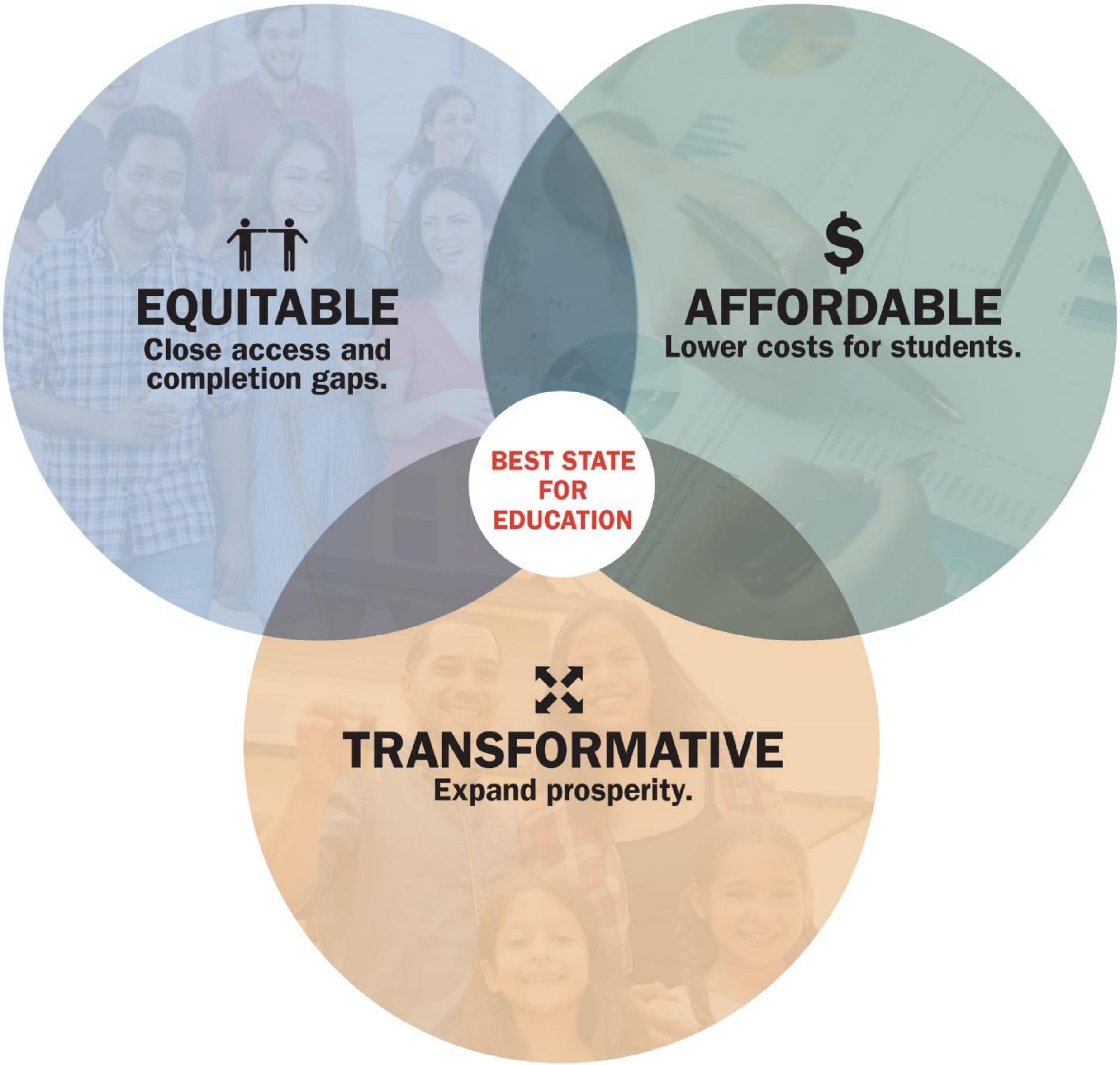
State Council of Higher Education for Virginia


EQUITABLE
Close access and completion gaps.
AFFORDABLE
Lower costs for students.
BEST STATE FOR EDUCATION
TRANSFORMATIVE
Expand prosperity.

Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education

2021 Annual Report

December 2021

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OVERVIEW

The Code of Virginia vests the State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV) with the responsibility to develop a statewide strategic plan that reflects statutory goals for higher education in The Commonwealth, identifies a coordinated approach to such state and regional goals and emphasizes the future needs for higher education in Virginia. Approved in January 2021, *Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education* (The Plan), identifies trends that the Commonwealth must address if it is to continue to prosper and succeed.

The State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV) is required per Code to submit an annual report on progress toward the statutory goals. The 2021 Annual Report summarizes the three statutory goals, key findings from a baseline assessment of where Virginia stands relative to the statutory goals as well as upcoming and recent activities that directly support *The Pathways to Opportunity Plan*.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

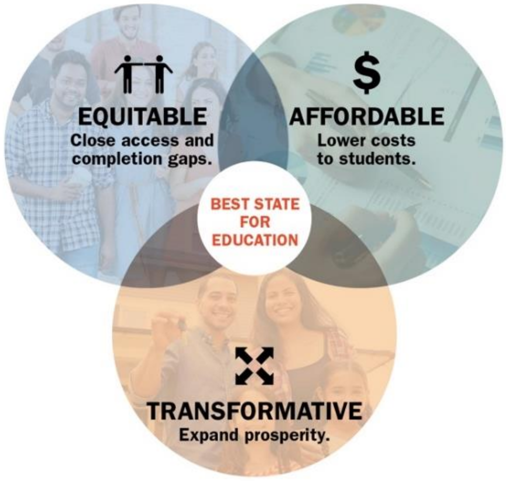
Background

The Code of Virginia vests the State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV) with the responsibility to develop a statewide strategic plan that reflects statutory goals for higher education in The Commonwealth, identifies a coordinated approach to such state and regional goals and emphasizes the future needs for higher education in Virginia. Approved in January 2021, *Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education* (The Plan), identifies trends that the Commonwealth must address if it is to continue to prosper and succeed.

Through input from higher education partners, *The Pathways to Opportunity Plan* is intended to help guide a vision for Virginia's future through a common framework. The framework is built on the premise that all partners in higher education must work together to help Virginia, its citizens and its regions. In essence, higher education serves as a critical nexus, transforming learners, cultivating talent and offering pathways to opportunity.

Goals

The framework, derived through the strategic planning process, includes three intrinsically connected goals of equitable, affordable and transformative higher education. Equity also serves as an underpinning of the entire plan. When achieved, the three goals will result in Virginia being the "Best State for Education" and will mean a 70% educational attainment rate for all 25- to -64 year working-aged Virginians by 2030.



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

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

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

Ten strategies support the equitable, affordable and transformative goals. Five measures assess progress toward achieving the three goals. Both components are summarized below.

Strategies

The 10 strategies serve as broad methods to achieve The Plan's goals and the basis for the biennial initiatives.

GOAL 1 – Equitable Higher Education Corresponding Strategies

EQUITABLE
Close access and completion gaps.

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

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

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

GOAL 2 – Affordable Higher Education Corresponding Strategies

$
AFFORDABLE
Lower costs to students.

