SCHEV HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR SURVEY REPORT

September, 2024

Prepared By:
The Social Science Research Center &
The Center for Implementation and Evaluation of
Education Systems

OLD DOMINION
UNIVERSITY

This document was compiled by:
Tancy Vandecar-Burdin, PhD, Ann Maydosz, PhD
Brianna Ovalle, Caylin Smith, Mackenzie Kibler & Wendi Wilson-John

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Executive Summary

The ODU research team is pleased to provide this report based on the web survey of high school seniors in Virginia. The data summarized here addresses decision-making processes regarding the choice to attend or not attend postsecondary education, specifically identifying the factors influencing students who choose not to pursue higher education, and reviewing public policy actions that might lead to different decisions.

A small pilot was conducted followed by outreach attempts to 15,903 high school seniors in Virginia. A pre-survey postcard was mailed to all students prior to sending a web survey email invitation. A total of 631 students completed the survey and 62 students did not plan to attend college within 12 months after high school. The data included approximately 319 student comments about why a close friend did not plan to go to college after high school. The sampling frame allowed for efficient outreach to high school seniors by both mail and email but was skewed towards those who planned to continue their education after high school. However, the data from those not planning to attend college within the next 12 months plus qualitative responses about why a close friend is not planning to attend college provide useful information to consider. The data also provide insight as to high school students' information sources regarding post-high school plans.

Some key takeaways from the survey data include:

- Students who responded to the survey are similar in terms of gender and race when compared to official Virginia statistics of all high school graduates and those enrolled in an institution of higher education within 16 months of graduation.
- The most frequently cited reasons for not attending college include costs, lack of perceived value or utility of a college degree, and not enjoying school. The reasons student respondents did not plan to attend college are similar to other national studies.
- There are differences in the perceptions of the value/costs of a college degree and its usefulness/utility between college-bound and non-college bound students.
- Sources of information about post-high school plans in general and college specifically, differed among college-bound and non-college bound students and also among males/females and whites/nonwhites. College-bound students were more likely to get most of their college information directly from colleges through college websites/webinars, emails, mailings, and campus visits.
- Males were more likely to get most of their information about college from their parents than females. Female students were more likely to get most of their college information from school counselors, college readiness programs, college websites, and internet/Google searches.
- Nonwhite students were more likely to get most of their college information from school counselors and college readiness programs compared to their white peers.

- College-bound students and white students are more likely to report campus visits as a source of information about college which leads to questions about how accessible college campuses are for all students.
- The role of high school counselors, teachers, and other staff may be an important consideration given that almost one in four students reported only meeting once or not at all with school counselors to specifically discuss what they might do after high school.
- The majority of non-college bound students did not completely rule out the possibility of attending college in the future and there may be multiple pathways for non-college bound students to eventually enroll in higher education.

The results provide useful information about the sources of information about college for high school seniors, who serves as the messengers and helper for students in their decision-making process, and what perceptions students have about a college degree. The results of this survey indicate that there is a lack of information and support for some students and much of that may be influenced by implementing or expanding upon current Virginia efforts or those from other states. Potential programmatic and/or policy changes should consider the following:

- *Who are the messengers and what is the message about the costs of college and possible financial aid opportunities?*
  Given the negative press and perspectives about student debt as well as the costs and utility of a college degree, SCHEV will need to work with higher education institutions in the Commonwealth to promote policies related to costs and to try to change the narrative around the value of higher education.
- *What are other states doing that could be replicated in Virginia? What is already being done well in Virginia that could be enhanced to help inform decision making about college and increase enrollment?*
  Virginia is utilizing programs similar to other states in terms of increasing college enrollments. However, there are efforts in other states that could be considered and replicated in Virginia. Further, those efforts that are currently working well in Virginia could be further resourced, expanded and/or improved upon.
- *Even though increasingly more students may not be enrolling in college immediately after high school, how can we ensure that they leave high school knowing the various pathways for returning to college if and when needed?*
- *What happens after students enroll in college? How do we ensure that they finish and earn a degree?*

The data, results, and considerations are explored further in the full report document which we believe will help guide next steps for SCHEV decision-makers.

Background/RFQ Response

In response to a targeted request for quotes received in January 2024, the multidisciplinary research team at Old Dominion University (ODU) ("research team") submitted a quote to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) to conduct a web-based survey of high school seniors in Virginia. SCHEV sought a partnership with an institution of higher education to design, administer, and analyze a web-based survey of high school seniors in Virginia. The survey would cover decision-making processes regarding the choice to attend or not attend postsecondary education, specifically identifying the factors influencing students who choose not to pursue higher education, and reviewing public policy actions that might lead to different decisions. The findings will be used to inform policy decisions and potentially guide state-level actions to increase access to and interest in entry into higher education after high school.

The ODU research team engaged in a collaborative survey design effort with SCHEV to identify factors influencing students' decisions about whether to pursue a post-secondary degree. The survey content was informed, in part, by insights from the "What We Know About College Decision Making" brief created by SCHEV, which included data from HCM-Edge Research ("EDGE study"). The research team met regularly with SCHEV staff to develop the survey instrument, share results of the pilot survey, and give updates on survey progress and preliminary data findings.

Following guidance from the SCHEV survey team, this report will focus on specific data highlights. The document is organized with a brief description of the survey methodology and key takeaways, followed by the demographics of all responding students and the reasons for not attending college given by those who do not plan to continue their education in the next 12 months. Comparisons made between college-bound and non-college bound students include demographics, perceptions of college, help and information sources, and the role of schools, teachers, and counselors in those decisions. A summary of open-ended responses is provided. The report concludes with future considerations. Additional details about the methodology, basic frequency tables, and other documentation may be found in the Appendix.

Methodology

After a collaborative design process involving the research team and SCHEV, the questionnaire was programmed into a Qualtrics web-based survey and tested by the research team and SCHEV staff (see Appendix for the full survey instrument). The sampling frame was provided by College Bound Selection Service (CBSS). While CBSS collects information from both public and private high schools, we understood that this list would likely be skewed towards students with at least some interest in attending college. However, given the short study timeframe, restrictions on research with minors, and the goal of at least 600 completed surveys, the ODU team proposed that using the CBSS list

would be the most expedient way to contact high school seniors in Virginia. All data collection occurred between May 6 and June 21, 2024. Students who completed the survey and provided their contact information received a $10 gift card.

A pre-survey postcard was mailed to all students prior to sending the web survey email invitation. A small pilot was conducted with 350 students initially. The pilot was useful for ensuring that the web-based survey was programmed correctly and that incentives could be delivered to students easily. Open-ended comment questions were included throughout the pilot survey, asking students if they had trouble understanding any of the question items. Early completed surveys from the pilot showed that the survey was reaching more students who planned to attend college. Therefore, an additional open-ended question was included for those students who indicated that they planned to continue their education. The question was worded as follows: *Not everyone plans to attend college after high school. Thinking about your closest friend who does not want to go to college, why did they decide not to go to college at this time?* The purpose of this question was to extend the reach of the survey to gather reasons for not attending college from a larger number of respondents. A total of 29 students completed the pilot survey and all indicated that they were planning to continue their education in the next 12 months. No substantive issues or problems were noted by students completing the pilot survey.

The full survey implementation included attempts to reach 15,903 students. For the full implementation phase of the survey, 631 completed surveys were recorded, of which 62 were completed by students who did not plan to attend college within 12 months after high school. The data included approximately 319 student comments about why a close friend did not plan to go to college after high school.
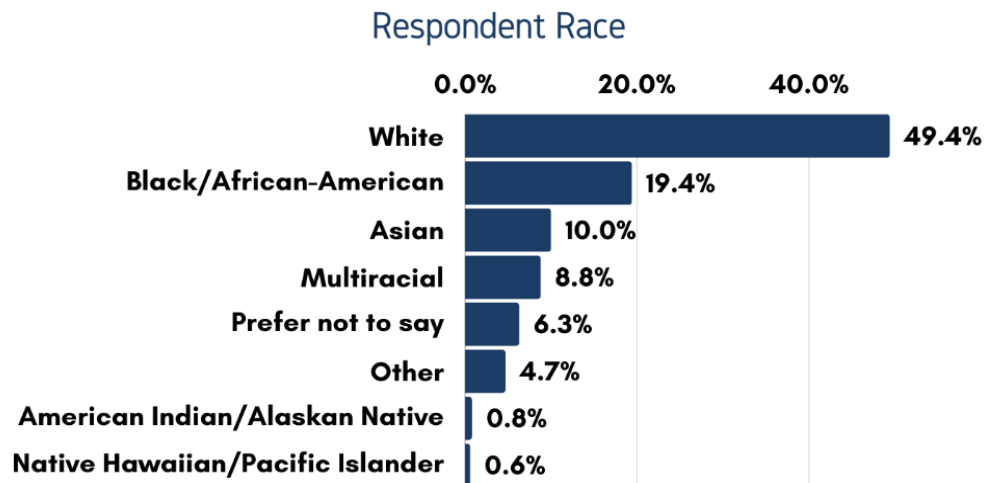
Key Takeaways

While the vast majority of respondents indicated that they planned to attend college, thus limiting the diversity of the resulting data, the findings provide valuable information about high school seniors in Virginia. Below are some key takeaways.

- Students who responded to the survey are **similar in terms of gender and race** when compared to official Virginia statistics of all high school graduates and those enrolled in an institution of higher education within 16 months of graduation.
- The most frequently cited **reasons for not attending college include costs, lack of perceived value or utility of a college degree, and not enjoying school**. The reasons student-respondents did not plan to attend college are similar to other national studies and are also similar among males/females and white/nonwhites with a few exceptions. Their cited reasons are also reflected in and supported by the open-ended responses obtained from college-bound seniors regarding their close friends who are not attending college.

- There are **differences in the perceptions of the value/costs of a college degree and its usefulness/utility between college-bound and non-college bound students.** Those not planning to attend college were more likely to agree that getting a college degree is not worth the investment, that they did not need a college degree for the job they want, and that college did not provide the skills required for the job they want.
- **Sources of information, about post-high school plans in general and college specifically, differed among college-bound and non-college bound students and also among males/females and whites/nonwhites**. College-bound students were more likely to get most of their college information directly from colleges through college websites/webinars, emails, mailings, and campus visits. Males were more likely to get most of their information about college from their parents than females. Female students were more likely to get most of their college information from school counselors, college readiness programs, college websites, and internet/Google searches. Nonwhite students were more likely to get most of their college information from school counselors and college readiness programs compared to their white peers.
- **College-bound students and white students are more likely to report campus visits as a source of information about college** which leads to questions about how accessible college campuses are for all students.
- **The role of high school counselors, teachers, and other staff may be an important consideration given that almost one in four students reported only meeting once or not at all with school counselors** to specifically discuss what they might do after high school. College-bound students were also more likely to indicate that teachers/counselors encouraged students to consider a variety of options for what they might do after high school and non-college bound students were more likely to indicate that teachers/counselors only encouraged certain students to go to college.
- **The majority of non-college bound students did not completely rule out the possibility of attending college in the future.** Open-ended comments further show that non-college bound students may take multiple pathways to an eventual college degree (including joining the military to pay for college, working to save for college, or taking a gap year to figure out what kind of career/degree they would like to pursue).

Demographics of All Student Respondents

The number of demographic questions included in the survey was intentionally limited to help keep the survey length reasonable. Gender and race were the two main questions included. About 54 percent of those responding were female compared to 41.2 percent male and 3.7 percent transgender or other. Just under half of respondents were white (49.4 percent), 19.4 percent were black/African-American, and 10 percent were Asian.

