



Governor Northam Signs Legislation Creating Tuition-Free Community College Program for Low- and Middle-Income Students

~ ‘Get Skilled, Get a Job, Give Back’ initiative will enable an estimated 36,000 Virginians to earn degrees in high-demand fields ~

ALEXANDRIA—Governor Ralph Northam today signed legislation creating his signature “Get Skilled, Get a Job, Give Back” initiative, or “G3” program, which makes tuition-free community college available to low- and middle-income students who pursue jobs in high-demand fields. The G3 program includes \$36 million to cover tuition, fees, and books and provide wraparound support for eligible students at the Commonwealth’s two-year public institutions.

Governor Northam signed [House Bill 2204](#), carried by Speaker of the House of Delegates Eileen Filler-Corn, and [Senate Bill 1405](#), carried by Senator Majority Leader Richard Saslaw, during a ceremony at the Alexandria campus of Northern Virginia Community College. The identical bills which establish and fund the G3 program passed in the House and Senate with broad bipartisan support.

“Building an equitable and inclusive economy is more important than ever as we emerge from this pandemic,” **said Governor Northam**. “The G3 program will connect thousands of Virginians with the skills, training, and resources they need to secure jobs in high-demand fields and support themselves and their families—all without being forced to shoulder mountains of student debt. Tuition-free community college was one of the key issues I ran on during my campaign for governor, and I am thrilled to be delivering on that promise.”

The Governor’s tuition-free community college initiative targets key industries, including health care, information technology and computer science, manufacturing and skilled trades, public safety, and early childhood education. On average, students in these high-demand degree programs increase their wages by 60 percent upon program completion and

double their individual state tax contributions.

“Many Virginians are struggling to secure good jobs and support their families despite the Commonwealth’s continuing recovery,” **said Chief Workforce Development Advisor Megan Healy**. “The G3 program is a powerful tool to address the skills gap we are seeing in key industries and help businesses find the right talent to fill job openings, expanding both our workforce and our economy.”

The G3 program is one of the first in the nation to provide wraparound financial assistance to help students at the lowest income levels with expenses such as food, transportation, and child care. Students who qualify for a full federal Pell grant and enroll full-time will receive student- support incentive grants on a semester basis. These grants will be in an amount up to \$900 per semester and up to \$450 per summer term. Participating institutions will receive a performance payment for every eligible student receiving a student-support incentive grant that successfully completes 30 credit hours, and an additional performance payment when the student earns an associate degree.

“With increased financial stress due to the pandemic, we are seeing more middle- and low-income Virginians delay looking for new job opportunities,” **said Secretary of Education Atif Qarni**. “The G3 program provides critical funding to ensure students are equipped to complete the training that will enable them enter and excel in high-need fields.”

Initial eligibility for the G3 program is determined through the submission of applications for federal and state student financial aid, including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA. To address pandemic-related declines in FAFSA completion rates, Governor Northam recently [announced](#) a statewide effort to offer free, one-on-one FAFSA advising. From March 22 through June 30, 2021, Virginia students and families can go to virginiacan.org/fafsa to schedule a virtual meeting with a FAFSA advisor.

“I am grateful for Governor Northam’s steadfast leadership in championing and passing this critical program,” **said House Speaker Filler-Corn**. “The G3 jobs training program will equip Virginians with skills to enter or return to the workforce and give back to their communities through tuition free community college in fast growing industries like healthcare and information technology.”

“I was proud to be the chief co-patron of this legislation that establishes a free community college program for low- and middle- income students in high-need fields,” **said Senate Majority Leader Saslaw**. “The G3 program will be a lifeline to thousands of students who are looking for a sustainable way to support their families and contribute to their communities.”

To prepare for the G3 program, Governor Northam [announced](#) a collaborative effort in 2018 to transform workforce programs offered through the Virginia Community College System. This model equips students with skills training on day one and provides continual pathways for working adults to obtain additional credentials throughout their career.

“The Governor’s G3 initiative will make earning the necessary skills to fully participate in our 21st century economy affordable for more Virginians,” **said Glenn Dubois, Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System.** “Virginia’s 23 community colleges are ready to help students prepare for and succeed in the high-demand jobs of today and tomorrow.”

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