S4: Align tuition and fees, financial aid and state appropriations such that students have broader access to postsecondary education opportunities regardless of their ability to pay.

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

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

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

GOAL 3 – Transformative Higher Education Corresponding Strategies

TRANSFORMATIVE
Expand prosperity.

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

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

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

Measures

The Pathways to Opportunity Plan encompasses all of higher education. Developing The Plan amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and persistent inequities, stakeholders expressed the need to prioritize students and student success over all else. Therefore, the five measures focus specifically on students and student success. Intentional efforts were made to disaggregate data pertaining to the measures by subgroup. Data disaggregation can, in turn, inform equity-based policy.

Measures to Assess Goal Fulfillment

Goals	Measure	Definition	Target	Desired Outcome
Goal 1 - Equitable: Close access and completion gaps.	**Attainment**	Percent of 25- to 64-year-olds with an associate degree or higher.*	Close gaps in attainment of selected groups.	Improved attainment for all.
	Enrollment	Fall headcount of public and private undergraduates.	Close enrollment gaps of selected groups to reflect the population.	Improved access for all.
Goal 2 - Affordable: Lower costs to students.	**Awards**	Undergraduate degrees and credentials produced each year.	Close award gaps of selected groups to reflect enrollment.	Improved success for all students.
	Borrowing	Average debt of graduates.	Close gaps in borrowing of selected groups.	Improved affordability for all students.
Goal 3 - Transformative: Expand prosperity.	**Wages**	Graduates' wages 10 years after graduation.	Close gaps in earnings of selected groups.	Improved prosperity for all graduates.

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

In the above chart, closing gaps means targeting resources based on identified needs and circumstances and eliminating barriers that limit opportunities and success. The desired effect of closing gaps is to improve outcomes for all.

Purpose of Report

The Plan's 70% attainment target focuses on a 2030 timeline. However, achieving the goals and vision will require innovation, collaboration and long-term work to resolve complex and persistent issues. Higher education is one of many stakeholders that must step up to address these complex issues. To that end, this annual report summarizes key findings, recent activities and upcoming initiatives that support *The Pathways to Opportunity Plan*.

2021 FINDINGS

In support of The Plan's equity underpinning, SCHEV disaggregated data pertaining to the five measures for the following subgroups: race/ethnicity, income, GO Virginia regions and gender. SCHEV does not have access to all subgroup data (e.g., data pertaining to English language learners and students with disabilities). SCHEV is working to address these data limitations.

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

The following summarizes key findings from the baseline data. The key findings identify the existing gaps as the first step in the work to close them over time. With the exception of the attainment data, the four other measures reference data for all undergraduate students in Virginia. Refer to Appendix B for further explanation and detailed charts illustrating the key findings.

Key findings from the baseline data (2019-2020):

Attainment: The percentage of 25- to 64- year-olds with an associate degree or higher. Attainment gaps exist in every subgroup (race/ethnicity, income, region and gender). The gaps highlight the breadth and complexity of this issue. Those with the lowest attainment within each subgroup:

- By race/ethnicity - Black
- By region of origin - Southside and Southwest Virginia
- By income - Lower income
- By gender - Men

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

- By race/ethnicity – Black, Hawaiian Islander/Pacific Islander, Non-Resident Alien and White
- By region of origin – Hampton Roads and Shenandoah Valley
- By income – Middle income
- By gender – Men

Awards: Undergraduate degrees and credentials produced each year. Success gaps may exist when the percentage of total awards is less than the percentage of enrolled students. Identified success gaps may include:

- By race/ethnicity – Black, Multi-Race, Hispanic/Latinx
- By region of origin – Greater Richmond, Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia
- By income – Lower income
- By gender – Men

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

- By race/ethnicity – Black and Race/Ethnicity unknown
- By region of origin – Hampton Roads
- By income – Middle income
- By gender – Women

Wages: Graduates' wages 10 years after graduation. Those groups with the widest wage gaps include:

- By race/ethnicity – Black and American Indian/Native Alaskan
- By region of origin – Southside and Southwest
- By income – Lower Income
- By gender – Women

SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

Biennial Initiatives

The biennial initiatives derive from a combination of stakeholder input during the strategic planning process and throughout 2021. Each initiative supports one or more of The Plan's goals and strategies. The identified initiatives strike a balance, reflecting broad themes of *The Pathways to Opportunity Plan* while being specific enough for SCHEV to implement. The following table references the biennial initiatives approved by Council in September along with broad biennial budget recommendation themes.

Biennial Initiatives	Budget Recommendation Themes
Goal 1: Equitable – Close Gaps	
• Form an enhanced partnership between VDOE and SCHEV through the commitment of a shared goal to increase post-secondary enrollments to include a shared position and strategic planning. • Identify and assess hybrid learning access gaps and quality issues, as well as potential solutions, and define SCHEV's role in addressing these findings. • Identify critical student-support-services issues and formulate recommendations that will positively affect the student experience, persistence and completion.	• Increase aid to institutions with a focus on institutions with the largest gaps in unmet need for low- and middle-income groups. • Support institution efforts focused on increased student success initiatives that close gaps in completion.
Goal 2: Affordable – Lower Cost to Students	
• Determine strategies to better assess higher education costs and implement approaches to allocate limited public resources to institutions through the cost and funding need study. • Identify improvements in the transfer process (e.g., transfer-grant program; dual enrollment); facilitate formal transfer alliances and coordinate a unified communication campaign to improve two-year community college student connectivity with and transition to four-year institutions. • Educate new legislators and administration on the value, needs and priorities of higher education. • Fund an initiative focusing on institutional collaboration and innovations to improve equitable student persistence and completion.	• Set aside funding to support outcomes from the cost and funding need study (final report due July 1, 2022). • Support increases to financial aid. • Continue one-time funding provided in FY 2022 as part of ongoing support to the institutions. • Provide state support for increased costs at institutions to help offset tuition increases, including maintenance reserve. • Support collaborative initiatives, such as the Virginia Virtual Library (VIVA) and other initiatives to improve efficiencies.
Goal 3: Transformative – Expand Prosperity	
• Facilitate collaboration between the Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE) and institutions of higher education, and identify new ways to integrate VOEE tools and resources with SCHEV initiatives and processes—these may include: use of graduate outcomes survey results; development of labor market criteria for evaluating academic programs and assessing the need for proposed academic programs; and relationship building between higher education and business. • Advance equity in higher education by fostering a culture of inclusion that supports DEI efforts on campus and tells the institutional and SCHEV stories of how "Equity Works."	• Provide funding for talent development through new programs in high demand fields, internships and work-based learning opportunities. • Support institutional initiatives targeted to improve the campus culture/equity, grow research and support outreach. • Identify additional policies that could be enhanced/removed to support institutions while ensuring state needs are met.

Recent Activities

In addition to the upcoming biennial initiatives, SCHEV has engaged in various activities that directly support *The Pathways to Opportunity Plan*. The following summarizes some of these efforts as they relate to The Plan and its three goals.

Three such activities support all three goals.

SCHEV Website Redesign: SCHEV has started updating its website to improve information access and ease of use. In addition to updating the site map and existing content, additional pages are being developed, including an equity landing page and additional web-based, research data dashboards.