Respondent Race

Race	Percent
White	49.4%
Black/African-American	19.4%
Asian	10.0%
Multiracial	8.8%
Prefer not to say	6.3%
Other	4.7%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.8%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.6%

These demographics are fairly similar to the 2022 VDOE Federal Graduation Indicator (FGI) report (students earning a high school diploma)[1]. This indicates that, at least for these demographics, the survey respondents are similar to the Virginia high school student population as a whole. Students were also asked to provide the ZIP code of where they live and there was considerable geographic spread of responding students from across the Commonwealth. A map with the ZIP codes of responding students and a map showing the coverage of the full CBSS list of student contacts based on ZIP codes to which postcards were mailed can be found in the Appendix (page 60).
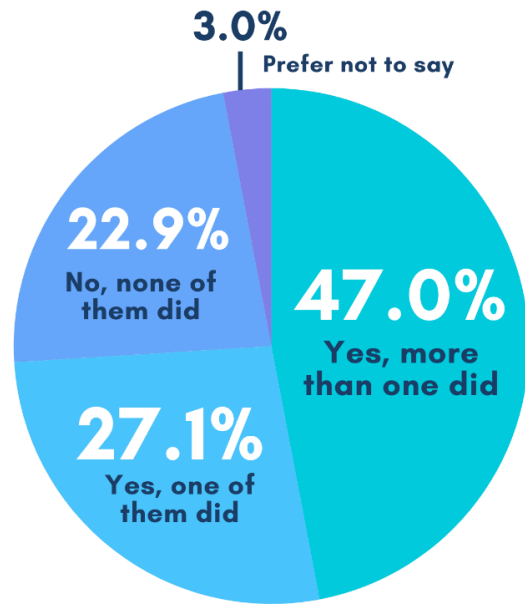
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[1] According to the VDOE State Fiscal Stabilization Fund Indicator (C)(11) report, for the 2022 FGI cohort year students earning a high school diploma were 50.2% female and 49.8% male, 50.5% white, 20.6% black, and 8.3% Asian.
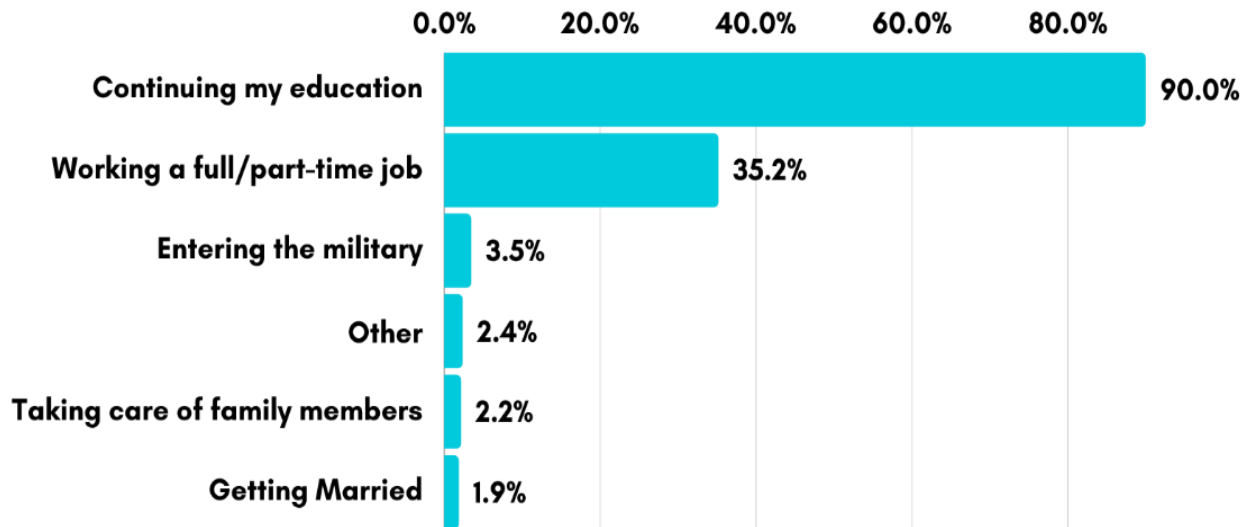
Students were also asked if any of their parents or guardians completed a certificate, associate degree or a bachelor's degree. Almost three-quarters of responding students indicated that one parent/guardian had completed some post-secondary education (47 percent) or more than one did (27.1 percent).

The vast majority of responding students (90 percent) indicated that they plan to attend college in the 12 months after high school graduation. Slightly more than one-third (35.2 percent) indicated that they plan to work a full-time or part-time job, and only 3.5 percent plan to enter the military[2].

"Did any of your parents/guardians complete a certificate, associate's degree or a bachelor's degree?"

- 3.0% Prefer not to say
- 22.9% No, none of them did
- 47.0% Yes, more than one did
- 27.1% Yes, one of them did

"What are your plans for the 12 months after high school graduation?"

Plan	Percentage
Continuing my education	90.0%
Working a full/part-time job	35.2%
Entering the military	3.5%
Other	2.4%
Taking care of family members	2.2%
Getting Married	1.9%

Reasons for Not Attending College

Only about 10 percent of responding students indicated they planned to do something other than attend college 12 months after high school graduation (n=62). The most frequently cited reasons for not attending college included: that it was too expensive and that students did not enjoy school. Other reasons included: not worth the money it costs
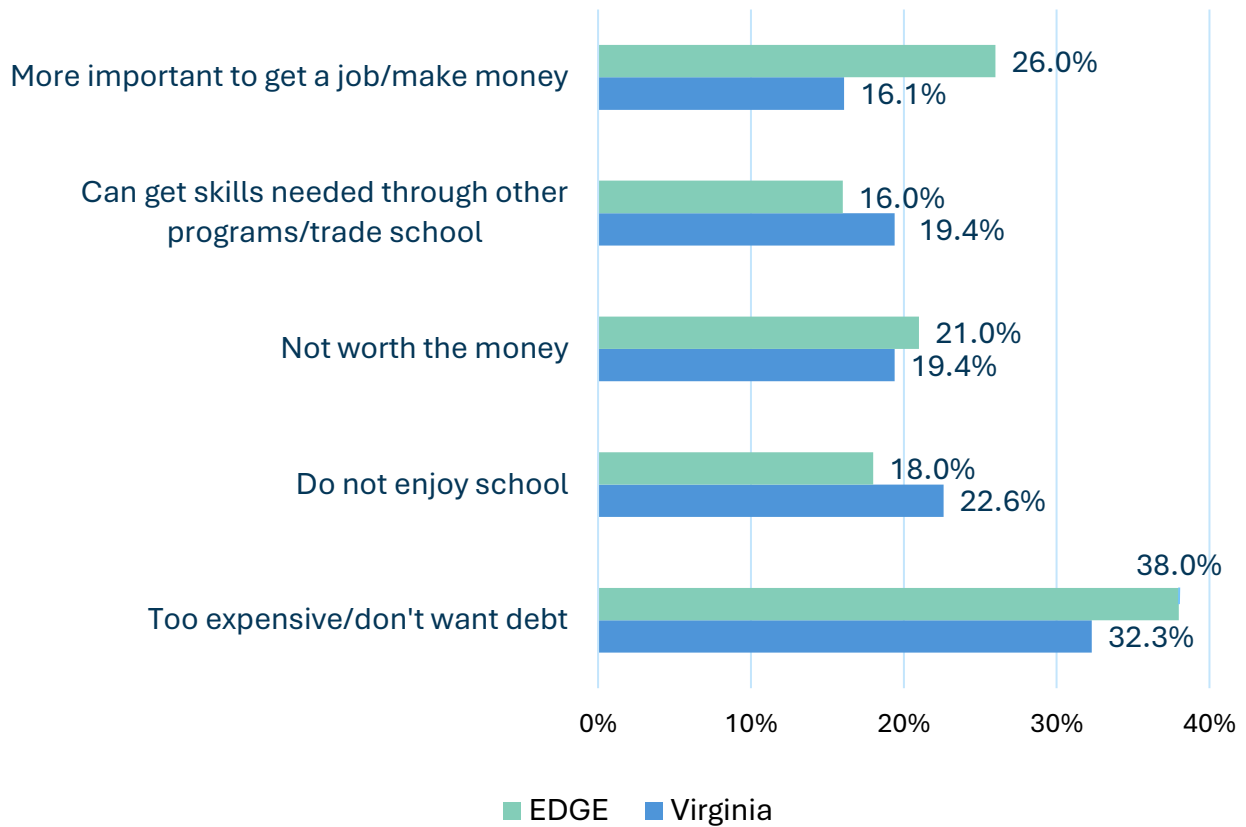
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[2] Plans for 12 months after high school was a multiple response item.

to attend, can get the skills/credentials needed through other programs, not being academically prepared/worried that classes will be too hard, and that it is more important to get a job and make money.
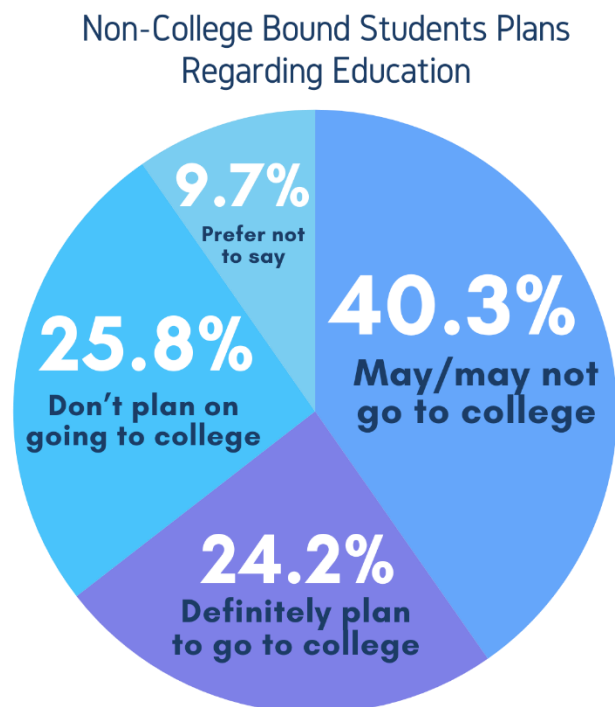
Which of the following are reasons you may not go to college? (select all that apply)	%
Too expensive – do not want to take on debt	32.3%
Do not enjoy school	22.6%
Not worth the money it costs to attend	19.4%
Can get the skills and credentials needed through other educational programs, like trade school or certificate courses	19.4%
Not prepared academically/worried classes will be too hard	16.1%
More important to get a job and make money	16.1%
College seems an uncomfortable place for me to attend	4.8%
Not accepted to the school I want(ed) to attend	3.2%
Family did not think it was important to attend college	3.2%
Other (couldn't get in with GPA / mental health)	3.2%

Since the EDGE survey was used as a source for several survey questions, comparing Virginia's results to that national survey may be useful. The Virginia results are quite similar to the national EDGE results when comparing the most frequent reasons for not attending college. As in Virginia, the EDGE survey showed that concerns about costs, questions about the value of a college degree, not enjoying school, and preferring to get a job/make money were among the most common reasons for not attending college.

Virginia Results Compared to EDGE Survey Results

More important to get a job/make money
- EDGE: 26.0%
- Virginia: 16.1%

Can get skills needed through other programs/trade school
- EDGE: 16.0%
- Virginia: 19.4%

Not worth the money
- EDGE: 21.0%
- Virginia: 19.4%

Do not enjoy school
- EDGE: 18.0%
- Virginia: 22.6%

Too expensive/don't want debt
- EDGE: 38.0%
- Virginia: 32.3%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%

■ EDGE   ■ Virginia

Students who indicated that they did not plan to attend college in the 12 months after high school were asked what their future plans were regarding education. About one in four of these non-college bound students indicated that they definitely plan to attend college at some point in the future (24.2 percent), while another one in four do not plan to attend college (25.8 percent). About 40 percent were not sure. This would indicate that there is at least some possibility among the majority of non-college bound students to attend college in the future.

