WHO ARE TODAY’S STUDENTS?

Nationally, today’s students are more diverse than any previous generation of college students: in age, race, and income level. They’re more mobile and may not live on campus. Most participate in the workforce, either full-time or part-time. Work and family responsibilities beyond the classroom—whether that is on-campus or online—often compete with today’s students’ educational goals.

NATIONWIDE, TODAY’S STUDENTS ARE:

- 37% OLDER THAN 25
- 64% WORKING WHILE IN COLLEGE
- 24% PARENTING
- 13% LIVING ON CAMPUS
- 40% PART-TIME

IN VIRGINIA...

Dr. Jason Smith, Partnership Executive Director at Bridging Richmond, and member of Higher Learning Advocates’ Champions Network, supports a higher education system that better integrates prior learning, high quality credentials, two-year and four-year degrees.

“It is too easy to see one part of the system and to work to advance the interests of our primary role in it. We see the pendulum swing between public support for bachelor’s degrees, associate’s degrees and industry credentials instead of thinking about how today’s learner will navigate and connect multiple learning experiences in their careers.”

JASON SMITH’S POLICY POWER PLAYS:

- Incentivize coordination of social services and reform financial aid to address the needs of today’s learners.
- Improving transfer alignment and creating reverse transfer opportunities.
- Reinforce the bipartisan agreement about the value of education.
SNAPSHOT: How do Virginia’s numbers stack up?

To better understand how Virginia compares to the national higher education landscape, look to the data below detailing trends in enrollment, federal student aid, tuition and fees, earnings, and attainment comparing national and state level data.

ENROLLMENT

Virginia’s total student enrollment is 557,632 or 62%. Virginia students attend full-time.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID

About 65% of Virginia’s college students and their families take out federal student loans,¹ compared to 70% nationwide.²

¹Includes Direct Subsidized Loan, Direct Unsubsidized Loans, Parent PLUS, Grad PLUS, and Perkins Loan.
²https://www.cnbc.com/2017/07/03>this-is-the-age-most-americans-pay-off-their-student-loans.html

SNAPSHOT: How do Virginia’s numbers stack up?

TUITION & FEES

Virginia's institutions of higher education tuition & fees are higher than the national average for students attending public two-year and public four-year institutions.


ATTAINMENT

In 2016-2017, Virginia students obtained postsecondary degrees or credentials relatively on par with rest of the nation.


Percentage of Degrees & Certificates Awarded | 2016-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bachelors</th>
<th>Associates</th>
<th>Certificates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Average</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average Tuition & Fees | 2018-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public Two-Year</th>
<th>Public Four-Year (In-state)</th>
<th>Public Four-Year (Out-of-state)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Average</td>
<td>$3,660</td>
<td>$13,490</td>
<td>$26,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>$5,260</td>
<td>$10,230</td>
<td>$33,640</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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SNAPSHOT: How do Virginia’s numbers stack up?

ATTAINMENT continued

As of February 2019, about **53.9%** of Virginia residents ages 25-64 have obtained a certificate or postsecondary degree.

NATIONALLY, **47.6%** of Americans ages 25-64 have obtained a certificate or postsecondary degree.³

Virginia Education Levels for Residents Ages 25-64

- High School Graduate or less: 17.0%
- Some college, no credential: 31.9%
- Certificate: 23.5%
- Associate Degree: 14.2%
- Bachelor’s Degree: 8.4%
- Graduate or Professional Degree: 5.0%


Percentage of Virginia Residents Ages 25-64 with at least an Associate’s Degree by Race

- Hispanic: 31% National Average, 24% Virginia
- White: 47% National Average, 31% Virginia
- African-American: 52% National Average, 31% Virginia
- American Indian: 34% National Average, 25% Virginia
- Asian & Pacific Islander: 63% National Average, 68% Virginia


SNAPSHOT: How do Virginia’s numbers stack up?

EARNINGS AND EMPLOYMENT

Americans who earn a postsecondary degree or credential have higher earnings potential.

Source: Georgetown University Center for Education and Workforce. Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees. https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/certificates/

Virginia workers with higher levels of postsecondary attainment have more earning power than their peers with less than a bachelor’s degree. The median earnings of Virginia residents is above the national average for high school graduates and residents with postsecondary degrees.


The majority of jobs nationwide in 2020 will require education beyond high school.

## WHAT CHALLENGES DO TODAY’S STUDENTS FACE?

### AFFORDABILITY
- 49% financially independent
- 31% at or below federal poverty line

### PART-TIME VS.
- 40% part-time

### COMPLETION
- 38% of students with additional financial, work, and family obligations leave school in their first year

### WORK
- 64% work while in college

### PARENTING
- 24%

### EMERGENCY COSTS
Early data from the University Innovation Alliance (UIA), a coalition of eleven public research universities, shows that about 4,000 Pell-eligible college seniors, who are in good academic standing, are at risk of being dropped from their classes or not allowed to graduate because less than $1,000 is owed to their institutions.

### VETERAN-STATUS
- 4% of undergrads are veterans but they face unique challenges, such as applying competencies learned in military service to civilian careers and academics.

### HOW CAN FEDERAL POLICY HELP SET TODAY’S STUDENTS UP FOR SUCCESS?

Outcomes are critical for today’s students—including completion, employment, equity, and value—to be gained from higher learning. Federal policy needs to catch up to the way that today’s students are learning and reward institutions and systems that deliver the strongest career and educational outcomes.

**FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID** should be redesigned with a focus on the needs of a wide range of students, especially those who work full- or part-time, are financially independent, or need to enroll in courses outside the traditional two-semester approach. Redesign approaches could include rethinking Pell eligibility for workforce programs, or simpler loan repayment to match today’s students’ needs.

**DATA** gathered through federal, state, and workforce data systems should cover the full spectrum of today’s students, not just first-time, full-time students. Today’s students, families, schools, and taxpayers need clear information to make informed choices about higher learning.

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5 https://www.luminafoundation.org/todays-student-statistics

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