IN A TIME OF GREAT POLITICAL DIVISION, THERE IS SOMETHING ON WHICH VIRGINIANS OF BOTH PARTIES STRONGLY AGREE . . .

It’s Time to Invest in Virginia’s Talent

Kirk Cox
President, Virginia Business Higher Education Council
About VBHEC

- **The Virginia Business Higher Education Council (VBHEC)** is a nonprofit, nonpartisan partnership among VA’s business and higher education leadership, the most active such partnership in the 50 states.
- Since our founding in 1994, VBHEC has been led by business leaders who recognize the crucial role our standout higher ed system plays in growing VA’s economy and creating good jobs for all Virginians.
- Our top priorities include providing paid internship opportunities for all students and creating affordable talent pathways that cause students to stay in Virginia for full-time employment after graduation.
- **Our board’s current membership:**

  **Business leaders:** Dennis Treacy - Chair (Reed Smith); Nancy Agee - Vice Chair (Carilion Clinic); Todd Stottlemyer - Treasurer (CNSI); George Martin - Secretary (McGuireWoods); G. Robert Aston, Jr. (TowneBank); Robert M. Blue (Dominion Energy); Thomas J. Cosgrove (Newport News Shipbuilding); Clifford Fleet (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation); W. Heywood Fralin (MFA); Victoria Harker (TEGNA); Jennifer L. Hunter (Altria); Michael Karafotis (Bank of America); James B. Murray, Jr. (Court Square Ventures); Stephen Moret (Strada Education Network); Mark R. Pace (E.C. Pace Co.); Delbert Parks (Micron); Deborah L. Petrine (Commonwealth Care); Michael J. Quillen (Alpha Natural Resources, ret.); Mehul Sanghani (Octo); Becky Sawyer (Sentara Healthcare); Holly Sullivan (Amazon)

  **Higher education leaders:** W. Taylor Reveley, IV - COP Chair (LU); James E. Ryan - COP Vice Chair (UVA); Makola M. Abdullah (VSU); Javaune Adams-Gaston (NSU); Jonathan R. Alger (JMU); David Doré (VCCS); Donna Price Henry (UVA Wise); Troy D. Paino (UMW); Michael Rao (VCU); Katherine A. Rowe (W&M); Timothy D. Sands (VT); Gregory Washington (GMU).
About GROWTH4VA

• Two recessions in the 2000s caused per-student, constant-dollar state support of higher education in Virginia to be slashed by half, shifting the burden to tuition-paying students and their parents, and jeopardizing the competitive advantage Virginia enjoys from having a top higher ed system.

• In response, VBHEC launched our major advocacy program — GROWTH4VA (formerly “Grow By Degrees”) — to demonstrate the economic value of higher education, generate business and grassroots support for investments that will make Virginia the Top State for Talent, and make paid internships and affordable talent pathways broadly available to students in Virginia’s colleges.

• GROWTH4VA’s core activities include:
  • Economic impact analyses documenting VA higher ed’s impact on economic growth, job creation, and tax revenues.
  • Policy research and development focused on making higher ed instruction and research a catalyst for greater economic growth, better alignment with workforce needs, improved affordability, and strengthened performance.
  • Polling by national prominent bipartisan team to measure public support for higher ed system and policy goals.
  • Briefings for statewide and legislative candidates to present policy recommendations and relevant data.
  • Higher ed summits/other events to foster policy collaboration by business, education, and government leaders.
  • Digital communications program to give grassroots Virginians a voice (37,000 expressions of support to date).
  • Public relations program, including op/eds by business and education leaders, to build support for key policies.
  • National best practices research to identify key initiatives, especially related to talent pathways, internships, etc.
  • Direct advocacy by business leaders with executive and legislative branch decision-makers.
We’re Different

When it comes to developing talent, Virginia is unique . . .
Across the nation, support for higher education recently has shown signs of eroding . . .

Often-cited reasons:

- High tuition cost and uncertain return on investment (ROI)
- Students incur high debt yet fail to graduate
- Graduates can’t find well-paying jobs in their field of study
- Students feel ideological pressure to conform and self-censor speech
- Colleges have bloated bureaucracies that drive up costs

Other states are experiencing what happens to public support when colleges fail to deliver real value.
In Virginia, the story is completely different. Large majorities in both parties say a college education is still a good value.

This is even true when common criticisms of higher ed are highlighted in the question, such as some graduates’ difficulty finding jobs and the increasing cost.

“In your opinion, is having a college education still a good value even though some college graduates have trouble finding work in their chosen fields of study these days?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOP</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dem</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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</table>

“In your opinion, is having a college education still a good value even though it has become more expensive?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOP</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dem</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Competitive Advantage

Higher education is why Virginia wins on economic growth and job creation . . .
No investment produces a stronger ROI for the Commonwealth . . .

**ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS**

A comprehensive study completed by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service in 2023, the fourth of its kind since 2009, has documented the dramatic economic impact of Virginia’s higher education system.

- **$52B** GSP
- **188K** Jobs
- **$3.8B** Revenue

The investment more than pays for itself. Each dollar spent on Virginia’s public higher education system produces more than $25 in greater Gross State Product (GSP) and returns nearly $2 to the state treasury.

- **$25** GSP impact
- **$1.89** State tax revenue impact
Virginians support expanding dual enrollment opportunities so students can obtain marketable 2-year degrees and industry credentials faster and at less cost.

“The Governor and General Assembly should expand the number of dual enrollment courses, which are usually community college courses that students can take while they are still in high school, because the sooner a student can get a two-year degree or industry credential, the quicker and cheaper it will be for them to complete their education and get a good job.”^^

^^ Split Sample B, N=400.
Virginians are more likely to vote for a candidate with a plan to address workforce shortages by increasing degrees and credentials in STEM and other high-demand fields.