Non-College Bound Students Plans Regarding Education

- 9.7% Prefer not to say
- 25.8% Don't plan on going to college
- 40.3% May/may not go to college
- 24.2% Definitely plan to go to college

Non-College Bound Students: Demographic Comparisons

When comparing males and females, the cost and lack of enjoyment factors still rate among the highest for both groups. However, a larger percentage of males indicated that it was more important to get a job and make money and that college is not worth the money it costs to attend. In comparison, a larger percentage of females felt unprepared or worried that college classes would be too hard. A slightly larger percentage of males also felt that they could get the skills needed through other/non-college programs such as trade school or certificate courses[3].

Which of the following are reasons you may not go to college (select all that apply)	Male % (n=37)	Female[4] % (n=17)
Too expensive – do not want to take on debt	32.4%	29.4%
Do not enjoy school	21.6%	23.5%
Not worth the money it costs to attend	21.6%	11.8%
Can get the skills and credentials needed through other educational programs, like trade school or certificate courses	18.9%	11.8%
Not prepared academically/worried classes will be too hard	16.2%	23.5%
More important to get a job and make money	21.6%	5.9%
College seems an uncomfortable place for me to attend	5.4%	5.9%
Not accepted to the school I want(ed) to attend	0.0%	5.9%
Family did not think it was important to attend college	2.7%	5.9%
Other (couldn't get in with GPA / mental health)	2.7%	5.9%

When comparing white and nonwhite students, the cost and lack of enjoyment factors also rate among the highest for both groups. However, a larger percentage of white students indicated they could get the skills needed through other/non-college programs such as trade school or certificate courses.

Which of the following are reasons you may not go to college (select all that apply)	White % (n=30)	Nonwhite % (n=25)
Too expensive – do not want to take on debt	33.3%	32.0%
Do not enjoy school	23.3%	24.0%
Not worth the money it costs to attend	16.7%	20.0%
Can get the skills and credentials needed through other educational programs, like trade school or certificate courses	26.7%	4.0%
Not prepared academically/worried classes will be too hard	20.0%	16.0%

[3] Given the small number of non-college bound students, statistical testing among subgroups was not performed.
[4] A total of seven (7) students indicated they were transgender or did not indicate their gender.

Which of the following are reasons you may not go to college (select all that apply)	White % (n=30)	Nonwhite % (n=25)
More important to get a job and make money	16.7%	20.0%
College seems an uncomfortable place for me to attend	6.7%	4.0%
Not accepted to the school I want(ed) to attend	0.0%	4.0%
Family did not think it was important to attend college	6.7%	0.0%
Other (couldn't get in with GPA / mental health)	6.7%	0.0%

College-Bound and Non-College Bound Students: Demographic Comparisons[5]

Those students who indicated they did not plan to attend college were more likely to be male. However, there were no significant racial differences between those who did and did not plan to attend college. There were also no significant differences in the college-bound and non-college bound groups in terms of parent/guardian education (when comparing those with no parent/guardians completing post-secondary education to those with at least one who completed post-secondary education).

Demographics	Non-College Bound % (n=62)	College-Bound % (n=569)
Male	60.7%	39.1%***
Female	27.9%	57.1%
Transgender/other	1.6%	1.4%
Prefer not to say	9.8%	2.3%
White	48.4%	49.6%
Black/African-American	19.4%	19.4%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	3.2%	0.5%
Asian	4.8%	10.5%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1.6%	0.5%
Multiracial	4.8%	9.3%
Other	6.5%	4.5%
Prefer not to say	11.3%	5.7%

*p≤.05, **p≤.01, ***p≤.001

[5] Unless otherwise indicated, significance testing was conducted via Chi-square analysis after recoding variables to be dichotomous (two categories, e.g. male/female, white/nonwhite. Responses of prefer not to say and transgender were recoded to missing for the comparisons).

Did any of your parents/guardians complete a certificate, an associate degree or a bachelor's degree?	Non-College Bound % (n=62)	College-Bound % (n=569)
No, none of them did	25.8%	22.6%
Yes, one did	37.1%	26.0%
Yes, more than one did	30.6%	48.8%
Prefer not to say	6.5%	2.7%

College-Bound and Non-College Bound Students: Perceptions of College[6]

The table below shows many significant differences between college and non-college bound students regarding their perceptions of the value and costs of a college education as well as the usefulness or utility of a college degree. For example, more than half (52 percent) of students who plan to attend college agreed that a good job requires a college degree compared to just 26 percent of non-college bound students. Almost 70 percent of those planning to attend college agreed they would be willing to take on college debt if they could be guaranteed a good job after graduation compared to just 56.5 percent of non-college bound students. Conversely, those not planning to attend college were more likely to agree that getting a college degree is not worth the investment, that they do not need a college degree for the job they want, and that college does not provide the skills required for the job they want.

There were also some significant differences in other personal or family factors. Almost 60 percent of those planning to attend college agreed that college is designed "for people like me" compared to just 15 percent of non-college bound students. Ninety percent of college-bound students agreed that family or loved ones have encouraged them to get a college degree compared to just over half (53.2 percent) of non-college bound students.

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements….	Non-College Bound % (n=62)	College-Bound % (n=569)
	Strongly agree/Agree	Strongly agree/Agree
Going to college and getting a degree only makes sense if I know exactly what field I want to study.	59.7%	42.5%***
College is designed for people like me.	14.8%	59.6%***

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[6] The tables in this section reflect the percentage of students responding agree/strongly agree **before** recoding for statistical testing. For statistical testing using Chi-Square, statements were recoded to dichotomize and compare those responding strongly agree/agree with those responding strongly disagree/disagree and removing/recoding the "neither" category to missing. Those data tables can be found in the Appendix.

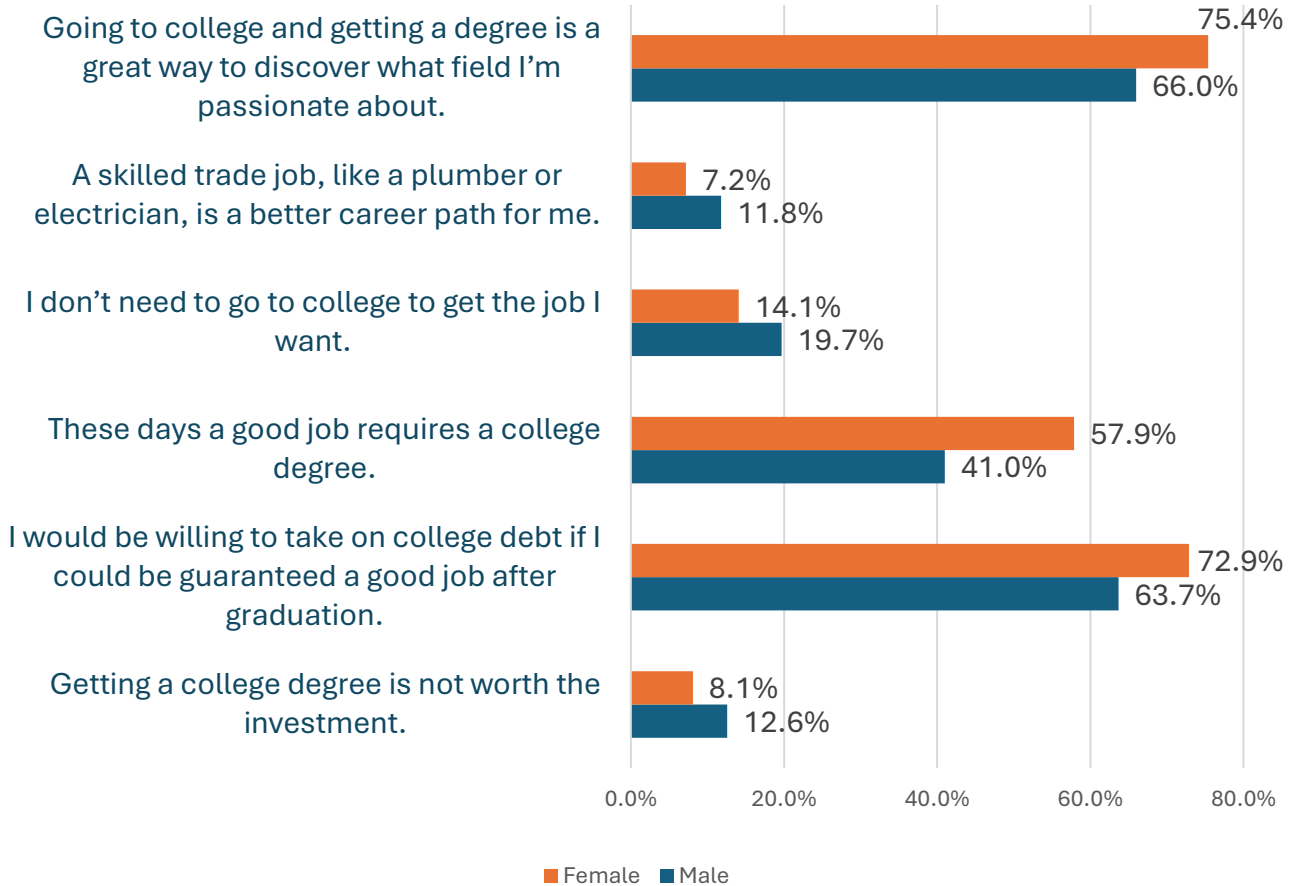| Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements….	Non-College Bound % (n=62)	College-Bound % (n=569)
	Strongly agree/Agree	Strongly agree/Agree
My family/loved ones have encouraged me to get a college degree.	53.2%	90%***
Getting a college degree is not worth the investment.	35.5%	8.4%***
For the kind of career I want, employers care that I have the right experience and skills (not about a college degree).	62.9%	43.1%***
Going to college and getting a degree is a great way to discover what field I'm passionate about.	30.7%	74.1%***
High schools should provide more information assistance for students who intend to get a job, learn a trade, and/or join the military after they graduate from high school.	79%	78.3%
I can get all the education I need online at no cost (e.g., YouTube, TikTok).	22.6%	20.5%
I would be willing to take on college debt if I could be guaranteed a good job after graduation.	56.5%	69.3%***
These days a good job requires a college degree.	26.2%	52%***
I don't need to go to college to get the job I want.	51.6%	13.6%***
College does not provide the skills I need for the job I want.	32.3%	6%***
A skilled trade job, like a plumber or electrician, is a better career path for me.	43.5%	6.2%***

***p≤..001

There were also statistically significant differences between males and females regarding their perceptions of college. Female students were more likely to agree that going to college is a great way to discover what field they are passionate about (75.4 percent compared to 66 percent of male students). In contrast, male students were more likely to agree that a skilled trade job (e.g., plumber, electrician) is a better career path for them (11.8 percent compared to 7.2 percent of female students). Almost 20 percent of males agreed that they do not need to go to college for their desired job, compared to just 14.1 percent of female students.

Female students were more likely to agree that a good job requires a college degree (57.9 percent compared to 41 percent of males) and that they would be willing to take on college debt if they could be guaranteed a good job after graduation (72.9 percent compared to

63.7 percent of males). Only 8.1 percent of female students agreed that college is not worth the investment compared to 12.6 percent of male students.