Higher Education Data Disaggregation: SCHEV has started to improve data disaggregation with the development of a progress tracker for The Plan's three goals via five measures. SCHEV also is identifying existing gaps in data and working to remedy such gaps to the extent possible. Equity-minded policy development starts with data disaggregation.

Ongoing Collaboration With Other Organizations: SCHEV continues to strengthen and expand collaboration with other organizations in ways that relate to cost, quality and access. Some of the examples below illustrate innovative and enhanced partnerships and collaboration.

Goal 1 - Equitable higher education

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

Lumina Foundation Talent, Innovation and Equity (TIE) Grant (2019): Virginia received a $500,000 grant from the Lumina Foundation to help close gaps in educational attainment for students of color by five percentage points by 2023. SCHEV invested in leadership and culture, advanced equity initiatives, improved communication about equity challenges and solutions, and provided subgrants to institutions. Work in 2021 included developing a community engagement strategy to identify barriers to access and success, and inform state and institutional work.

SCHEV staff participated in the second Global Virginia Summit (March 2021), held online. Global Virginia is a coalition of educators, policymakers, workforce representatives and others committed to improving the global readiness of Virginia's students at all educational levels.

SCHEV's College Access and K-12 Outreach team submitted a GEAR UP Virginia (GUV) program renewal proposal in Spring 2021. GUV provides college preparatory services and skills development to a cohort of students and supports them through their first year of college. The proposal seeks to expand GEAR UP coverage statewide. Additional partners have pledged financial support to build on GUV work. In October, the Commonwealth received the new $24.7 million federal GEAR UP grant to increase access to higher education and jobs training for students in the Commonwealth, one of only four such grants awarded in the nation.

SCHEV issued a request for proposals for a college access strategic plan and selected a consultant to facilitate this effort which includes: a strategic plan, gap analysis, branding strategy, marketing campaign and student-focused website. Complementary activities include:

- Statewide college access campaign in partnership with VA 529 and Virginia College Access Network (VCAN).
- Full (100%) participation of all free and reduced lunch high schools in 1,2,3 Go! Campaign activities.
- State aid application modernization to ease and increase completion and submission, including digital access.
- Improved FAFSA completion rates via statewide campaign; partnership with U.S. Secretary of Education FAFSA workgroup; and one-on-one FAFSA completion assistance.

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

Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA): A consortium of the nonprofit academic libraries within the Commonwealth of Virginia includes all of Virginia's public colleges and universities, as well as 32 private institutions and the Library of Virginia.

VIVA's Open and Affordable Course Content Programs: Through this effort, VIVA provides two grant opportunities, the VIVA Open Adopt Grants and the VIVA Open Course Grants. These grants encourage the use of open and affordable course content, including textbooks, software and other course materials, by providing funding for instructors to adopt, adapt and create course content that can be made available to students for no or very little cost.

The programs also promote the Open Education Network (OEN) System. Membership allows VIVA to train open education library leaders who will hold workshops for faculty across the state to support them in making greater use of openly available educational materials, including textbooks, which are free for students. By promoting the use and creation of free high-quality educational materials, this initiative increases affordability in higher education, promotes student success and empowers Virginia faculty to contribute to the growing field of open course materials.

Distance Learning Trends: Many Virginia colleges and universities transitioned to remote learning, either fully or via a hybrid model of instruction because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As students, institutions and policy makers grappled with how COVID-19 has changed higher education, SCHEV examined distanced learning trends prior to COVID-19 using SCHEV's "Distance Education Trends at Virginia Institutions report." These data provide a baseline of "face-to-face' (F2F) learning trends from 1995-2019.

Open Virginia Advisory Council (OVAC): OVAC makes recommendations to SCHEV regarding initiatives and policies that may facilitate the adoption of open educational resources by the public institutions. OVAC also organizes events such as workshops and conferences to facilitate inter-institutional networking and the sharing of best practices.

In 2020-21, the OVAC programmed four webinars despite COVID-19, with total attendance of 440 with subsequent recordings. The most popular program, "Getting Started with Open Education Resources (OER)," had 215 attendees.

The OVAC also developed recommendations for how OER can advance The Plan's Goal One to Close Access and Completion Gaps and formalized monthly meetings to include sharing campus best practices and challenges.

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

GEAR UP Single Point of Contact Workshop Series: This initiative between Project Hope Virginia, The College Place and GEAR UP supports students experiencing homelessness at institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth. The five-part professional development series of online workshops for campus administrators increases the visibility of this marginalized population and establishes a single point of contact (SPOC) at institutions for college students with housing insecurity.

Disabilities Access in Higher Education Advisory Committee (June 2021): To address data gaps, SCHEV formed a working group to discuss the collection of data regarding students with disabilities. The workgroup will explore potential data sources to use.

Goal 2 - Affordable higher education

S4. Align tuition and fees, financial aid and state appropriations such that students have broader access to postsecondary opportunities regardless of their ability to pay.

Cost and funding need study: This current study focuses on the following as outlined in the budget.

The Council shall identify and recommend:

- Methods to determine appropriate costs, including a detailed cost analysis of Virginia institutions and peer institutions.
- Measures of efficiency and effectiveness, including identifying opportunities for mitigating costs, increasing financial efficiencies, and incorporating current best practices employed by Virginia institutions and other institutions, nationwide.
- Provisions for any new reporting requirements, including a possible periodic review of cost data and strategies employed to implement efficient and effective operational practices.
- Strategies to allocate limited public resources based on outcomes that align with state needs related to affordability, access, completion and workforce alignment, and the impact on tuition and pricing.
- The impact of funding on underrepresented student populations.

Financial Aid Review and Impact on Various Demographics: This work connects to the Cost and Funding Need Study. The intent is to review financial aid data to determine how administration and awarding of state financial aid affects various demographics.

Expanded Financial Aid for Undocumented Students: The 2021 General Assembly session expanded prior legislation to allow certain students who previously were ineligible to have access to state financial aid programs beginning in 2022- 23. This legislative change will greatly improve access and affordability to the students and families who will become eligible for aid, including the Tuition Assistance Grant.

SCHEV is contracting with a vendor to create a state-based student financial aid application that, like the FAFSA, will produce an expected family contribution (EFC) equivalent. The EFC will be used to calculate need so students can be considered for state need-based aid.

Financial aid program processes (including award letter review) also are being combined. The intent is to simplify administration and communication of state aid requirements for ease of use and comparison purposes.

Education Loan Ombudsman: Since the creation of the Office of the Education Loan Ombudsman (2018), more than 350 Virginians received assistance with student loans, ranging from general questions about the types of loans to assistance with loan repayment options to settling discrepancies with a loan servicer. Data collected on borrower cases identified three main issues for Virginia education loan borrowers: (1) understanding the complexity of the loans; (2) troubleshooting eligibility issues with the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program; and (3) filing Borrower Defense to Repayment claims with Federal Student Aid for borrowers who claimed they were defrauded or misled by their college or university.

