



**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 Stottlemeyer - 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.

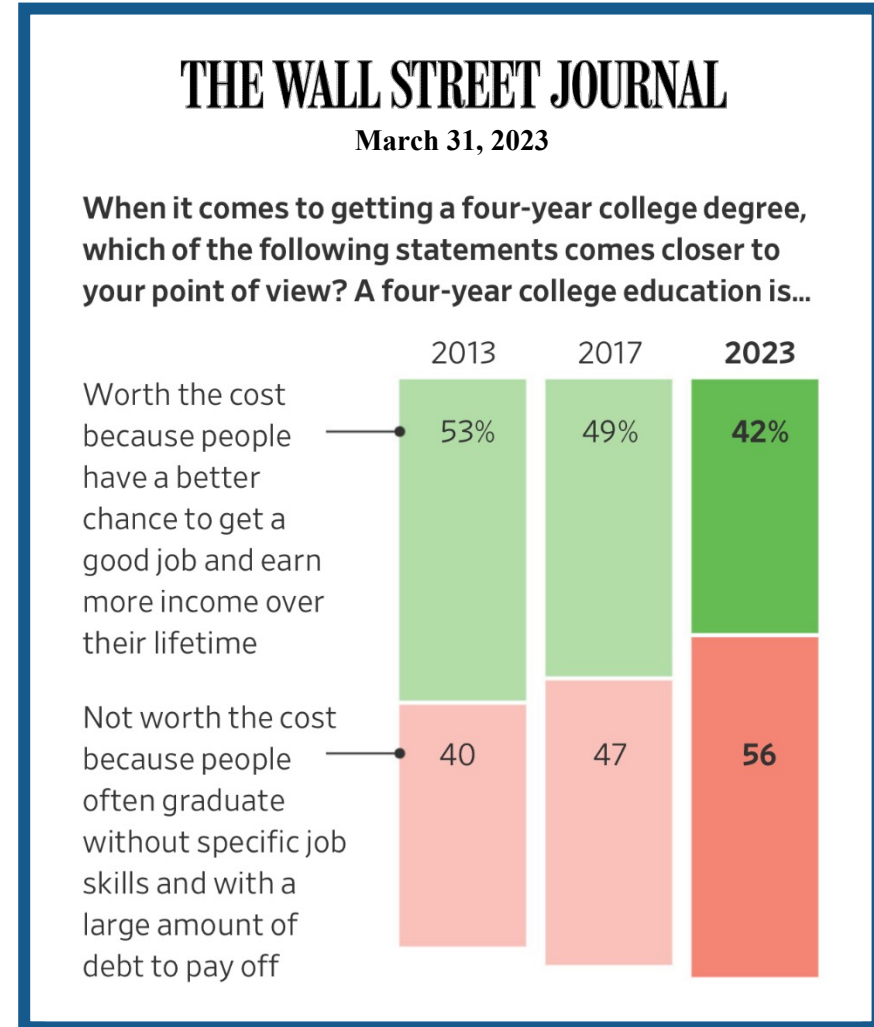
We're Different

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

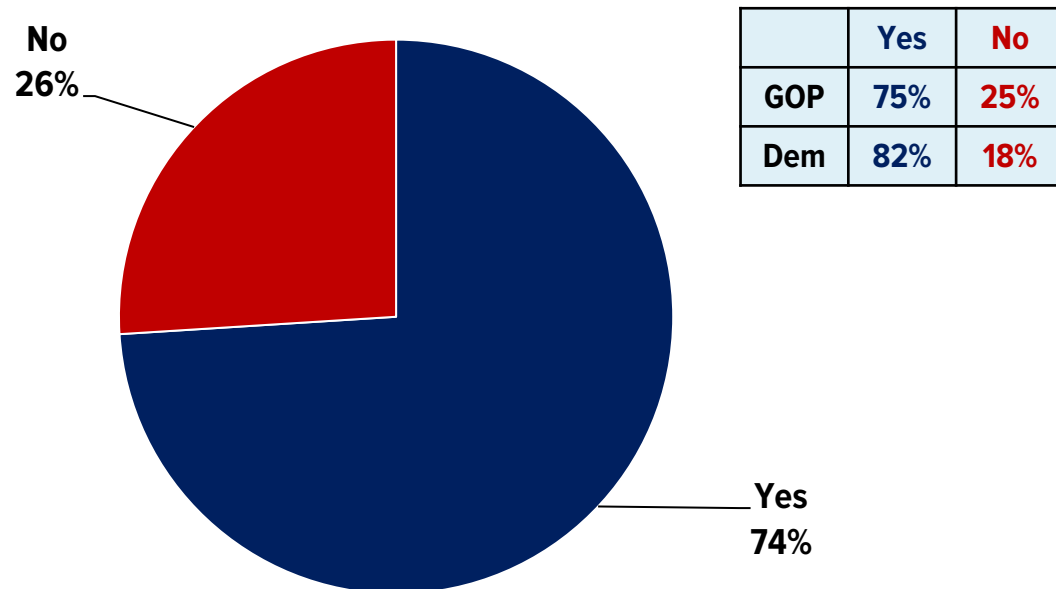