Perceptions of College - Male / Female Signficant Differences

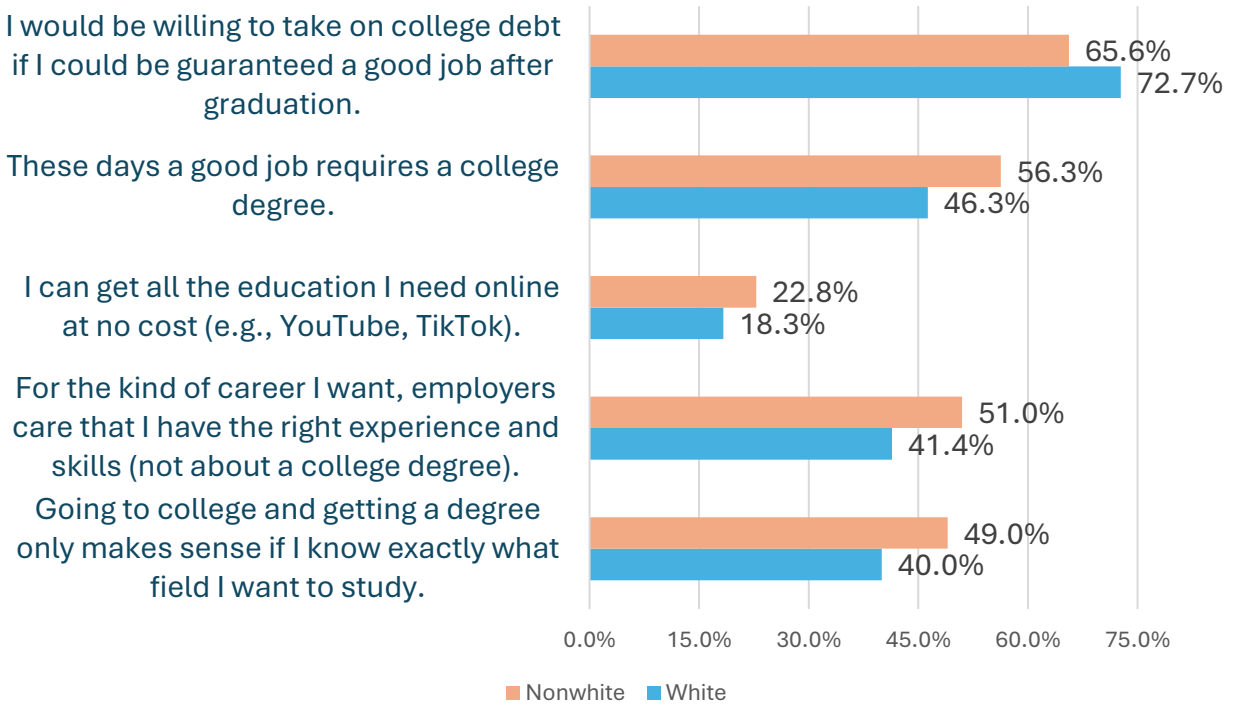| Statement	Female	Male
Going to college and getting a degree is a great way to discover what field I'm passionate about.	75.4%	66.0%
A skilled trade job, like a plumber or electrician, is a better career path for me.	7.2%	11.8%
I don't need to go to college to get the job I want.	14.1%	19.7%
These days a good job requires a college degree.	57.9%	41.0%
I would be willing to take on college debt if I could be guaranteed a good job after graduation.	72.9%	63.7%
Getting a college degree is not worth the investment.	8.1%	12.6%

■ Female ■ Male

There were also some differences between white and nonwhite students related to the value and usefulness of a college education. White students were more likely to be willing to take on college debt if a good job was guaranteed after graduation (72.7 percent compared to 65.6 percent of nonwhite students). More than half of nonwhite students (56.3 percent) agreed that a good job requires a college education, compared to only 46.3 percent of white students. However, more than half (51 percent) of nonwhite students also agreed that, for the kind of career they want, employers care that they have the right skills and experience (and not about a college degree) compared to 41.4 percent of white students.

Further, almost half of nonwhite students (49 percent) agreed that going to college only makes sense if they know exactly what field they want to study, compared to 40 percent of white students. Nonwhite students were also slightly more likely to agree that they can get

all the education they need online at no cost (22.8 percent compared to 18.3 percent of white students).

Perceptions of College - White / Nonwhite Significant Differences

Statement	Nonwhite	White
I would be willing to take on college debt if I could be guaranteed a good job after graduation.	65.6%	72.7%
These days a good job requires a college degree.	56.3%	46.3%
I can get all the education I need online at no cost (e.g., YouTube, TikTok).	22.8%	18.3%
For the kind of career I want, employers care that I have the right experience and skills (not about a college degree).	51.0%	41.4%
Going to college and getting a degree only makes sense if I know exactly what field I want to study.	49.0%	40.0%

0.0%   15.0%   30.0%   45.0%   60.0%   75.0%

■ Nonwhite   ■ White

Help & Information Sources: Post-High School Plans and College

Students were asked to whom or where they went for help when seeking information about what to do after high school. Parents were most frequently identified as sources of information/help for both college-bound and non-college bound students. Friends were also among the most frequently identified (53.2 percent for non-college bound and 59.4 percent for college-bound). Perhaps unsurprisingly, college-bound students were more likely to identify teachers (58.2 percent compared to 32.3 percent of non-college bound students), school counselors (58 percent compared to 41.9 percent of non-college bound students), and college websites (61.2 percent compared to just 19.4 percent of non-college bound students). Non-college bound students were more likely to identify job websites such as LinkedIn and Indeed than their college-bound peers (24.2 percent compared to 10 percent). When asked which was *most helpful*, most college-bound and non-college bound students indicated their parents. College-bound students also identified college websites and school counselors while non-college bound students identified teachers and friends as the most helpful source.

When you were seeking information about what to do after high school, to whom or where did you go for help?	Non-College Bound % (n=62)	College-Bound % (n=569)
Friends	53.2%	59.4%
Parents	79%	83.1%
Other family	30.6%	28.6%
Teachers	32.3%	58.2%***
School counselors	41.9%	58.0%***
College websites	19.4%	61.2%***
Job websites (LinkedIn/Indeed)	24.2%	10.0%***
Social media (Tik Tok/Instagram/FB/Twitter/YouTube)	25.8%	25.1%
Other	1.6%	3.3%
Prefer not to say	4.8%	0.9%
Which most helpful? (top three highest %)		
Parents	34.0%	44.5%
Teachers	14.9%	(not top 3)
Friends	12.8%	(not top 3)
College websites	(not top 3)	17.0%
School counselor(s)	(not top 3)	13.2%

*p≤.05, **p≤.01, ***p≤.001

There were some differences in information sources for male and female students. While parents are the most frequently selected source of information for both males and females, 59.3 percent of female students turned to teachers compared to only 51.2 percent of male students. School counselors were indicated as a source of help by 59.9 percent of females compared to 50.8 percent of males. College websites were also

mentioned by 61.7 percent of female students and only 51.2 percent of male students. Most males and females identified parents as *most helpful*. Smaller percentages of males (11.2 percent) and females (18.9 percent) also identified college websites as the most helpful. Friends were mentioned by 11.2 percent of males as most helpful while 16.9 percent of females identified school counselors as most helpful. The sources of information about what to do after high school were very similar for white and nonwhite students. There was only one significant difference with more white students (88.3 percent) going to their parents for help than their nonwhite peers (78.3 percent).

When you were seeking information about what to do after high school, to whom or where did you go for help?	Male % (n=254)	Female % (n=334)
Friends	58.7%	59.0%
Parents	85.0%	82.0%
Other family	24.4%	31.1%
Teachers	51.2%	59.3%*
School counselors	50.8%	59.9%*
College websites	51.2%	61.7%*
Job websites (LinkedIn/Indeed)	9.1%	12.9%
Social media (Tik Tok/Instagram/FB/Twitter/YouTube)	24.8%	26.3%
Other	4.7%	2.1%
Prefer not to say	1.2%	1.2%
Which most helpful? (top three highest %)		
Parents	50.2%	39.1%
Friends	11.2%	(not top 3)
College websites	11.2%	18.9%
School counselor(s)	(not top 3)	16.9%

*p≤.05, **p≤.01, ***p≤.001

Students were also asked where they got most of their information specifically about college. Again, parents were among the most frequently identified for both college-bound and non-college bound students. Those planning to attend college mentioned college websites, webinars, mailings or emails, internet or Google searches, and campus visits more often than their non-college bound peers. While this is not surprising, it does lead to further questions about when/how decisions to attend college are being made. For example, are non-college bound students not visiting college campuses because they have already decided not to attend, or do they not have the opportunity/resources to visit at any point in their decision-making process? The most frequently identified source of college information for college-bound students was college websites, webinars, mailing, or emails (56.9 percent). In comparison, parents were the most frequently identified source for non-college bound students (40.3 percent). Parents are also a frequently mentioned resource and support in the open-ended comments.

Where are you getting MOST of your information about college?	Non-College Bound % (n=62)	College-Bound % (n=569)
My parents	40.3%	45.2%
School counselors/social workers	32.3%	33.4%
College websites, webinars, mailings or emails	32.3%	56.9%***
Teachers/athletic coaches	27.4%	17.6%
My friends, classmates, peers	22.6%	26.0%
College readiness program/presentation in high school	21.0%	21.8%
Social media	16.1%	17.8%
Internet/Google searches	16.1%	30.1%***
My siblings, cousins, or other family members close to my age	19.4%	20.0%
Campus visits	9.7%	41.8%***
Other	1.6%	0.9%
I am not hearing much about college	6.5%	0.7%

*p≤.05, **p≤.01, ***p≤.001

A larger percentage of males identified their parents as the source of most of their information about college (53.5 percent compared to 39.2 percent of females). However, more female students (37.4 percent) indicated that they got most of their information from school counselors and/or social workers compared to male students (29.1 percent). Thirty-four percent of female students found most of their information about college from internet and Google searches compared to 22.4 percent of male students. College readiness programs and presentations in high school were indicated by 26 percent of female students and only 15.7 percent of male students. Female students were also more likely to identify college websites, webinars, and mailings/emails (62.3 percent) than male students (46.5 percent). Finally, more female students (21.6 percent) responded that social media is the source of most of their information for college, whereas only 14.6 percent of male students responded the same. Since female students were more likely to indicate that they planned to attend college after high school, it is perhaps not surprising that they more often report using various informational sources to learn about college.

Where are you getting MOST of your information about college?	Male % (n=254)	Female % (n=334)
My parents	53.5%	39.2%***
College websites, webinars, mailings or emails	46.5%	62.3%***
Campus visits	37.8%	41.0%
School counselors/social workers	29.1%	37.4%*
My friends, classmates, peers	25.6%	26.0%
My siblings, cousins, or other family members close to my age	22.4%	19.2%
Internet/Google searches	22.4%	34.1%**

Where are you getting MOST of your information about college?	Male % (n=254)	Female % (n=334)
Teachers/athletic coaches	21.3%	16.8%
College readiness program/presentation in high school	15.7%	26.0%**
Social media	14.6%	21.6%*
Other	2.0%	0.3%
I am not hearing much about college	2.0%	0.3%

*p≤.05, **p≤.01, ***p≤.001

White students (50.6 percent) were more likely to indicate that they get most of their information about college from their parents compared to nonwhite students (39.5 percent) and are also more likely to identify campus visits as a source of most of their college information (43.5 percent compared to 34.1 percent of nonwhite students). Given that non-college bound students are also less likely to mention campus visits, a similar question is raised about nonwhite students and whether they are not visiting college campuses because they have already made up their minds about college or do they not have the opportunity/resources to visit during their decision-making process? Nonwhite students were more likely to report getting most of their college information from school counselors than white students (40.9 percent compared to 27.9 percent) and from college readiness programs and presentations in high school (28.6 percent compared to 16.2 percent).

