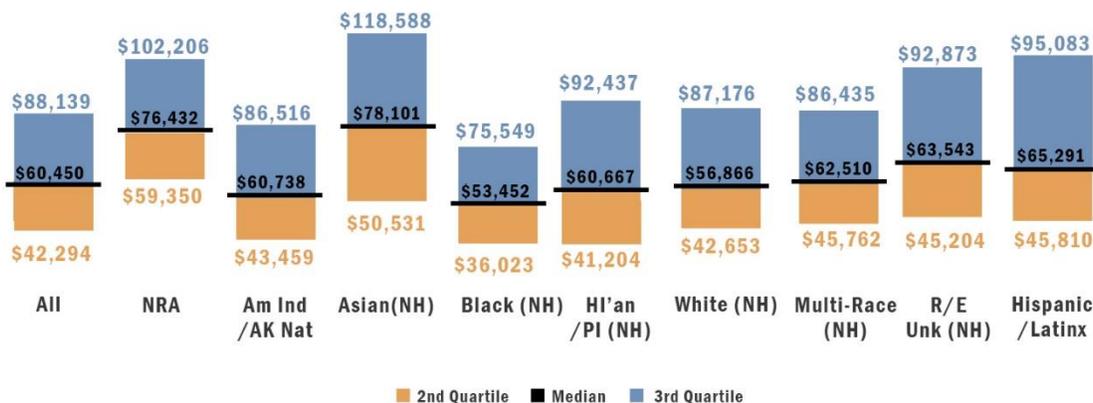
Graduate Wage Outcomes by Region of Origin, 10 years Post-completion

	Southwest Virginia	Roanoke/ New River/ Lynchburg	Southside	Greater Richmond	Hampton Roads	Greater Fredericksburg	Northern Virginia	Shenandoach Valley	Greater Charlottesville
3rd Quartile	$59,365	$78,736	$66,022	$86,491	$82,415	$85,692	$113,418	$79,119	$84,672
Median	$44,056	$54,982	$47,192	$61,056	$58,153	$58,548	$75,985	$56,124	$60,022
2nd Quartile	$32,582	$39,520	$32,396	$44,287	$40,737	$42,477	$53,415	$40,818	$42,966

■ 2nd Quartile   ▬ Median   ■ 3rd Quartile

Graduate Wage Outcomes by Income Level, 10 years Post-completion

	Lower Income	Middle Income	Upper Income	Unknown Income
3rd Quartile	$74,844	$84,217	$96,735	$93,462
Median	$52,000	$58,742	$65,878	$64,568
2nd Quartile	$35,816	$42,566	$47,125	$44,104

■ 2nd Quartile   ▬ Median   ■ 3rd Quartile

Graduate Wage Outcomes by Gender, 10 years Post-completion

	Men	Women	Unreported
3rd Quartile	$105,487	$77,898	$62,481
Median	$70,468	$55,452	$62,468
2nd Quartile	$48,356	$38,843	$46,653

■ 2nd Quartile   ▬ Median   ■ 3rd Quartile
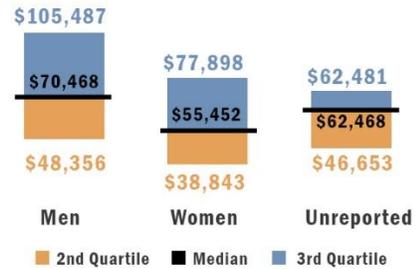
APPENDIX C: PREVIOUS (2021-2023) PATHWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY PLAN INITIATIVES AND UPDATED ACTIONS