Other states are experiencing what happens to public support when colleges fail to deliver real value.

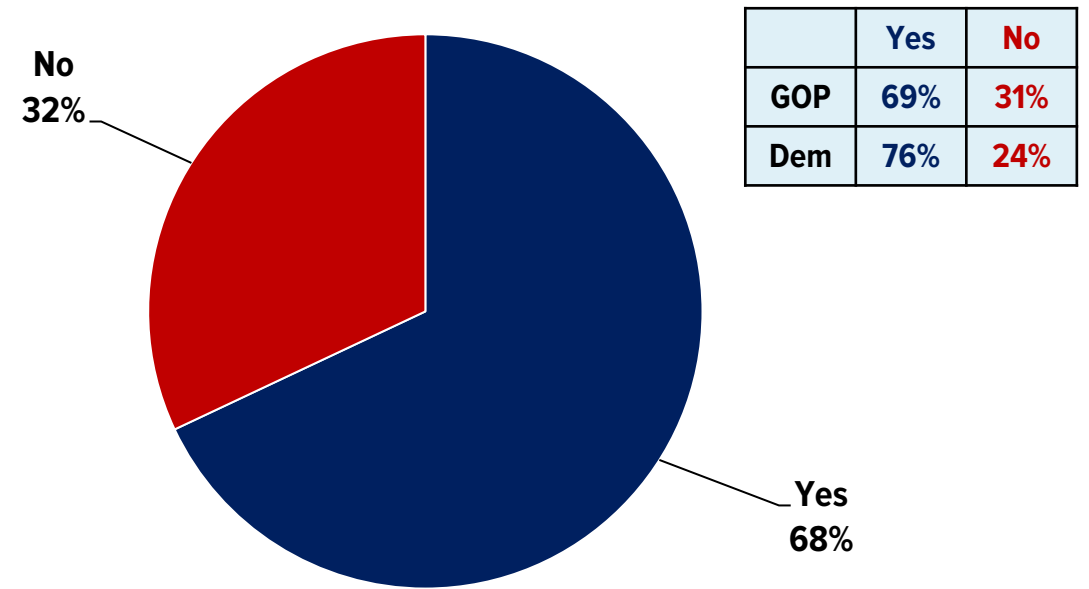
In Virginia, the story is completely different. Large majorities in both parties say a college education is still a good value.

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?"