Where are you getting MOST of your information about college?	White % (n=308)	Nonwhite % (n=276)
College websites, webinars, mailings or emails	58.8%	50.7%
My parents	50.6%	39.5%**
Campus visits	43.5%	34.1%**
School counselors/social workers	27.9%	40.9%***
Internet/Google searches	26.0%	30.8%
My friends, classmates, peers	23.1%	29.7%
My siblings, cousins, or other family members close to my age	19.2%	22.1%
Teachers/athletic coaches	19.5%	18.1%
College readiness program/presentation in high school	16.2%	28.6%***
Social media	15.3%	21.4%
Other	0.6%	0.7%
I am not hearing much about college	1.6%	0.4%

*p≤.05, **p≤.01, ***p≤.001

Role of Schools, Teachers & Counselors

Students were presented with a series of statements about the teachers and counselors at their school. College-bound students were much more likely to agree that teachers/counselors encouraged students to consider a variety of options for what they might do after high school compared to their non-college bound peers (71 percent compared to 45.2 percent)[7]. There were no significant differences between males and females or white and nonwhite students.

Which of the following best describes the teachers/counselors at your high school?	Non-College Bound % (n=62)	College-Bound % (n=569)
Teachers/counselors encouraged students to consider a variety of options for what they might do after high school.	45.2%	71.0%***
Teachers/counselors encouraged everyone to go to college after high school.	21.0%	14.3%
Teachers/counselors encouraged only certain students to go to college after high school.	19.4%	7.8%
Teachers/counselors did not discuss options for what students might do after high school.	6.5%	3.4%
Prefer not to say	8.1%	3.5%

*p≤.05, **p≤.01, ***p≤.001

Students were asked how well their high school prepared them with information or other resources to help with post-high school plans. More than 40 percent of students said that their high school did not do too well or did not do well at all in terms of learning about the salary potential of different careers (44.4 percent) or learning about their salary potential with and without a degree (43.3 percent). Just under one-third also did not think their high school did well with helping them choose a major in college (31.4 percent) or deciding where to apply to college (28 percent). About one in four students also thought their high school did not do well in terms of helping them learn what careers would best match their skills and interests (24.5 percent). Ratings on all these items were similar for both college-bound and non-college bound students with the exception of being academically prepared for college (24.6% of non-college bound students responding not too well/not well at all compared to just 10% of college-bound students).

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[7] This variable was dichotomized to compare "encouraged students to consider a variety of options" to all other options. There was significant different between college-bound and non-college bound students when "encouraged students to consider a variety of options" was compared to all other options combined.

How well has/did high school prepare you for each of the following?	Not well at all/Not too well %
Learning about the salary potential for different careers	44.4%
Learning about your salary potential with and without a degree	43.3%
Choosing a major in college	31.4%
Deciding where to apply to college	28.0%
Learning what careers would best match your skills and interests	24.5%
Taking standardized tests to get into college (e.g., SAT/ACT)	23.2%
Being prepared socially and emotionally for college	22.2%
Understanding and completing the college application process	21.7%
Learning about career, military, or educational options after high school	15.7%
Being prepared academically for college	11.4%

Students often meet with school counselors or other school personnel to discuss their post-high school plans. The survey results show that about 23 percent of all students met only once or not at all with a school counselor during high school to discuss what they might do after high school. There were no statistically significant differences between those planning to attend college and those who do not plan to attend college[8]. There was a significant difference between white and nonwhite students, with nonwhite students being slightly more likely to report that they met with their school counselor two or more times than white students (81.6 percent compared to 74.4 percent).

During high school, how many times did you meet with a school counselor/other school personnel to specifically discuss what you might do after high school?	All Students (n=631)	Non-College Bound % (n=62)	College-Bound % (n=569)
Never	6.8%	1.6%	7.4%
Once	15.8%	19.4%	15.5%
2-3 times	39.8%	43.5%	39.4%
4-5 times	20.4%	14.5%	21.1%
6+ times	16.0%	17.7%	15.8%
Prefer not to say	1.1%	3.2%	0.9%

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[8] No statistically significant differences between college/non-college or gender when comparing 0/1 times with 2 or more times. $p \leq .05$ for race.

Open-Ended Responses[9]

The survey included two open-ended questions that allowed students to provide more detailed information about their plans after high school. Members of the research team reviewed the responses and did a general thematic analysis of the open-ended data. For more information about the analysis/coding process, please see the Appendix. The first open-ended question was asked of all students: *Please tell us anything else that influenced your decision about what you plan to do after high school. You can also use this space to share any other thoughts you have about issues discussed in this survey.*

One of the most common themes showed the influence of parents, family members, school staff and others in their decision to attend (or not attend college). Some of these comments reflected social or familial expectations/norms to get a college degree.

"I plan on studying to become an Athletic Trainer. My coaches and family friends helped me realize that this is what I want to do."

"My friends and family definitely influenced my decision."

"Mostly family and social expectations to go to a 4-year institutions influenced my decision."

"What influenced me to go to college is to have a good paying job while enjoying working. I want to have a good paying job to be able to provide for my family and do things. The job that I want to have does take 6 years of college."

"It is almost impossible to get a job that pays a comfortable salary without going to college, so going to college is a must."

Students also shared how college is necessary for their chosen job/career and/or to have a higher paying job.

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[9] Quotes are provided here verbatim (including typos, misspellings, etc.) from the students' response.

Another common response theme to this question showed that students were concerned about the cost/affordability of college and the potential for accruing debt. Comments showed that students were weighing the cost of college in their decision on where to go to school, what type of college to attend (four-year or community college), or if they would go at all.

> *"Seeing my parents one with a degree and one with their own business without a degree and how different it is. One with no debt other with a ton. Plus the one without a degree makes way more money and loves their job then other with a degree struggles everyday for still just getting by."*
>
> *"College is expensive and community college is cheaper. Student debt is not worth the degree nowadays."*

Others mentioned athletic scholarships and/or the desire to continue playing a collegiate sport as influencing their post-high school plans.

> *"I play a sport so that persuaded my decision a lot by scholarship money, having my major, as well as the coaching staff and campus."*
>
> *"Getting an athletic scholarship definitely helped me decide to go to college."*
>
> *"My life goal has been to play lacrosse collegiately. That is what I will be doing while earning a degree in graphic design and digital marketing."*

Other, less common themes included entering the military instead of college or to pay for college, using social media/internet research to inform their post-high school plans and potential career path, and entering the workforce or pursuing a trade instead of going to college.

> *"My school has a career and technical center program to study many different trade options, I chose to do the two year cosmetology program."*
>
> *"I enjoy working so I'm going to trade school"*

> *"So for now it's the military and maybe college after when I get the funds."*
>
> *"My dad is disabled and a navy retiree and because of that I am eligible for scholarships that pay for my tuition and such…"*
>
> *"Social media for sure. They provide more insight on their college experience and advice on what to do and what to avoid."*

The other open-ended question was asked of students who had indicated that they planned to attend college after high school: *Not everyone plans to attend college after high school. Thinking about your closest friend who does not plan to go to college, why did they decide not to go to college at this time?* The themes from this question support the results from the small subgroup of students who do not plan to attend college immediately after high school and they align with the national EDGE survey. The most common themes included concerns about costs and the potential for debt; friends' interest in pursuing a job, the military or a trade; not enjoying school and college not being necessary for the job their friend wishes to pursue. A less common theme was that non-college bound friends wanted to take a gap year after high school. Some comments also indicated that friends were not completely ruling out going to college in the future but instead taking a gap year to work and save money or figure out their interests. Some mentioned that their friend(s) are joining the military to help pay for college. These comments reflect that there may be different pathways for non-college bound students to eventually enroll in college. Examples of thematic quotes are provided in the table below.

Cost/Affordability:	Pursuing Trades:	Not Necessary:
"The cost of going to college is too much of a burden." *"He wants to start making money immediately and therefore decided that he*	*"Most of my friends are going to college, but the ones that aren't are choosing to do other things like cosmetology school or real estate school."*	*"They decided to do that because what they wanted to do in the future didn't require a college degree."*

didn't want to go into debt but wanted to go straight into the labor force."	*"He wants to go trade school over college. He really enjoys his auto tech class and so he wants to be able to utilize those skills for a career."*	*"They have another path in their life that doesn't involve(need) college."*
Enter the Military:	**Not interested in College:**	**Gap Year:**
"Some would rather the military pay for their education." *"They want to go to the military to get college free and other benefits as well."* *"My friend chose to go to the Air Force first so he could help get his college payed for."*	*"They said school wasn't for them."* *"because college isn't for everyone school isn't"*	*"I have a friend who has chosen not to go to college because they needed a break from school/education in general."* *"A year from now they may reconsider it when they have more work experience and money."* *"They don't know what they want to do, so they are taking a gap year."*

There are also word cloud diagrams for the two open-ended questions in the Appendix.

Conclusions & Considerations

SCHEV has acknowledged the downward-trending demand for higher education, which was a motivating factor for this survey effort with Virginia high school seniors. We acknowledge the limitations of the survey data in which a majority of students plan to continue their education after high school; however, the data from those not planning to attend college and the information provided about friends who do not plan to attend college provides important context to consider. The results of the Virginia survey are consistent with other national accounts that a college degree may no longer be the post-high school gateway to success that American families valued so highly in previous years. In 2021, The Carnegie Corporation found that 46% of parents preferred not to send their children to 4-year colleges, opting instead for non-college training programs, two-year colleges, or other pathways (e.g., entering the military; vocational, technical, or trade schools; internships; starting a business) and a Gallup poll found that Americans who indicated a *great deal* of confidence in institutions of higher education fell from 28% in 2015 to 17% in 2023 (Brenan, 2023).

A trend of deprioritizing a college or university education in favor of alternatives has also been noted in The Wall Street Journal (2024), citing Carnegie and Gallup survey data and positing that student debt, low job prospects, and political friction on campuses were steering high school graduates and their parents away from four-year institutions. Some employers seem to be taking heed, as Intelligent.com (2024) found that 45% of respondents planned to eliminate bachelor's degree requirements, focusing instead on job experience, with the prospect of diversifying their workforces. The results from the current study confirm that high school students in Virginia, too, are concerned about the costs of a college education, are questioning the value or need for a college degree, and have other concerns related to being academically prepared or not enjoying school.

Since SCHEV alone cannot ultimately control the costs of higher education in Virginia, the results of the study would suggest that SCHEV and other higher education stakeholders need to address negative perceptions about the costs and value of a college degree. This survey specifically asked students about where they were getting information about college and to whom/where they turned to for help when considering what to do after high school. We recommend SCHEV also consider some possible messaging opportunities to help inform the narrative around how to afford college as well as the value of a college degree.

Consider: *Who are the messengers and what is the message about the costs of college and possible financial aid opportunities?*

It would appear that for those students who are not planning to attend college that message is: "it costs too much and is not worth the investment," as costs emerged as the top reason for those not planning to attend college. More than half of all students are getting information about college from college websites directly versus only about one-third who indicate that they are getting most of their information about college from school counselors. Students (and parents) visiting college websites may experience sticker shock at the posted costs of tuition – particularly if they do not understand what financial aid options are available to them. National studies also show that students are more likely to attend college if they think their family can afford it, which speaks to the importance of accurate information about costs relative to potential aid (NCES, 2022).

Since almost one in four students indicated that they are only meeting with school counselors or other school personnel once or not at all to discuss what they might do after high school, this represents a missed opportunity to connect with students and provide additional, accurate information about financial aid and scholarship opportunities. However, high school counselor caseloads are high and they have "witnessed an explosion of responsibilities" to include testing, discipline, and scheduling (Newell, 2014, p.11). Thus, they are dealing with many more {pressing} issues beyond planning for life after high school and have diminished capacity to fully support all students in their post-high school decision-making process. Additional support to connect students with those who can help

navigate the college discovery and application process would increase the chances that students and families get the accurate help needed to make informed decisions.

Consider: *What are other states doing that could be replicated in Virginia? What is already being done well in Virginia that could be enhanced to help inform decision making about college and increase enrollment?*

As states and institutions of higher education deal with declining college enrollments, many have adopted a variety of approaches to easing the path to college for high school students, often with a focus on underrepresented populations. The research team explored what other states (and Virginia) are doing to increase the pathways to higher education. AI-generated search results from the question "What are states doing to encourage college attendance after high school?" are noted below (Open AI, 2024). These search results were independently confirmed by the research team/SCHEV.