With funding from the General Assembly, the Loan Ombudsman's office partnered with a vendor to create an online loan education course called *Virginia Student Loan Help*, which is scheduled for release in December 2021. The site is organized based on the three primary audiences: high school students exploring funding options; college students preparing for repayment; and loan borrowers in repayment. Because federally held loans have been in administrative forbearance since March 2020, the Student Loan Advocate will spend the fall preparing borrowers for the payment restart in January 2022, along with helping many borrowers become acclimated to a new loan servicer as a result of changes at the federal level.

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

The Transfer Virginia initiative has coordinated the collaboration of hundreds of faculty across two- and four- year institutions on how to approach transfer policies and services through an equity lens. Recent work has included uniform course development, program pathway mapping and development of the transfer portal. The portal includes an array of resources to facilitate transfer for students, including the ability to receive customized reports on course equivalencies and four-year pathway requirements.

In summer 2021, the G3 – Get Skilled, Get a Job and Get Ahead program went into effect. G3 makes tuition-free community college available for low- and middle-income students who pursue jobs in high-demand fields.

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

SCHEV hired the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) to assist with a review of costs and funding needs in Virginia. SCHEV has a web page to track the status of the program and submitted a work plan to the members of the Joint Subcommittee on the Future Competitiveness of Higher Education in Virginia. An interim report is due December 1, and the final report will be submitted July 1, 2022.

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

In April 2021, SCHEV coordinated, along with members of the Virginia Educational Development Network, an online workshop for Virginia faculty, "Creating Equitable Learning Opportunities Through Transparent Assignment Design." Nearly 300 faculty from more than 30 public and private institutions across Virginia attended. The workshop planning team organized a number of follow-up faculty learning communities for summer 2021, as well as a research project on the effect of transparent teaching on student outcomes.

SCHEV staff spoke at the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) June Symposium as part of a panel discussion on "Key Strategies to Improve Quality and Equity in Higher Education."

Goal 3 - Transformative higher education

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

Innovative Internship Fund and Program: The Innovative Internship Fund and Program was created by the General Assembly in 2019 to expand paid or credit-bearing opportunities for student internships and other work-based learning in collaboration with Virginia employers. The program comprises institutional grants and a statewide initiative to facilitate the readiness of students, employers and institutions of higher education to participate in internships and other work-based learning opportunities.

In October 2020, in partnership with the Virginia Chamber Foundation, the program was re-branded as the Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership (V-TOP). The Chamber created and launched an associated website. The statewide initiative focuses on developing resources to support employers, regions, institutions and students through partnerships with and grants to GO Virginia regions, the Chamber and colleges and universities.

Beginning in FY 2022, the program will have an annual budget of $2 million. Highlights of recent activities include:

- Partnership with Virginia Department of Veterans Services to provide support for employers hosting internships for transitioning service members (began spring 2021 and is ongoing).
- Monthly newsletter (the V-TOP One Stop; launched April 2021).

- Professional development for practitioners and graduate students as part of institutional readiness (launched July 1, 2021).
- Grants to regions to deploy resources and complete other required activities include:
    - GO VA Region 2, Roanoke/Blacksburg/Lynchburg (awarded June 2021).
    - GO VA Region 4, Richmond Metro area (awarded June 2021).
- Institutional Grant Highlight: Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) received a grant award for a partnership with Micron and Year Up. Year Up recruited students for the Engineering Technology Technician program. Students had to complete Year Up's Learning and Development curriculum in order to enter Micron's pre-internship program. More than two thirds (68%) of the students completed that first phase. The 13 students who successfully completed the first phase also completed the Micron program, and 12 were offered roles in Micron's full-time internship program, which includes wages of $17-$20 per hour, benefits, 401(k) and tuition assistance. The grant period ended in January 2021. The program has proved to be sustainable, and two more cohorts have started with 13 and 15 students, respectively. The partnership with Year Up increased the diversity in the degree program; to date, 78% of participants are Hispanic/Latino/Black; 6% are white.

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

Graduate Outcomes Survey: A yearlong effort with VCU researchers culminated in the release of survey findings which include satisfaction of college graduates, student debt, mobility, employment and recommendations from graduates on ways to improve the student experience. SCHEV will continue to analyze the findings over the next year, including those pertaining to experiential learning and internships.

Strada Recovery Incubator Grant: In the fall of 2020, SCHEV and a group of partners received a Recovery Incubator Grant from Strada Education Network, a national nonprofit focused on improving pathways between education and employment. SCHEV's partners include The Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP); Virginia Community College System (VCCS); Virginia Employment Commission (VEC); GO Virginia; Community College Workforce Alliance (CCWA); and Southside Virginia Community College (SVCC). Through the grant, SCHEV and partners support several activities that follow from the recommendations in the 2020 SCHEV report on Higher Education and Workforce Alignment. These activities include:

- Developing the implementation plan for the Office of Education and Labor Market Alignment also known as the Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE).
- Demonstrating COVID-related early successes through regional projects with the CCWA and SVCC. Specifically developing career pathways maps for the healthcare, manufacturing and construction/infrastructure industry sectors.
- Producing an asset-map/replicable playbook for corresponding regions.

Establishment of the Virginia Office of Education Economics (July 2021): One of the core recommendations in SCHEV's Higher Education and Workforce Alignment report involved "cultivating a framework for coordinated education and labor market data analysis, translation and partnerships." During the 2021 General Assembly Session, the passage of SB 1314 created an office of education and labor market alignment (Virginia Office of Education Economics or VOEE) to provide this unified, consistent source of analysis for policy development and implementation related to talent development. Funds from the Strada Education Network grant secured by SCHEV supported the implementation planning for VOEE prior to July 2021.

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

Equity Institutions Grant (2021): Lumina Foundation awarded SCHEV a $725,000 Equity Institutions grant to support progress in closing achievement gaps as demonstrated by six public Virginia institutions. SCHEV and VCCS received funds to administer the grant and integrate institutional efforts with state-level strategies addressing inequities in higher education. Some of the activities supported by the grant this year are below.

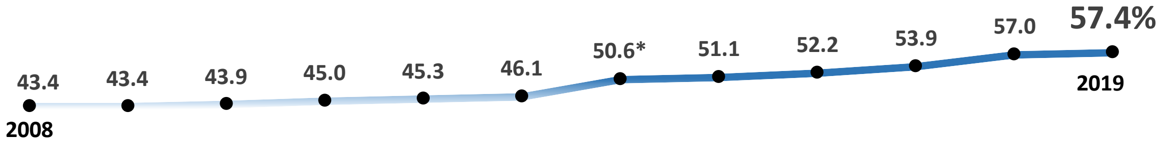
- SCHEV continues to work on shaping the agency culture to create One SCHEV, a more inclusive environment that recognizes the value of diversity and practices equity-mindedness. Consultants, staff workgroups and trainings support this process.
- The sharing/training, with Council members and staff in March, of the Protocol for Assessing Equity-mindedness in State Policy resource created by USC's Center for Urban Education and adapted by SCHEV will help ensure that leadership continues to promote equity-minded practices, policies and budgets.
- SCHEV submitted its Plan to Advance Excellence through Diversity, Equity and Inclusion on July 1, along with all of Virginia's state agencies, including public colleges and universities.