Please read the following education policy positions candidates for General Assembly might take. After you read each one, please indicate if that policy position would make you more likely or less likely to vote for a candidate for General Assembly, or if would make no difference to your vote:

“A candidate who proposes increasing the number of college and community college degrees and credentials earned by Virginia students in high-wage, high-demand sectors of the economy, such as science, technology, engineering and math, and in areas where there now are shortages of trained workers, such as health care and data science.”

* Denotes Rounding; ^ Split Sample A, N=400.
Virginians are more likely to vote for a candidate with a plan to address workforce shortages by investing in jobs skills training programs.

Please read the following education policy positions candidates for General Assembly might take. After you read each one, please indicate if that policy position would make you more likely or less likely to vote for a candidate for General Assembly, or if would make no difference to your vote:

“A candidate who says we should increase state funding for job-specific education and training programs that result in a workplace credential or degree and teach job skills needed in all parts of our high-tech economy.”

* Denotes Rounding; ^ Split Sample A, N=400.
Talent Investments

Virginians in both parties strongly agree it’s time for strategic higher ed investments . . .
Virginians say it’s time for the state to invest in talent . . .

And they are clear about the state investments they want:

**8 PRIORITIES FOR STATE INVESTMENT STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY VIRGINIANS IN BOTH PARTIES**

- Invest in internships that help students pay for college and get good jobs.
- Invest in reducing the tuition burden on students and their families.
- Invest in financial aid for low- and middle-income families.
- Invest in affordable access via HBCU’s, TAG grants, VCCS dual enrollment.
- Invest in strategies to attract talent and keep students in VA after graduation.
- Invest in meeting the workforce needs of current and future VA businesses.
- Invest in educational opportunities for Virginians who serve in the military.
- Invest in mental health and other needed support services for students.
Virginians are especially strong in their support for expanding paid internships.

**THE BIG GOAL:** EVERY STUDENT WHO ATTENDS VIRGINIA’S COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR AT LEAST ONE PAID INTERNSHIP IN THEIR FIELD OF STUDY WITHOUTEXTENDING THE TIME IT TAKES TO COMPLETE THEIR DEGREE.

“Virginia should increase the paid internship opportunities available to students because it will help students pay for college as well as prepare them for their career.”^^

“It is important the state of Virginia invests in the Innovative Internship Program which increases the number of paid internships, co-op programs, and other work-based learning opportunities available to students attending Virginia’s colleges and universities.”^

^ Split Sample A, N=400; ^^ Split Sample B, N=400.
Internships play an especially important role in “talent pathways” that enhance affordable access and help keep students in Virginia for full-time jobs after graduation.

**WHAT ARE TALENT PATHWAYS?**

4 key elements:

✓ Colleges collaborate with businesses and other employers.

✓ Curriculum is aligned to better address employer needs.

✓ Students have paid internship experiences or other valuable work-based learning.

✓ Leads to full-time job opportunities with a Virginia-based employer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A candidate who says we need to invest in creating more talent pathways in Virginia because they are especially helpful for first-generation and low-income college students who otherwise have trouble getting needed work experience and being considered for well-paying jobs.^^</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More/Less Likely to Vote for …</td>
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<tr>
<td>79/9</td>
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<tr>
<th>A candidate who says we need to invest in creating more talent pathways in Virginia because the best way to keep talented young people from moving away from our state after graduation is to connect them to Virginia businesses while they are still in college, such as through internships and co-op programs that can lead to full-time employment in Virginia.^^</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More/Less Likely to Vote for …</td>
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<td>80/8</td>
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^^ Split Sample B, N=400.
Virginians support multiple investment strategies to make paid internships available to all students.

**Campus Internship Centers**
“A candidate who says that colleges in Virginia need to work directly with businesses to help place students in paid internships with those businesses, so the state should invest in campus internship centers that focus on matching students with businesses for specific internship opportunities.”

**Internship Listings on Online Portal**
“A candidate who says that because many businesses want to hire student interns but do not know how to go about it, the state should create a user-friendly online portal with internship information and market it to employers and students throughout the state.”

**Small Business Matching Grants**
“A candidate who says that because most jobs in our economy are created by small businesses and internship experiences with small businesses are especially valuable to students, the state should provide matching grants to small businesses in Virginia so more small businesses can afford to hire interns.”

**Financial Aid to Help with Expenses**
“A candidate who says that because many students cannot afford off-campus internships because they have additional expenses for things like transportation and housing, the state should provide financial aid to help cover those expenses so internships are accessible to all students regardless of their family’s income.”

* Denotes Rounding

* Much More Likely | Total More Likely | Much Less Likely | Total Less Likely
--- | --- | --- | ---
Campus Internship Centers | 36% | 12% | 76% | 12%
Internship Listings on Online Portal | 37% | 12%* | 75% | 12%
Small Business Matching Grants | 32% | 13% | 74% | 13%
Financial Aid to Help with Expenses | 32% | 22% | 66% | 22%
Fall Events & Media

SCHEV + COP Joint Meeting

Roundtables

Virginia FREE Leadership Luncheon

Workforce & Education Conference
Fall Events & Media

Business Higher Education Council Discusses Internships At JMU Roundtable
September 19

Virginia public colleges and universities account for nearly $4B in state revenue
September 20

Treacy, Reveley: To bridge the workforce gap, Virginia must invest in higher ed
September 22

Let us know how we can help!

For more information, contact:
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McGuireWoods Consulting: 804-775-1937

WWW.GROWTH4VA.COM @GROWTH4VA