Common State Initiatives (and Virginia Exemplars)		
Financial Aid Programs State scholarship programs, grants, and tuition assistance initiatives to make higher education more accessible. Examples include merit-based scholarships, need-based grants, and programs targeting specific populations (e.g., first-generation college students, low-income families).	**Dual Enrollment Programs** Dual enrollment allows high school students to take college courses while still in high school. States can promote dual enrollment partnerships between high schools and colleges, providing students with early exposure to college-level coursework. (Virginia Community Colleges High School Dual Enrollment)	**College Access Networks** These networks connect students with resources, mentors, and information about college admissions, financial aid, and career pathways. State-funded college access programs offer guidance and support to students navigating the college application process. (Virginia College Access Network - VirginiaCAN)
College Promise Programs "College promise" initiatives guarantee tuition-free community college for eligible students. These programs aim to reduce financial barriers and encourage enrollment in postsecondary education. (G3 Program and Virginia's Tuition Promise Programs)	**Career and Technical Education (CTE)** States invest in CTE programs that prepare students for specific careers or technical fields. By aligning high school coursework with college pathways, CTE programs can promote college readiness. (Jobs for Virginia Graduates - JVAG)	**College Savings Plans** States administer 529 savings plans, which allow families to save for college expenses with tax advantages. These plans encourage long-term planning and financial preparedness for higher education. (Virginia 529)

Common State Initiatives (and Virginia Exemplars)	
Outreach and Awareness Campaigns State run campaigns to raise awareness about the benefits of college education. These efforts include promoting college fairs, campus tours, and information sessions. (Level Up Virginia)	**Statewide College Advising Corps** Many states have implemented statewide advising corps to provide students with one-on-one college advising. Many use advisors who are recent college graduates to help guide high school students through the college application and financial aid processes. (Virginia College Advising Corps - VCAC)

While Virginia is utilizing all of the above to some degree, there are additional efforts in other states that could perhaps be considered and replicated in Virginia. Regarding **outreach and awareness campaigns**, several states have adopted programs aimed at creating a culture of college-valuing and attendance for students who have little experience finding and applying to colleges. Several universities build familiarity with the college experience by offering pre-college summer programs. Iowa's Grand View University offers students from selected school divisions a "…7-day, on campus experience [that] will help prepare you for college, jump start your education with your first college class at Grand View and help you develop relationships with GV faculty, staff and fellow students" (Grand View University, 2024).

Parents are a key source of college information for the students in the Virginia survey, with 90 percent of college-bound students indicating that family or loved ones have encouraged them to get a college degree compared to just over half (53.2 percent) of non-college bound students. Parents were also the most frequently cited source of college information for non-college bound students and males. Therefore, building additional access points to provide support for parents may be helpful. For example, *Alabama Goes to College* (Alabama Possible.org, n.d.) solicits parent input on the process of finding and applying to colleges and provides a help desk line and supportive links. Other colleges and universities streamline the entry process, simplify application forms and fees, and support families in the application process. The University of Arkansas Little Rock completes a pre-review of a student's admissibility before the student applies and provides acceptance and support information for those who qualify (Brownfield, 2024). GA futures.org (2024) has created *Georgia Match*, a student dashboard that uses GPAs to show students which state institutions they would be eligible to apply to and then provides a simplified application to begin the process.

Regarding **statewide college advising corps**, the *Virginia College Advising Corps* (VCAC), an AmeriCorps partnership, is part of the Virginia College Access Network which provides intensive advising to low income, first-generation, and under-represented Virginia high

school students and has data to support its continued use. Recent college graduates are placed in high schools with school counselors to assist students and families with the college exploration and application processes, entrance testing, financial aid applications, and scholarship searches. The following data indicates that the program has improved college attendance for Virginia families.

- Over time, VCAC partner high schools saw an average increase in post-secondary enrollment anywhere between 2 and 17 percentage points, with a program average of 9 percentage points.

- Students served by VCAC persist into their second year of college at a higher rate (75%) than the national average (69%).

- In 2018-2019, 36 college advisors assisted students with 14,177 college application submissions, ensured 4,571 FAFSA completions, and helped students secure access to over $90 million in institutional aid and $15 million in scholarships.

- In 2017-2018, 24 college advisors served just under 5,800 seniors, directly helping 3,082 students to enroll. Indicative of the program's central tenet of finding the best match & fit for students, of the 53% enrollment rate, 29% enrolled at 4-year institutions and 24% at 2-year institutions (VCAC, n.d.)

VCAC college advisors engage parents and families in multiple ways including attending events such as College Nights in Virginia, Virgnia College Application Week, FAF$A Next, and Decision Day VA.   They will also discuss with parents and families the postsecondary options that are available to their student and how to pay for school. Since parents are a key information source about college for high school students, increased VCAC presence at these events and increasing the capacity to conduct outreach *directly to parents* through existing means (e.g., emails, phone calls, newsletters, and school communication channels) can help inform students as they make decisions about their future.

Consider: *Even though increasingly more students may not be enrolling in college immediately after high school, how can we ensure that they leave high school knowing the various pathways for returning to college, if and when needed?*

Since 64% of students who do not plan to attend college in the 12 months after high school indicated that they may eventually continue their education, there is an opportunity to be sure they know how to make that transition back to education after taking a gap year, entering the workforce, or joining the military. ***Outreach and awareness campaigns*** could be targeted to those who have recently graduated but not yet enrolled as a reminder of the educational options available to them. Also, non-college bound students and nonwhite students are less likely to report campus visits as a source of information. Are campus visits not happening for these groups because the decision has already been made not to

pursue higher education or are there barriers for students to participate in college campus visits as part of their discovery process?

Campus visits additionally play an important role in the college decision making process. However, fewer schools—public, private, and Ivy League—are relying on this type of demonstrated interest in admissions decisions (Whitford, 2023). The pandemic additionally altered the traditionally favored practice of visiting college campuses. In 2019, 63% of college-bound students responded that campus tours were the best source of information when considering which schools to apply to, compared to only 36% of students in 2023 (Trovato, 2023). Virtual campus tours and information sessions are increasing in popularity as an alternative to physical visits since the pandemic (Whitford, 2023). Virtual tours can be a great alternative for students who may have difficulty making the trip to visit campuses in person (Whitford, 2023).

As previously mentioned, it is unclear whether non-college bound students do not cite campus visits because they have already decided to not apply to college, or they cannot make the visits due to barriers. Whitford (2023) notes that there are equity issues regarding the opportunity to visit campuses, such as affording the travel expenses to do so and making the time (i.e., taking off work) for visits, especially for schools that are not in close proximity. Wai (2021) notes that there may be disparities between first-generation students and those whose parent(s) attended college regarding touring and visiting campuses. Campus visits provide opportunities for students to experience a school firsthand before making decisions about applications (Swanson et al., 2021; Wai, 2021) and to build self confidence in both attending and being successful in college (Swanson et al., 2021). Providing this opportunity to students who might not otherwise visit could provide another pathway to college – either immediately or in the long-term.

Consider: *What happens after students enroll in college? How do we ensure that they finish and earn a degree?*

While this may seem tangential to the decision-making process to attend college in the first place, reports indicate that college *completion* rates have also stagnated over the past several years (NCES, 2023). Programs like VCAC start while students are still in high school, however, much can happen after a student is enrolled in college particularly if they are first generation or otherwise lack supports to navigate the transition from high school. Given that some students in the non-college bound group, particularly females, expressed concerns about being academically prepared, additional support *after* enrollment makes sense.

The IES-funded What Works Clearinghouse, largely acknowledged as a trusted source of empirical evidence, notes only a single intervention, *Bottom Line,* as a *Tier 3/promising practice* for assisting low-income high school students who want to attend 4-year colleges. *Bottom Line* showed potentially positive effects on *enrollment* and *progressing in college*

for the intervention group, many of whom were the first members of their family to attend college. *Bottom Line* utilizes intensive advising beginning at the end of the students' junior year, assistance with college and financial aid applications, college and transition assistance, college orientation, and continued support for up to six years (IES, 2021). Bottom Line's website states, "Bottom Line provides individualized, one-on-one support to students *all the way until college graduation*, meeting students in-person on campus and providing additional holistic support through a variety of methods including video chat, calls, texts, emails, and social media" (emphasis added, Bottom Line.org, n.d.). Bottom Line's (n.d.) Success Program notes that "Students who participate in our Success Program graduate within 6 years at rates up to 43 percentage points higher than students who receive support only with college applications." Consideration might be given to extending the support provided to students via programs like VCAC for the duration of their college attendance to better support college persistence to degree completion.

Given the negative press and perspectives about student debt as well as the costs and utility of a college degree, SCHEV will need to work with higher education institutions in the Commonwealth to promote policies related to costs and to try to change the narrative around the value of higher education. Almost 70 percent of responding students agreed they would be willing to take on college debt if they could be guaranteed a good job after graduation. The question becomes how to reduce the chances for debt and increase the chances for career success. SCHEV might explore different tuition models with institutions in Virginia (e.g., block, scaled or flat-rate models) in addition to the traditional per-credit hour system.

The results of this survey also indicate that there is a lack of information and support for some students and much of that can be influenced by implementing or expanding upon the in-state and national examples above. As with most complex problems, there is not a one-size-fits-all solution given the various needs and concerns identified. SCHEV will need to consider possible solutions, available resources, and the political will to make necessary changes. We believe this report provides information to help guide that process.

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Methodology

The research team agreed that the most cost-effective and quickest approach for survey data collection would be through a web-based survey and existing web-based panel. Inquiries to existing web-based panel vendors that the research team has used before (e.g., Dynata, Cint, and Qualtrics) resulted in very low incidence rates of high school seniors (e.g., 100 or less) and/or would require indirect recruiting through the student's parents which would further prolong survey efforts and increase costs. One sampling vendor suggested American Student List and they connected the research team with the College Bound Selection Service (CBSS). CBSS has been supplying student recruitment data for more than 25 years to a large portion of colleges throughout the nation. CBSS estimated that they have more than 30,000 contacts for Virginia senior high school students to include name, email address, and postal address. The research team secured a sample of more than 16,000 students from CBSS to include name, email address, and postal address.

While CBSS collects information from both public and private high schools, we understood that this list is likely skewed towards students with at least some interest in attending college. However, given the short study timeframe and the goal of at least 600 completed surveys, we felt that using the CBSS list would be the most expedient way to contact high school seniors in Virginia. CBSS was also able to provide the research team with students who would be 18 years or older by the time the survey was administered. This was important given SCHEV's intention to make the survey data available publicly and to inform policy – thus the survey would likely constitute generalizable knowledge (or "research") and therefore the survey procedures would need to be reviewed for human subjects' protections. Since at least some high school seniors would still be minors in the spring of 2024, some form of parental notification or consent would have been required without the ability to target students who were not minors. Given the potential delays and costs associated with obtaining full parental consent, the suggested approach was to obtain contact information from CBSS only for high school seniors who would be 18 years of age at the time the survey was fielded (e.g., by April 1, 2024). This allowed the survey to be reviewed as exempt from full IRB review and not require parental consent.

Research has shown that multiple contacts and offering a variety of ways (modes) for participants to respond to surveys help improve response rates. Given the short duration of the project, offering the survey in multiple modes would have been difficult. However, the final approach did provide a mix of mail and email contacts with multiple reminders. Postcards were mailed announcing the survey and incentive and asking students to check their email for the survey. Within a few days of mailing the initial postcards, the email invitation was sent followed by up to three reminders to non-responding students over an approximately three-week period following the initial email invitation.

