

# Expanding Work-Based Learning: SCHEV's Call to Action for Student Success

**Alisha Bazemore**  
**Assistant Director, SCHEV –**  
**Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership**

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STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA

# Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership (V-TOP)

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- The Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership (V-TOP) is operated by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) as an established collaboration between SCHEV, the Virginia Chamber Foundation (VCF), and the Virginia Business-Higher Education Council (VBHEC).
- V-TOP is publicly funded through the statutorily-created Commonwealth Innovative Internship Fund (\$8.5 million in FY2026 and \$20.5 million over the biennium).

## § 23.1-903.4. Innovative Internship Fund & Program

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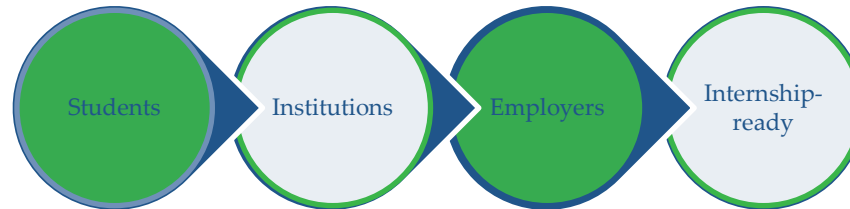
“B. ... The purpose of the Program is to **expand paid or credit-bearing student internships and other work-based learning opportunities in collaboration with Virginia employers.**”

The Program is comprised of 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.

# Goals of V-TOP

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- ❑ Distinguish the Commonwealth as the leading state for **higher education and talent pathways**.
- ❑ Have the **most internship-ready** students, employers, and institutions of higher education.



- ❑ Ensure that every student enrolled at a Virginia two-year and four-year institution of higher education has an opportunity to participate **in at least one paid, employment-based, authentic, and applied learning experience** (as drafted by a workgroup of the Council of Presidents).

# Establishing the Case for Work-Based Learning

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## Internship Participation Gaps: Intent vs. Participation

### Strong Intent, Lower Follow-Through

- 70% of first-year students expect to intern, but **fewer than 50%** follow through by senior year.
- Underrepresented groups show high interest yet significantly lower participation.

### Intent vs. Actual Participation

- **White:** 71% → 54%
- **African American:** 69% → 36%
- **Latino:** 67% → 39%

*Internship equity gap is most prominent among African American and Latino students.*

### Participation by Group

- **First-generation:** 41%
- **Non-first-generation:** 55%
- **Women:** 50%
- **Men:** 44%

*First-generation students and men are less likely to complete internships.*

### Why It Matters?

Students who complete internships report **increased confidence in their communication skills** and job readiness.

Source: Strada From College to Career: Students' Internship Expectations and Experiences 05/2023

# Shaping Future-Ready Graduates

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## What we know in Virginia –

- In 2019, SCHEV contracted with VCU for a survey of individuals who graduated from Virginia institutions between 2007 and 2018. Those findings provide valuable insights and serve as a potential baseline.
- 58% of graduates of Virginia four-year institutions and 24.4% of two-year-college graduates reported having completed a paid or unpaid internship during their matriculation.
- 53% of two-year and 57% of four-year graduates indicated that internships helped them obtain job offers after graduation, regardless of whether they accepted the positions.

Source: [Virginia Educated](#)