Goal 1 – Equitable: Close Access and Completion Gaps

Plan Strategy	Pathways to Opportunity Biennial Initiative	Status update: Actions to implement initiative
S1: Expand postsecondary opportunities and awareness to Virginians who may not view higher education as an option.	**I.1:** Form an enhanced partnership between VDOE and SCHEV through the commitment of a shared goal to increase post-secondary enrollments to include a shared position and strategic planning.	**1. COMPLETED:** Executed a MOU for the enhanced partnership and shared position. **2. COMPLETED:** Identified and secured additional funding needs and resources to support the partnership and strategic planning activities. **3. COMPLETED:** Established the governance structure and advisory board composition to guide the work. **4. CONTINUING:** Working to develop a shared enrollment goal and associated collaborative work plan.
S2: Advance digital access, adoption and literacy as well as high quality, effective remote-learning programs.	**I.2:** Identify and assess hybrid learning access gaps and quality issues as well as potential solutions and define SCHEV's role in addressing these findings.	**1. COMPLETED:** Presented a series of related topics to Council to identify areas of interest, focus the discussion and discern next steps. Topics include Open Virginia Advisory Committee (OVAC), Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA), the Online Virginia Network (OVN) and hybrid learning assessments. **2. COMPLETED:** In October 2021, members of the SCHEV Open Virginia Advisory Committee presented a panel discussion at the VIVA Open and Affordable Community Forum regarding open education and learning technology solutions that can address (Covid) learning loss. **3. COMPLETED:** Online Virginia Network presented an overview at the January 2023 Council meeting.
S3: Strengthen student support services for persistence and completion: mental health, career services, social, student basic needs, information technology, disability support and other services.	**I.3:** Identify critical student-support-services issues and formulate recommendations that will positively affect the student experience, persistence and completion.	**1. COMPLETED:** Used quantitative and qualitative data to assess critical student-support-services issues. **2. COMPLETED:** Examined best practices and obtain subject matter expertise to formulate recommendations for action at the state and institutional level to address the core issues. **3. COMPLETED:** Completed the student support services review and presented findings and recommendations to Council for input and approval by October. **4. CONTINUING:** Continue to align recommendations from the review and higher education mental health workforce pilot with any budget and/or policy recommendations as appropriate. **5. COMPLETED:** Issued final report by November 2022. **6. CONTINUING:** Work with Council and various stakeholders to implement recommendations from the review. Merge with #4 above.

Goal 2 – Affordable: Lower Costs to Students

Plan Strategy	Pathways to Opportunity Biennial Initiative	Status update: Actions to implement initiative
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.	**I.4:** Determine strategies to better assess higher education costs and implement approaches to allocate limited public resources to institutions through the cost and funding need study.	**1. MODIFIED:** Initial report complete. Subsequent work paused and activities redirected under new PI #4 (2023-25) in accordance with work done in 2023 (SB800 2023 budget amendment).
S5: Cultivate affordable postsecondary education pathways for traditional, non-traditional and returning students.	**I.5:** Identify improvements in the transfer process (e.g., transfer-grant program; dual enrollment); facilitate formal transfer alliances and coordinate a unified communication campaign to improve two-year community college student connectivity with and transition to four-year institutions.	**1. COMPLETED:** Work with Virginia Community College System to identify dual enrollment gaps and measures to close those gaps. **2. UNDERWAY:** Continue work in support of the Virginia Transfer Portal. **Update:** Emphasis on marketing, enrolling new users and uploading transfer guides. **3. COMPLETED** (launch and selection): Launch "Transfer Boost" project in collaboration with HCM Strategists—select 5 (or 6) institutions to improve the transfer-to-bachelor completion rate for underrepresented students through use of innovative transfer guarantee practices. **4. CONTINUING** via VCCS: JLARC report – all outcomes from the report point toward VCCS and developing funding models; not a SCHEV duty. **5. UNDERWAY:** Evaluate transfer grant program – conversations have begun through various workgroups including the State Committee on Transfer and the VCCS Transfer Advising Peer Group. SCHEV is conducting research to evaluate the threshold necessary to quality for the transfer grant program.
S6: Update and reform funding models and policies to improve equity, affirm return on investment and encourage increased and consistent levels of	**I.6:** Educate new legislators and administration on the value, needs and priorities of higher education.	**1. CONTINUING:** Identify key data and use infographics and consistent messaging materials to communicate the value, needs and priorities of higher education. **Update:** Produced a simplified Key Facts document using engaging infographics to educate General Assembly members about higher education. A more in-depth document will be produced in the first quarter of 2024. **2. COMPLETED:** Developed a strategic communications plan to educate policy makers, the public and others about Virginia's higher education system and the work being done by SCHEV. **Update:** Assisting with the new priority initiatives, the Outcomes Report, that will highlight the benefits of higher education and provide information on the factors that can affect educational outcomes. The report should be available in the first quarter of 2024.
S7: Foster program and administrative innovations that enhance quality promote collaboration and improve efficiency.	**I.7:** Fund an initiative focusing on institutional collaboration and innovations to improve equitable student persistence and completion.	**1. COMPLETED:** Using FFEI funds, draft the call for proposals and develop pilot parameters. Model after University Innovation Alliance and tailor to Virginia institutions. **2. COMPLETED:** Obtain input on draft RFP. **3. CONTINUING:** Issue RFP and select FFEI recipients. **Update:** Modified RFP to focus on TRANSFORMATIVE goal/AI pathways. **4. NEW:** Monitor and report on recipients' progress (current and prior rounds). Share findings/outcomes from pilot projects with appropriate stakeholders to promote adoption. **Update:** Present findings to Council in 2024.

