

Transforming Career and College Planning: An Initial Review of the Virginia Education Wizard

Career and college planning increases student retention and graduation rates (Hull-Banks, et al, 2005)¹. Launched in March of 2009 by the VCCS, the Virginia Education Wizard (www.VaWizard.org) revolutionizes career and college planning by providing high-quality information that helps students and potential students select a career, find the right major and institution, pay for college, and transfer from Virginia's Community Colleges to universities.

"You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you are going, because you might not get there." ~ Yogi Berra

Definitions

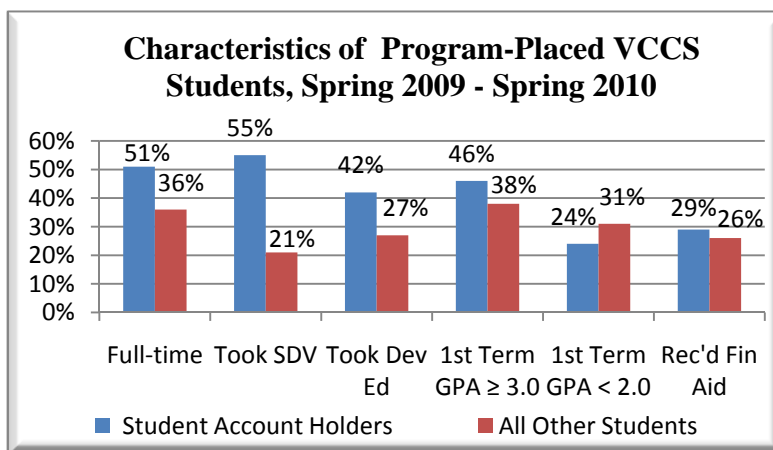
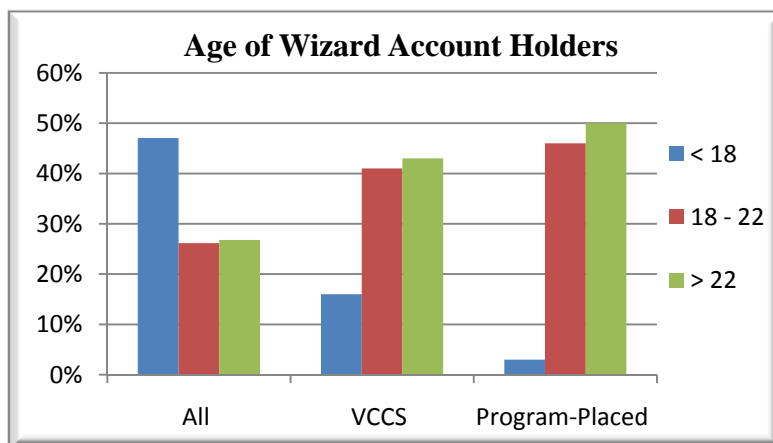
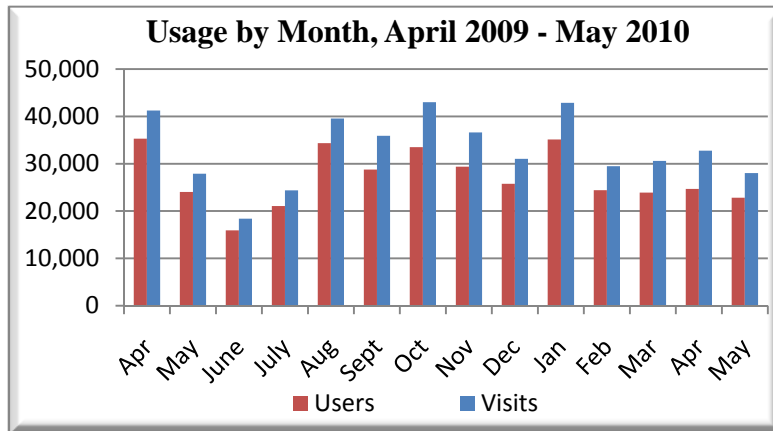
- Visits – total number of times the Wizard is accessed by users
- Users – individual clients of the Wizard's services and information
- Account Holders – registered users of the Wizard
- Student Account Holders – registered VCCS student users of the Wizard

Highlights

- In 15 months, the Wizard has helped 371,273 users through 487,889 visits in which 4,347,914 pages have been viewed.
- The career planning section of the Wizard has been used more than any other with 1,506,261 pageviews.
- Of the more than 90,000 users who created accounts, almost half are younger than age 18, and almost a third are VCCS students.
- The typical VCCS student account holder is more likely to attend full-time, have enrolled in SDV and in developmental education, earned a 3.0 GPA, and received financial aid when compared to other program-placed students.