- Communities of practice and train-the-trainer opportunities to develop culturally competent pedagogy engage our faculty in a way that fosters equity champions on the front lines of campuses.
- The Transfer Virginia initiative focused hundreds of faculty across two- and four-year institutions on how to approach transfer policies and services through an equity lens.
- In addition, six institutions and the Virginia Community College System received Equity Institutions funds to further and share promising campus practices, such as surveying student experiences, providing adjunct faculty with DEI training, assessing core curriculum areas for cultural competency and centralizing equity efforts to further engage and increase the impact of cross-campus work.

COVES Fellowship (Summer 2021): SCHEV received a Commonwealth of Virginia Engineering and Science (COVES) Fellowship. The fellowship, supported by the Virginia Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine (VASEM), selects a graduate student or postdoctoral fellow to serve as a science adviser over a 12-week period. With an aim to understand whether there is a need for basic research support at Virginia's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), SCHEV selected a COVES fellow to lead the project on Basic Research which culminated in a report and presentation to key stakeholders.

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

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



*Since 2014, workforce-relevant certificates have been included in the total of Postsecondary credentials. Since 2018, the total also has included certifications.

Source of baseline information: [Lumina Foundation Stronger Nation](#).

APPENDIX B: BASELINE FOR ASSESSING PROGRESS

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

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

The following summarizes key findings from the baseline data in the progress tracker. The key findings identify the existing gaps as the first step in the work to close them over time. With the exception of the attainment data, the four other measures reference data for all undergraduate students in Virginia. Additional analysis by program area can be performed using the tracker.

Baseline Key Findings

Attainment

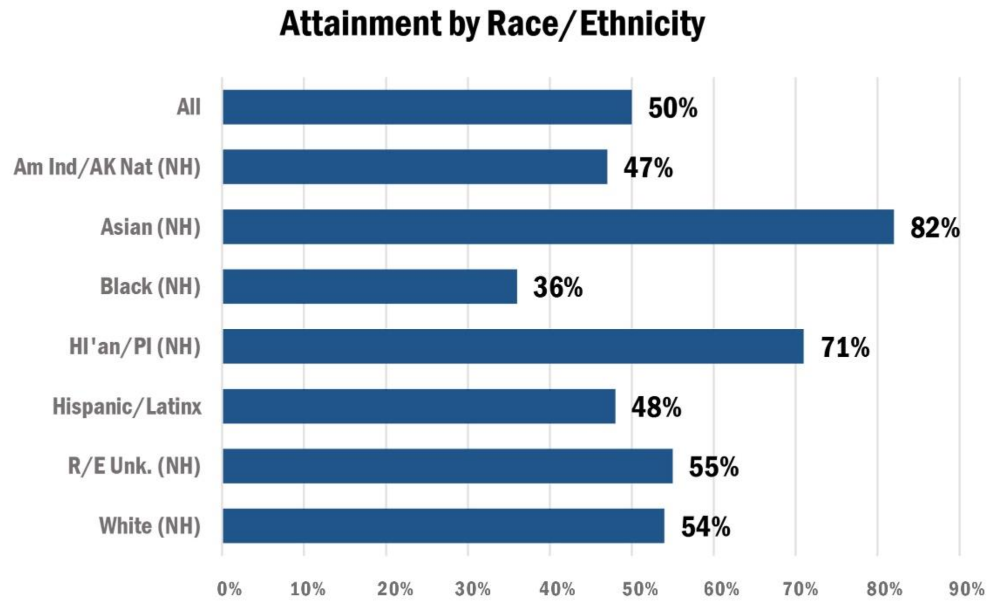
The Pathways to Opportunity Plan includes an overarching attainment objective (Appendix A) as well as an attainment measure. The 70% overarching attainment objective includes the percentage of 25- to 64- year-olds with a postsecondary certificate, certification or higher.

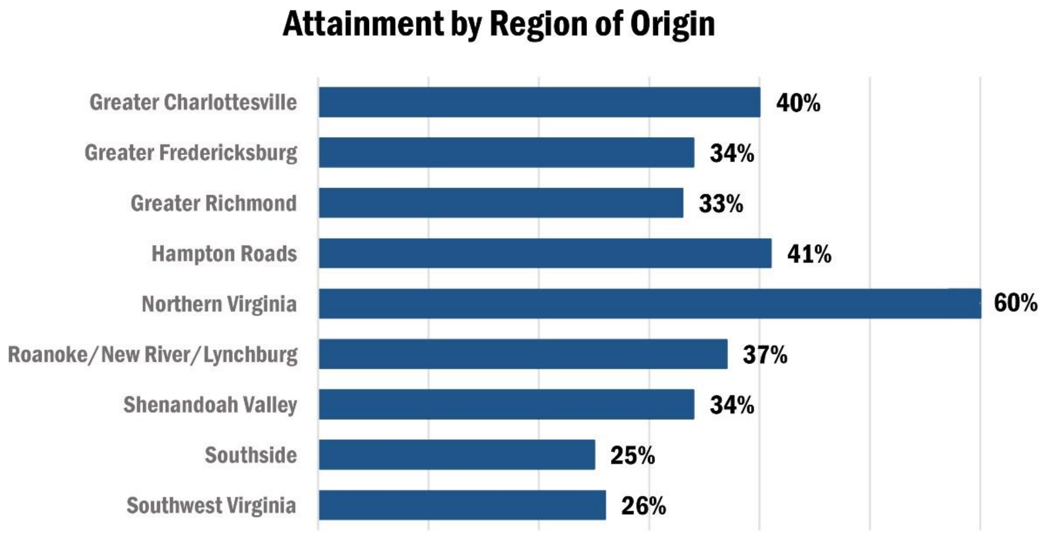
The Plan's attainment measure is defined as the percentage of 25- to 64- year-olds with an associate degree or higher. The target for this measure is to close gaps in attainment of selected groups. Currently, attainment is at 50% for all 25- to 64- year olds in Virginia with an associate degree or higher. Disaggregated data, however, reveals attainment gaps.

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

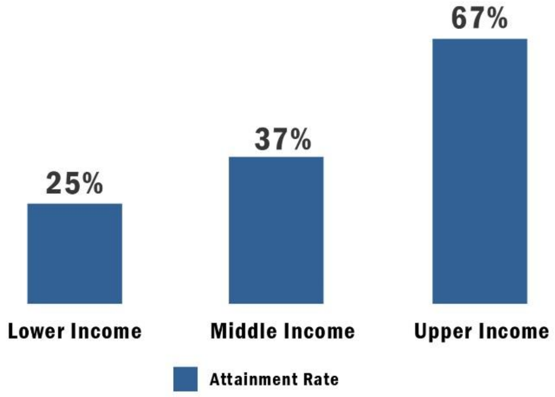
Those that have the lowest attainment within each subgroup:

- By race/ethnicity - Black (36%)
- By region of origin - Southside (25%) and Southwest Virginia (26%)
- By income - Lower income (25%)
- By gender - Men (46%)

