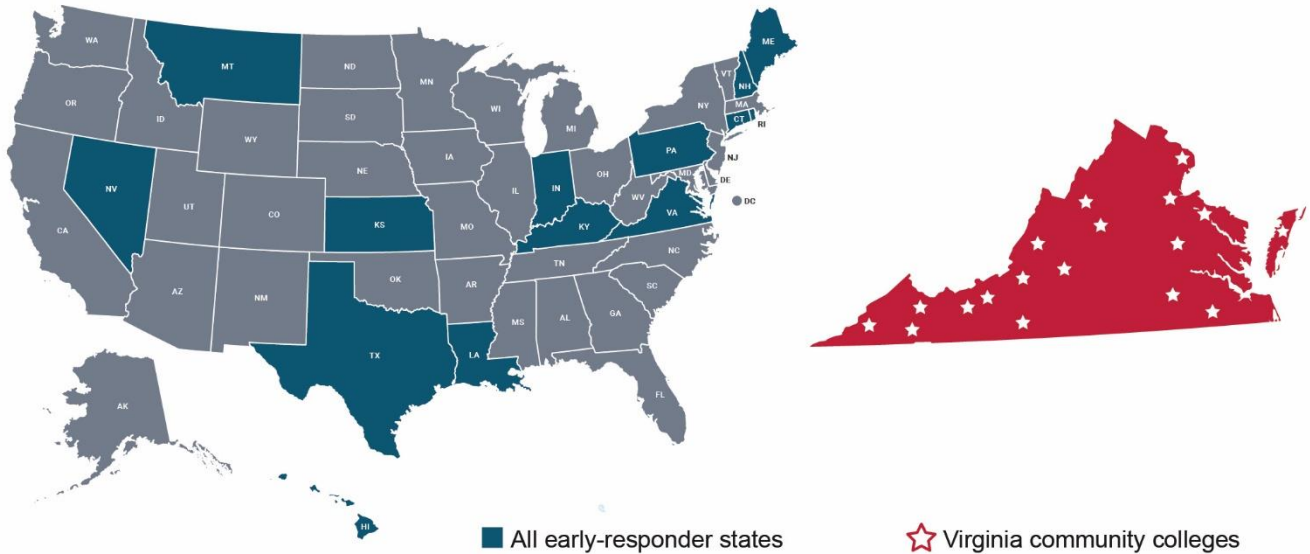


In late 2020, Virginia community colleges participated in a national study of community college workforce education. Virginia was one of 14 states where education authorities volunteered to encourage colleges to respond early enough in 2020 to receive preliminary statewide results in January 2021. This brief compares Virginia to the 14 states in this early-responder group.

The goal of the study: to explore the innovation under way at community colleges across the US and highlight what these institutions are doing to put Americans to work as the nation recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic.

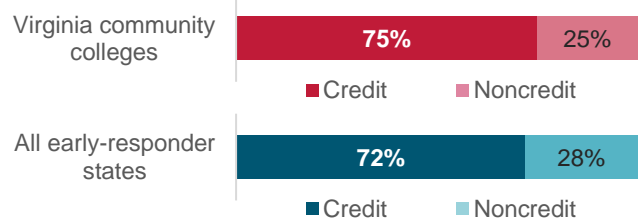
Early responders



Credit and noncredit enrollment

Community colleges report abundant information about students enrolled in credit-eligible programs. Much less is known about learners enrolled in institutions' noncredit divisions. This study begins to address that gap, with a special focus on two-year colleges' noncredit workforce education programs and relationships with employers.

Percentage of students in credit & noncredit programs



In 2019, 75 percent of Virginia community college students were enrolled in credit-eligible programs; 25 percent were enrolled in noncredit programs. This is similar to the average across all early-responder states, where 28 percent of students were enrolled in noncredit programs.