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



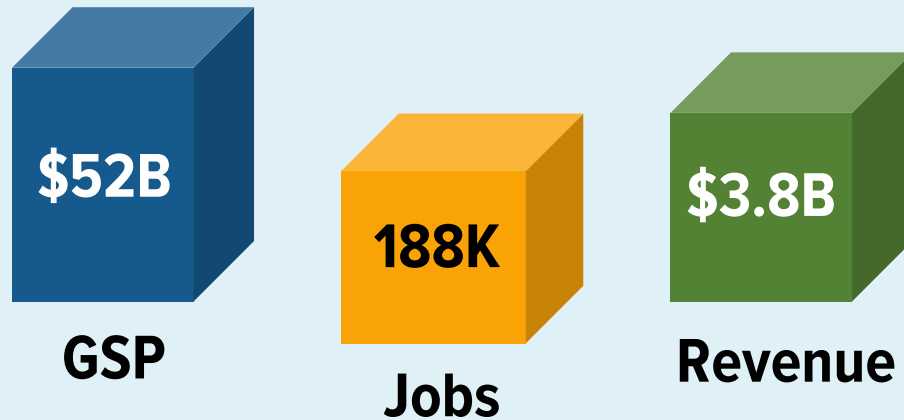
Competitive Advantage

Higher education is why Virginia wins
on economic growth and job creation . . .

No investment produces a stronger ROI for the Commonwealth . . .

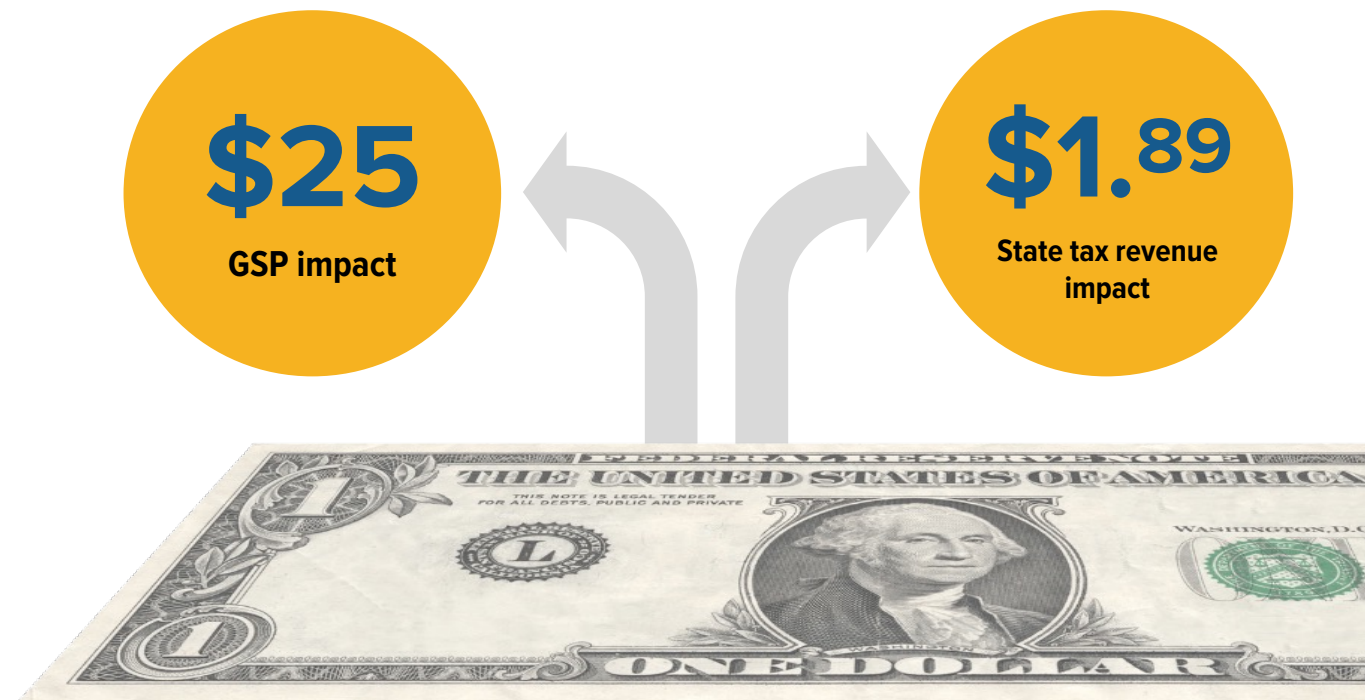
ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

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.