Reflections

Early indicators of Wizard use point to a growing cadre of Virginians using the tool to initiate career and college planning. Through the Wizard, users, and account holders specifically, engage in planning activities that align with *Achieve 2015* by encouraging access to college, goal identification, progress towards goals, and student success. Colleges are urged to identify ways to use the Wizard to facilitate career planning, major selection, and transfer planning and to consider a growing population of students who will arrive on campus familiar with the Wizard.



Key Functions of the Wizard

The Wizard provides users with opportunities to interact with career and college information and to engage in a process of planning for their future. Three career assessments enable users to identify those occupations and clusters of careers that best match their interests, work values, and skills. The financial aid award estimator allows account holders to share personal information and in return receive a college-specific, student-specific financial aid award estimate complemented by interactive instructions on completing the FAFSA. The transfer planner poses a few simple questions and produces a step-by-step checklist guiding the student from the first semester in a community college to matriculation at a university.

Description and Activities of Account Holders by College ²									
College	Accounts Created			Rate of Account Creation Among Population Age 14-17			Results Saved to Profile		
	Service Region ²	All Students	Program-Placed Students	Accounts Created 14-17	Service Region Pop. 14-17	Rate	Career Assessments	Fin. Aid. Award Estimates	Transfer Plans
Blue Ridge	2,531	823	676	1,002	11,384	8.8%	3,322	174	220
Central Virginia	1,385	469	348	581	12,444	4.7%	1,640	100	122
Dabney S. Lancaster	1,919	418	179	1,433	4,555	31.5%	2,660	136	73
Danville	1,490	603	358	405	7,238	5.6%	1,638	113	160
Eastern Shore	857	185	142	365	2,823	12.9%	1,079	44	35
Germanna	2,594	696	549	900	23,914	3.8%	2,604	222	146
J. Sargeant Reynolds	5,715	1,354	1,110	1,894	35,599	5.3%	5,263	552	450
John Tyler	13,543	3,024	2,202	5,065	28,691	17.7%	19,501	1,550	1,287
Lord Fairfax	3,235	1,192	956	1,288	15,649	8.2%	3,512	248	403
Mountain Empire	1,287	431	265	530	5,216	10.2%	1,375	66	51
New River	3,274	1,194	854	1,448	6,728	21.5%	3,925	141	163
Northern Virginia	14,236	5,727	4,934	3,389	109,944	3.1%	9,367	1,136	2,259
Patrick Henry	3,612	929	623	1,743	6,709	26.0%	4,519	185	98
Paul D. Camp	1,590	350	297	633	8,201	7.7%	1,706	110	63
Piedmont Virginia	1,889	676	553	551	11,617	4.7%	1,329	300	211
Rappahannock	2,217	743	463	961	9,387	10.2%	3,029	106	139
Southside Virginia	2,381	780	403	1,129	9,244	12.2%	2,760	131	143
Southwest Virginia	1,541	640	442	793	5,442	14.6%	1,734	91	84
Thomas Nelson	8,583	2,638	2,274	3,679	26,608	13.8%	9,851	702	870
Tidewater	8,156	3,405	3,178	2,430	62,867	3.9%	7,580	694	1,124
Virginia Highlands	1,215	690	500	349	4,940	7.1%	1,607	87	111
Virginia Western	3,240	1,117	722	1,634	15,172	10.8%	4,034	194	223
Wytheville	3,742	1,291	691	1,952	5,767	33.8%	4,830	379	147
Total	90,232	29,375	22,719	36,048	494,429	7.3%	95,766	7,461	8,582

¹Hull-Blanks, E., Kurpius, S. E. R., Befort, C., Sollenberger, S., Nicpon, M. F., & Huser, L. (2005). Career goals and retention-related factors among college freshmen. *Journal of Career Development*, 32, 16-30.

²Account holders are automatically assigned to a primary community college by a zip code they provide. Account holders may change their primary community college following account creation.

How Were Data Generated?

Google Analytics was used to describe Wizard visits and users. Wizard database files were used to describe account holders and matched against VCCS student files based on the account holders' names and dates of birth to identify student account holders. JobsEQ® and the U.S. Census were used to describe the population, less than 18 years of age, by service region.

For More Information

Visit <http://www.vccs.edu/studentsuccess> to learn more about student success.

Visit <https://www.VaWizard.org> to learn more about the Virginia Education Wizard.