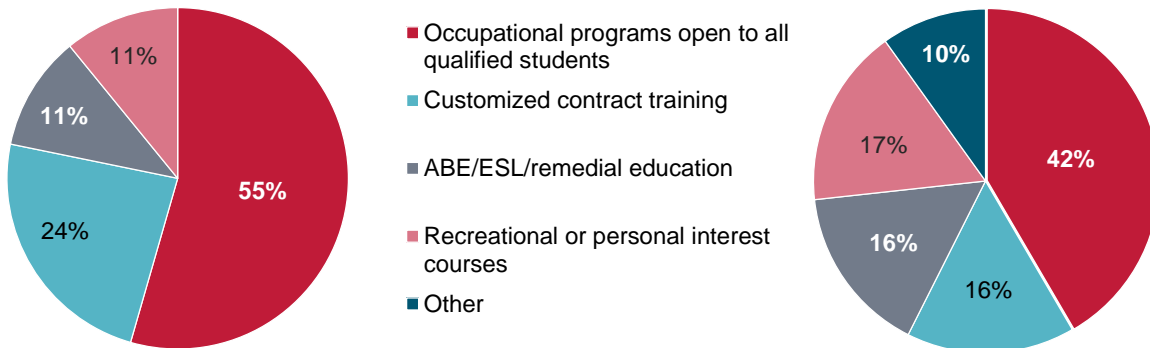
Noncredit programs

Noncredit programs may include customized contract training provided for specific employers, occupational education programs open to all qualified students, remedial education, English as a second language and personal interest courses, among other types of instruction.

In 2019, 55 percent of Virginia noncredit community college students were enrolled in occupational programs open to all qualified students – a somewhat larger share than the average in all early-responder states.

Virginia community colleges

All early-responder states



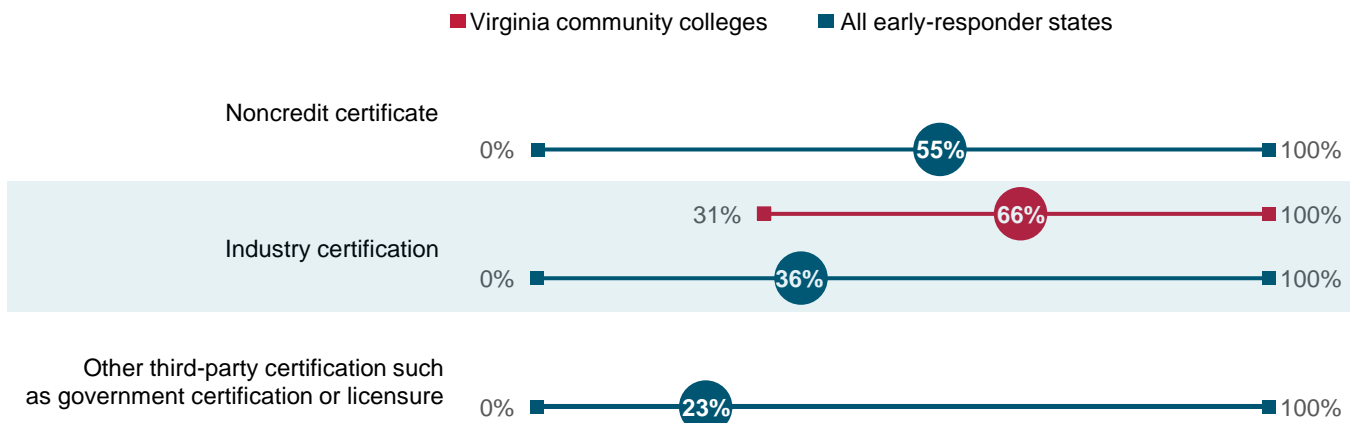
Noncredit workforce education

Credentials earned in noncredit occupational education programs

Students who complete noncredit workforce programs generally earn a credential of some kind, sometimes several credentials. In Virginia, roughly two-thirds of students who completed noncredit workforce programs earned industry certifications – significantly more than the average in all early responder states.

Percentage of program completers who earned credentials

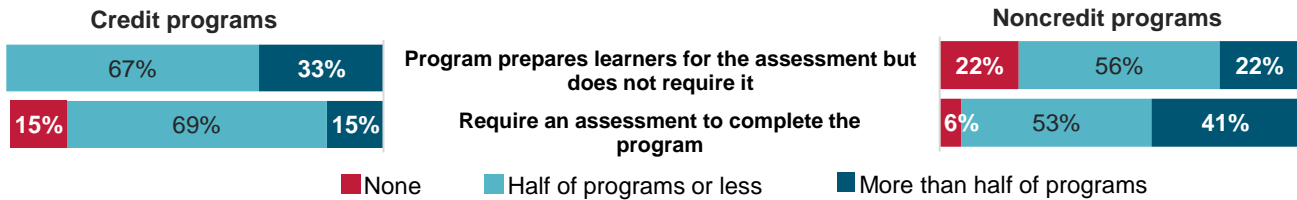
The **round dots** in this figure show the average percentage. The lines show the **minimum** and **maximum** percentages across participating colleges.