# Virginia's Credit-Bearing Internship Outcomes

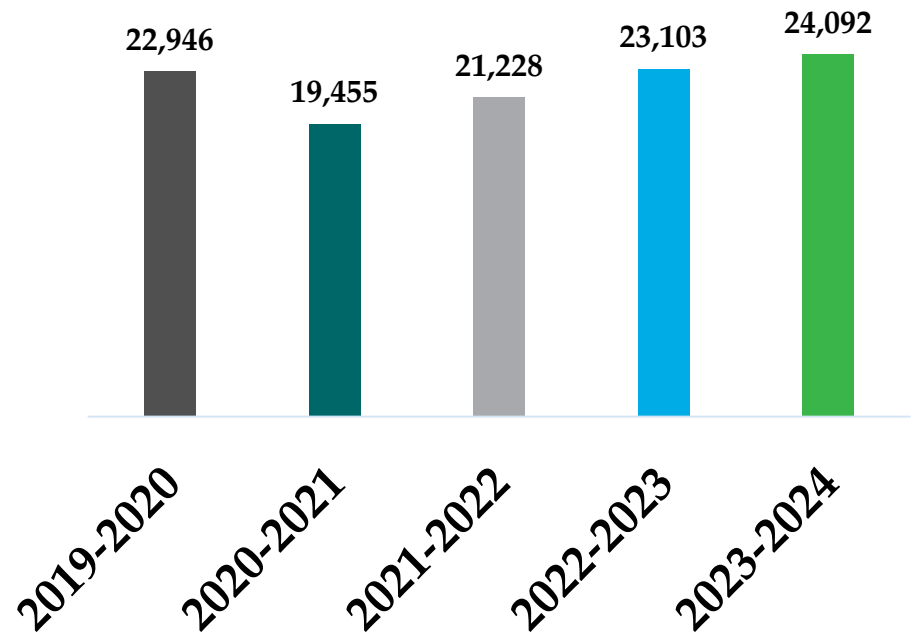
## What we know in Virginia -

### Academic year 2023-2024:

- 24,092 students enrolled in for-credit internships at 57 public and nonprofit private Va institutions.
- 58.9% were undergraduates.
- 41.1% were graduate students.
- 68.1% of undergraduate enrollees were seniors.

Source: SCHEV credit-bearing report, 2025

**Number of Students Enrolled in a Credit-Bearing Course by Academic Year**



Note: No reliable sources provide data about internships without academic credit.



# 2023-24 Virginia Credit-bearing Internships Participation

## Gender

Gender	Number	%
Female	16678	69.23%
Male	7351	30.51%
Other	3	0.01%
Unknown	60	0.25%

**30.5%**  
of participants  
were male

Access to paid internships is not evenhanded. Black and Latino students, women, low-income individuals, and first-generation students are less likely to obtain a paid internship. Even after accounting for differences between majors, these gaps persist.[\(Strada\)](#).

## Race

Race	Number	%
White (NH)	13568	56.32%
Black or African American (NH)	3258	13.52%
Hispanic	1973	8.19%
Race Unknown/Unreported (NH)	1874	7.78%
Asian (NH)	1385	5.75%
NRA	1030	4.28%
Multi-Race (NH)	893	3.71%
American Indian or Alaska Native (NH)	60	0.25%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (NH)	51	0.21%

**13.5%**  
of participants  
were Black or  
AA

**8%**  
of  
participants  
were  
Hispanic

Source: SCHEV credit-bearing report, 2025





# Barriers to Accessing Traditional Internships

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 60% of graduates who did not participate in an internship during their undergraduate enrollment reported having a desire to do so but experiencing one or more barriers (Source: Strada 2023 Survey Report)

**Commonly-reported barriers to internship participation:**

- **Difficulty finding an internship opportunity.**
- **Competitive market; not selected for an internship.**
- **Need to sustain employment/FT or PT job status.**
- **No or insufficient pay for the internship experience.**
- **Time pressure; rigorous course load (was a “student first”).**

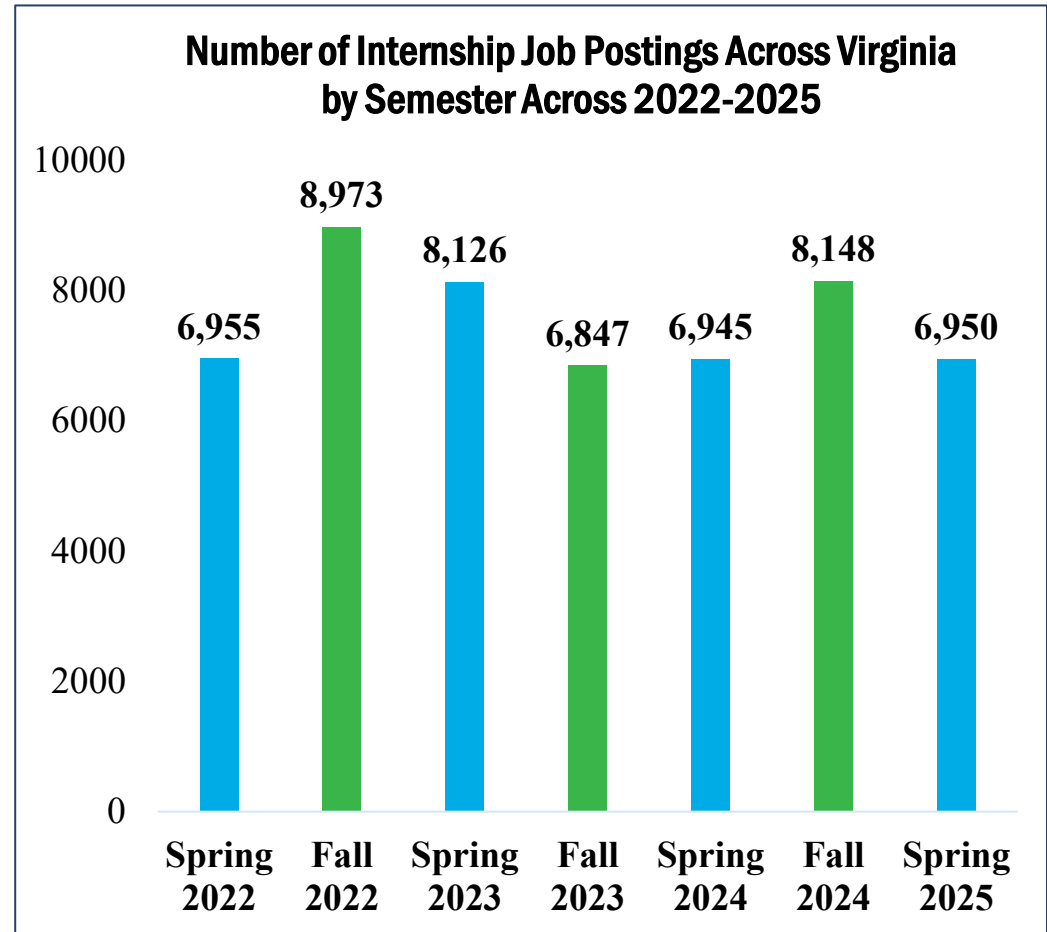
(Source: Strada 2023 Survey Report; Handshake Internship Index 2025)