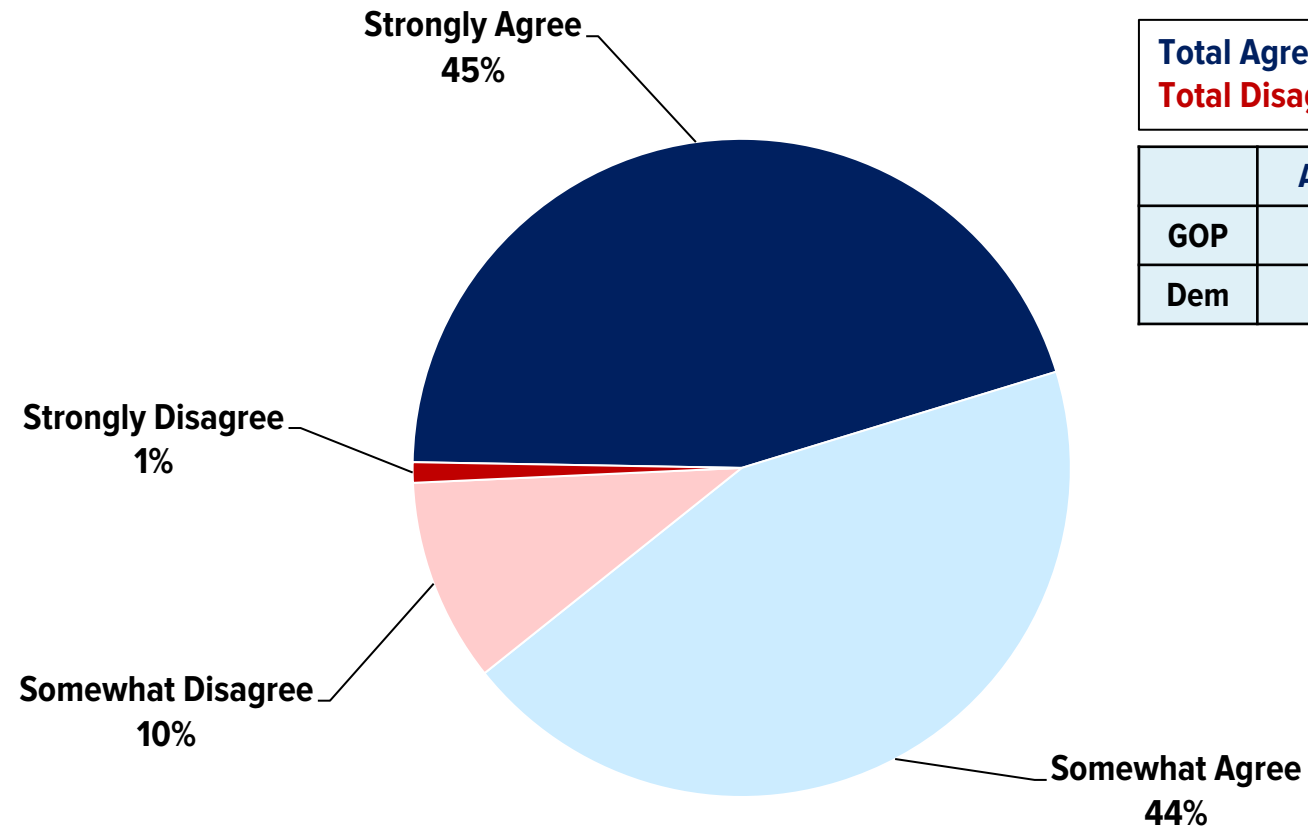
The investment more than pays for itself.

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.