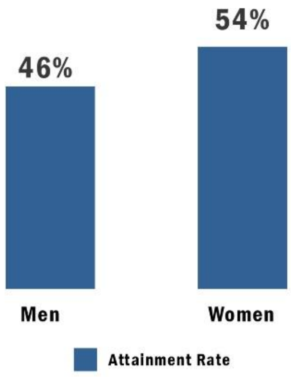




Attainment by Income Level



Attainment by Gender



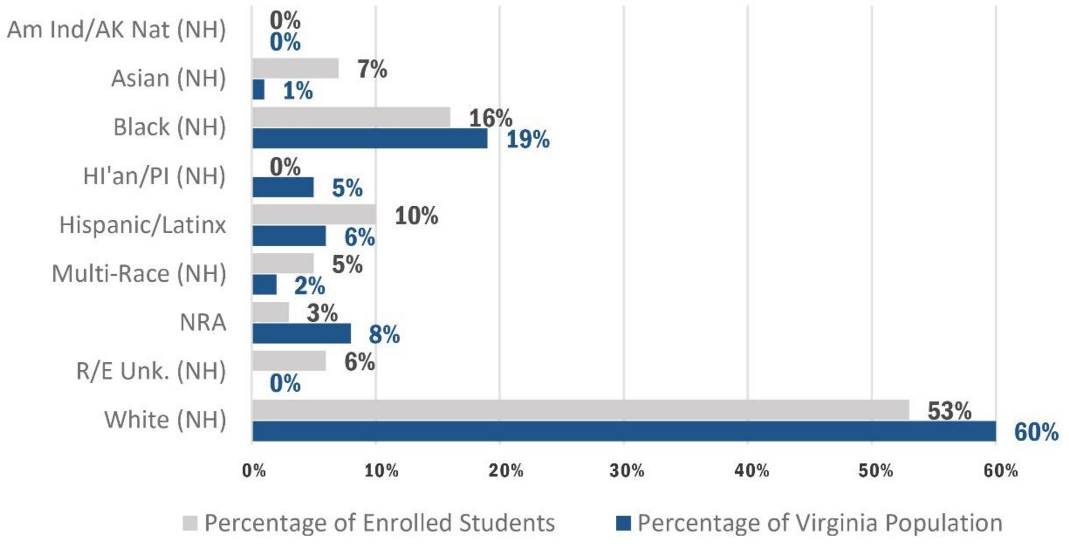
Enrollment

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

The following undergraduate enrollment gaps exist:

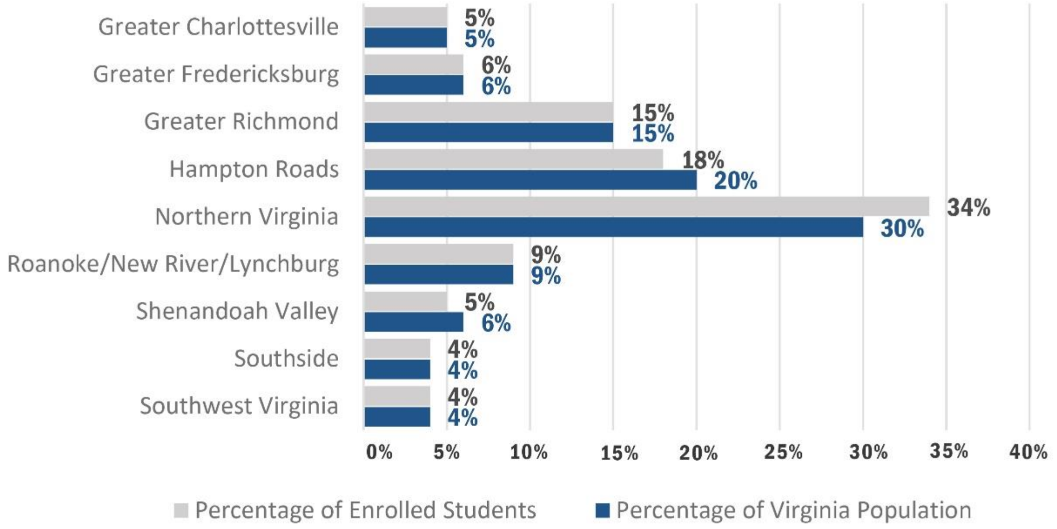
- By race/ethnicity – Black, Hawaiian Islander/Pacific Islander, Non-Resident Alien and White
- By region of origin – Hampton Roads and Shenandoah Valley
- By income – Middle income. Upper income has not been included as a gap with the assumption that a portion of those in unknown income levels are actually upper income. Students are classified with unknown income if they did not complete a FAFSA. This could be due to a lack of need for financial aid, students who are undocumented or those who exclusively pursue private loans or alternate ways of financing higher education costs.
- By gender – Men

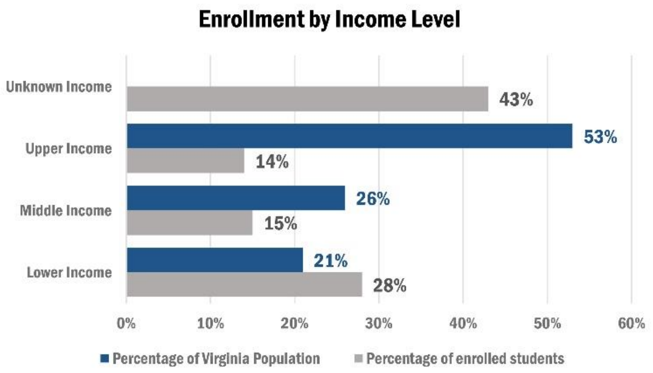
Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

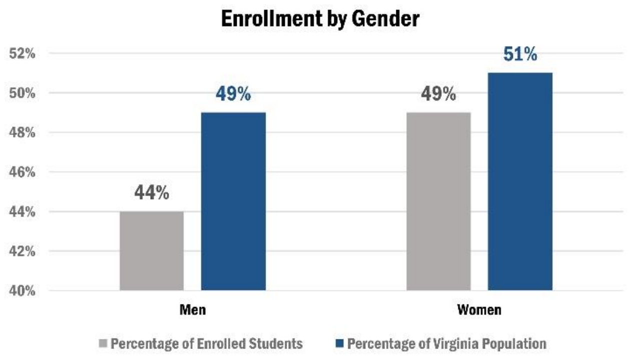


Note: Total undergraduate enrollment for American Indian/Alaska natives in Virginia is 1,142; Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander is 771. Total population of American Indian/Alaska Natives is 7,604. Total population Unknown/non-Hispanic is 6,504.