Goal 3 – Transformative: Expand Prosperity

Plan Strategy	Pathways to Opportunity Biennial Initiative	Status update: Actions to implement initiative
S8: Support experiences that improve students' employment outcomes, income and community engagement **S9: Improve** the alignment between post-secondary academic programs and labor market outcomes.	**I.8:** Facilitate collaboration between the Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE) and institutions of higher education, and identify new ways to integrate VOEE tools and resources with SCHEV initiatives and processes - these may include: use of graduate outcomes survey results; development of labor market criteria for evaluating academic programs and assessing the need for proposed academic programs; and relationship building between higher education and business.	**1. CONTINUING:** Convene a workgroup composed of SCHEV and VOEE staff to identify efficiencies and formalize collaboration such as data sharing and report production. **Update:** Workgroup formed with continued collaboration. **2. CONTINUING:** Coordinate an advisory committee to VOEE including institutions that will inform data analysis and develop more nuanced labor market criteria for academic program review and proposals. **Update:** Discussions occur on various topics/projects on a regular basis and informally vs. specific committee work. **3. COMPLETED:** Further analyze responses from the Graduate Outcomes Survey for respondents who indicated they took at least one internship during their undergraduate years; for respondents who consented, match to other SCHEV data and VLDS. **Update:** SCHEV hired a survey expert/researcher to assist with future survey/poll work. Near term work will focus on high school students and college decision-making as well as internship data.
S10: Cultivate a climate of inclusion and innovation through scholarship, research, a diverse faculty and other programming.	**I.9:** Advance equity in higher education by fostering a culture of inclusion that supports DEI efforts on campus and tells the institutional and SCHEV stories of how "Equity Works."	**1. MODIFIED:** Focus shifted to inclusion, belonging and dialogue across differences. Specifically, SCHEV's support of the Constructive Dialogue Institute work with institutions. **2. MODIFIED:** Energies have been placed on creating a trusted place to share stories and for leaders to talk about how their work aligns with current priorities. **3. MODIFIED:** Virginia affiliate formed in spring 2023 and meet monthly. A summit was hosted in July at George Mason University. The summit focused on identifying efforts that will advance inclusion given polarized campus environments.

APPENDIX D: CURRENT (OCTOBER 2023 ENDORSED) PATHWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY PLAN INITIATIVES AND SUPPORTING ACTIONS

Goal 1 – Equitable: Close Access and Completion Gaps

Plan Strategy	Pathways to Opportunity Biennial Initiative	Actions underway to implement initiative
S1: Expand postsecondary opportunities and awareness to Virginians who may not view higher education as an option.	**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.	**1. Level Up Virginia:** Develop and implement a comprehensive communication campaign focusing on those that might not view higher education as an option, highlighting both traditional and alternative postsecondary pathways, including apprenticeships and high-quality certificate and workforce credential programs. **2. SCHEV/VDOE Access Strategic Plan:** Collaborate with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to increase FAFSA completions, campus tours, college advising and shared access goals.
S2: Advance digital access, adoption and literacy as well as high quality, effective remote-learning programs.	**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.	**1. OVN/VCU outreach survey and analysis:** Work with VCU research team to survey alumni and match findings with those who obtained some college and no degree. The alumni finder tool will be used to reach out to those with some college but no degree and survey to understand/identify what it would take to get those alumni back to complete their degree. Analysis of results will inform next steps.
S3: Strengthen student support services for persistence and completion: mental health, career services, social, student basic needs, information technology, disability support and other services.	**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.	**2. SCHEV Mental Health Pilot:** Evaluate impact of the mental health pilot and the ability to scale across the state. Pilot is intended to simultaneously expand mental health and well-being supports for students and the pipeline of licensed mental health providers working in Virginia. **2. SCHEV/Virginia Mental Health Access Program Collaborative Training:** Partner to provide additional training/webinar(s) to on-campus healthcare professionals to diagnose, treat and manage common mental health disorders. In 2022, this partnership provided training for continuing medical education credits on managing anxiety in college-aged youth. **3. Disabilities Access to Higher Education Action Plan:** Close access and success gaps for students with disabilities by implementing strategies in the Disabilities Access to Higher Education Action Plan including the data collection pilot.