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.”^^



Total Agree	89%
Total Disagree	11%

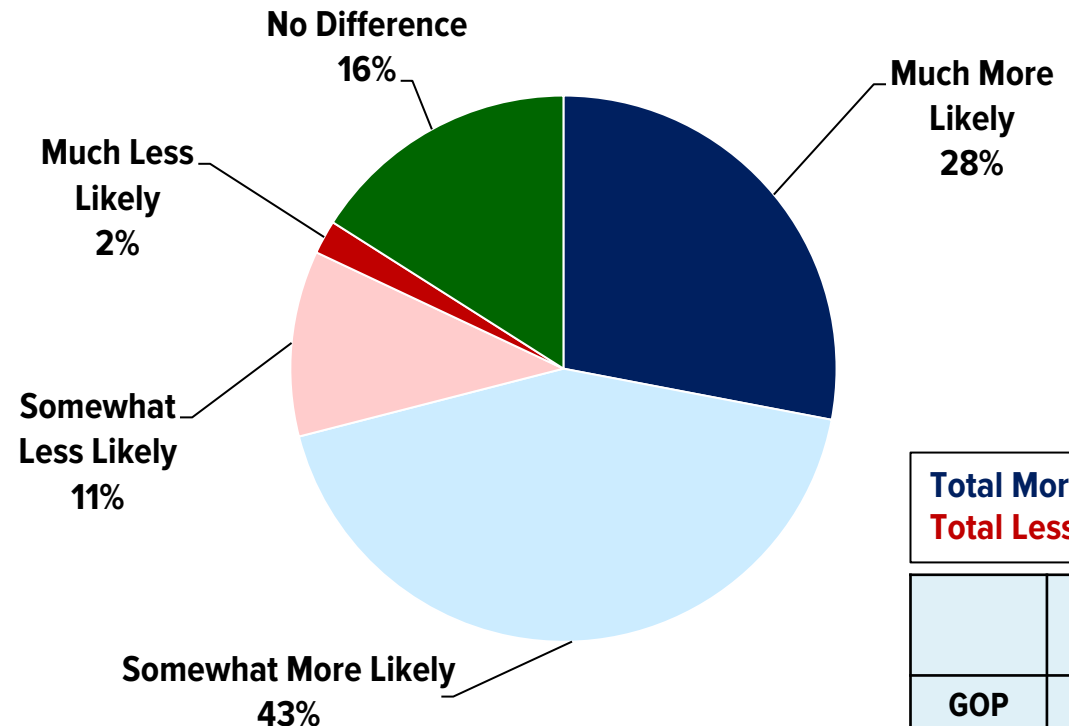
	Agree	Disagree
GOP	89%	11%
Dem	92%	8%

^^ 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.”[^]



Total More Likely		70%*
Total Less Likely		13%
	More Likely	Less Likely
GOP	71%	12%
Dem	75%	14%