# Barriers to Accessing Traditional Internships

## Supply vs. Demand

The supply of candidates exceeds the number of available opportunities.

- **542,702** – Students enrolled in VA public and private V-TAG institutions



(Fall 2024 headcount, SCHEV)

(AY 2022-2025; Source: VOOE)

# Barriers to Accessing Traditional Internships

## Supply vs. Demand

**The supply of candidates exceeds the number of available opportunities.**

Number of Internships Posted on Handshake  
in Virginia FY2024

- **542,702** – Students enrolled in VA public and private V-TAG institutions

**7,166**



\*Over 30 institutions use Handshake in Virginia.

(Fall 2024 headcount, SCHEV)

(Source: Handshake)

# Virginia's Public Institutions' Definition of WBL

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From the SB1280 Workgroup, per Code of Virginia § 23.1-906.1

- Work-Based Learning (WBL) is an educational approach that **integrates academic instruction with practical work experience**. It is designed to provide students with the opportunity to **apply classroom learning to real-world work settings** and gain practical **skills, knowledge, and experience that are directly relevant to their future careers**. WBL can take **various forms**, including internships, apprenticeships, co-op programs, and other experiential learning opportunities. Work-based learning experiences can be paid or unpaid, with a preference for paid experiences. Exceptions will be made when external accrediting organizations require otherwise.

# Undergraduate Work-Based Learning Standards

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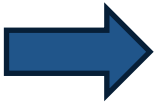
From the SB1280 Workgroup, per Code of Virginia § 23.1-906.1

- **Internships**
    - Micro-internships\*
    - Project-based learning\*
  - **Apprenticeship**
  - **Cooperative Education (Co-Op)**
  - **Field placement, practicum, or clinical experience**
  - **Research**
  - **Service learning & civic-engagement**
  - **Entrepreneurship**
  - **Social entrepreneurship**
  - **Public service**
  - **Voluntarism and community service**
- \*SCHEV/V-TOP's expanded approach.

Source: The workgroup drafted and synthesized these definitions using resources from the Council of Presidents, SCHEV Description of Credit-Bearing Internships at Public and Private Institutions of Higher Education in Virginia for Academic Years 2019-2022 (2023), the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), and the National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE).

# SCHEV's "Barrier Buster" Approach

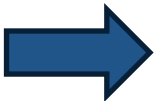
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## High-Impact, Low-Lift Strategies to WBL

Expand work-based learning definitions beyond traditional internships to include:

- **Micro-internships** – Short-term, paid professional projects that provide real-world experience in a flexible format.
- **Project-based learning** – Classroom/program-embedded activities where students solve real employer problems, building job-ready skills (e.g., communication and problem-solving).
- **Transformed work-study (more-internship like)** – On-campus jobs designed to include career-relevant tasks and professional development.



## Why Expand?

To increase access and better align opportunities with the diverse needs, schedules, and goals of today's students.