Enrollment by Region of Origin







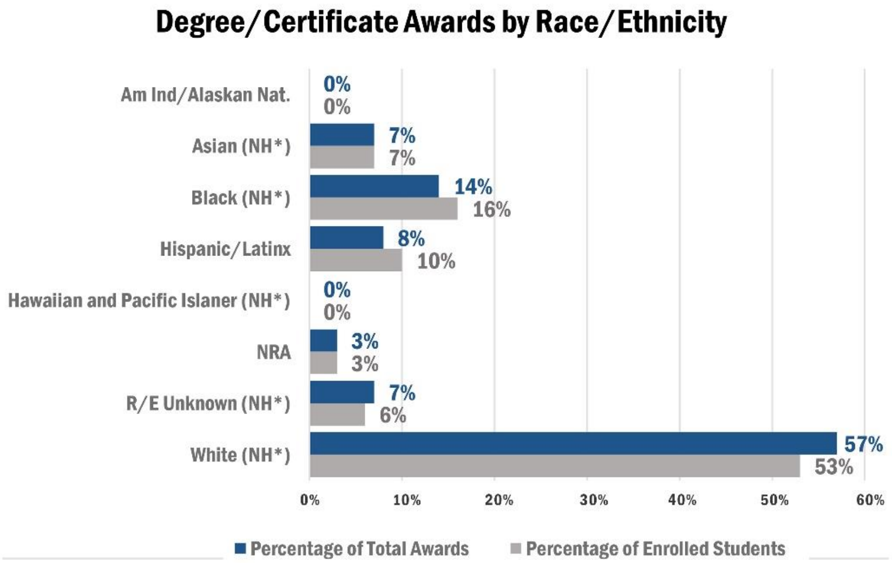
Awards

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

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

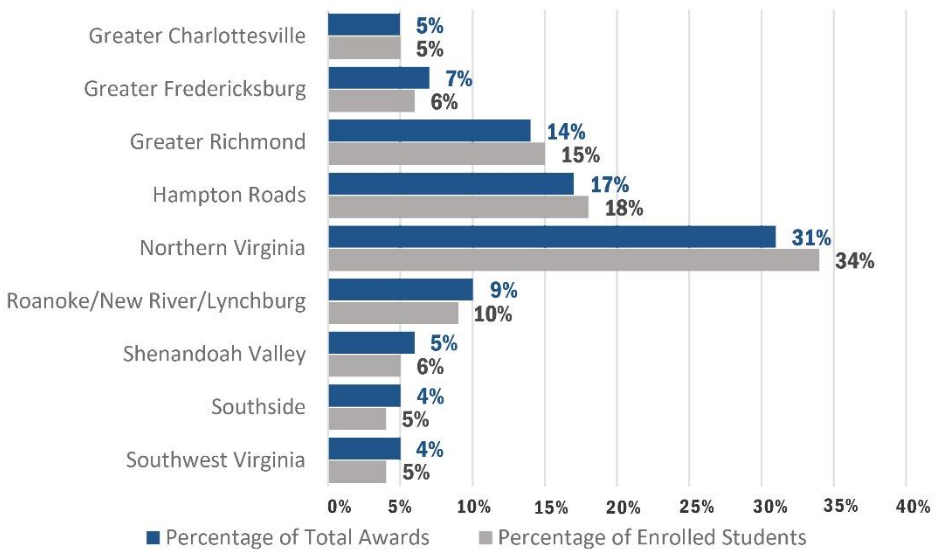
Identified success gaps may include:

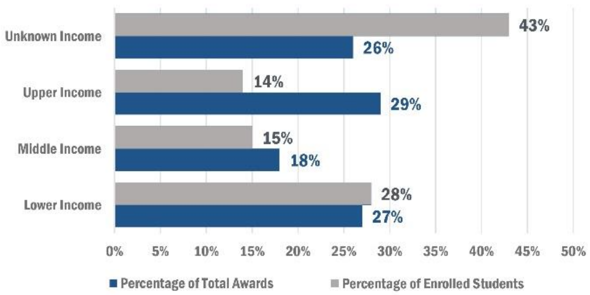
- By race/ethnicity – Black, Multi-Race, Hispanic/Latinx
- By region of origin – Greater Richmond, Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia
- By income – Lower income
- By gender – Men

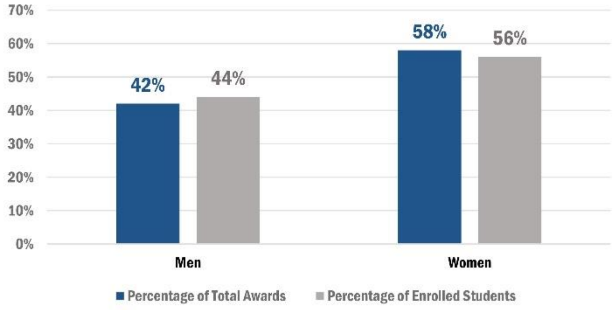


Note: Total undergraduate awards for American Indian/Alaska natives in Virginia is 474; Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander is 336.

(NH*) = Non-Hispanic


Degree/Certificate Awards by Region of Origin


Degree/Certificate Awards by Income Level


Degree/Certificate Awards by Gender

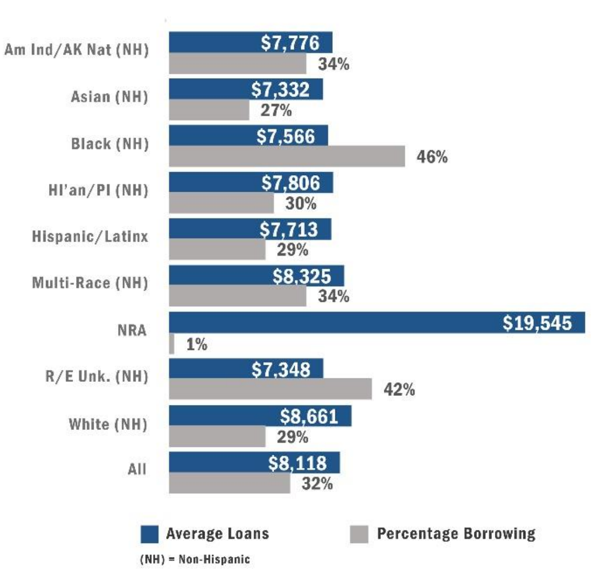
Borrowing

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

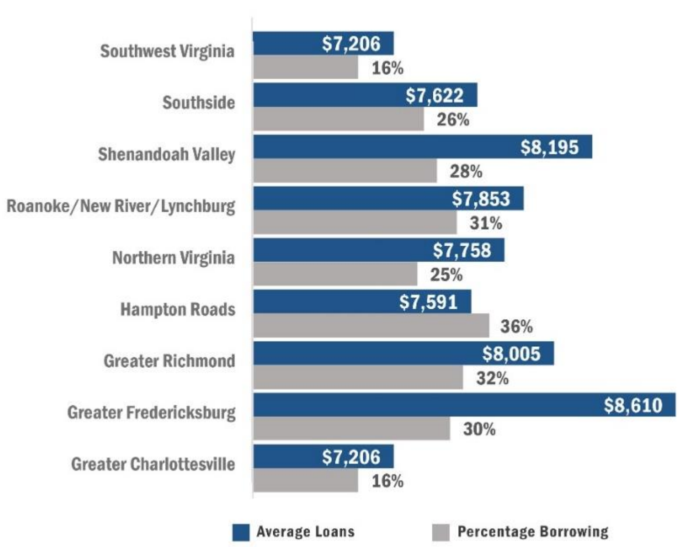
Borrowing is a barometer of affordability which is complex (e.g., not all debt is bad). Average borrowing is shown on an annual basis and includes students who borrowed $0 and that used federal or private loans for higher education.