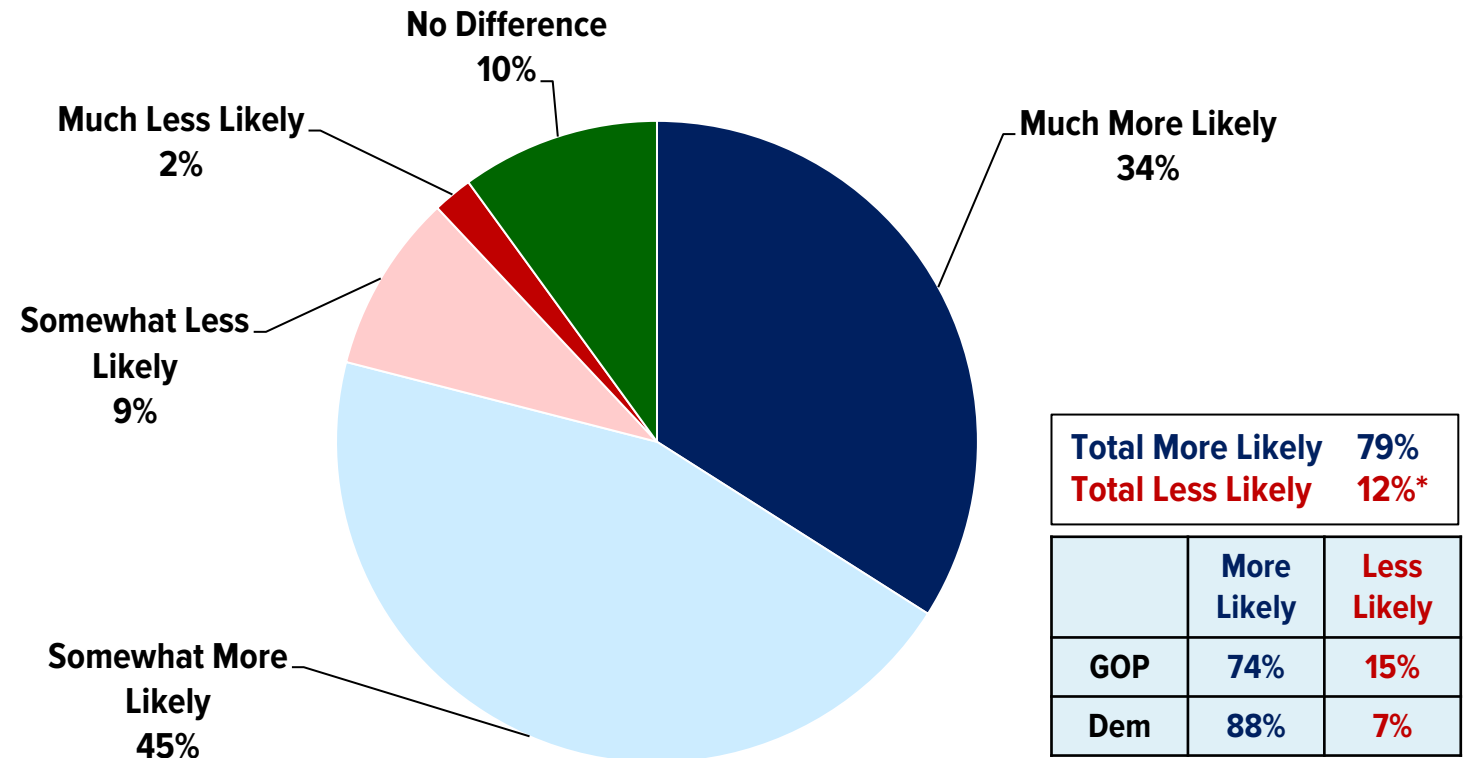
* Denotes Rounding; ^ Split Sample A, N=400.

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 WITHOUT EXTENDING 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.

■ Strongly Agree ■ Total Agree ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Total Disagree

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.

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.^{^^}

	Total	GOP	Dem	Ind	Child H.H.	No Child	Men	Women
More/Less Likely to Vote for ...	79/9	71/13	90/4	72/15	82/8	78/10	80/10	79/9