# High-Impact, Low-Lift Strategies to WBL

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## Work-Based Learning Fit Check

According to national opinion polls, **97 percent** of business leaders advocate for the expansion of work-based learning opportunities in colleges and universities ([Northeastern University](#)).

- **Micro-internships** help diversify talent pipelines. According to program provider Parker Dewey, over **80% of their micro-internships are completed by students from underrepresented backgrounds** ([Parker Dewey](#)).
- **Project-based learning** leads participants to experience **long-term, positive impacts** both personally and professionally, enhancing key skills such as communication, cultural awareness, confidence, and self-efficacy ([University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute](#)).
- **Work-study jobs are convenient**, typically located on campus, and reduce the need for commuting. They help fund a student's education while building transferable skills that enhance a resume ([Indeed](#)).

# Scaling Work-Based Learning That Works — Without Overload

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## V-TOP Impact Grants

Scale high-quality internships through staff support, internship coordination, and employer engagement.

- **Example:** Marymount University integrates project-based learning into courses—real-world, team-based problem solving with employers.

## Transforming Federal Work-Study

Redesign campus jobs into internship-like roles with career alignment.

- **Example:** PVCC received a \$50K grant to hire a Work-Study Coordinator and launch new WBL-aligned positions.

## Regional Events & Outreach

Build partnerships and align WBL needs locally through V-TOP Collaboratives.

- **Impact:** 354 Virginia small/mid-sized businesses hosted 226 student interns via V-TOP's staffing and matching grants.

## Career Readiness Modules

Free, self-paced student resources to boost career skills and access.

- **Reach:** Over 3,000 students from 50+ institutions enrolled in V-TOP's Internship Toolkit and Career Readiness Modules.

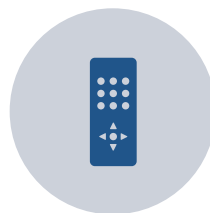


# Creating Impactful Internship and WBL Experiences

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The Gold Standard is a **paid internship opportunity** that offers access to valuable experiences.



A variety of formats that are student-focused experiences with traditional, hybrid, and remote options.



Diverse internship types, including traditional internships, project-based, micro-internship, and transformed work-study experiences, that meet the student's needs while ensuring the quality of the experience.



Employer engagement with institutional alignment and workforce needs.

**Additional Guidance:** [Guide to Internships \(NACE\)](#), [Designing and Implementing Work-Based Learning \(Northeastern University\)](#), [Making Work-Based Learning Work. \(Jobs for the Future\)](#) [Employer Alignment \(Strada\)](#)

# Methods to Track and Measure WBL Outcomes

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## Credit-Bearing Internships

- **Metric:** Student participation in credit-bearing internships
- **Data Source:** SCHEV credit-bearing internship reports, and Institutional Impact Grant reporting

## Paid, Unpaid, & Non-Credit Internships

- **Metric:** Participation across all types of internships
- **Data Source:** First Destination Data, Institution-level senior exit surveys (common questions), Handshake platform data (Institutional level)

## Project-Based Learning & Micro-Internships

- **Metric:** Participation in team-based or short-term real-world projects
- **Data Source:** Institutional Impact Grants, V-TOP Regional Outcomes Report, and SCHEV Work-Based Learning (WBL) Outcome Report

## Future Statewide Considerations

- ✓ Create a **universal course number** for non-credit internships across Virginia institutions
- ✓ Develop a **WBL survey framework** to consistently capture student participation
- ✓ Introduce a new course code for **work-integrated learning** (e.g., service learning)

Sources: National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE - annual national survey, limited coverage); National Survey of College Internships (NSCI); Strada State Opportunity Index (SOI - provides a state snapshot vs. other states); and [First-Destination Survey \(NACE\)](#)

# Call to Action – A Collective Approach

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## Increase

- Expand WBL definitions to increase access for more students to participate.

## Collaborate

- Collaborate with institutions and employers to develop unique work-based learning opportunities for students beyond a traditional internship (Micro-internships, project-based activities, and transformed work-study (internship-like) experiences).

## Promote

- Promote a collaborative systems change approach that includes all stakeholders in a supportive and unified manner.
  - Engage key stakeholders, employers, and institutions.

## Coordinate

- Coordinate scaling these activities across campus, region, and sector through structure and support (administrative support, goal-setting, tracking, and grant funding).

# Contact Information + Follow Us!

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**Alisha Bazemore**

**Assistant Director for Innovative Work-Based  
Learning Initiatives**

[AlishaBazemore@schev.edu](mailto:AlishaBazemore@schev.edu)

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