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

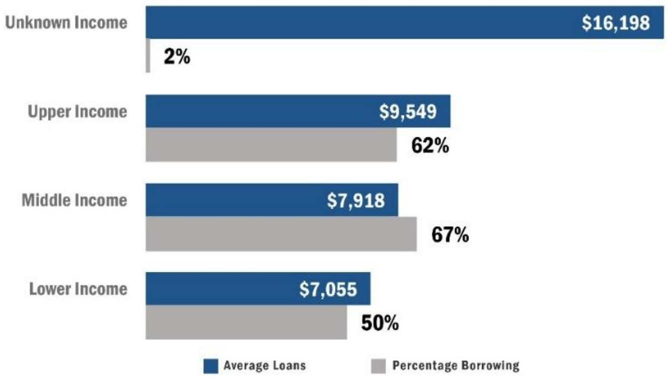
- By race/ethnicity – Black (46%) and Race/Ethnicity unknown (42%)
- By region of origin – Hampton Roads (36%)
- By income – Middle income (67%)
- By gender – Women (34%)



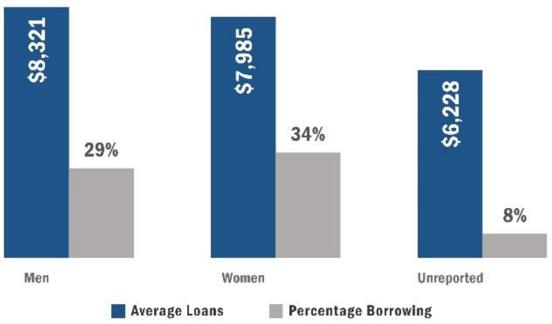
Student Borrowing by Race/Ethnicity



Student Borrowing by Region of Origin



Student Borrowing by Income Level



Student Borrowing by Gender

Data for the above charts include students borrowing for associate and bachelor's degrees. It is worth noting that four-year bachelor's degree borrowing rates are even higher. The largest percentage of four-year bachelor's degree loan borrowers are: Black (71%), American Indian (56%), Southside (71%), Southwest (61%), Lower income (73%), Middle income (75%) and Women (53%).

Wages

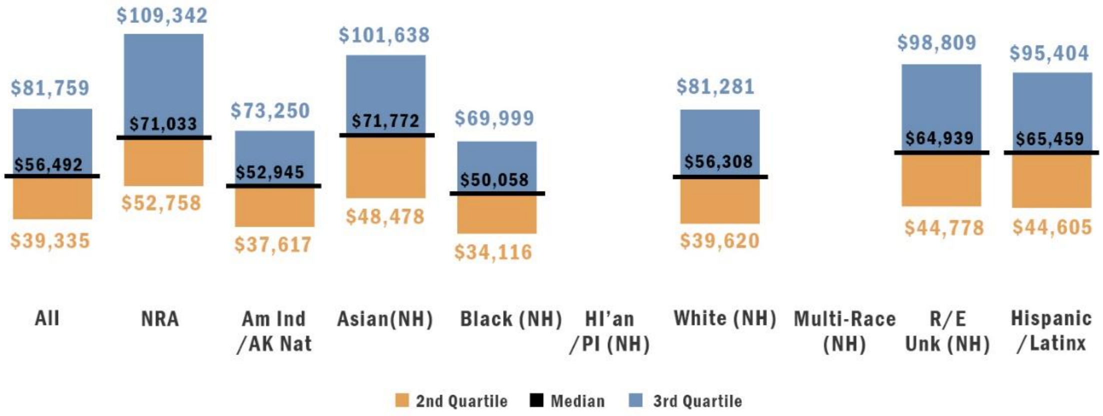
The Plan's wages measure is defined as graduates' wages 10 years after graduation. The target is to close gaps in earnings of selected groups.

Wages are the individual earnings of graduates, not household earnings, 10-years post completion. While wages signal prosperity in a financial sense, other aspects of prosperity (civic engagement, happiness, etc.) also exist; however, such data are less reliable or are more difficult to access and measure.

Even though wide gaps in wages are not "levers" that higher education can control in terms of long-term outcomes, such gaps are worthy of attention because they persist within each subgroup. These gaps signal that some groups are not experiencing the same social mobility benefits of higher education as other groups.

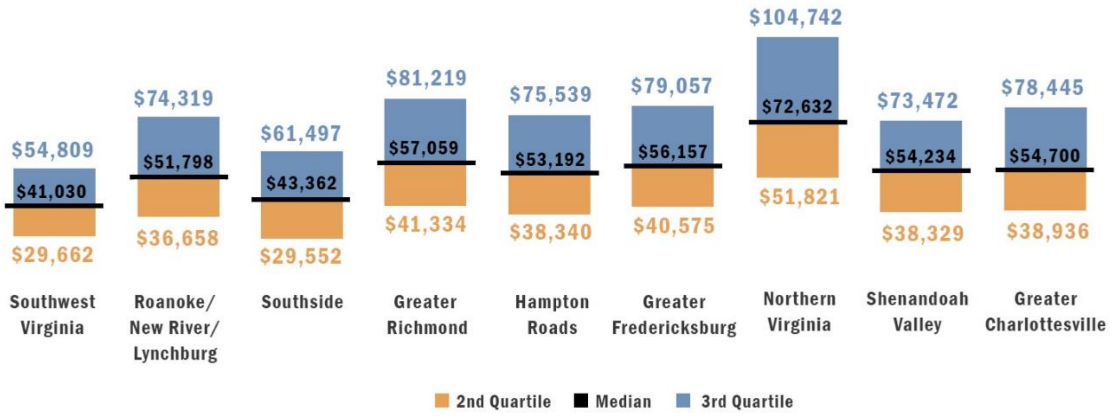
Those groups with the widest wage gaps include:

- By race/ethnicity – Black and American Indian/Native Alaskan
- By region of origin – Southwest and Southside. There appears to be a strong connection between region of origin and earnings.
- By income – Lower income
- By gender – Women

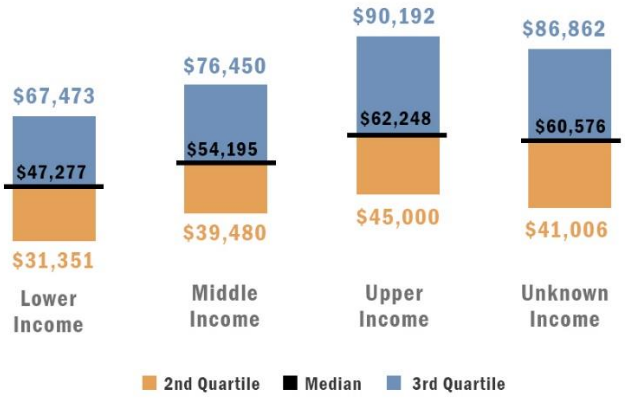


Graduate Wage Outcomes by Race/Ethnicity, 10 years Post-completion

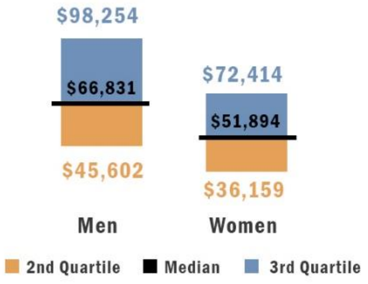
Graduate Wage Outcomes by Region of Origin, 10 years Post-completion



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



Graduate Wage Outcomes by Gender, 10 years Post-completion



Data for the above charts include students borrowing for associate and bachelor's degrees. It is worth noting that variations in median wages within race/ethnicity, income and gender subgroups were wider for graduates with four-year bachelor's degrees.