Goal 2 – Affordable: Lower Costs to Students

Plan Strategy	Pathways to Opportunity Biennial Initiative	Actions to implement initiative
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.	**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 (SB800 2023 budget amendment).	**1. Technical assistance:** Per SB800, provide technical assistance to the joint subcommittee reviewing public higher education funding policies and enrollment management. The subcommittee will conduct an assessment that will be used to develop guidelines against which to measure higher education funding requests.
S5: Cultivate affordable postsecondary education pathways for traditional, non-traditional and returning students.	**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.	**1. Common curriculum:** Work with two-year and four-year institutions to create common associate degree curricula, the development of a four-year plan of study and the development of a student-facing transfer guide. **2.Pathways maps and transfer guides:** Complete pathways maps for approximately 30 broad disciplinary areas across five phases. Develop transfer guides from completed pathways maps for each disciplinary major and make publicly available via Transfer Virginia website.
S6: Update and reform funding models and policies to improve equity, affirm return on investment and encourage increased and consistent levels of state funding.	**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.	**1. Biennial postsecondary education outcomes report:** Produce report and share findings on postsecondary education outcomes. **2. Assessment of college-decision making among high school students:** With appropriate partners, assess factors influencing high school students' decisions to purse/not pursue higher education.
S7: Foster program and administrative innovations that enhance quality promote collaboration and improve efficiency.	**I.7: Automate Database for Private Postsecondary Education:** Automate database to improve reliability and increase productivity in regulation of private postsecondary education.	**1. New database development:** Work with a selected vendor to replace current application process of online and hard copy applications with a web-based application that will provide access to real time information along with automation tools that simplify and streamline operations. **2. Centralized "system of record":** Utilize the database to maximize organizational effectiveness, reduce compliance risk and provide easy access to centralized "system of record" information/data.

Goal 3 – Transformative: Expand Prosperity

Plan Strategy	Pathways to Opportunity Biennial Initiative	Actions to implement initiative
S8: Support experiences that improve students' employment outcomes, income and community engagement	**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.	**1. Statewide staffing agency:** Expand internship opportunities by supporting small businesses with recruiting, hiring, and onboarding candidates. **2. Employer matching funds:** Provide incentives to small employers who hire students as interns through matching funds to cover wage and work-related expenses. **3. Academic Data Governance Workgroup:** Establish work-based learning standards, definitions, and data collection methods to be measured and considered across institutions.
S9: Improve the alignment between post-secondary academic programs and labor market outcomes.	**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.	**1. Define "urgent labor market needs:"** Identify and obtain additional data/forecasting needs to establish criteria to define "urgent labor market needs" and associated academic programs. **2. Incentive development:** Use the criteria and data findings from urgent labor market needs to develop recommendations for incentives to promote those academic programs and address specified labor market needs. **3. Develop teacher preparation degree programs:** Collaborate with institutions of higher education and Virginia Department of Education on approval of new teacher preparation degree programs for fall 2024 or later implementation.
S10: Cultivate a climate of inclusion and innovation through scholarship, research, a diverse faculty and other programming.	**I.10: Foster activities and partnerships that improve students' civic knowledge and their ability to contribute effectively to civic life.**	**1. Implementation strategies:** Partner with participating institutions and the Constructive Dialogue Institute (CDI) to help students, faculty, staff and other stakeholders to develop/enhance skills to have more effective conversations with people holding different views. Each participating institution will work with CDI staff to design an implementation strategy aligning with its institution's culture and existing programming. **2. Community of practice:** Faculty and staff from participating institutions will be invited to a "community of practice" to share experiences, challenges and seek support from each other, from CDI and access a library of resources. **3. Day of Dialogue events:** Facilitate cross-institutional conversations about high quality civic learning and engagement. **4. Presentations/ongoing discussions on this topic:** Include on subsequent Council agendas, presentations and discussions with the VDOE curricular standards experts about how civics is taught in Virginia.