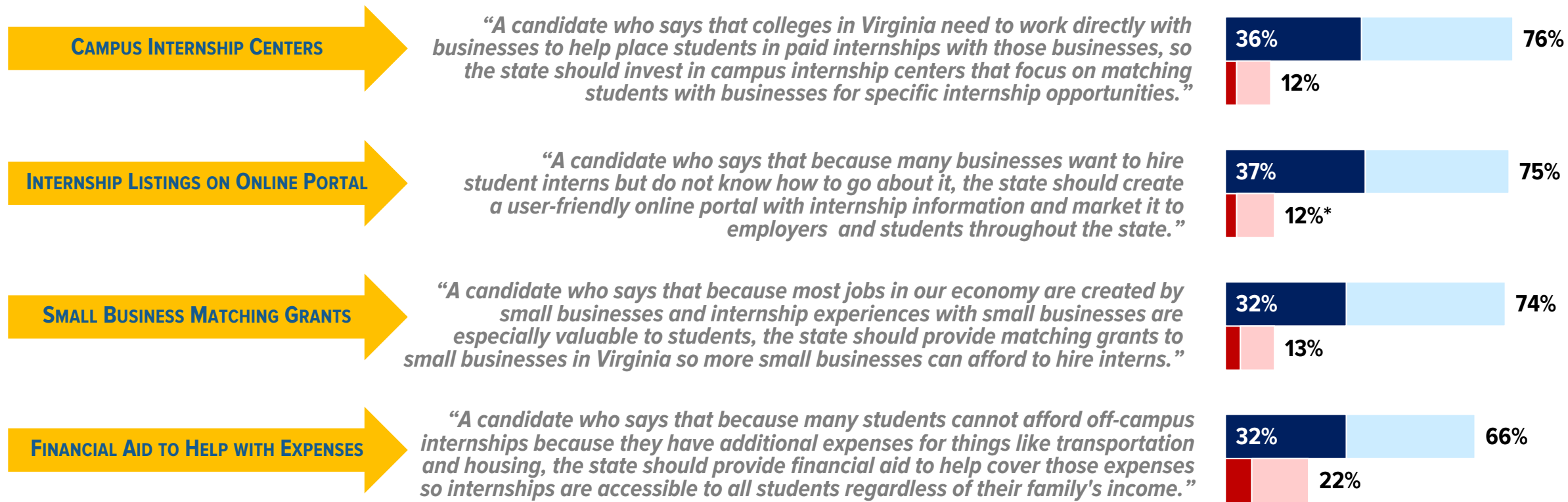
A candidate who says we need to invest in creating more talent pathways in Virginia because the best way to keep talented young people from moving away from our state after graduation is to connect them to Virginia businesses while they are still in college, such as through internships and co-op programs that can lead to full-time employment in Virginia.^{^^}

	Total	GOP	Dem	Ind	Child H.H.	No Child	Men	Women
More/Less Likely to Vote for ...	80/8	80/6	87/6	68/12	81/8	80/7	81/8	79/8

^{^^} Split Sample B, N=400.

Achieving the Big Goal

Virginians support multiple investment strategies to make paid internships available to all students.



* Denotes Rounding



Fall Events & Media



Fall Events & Media

Daily News-Record

**Business Higher Education Council
Discusses Internships At JMU Roundtable**
September 19

 **Growth4VA**
September 19 at 10:00 AM · 🌐

What's the next big focus in Virginia higher education? Expanding paid internships and creating affordable talent pathways.

Earlier this week, VBHEC President [Kirk Cox](#) announced our new [Growth4VA](#) campaign focused on this issue. And, throughout the week, we are unveiling new economic impact & polling data showing support for it and Virginia's public higher education system.

[Read more:](#)



GROWTH4VA.COM

VBHEC Launches Growth4VA Campaign to Promote Internships for Virginia Students: From "Learning to Earning"

👍 63 💬 3 comments ➦ 8 shares



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

 **Growth4VA**
September 26 at 10:40 AM · 🌐

According to our new report by the [Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service](#), investment in public [#highered](#) in Virginia more than pays for itself. Each dollar spent produces more than \$25 in state GDP, and returns nearly \$2 to the state treasury. [Learn more:](#)



WINA.COM

Virginia public colleges and universities account for nearly \$4-billion in state revenue | NewsRadio WINA

👍 60 ➦ 7 shares

Richmond Times-Dispatch

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

 **Growth4VA**
September 22 at 10:55 AM · 🌐

Did you read the article from our Chair Dennis Treacy and [Longwood University](#) President Taylor Reveley IV in today's [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#)? Read it below. 📰📰📰

In it, they agree: "the focus should be on mobilizing businesses and educators in each region and industry to work together to create affordable talent pathways that help students move efficiently from learning in Virginia to full-time earning in Virginia. ... Virginians agree it's time to invest in our talent. M... [See more](#)



RICHMOND.COM

Commentary: To bridge the workforce gap, Virginia must invest in higher ed
The commonwealth's return on its higher education investment is enormous. According to ...

👍 101 💬 2 comments ➦ 9 shares



Briefing for Elected Leaders and Candidates: 2023 Opinion Survey and Policy Recommendations

Let us know how we can help!

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

WWW.GROWTH4VA.COM

  @GROWTH4VA