Reminders were initially prioritized for males and those living in more rural areas. However, all students eventually received reminders. During the survey period, as the vast majority of students responding indicated that they planned to attend college, a separate email was sent to those completing the survey asking them to provide the contact information (name, email address, school name) for a friend who was a high school senior in Virginia and at least 18 years of age who was not planning to attend college after high school. Students provided 48 referrals resulting in 12 completed surveys. Towards the end of the survey data collection period, the survey was restricted to only those who indicated that they planned to do something other than attend college after high school. All those who completed the survey were also eligible to receive a $10 gift card.

See the table below for the survey fielding timeline.

Survey Activity	Date(s)
PILOT (n=350)	
Mailed post cards	5/6/24 – 5/9/24
Sent Invitation email	5/9/24
Sent reminder email 1	5/13/24
Sent reminder email 2	5/16/24
FULL IMPLEMENTATION (n=15,903)	
Mailed postcards	5/17/24-5/23/24
Sent Invitation Emails	5/22/24-5/24/24
Sent reminder emails 2 & 3	5/30/24 – 6/21/24

Basic Frequency Tables

What are your plans for the 12 months after high school graduation. Please select all that apply.	All Students %
Continuing my education	90.0%
Working a full or part-time job	35.2%
Entering the military	3.5%
Other	2.4%
Taking care of family members	2.2%
Getting married	1.9%
Unsure	1.0%
Prefer not to say	0.5%

Please indicate how you will continue your education. (Only asked of those who indicated "continuing my education")	College-Bound %
Attend a four-year college/university	84.3%
Attend a community college	11.8%
Attend vocational/technical/trade school	1.6%
Other	1.2%
Not sure yet	0.9%
Prefer not to say	0.2%

Will you take classes (in person or online) at a college, university or school located in Virginia or out of state? (Only asked of those who indicated "continuing my education")	College-Bound %
In Virginia	71.2%
Out of state	27.7%
I don't know	0.9%
Prefer not to say	0.2%
When do you plan to continue your education?	
Within the next 6 months	95.6%
6 to 12 months from now	1.4%
1 to 3 years from now	0.5%
More than 3 years from now	1.4%
Not sure	0.5%
Prefer not to say	0.5%

What are your future plans regarding education? (Only asked of those who did not indicate "continuing my education")	Non-College Bound %
I definitely plan on going to college	24.2%
I may or may not go to college/finish a college degree	40.3%
I don't plan on going to college/finish a college degree	25.8%
Prefer not to say	9.7%
Which of the following are reasons you may not go to college?	
Too expensive- do not want to take on debt	32.3%
Not worth the money it cost to attend	19.4%
College seems an uncomfortable place for me to attend	4.8%
Not accepted to the school I want(ed) to attend	3.2%
Do not enjoy school	22.6%
Not prepared academically/worried classes will be too hard	16.1%
Can get the skills and credentials needed through other educational programs, like trade school, or certificate courses	19.4%
More important to get a job and make money	16.1%
Family did not think it was important to attend college	3.2%
Other	3.2%

When you were seeking information about what to do after high school, to whom or where did you go for help? Please select all that apply.	All Students %
Friends	58.8%
Parents	82.7%
Other family	28.8%
Teachers	55.6%
School counselor(s)	56.4%
College websites	57.1%
Job websites (e.g., LinkedIn/Indeed)	11.4%
Social Media (e.g., Tiktok/Instagram/Facebook/Twitter/Youtube)	25.2%
Other	3.2%
Prefer not to say	1.3%
Which one of these was the most helpful?	
Friends	9.8%
Parents	43.6%
Other family	4.0%
Teachers	7.6%
School counselor(s)	13.0%
College websites	15.9%

Job websites (e.g., LinkedIn/Indeed)	0.7%
Social Media (e.g., TikTok/Instagram/Facebook/Twitter/YouTube)	4.0%
Other	1.4%

Where are you getting MOST of your information about college? Please select all that apply.	All Students %
My parents	44.7%
My siblings, cousin, or other family members close to my age	20.0%
My friends, classmates, peers	25.7%
School counselors/social workers	33.3%
College readiness program/presentation in high school	21.7%
Teachers/athletic coaches	18.5%
College websites, webinars, mailings, or emails	54.5%
Social Media (e.g., TikTok/Instagram/Facebook/Twitter/YouTube)	17.6%
Internet/Google searches	28.7%
Other	1.0%
I am not hearing much about college	1.3%

How well has/did high school prepare you for each of the following? (All Students)	Not well at all/Not to Well %	Somewhat Well %	Very Well/ Extremely Well %	Not sure/Prefer not to say %
Learning about career, military, or educational options after high school	15.7%	36.7%	45.3%	2.3%
Learning about the salary potential for different careers	44.4%	30.0%	23.3%	2.2%
Learning about your salary potential with and without a degree	43.3%	31.3%	22.4%	3.0%
Choosing a major in college	31.4%	33.7%	32.7%	2.3%
Deciding where to apply to college	28.0%	32.1%	37.0%	2.9%
Understanding and completing the college application process	21.7%	29.8%	45.8%	2.8%
Being prepared academically for college	11.4%	28.3%	57.7%	2.5%

How well has/did high school prepare you for each of the following? (All Students)	Not well at all/Not to Well %	Somewhat Well %	Very Well/ Extremely Well %	Not sure/Prefer not to say %
Being prepared socially and emotionally for college	22.2%	35.9%	37.5%	4.5%
Learning what careers would best match your skills and interests	24.5%	37.0%	36.1%	2.4%

Which of the following opportunities organized by your high school did you take advantage of or use in order to learn more about what you might do after high school? Please select all that apply.	All Students %
College fairs/visits from colleges	64.8%
Career fairs/visits from employers	27.9%
Military recruiter visits	15.5%
Classes on career exploration/what jobs are possible	27.9%
Questionnaires/surveys/tests that help students discover their interest	35.7%
Other	1.3%
None of these	12.7%
Prefer not to say	1.1%
Which one of these, if any, was most helpful to you?	
College fairs/visits from colleges	60.9%
Career fairs/visits from employers	7.6%
Military recruiter visits	2.0%
Classes on career exploration/what jobs are possible	12.3%
Questionnaires/surveys/tests that help students discover their interest	16.6%
Other	0.7%

During high school, how many times did you meet with a school counselor/other school personnel to specifically discuss what you might do after high school?	All Students %
Never	6.8%
Once	15.8%
2-3 times	39.8%
4-5 times	20.4%
6 or more times	16.0%
Prefer not to say	1.1%

Which of the following best describes teachers/counselors at your high school?	All Students %
Teachers/ Counselors encouraged students to consider a variety of options for what they might do after high school	68.5%
Teachers/ Counselors encouraged everyone to go to college after high school	15.0%
Teachers/ Counselors encouraged only certain students to go to college after high school	8.9%
Teachers/ Counselors did not discuss options for what students might do after high school	3.7%
Prefer not to say	4.0%

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (All Students)	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree %	Neither Agree /Disagree %	Strongly Agree/ Agree %	Prefer not to say %
Going to college and getting a degree only makes sense if you know exactly what field I want to study	32.7%	22.2%	44.2%	1.0%
College is designed for people like me	11.7%	31.8%	55.3%	1.1%
My family/loved ones have encouraged me to get a college degree	4.9%	7.9%	86.4%	0.8%
Getting a college degree is not worth the investment	56.2%	31.7%	11.0%	1.1%
For the kind of career I want, employers care that I have the right experience and skills (not about a college degree)	29.5%	24.1%	45.1%	1.3%
Going to college and getting a degree is a great way to discover which field I'm passionate about	9.3%	19.5%	69.8%	1.3%
High schools should provide more information/assistance for students who intend to get a job, learn a trade, and/or join the military after they graduate from high school	3.5%	17.2%	78.4%	1.0%
I can get all of the education I need online at no cost (e.g., YouTube, TikTok)	53.0%	25.1%	20.6%	1.3%

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (All Students)	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree %	Neither Agree /Disagree %	Strongly Agree/ Agree %	Prefer not to say %
I would be willing to take on college debt if I could be guaranteed a good job after graduation	13.4%	17.3%	68.1%	1.3%
These days a good job requires a college degree	25.0%	24.5%	49.5%	1.0%
I don't need to go to college to get the job I want	65.3%	15.6%	17.3%	1.8%
College does not provide the skills needed for the job I want	70.4%	19.5%	8.6%	1.4%
A skilled trade job, like a plumber or electrician, is a better career path for me	71.8%	16.9%	9.9%	1.4%

Did any of your parents or guardians complete a certificate, an associate degree or a bachelor's degree?	All Students %
No, none of them did	22.9%
Yes, one did	27.1%
Yes, more than one did	47.0%
Prefer not to say	3.0%
What is your gender?	
Male	41.2%
Female	54.2%
Transgender	0.8%
I use a different term	0.6%
Prefer not to say	3.1%
What is your race?	
White	49.4%
Black/African American	19.4%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	0.8%
Asian	10.0%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0.6%
Multiracial	8.8%
Other	4.7%
Prefer not to say	6.3%

SCHEV HS Student Survey

Intro
Please take a few minutes to complete our survey to tell us your thoughts about your next steps after high school graduation. Your participation is important in helping us understand what high school students think about their future. By clicking "Next", you are indicating that you are 18 years of age or older, a high school senior in Virginia, and that you consent to participate in the survey. Your participation is voluntary and your responses will be confidential.

At the conclusion of the survey, you will have the opportunity to enter your information to receive your $10 gift card. Please note that your contact information for the gift card will be stored separately from your survey responses and will not be linked in any way. You may also choose to donate/decline your gift card. Thank you for your participation.

- -

Page Break

Q1 What are your plans for the 12 months after high school graduation? Please select all that apply.

☐ Continuing my education

☐ Working a full or part-time job

☐ Entering the military

☐ Getting married

☐ Taking care of family members

☐ Other (please describe) _____

☐ ⊗Unsure

☐ ⊗Prefer not to say

Q1a Please indicate how you will continue your education:

○ Attend a four-year college/university

○ Attend a community college

○ Attend vocational/technical/trade school

○ Other (please describe) _____

○ Not sure yet

○ Prefer not to say

Q1a2 Will you take classes (in person or online) at a college, university or school located in Virginia or out of state?

○ In Virginia

○ Out of state

○ I don't know

○ Prefer not to say

Q1b When do you plan to continue your education?

○ Within the next 6 months

○ 6 to 12 months from now

○ 1 to 3 years from now

○ More than 3 years from now

○ Not sure

○ Prefer not to say

Q1c What are your future plans regarding education?

○ I definitely plan on going to college

○ I may or may not go to college/finish a college degree

○ I don't plan on going to college/finishing a college degree

○ Prefer not to say

Q1d Which of the following are reasons you may not go to college? Please select all that apply.

☐ Too expensive - do not want to take on debt

☐ Not worth the money it costs to attend

☐ College seems an uncomfortable place for me to attend

☐ Not accepted to the school I want(ed) to attend

☐ Do not enjoy school

☐ Not prepared academically/worried classes will be too hard

☐ Can get the skills and credentials needed through other educational programs, like trade school, or certificate courses

☐ More important to get a job and make money

☐ Family did not think it was important to attend college

☐ Other (please describe) _____

Page Break

Q2 When you were seeking information about what to do after high school, to whom or where did you go for help? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Parent(s)
- ☐ Other family
- ☐ Teachers
- ☐ School counselor(s)
- ☐ College websites
- ☐ Job websites (e.g., LinkedIn/Indeed)
- ☐ Social media (e.g., TikTok/Instagram/Facebook/Twitter/YouTube)
- ☐ Other (please describe) _____
- ☐ ⊗Prefer not to say

Display This Question:

If If When you were seeking information about what to do after high school, to whom or where did you go for help? Please select all that apply. q://QID22/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than or Equal to 2

Carry Forward Selected Choices from "When you were seeking information about what to do after high school, to whom or where did you go for help? Please select all that apply."

X→

Q2a Which one of these was the most helpful?

○ Friends

○ Parent(s)

○ Other family

○ Teachers

○ School counselor(s)

○ College websites

○ Job websites (e.g., LinkedIn/Indeed)

○ Social media (e.g., TikTok/Instagram/Facebook/Twitter/YouTube)

○ Other (please describe) _____

○ ⊗Prefer not to say

Q3 Where are you getting MOST of your information about college? Please select all that apply.

☐ My parents

☐ My siblings, cousins, or other family members close to my age

☐ My friends, classmates, peers

☐ School counselors/social workers

☐ College readiness program/presentation in high school

☐ Teachers/athletic coaches

☐ College websites, webinars, mailings, or emails

☐ Campus visits

☐ Social media (e.g., TikTok/Instagram/Facebook/Twitter/YouTube)

☐ Internet/Google searches

☐ Other (please describe) _____

☐ ⊗I am not hearing much about college

Page Break ———————————————————————————————————————

Q4 How well has/did high school prepare you for each of the following...	Not well at all	Not too well	Somewhat well	Very well	Extremely well	Not sure	Prefer not to say
Learning about career, military, or educational options after high-school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Learning about the salary potential for different careers	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Learning about your salary potential with and without a degree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Choosing a major in college	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Deciding where to apply to college	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Taking standardized tests to get into college (e.g., SAT, ACT)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Understanding and completing the college application process	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Being prepared academically for college	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Being prepared socially and emotionally for college	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Learning what careers would best match your skills and interests

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

Q5 Which of the following opportunities organized by your high school did you take advantage of or use in order to learn more about what you might do after high school? Please select all that apply.

☐   College fairs/visits from colleges

☐   Career fairs/visits from employers

☐   Military recruiter visits

☐   Classes on career exploration/what jobs are possible

☐   Questionnaires/surveys/tests that help students discover their interests

☐   Other (please describe) _____

☐   ⊗None of these

☐   ⊗Prefer not to say

X→

Q5a Which one of these, if any, was most helpful to you?

○ College fairs/visits from colleges

○ Career fairs/visits from employers

○ Military recruiter visits

○ Classes on career exploration/what jobs are possible

○ Questionnaires/surveys/tests that help students discover their interests

○ Other (please describe) _____

○ ⊗None of these

○ ⊗Prefer not to say

Q6 During high school, how many times did you meet with a school counselor/other school personnel to specifically discuss what you might do after high school?

○ Never

○ Once

○ 2-3 times

○ 4-5 times

○ 6 or more times

○ Prefer not to say

Page Break

Q7 Which of the following best describes the teachers/counselors at your high school?

○ Teachers/counselors encouraged students to consider a variety of options for what they might do after high school.

○ Teachers/counselors encouraged everyone to go to college after high school.

○ Teachers/counselors encouraged only certain students to go to college after high school.

○ Teachers/counselors did not discuss options for what students might do after high school.

○ Prefer not to say

Page Break

Q8 Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Prefer not to say
Going to college and getting a degree only makes sense if I know exactly what field I want to study.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
College is designed for people like me.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My family/loved ones have encouraged me to get a college degree.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Getting a college degree is not worth the investment.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
For the kind of career I want, employers care that I have the right experience and skills (not about a college degree).	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Going to
college and
getting a
degree is a
great way to
discover   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○
which field
I'm
passionate
about.

- -

Page Break

Q9 Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Prefer not to say
High schools should provide more information/assistance for students who intend to get a job, learn a trade, and/or join the military after they graduate from high school.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I can get all of the education I need online at no cost (e.g., YouTube, TikTok).	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would be willing to take on college debt if I could be guaranteed a good job after graduation.	○	○	○	○	○	○
These days a good job requires a college degree.	○	○	○	○	○	○
I don't need to go to college to get the job I want.	○	○	○	○	○	○
College does not provide the skills needed for the job I want.	○	○	○	○	○	○
A skilled trade job, like a plumber or electrician, is a better career path for me.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q10 Please tell us anything else that influenced your decision about what you plan to do after high school. You can also use this space to share any other thoughts you have about the issues discussed in this survey.

_____

_____

_____

Q10b Not everyone plans to attend college after high school. Thinking about your closest friend who does NOT plan to go to college, why did they decide not to go to college at this time?

_____

_____

_____

Page Break

Q11 Did any of your parents or guardians complete a certificate, an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree?

○ No, none of them did

○ Yes, one did

○ Yes, more than one did

○ Prefer not to say

Q12 What is your ZIP code?

_____

Q13 What is the name of your high school?

_____

Q14 What is your gender?

○ Male

○ Female

○ Transgender

○ I use a different term (please specify) _____

○ Prefer not to say

Q15 What is your race?

○ American Indian/Alaskan Native

○ Asian

○ Black/African American

○ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

○ White

○ Multiracial

○ Other (Please specify) _____

○ Prefer not to say

Page Break ——
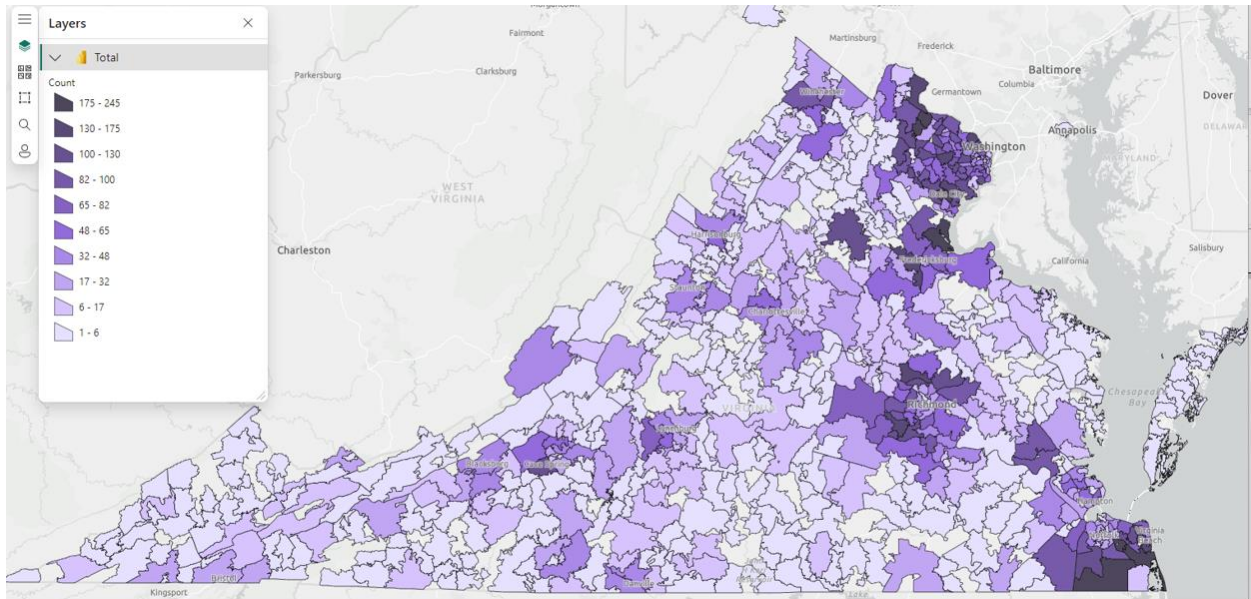
END Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey. Please click "Next" to exit to a separate page to enter information to receive your $10 gift card.

End of Block: Default Question Block

Map of CBSS List of Student Contacts (ZIP codes mapped to city/county)

Map of Responding Students (ZIP Code mapped to City/County)

Qualitative Question Coding Methodology

The open-ended responses were reviewed to identify potential categories and themes. The responses were then coded using auto-coded themes from NVivo qualitative software which helps automate the coding process by coding the data into nodes. A node is a collection of references about a specific theme, case or relationship. You gather the references by 'coding' sources to a node. When you open the node, you can see all the references in one place. The software also detects themes and sentiment in the responses by analyzing the content and the sentence structure within the survey responses. NVivo assigned significance to certain themes over others based on how frequently each theme occurred in the analysis. The identified themes were combined into groups and results are presented as a node for each broad idea, with sub-nodes for each theme within that group. Once the groups and themes were created in NVivo, the results were compared to the coding done by the research team to validate the themes initially identified before NVivo analysis.

Word Cloud: *Please tell us anything else that influenced your decision about what you plan to do after high school. You can also use this space to share any other thoughts you have about issues discussed in this survey*

Word Cloud: *Not everyone plans to attend college after high school. Thinking about your closest friend who does not want to go to college, why did they decide not to go to college at this time?*

Chi-Square Tables (Only for statistically significant items)

When you were seeking information about what to do after high school, to whom or where did you go for help? Please select all that apply.	Non-College %	College %	Chi-Square	p value
Teachers	32.3%	58.3%	15.210	<.001
School counselor(s)	41.9%	58.0%	5.865	<.015
College websites	19.4%	61.2%	39.877	<.001
Job websites (e.g., LinkedIn/Indeed)	24.2%	10.0%	11.115	<.001

Where are you getting MOST of your information about college? Please select all that apply.	Non-College %	College %	Chi-Square	p value
College websites, webinars, mailings, or emails	32.3%	56.9%	13.738	<.001
Campus visits	9.7%	41.8%	24.367	<.001
Internet/Google searches	16.1%	30.1%	5.298	<.021

Survey Statement	Non-College Agree %	College Agree %	Chi-Square	p value
Going to college and getting a degree only makes sense if I know exactly what field I want to study.	88.1%	54.6%	17.586	<.001
College is designed for people like me.	27.3%	87.1%	75.412	<.001
My family/loved ones have encouraged me to get a college degree.	78.6%	95.9%	22.847	<.001
Getting a college degree is not worth the investment.	68.8%	12.1%	69.510	<.001
For the kind of career I want, employers care that I have the right experience and skills (not about a college degree).	90.7%	57.4%	18.138	<.001
Going to college and getting a degree is a great way to discover which field I'm passionate about.	54.3%	90.7%	41.467	<.001
I would be willing to take on college debt if I could be guaranteed a good job after graduation.	67.3%	85.4%	11.193	<.001
These days a good job requires a college degree.	40.0%	68.9%	13.729	<.001

I don't need to go to college to get the job I want.	72.7%	16.2%	77.528	<.001
College does not provide the skills needed for the job I want.	52.6%	7.5%	73.525	<.001
A skilled trade job, like a plumber or electrician, is a better career path for me.	58.7%	7.5%	103.061	<.001

Survey Statement	Male Agree %	Female Agree %	Chi-Square	p value
Getting a college degree is not worth the investment.	19.2%	11.6%	4.438	<.035
Going to college and getting a degree is a great way to discover which field I'm passionate about.	84.8%	92.0%	6.048	<.014
I would be willing to take on college debt if I could be guaranteed a good job after graduation.	78.6%	86.8%	5.669	<.017
These days a good job requires a college degree.	57.5%	73.6%	12.531	<.001
I don't need to go to college to get the job I want.	24.6%	16.5%	4.847	<.028
A skilled trade job, like a plumber or electrician, is a better career path for me.	15.2%	8.3%	5.621	<.018

Survey Statement	White Agree %	Nonwhite Agree %	Chi-Square	p value
Going to college and getting a degree only makes sense if I know exactly what field I want to study.	51.0%	64.0%	7.694	<.006
For the kind of career I want, employers care that I have the right experience and skills (not about a college degree).	53.1%	68.4%	10.824	<.001
I can get all of the education I need online at no cost (e.g., YouTube, TikTok).	23.0%	32.5%	4.840	<.028
I would be willing to take on college debt if I could be guaranteed a good job after graduation.	87.8%	80.8%	4.447	<.035
These days a good job requires a college degree.	60.2%	74.9%	10.799	<.001