Embedding industry certifications

Unlike traditional academic credentials, which signal that students have attended and completed a course of study, industry certifications signal what learners know and what job-related tasks they can perform – occupation-specific knowledge and skills measured by tests developed by industry groups.

Percentage of Virginia community colleges that embed certifications in credit & noncredit programs

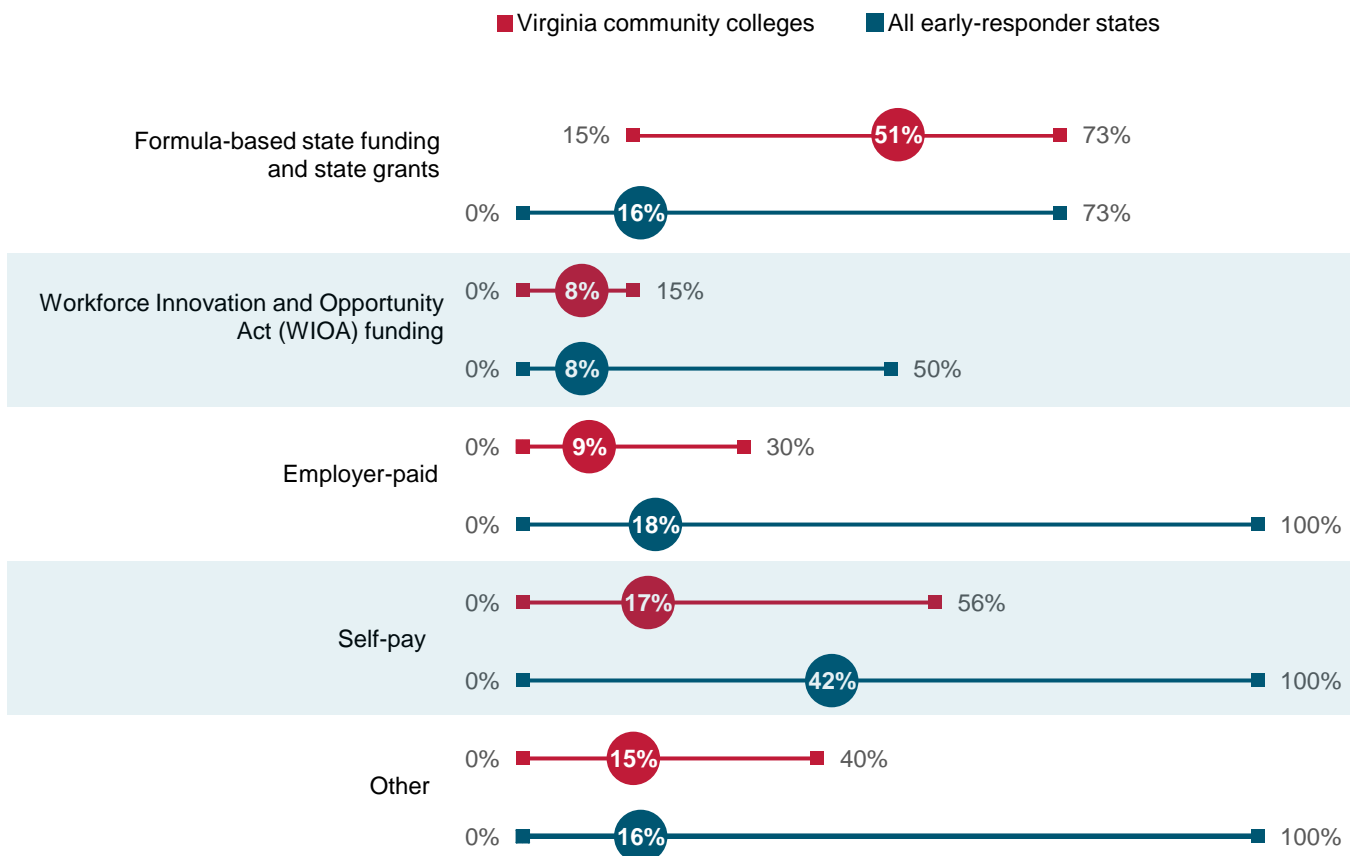


Funding

Virginia community colleges look to a variety of sources to provide funding for noncredit occupational education, with roughly half coming from the state.

Funding sources

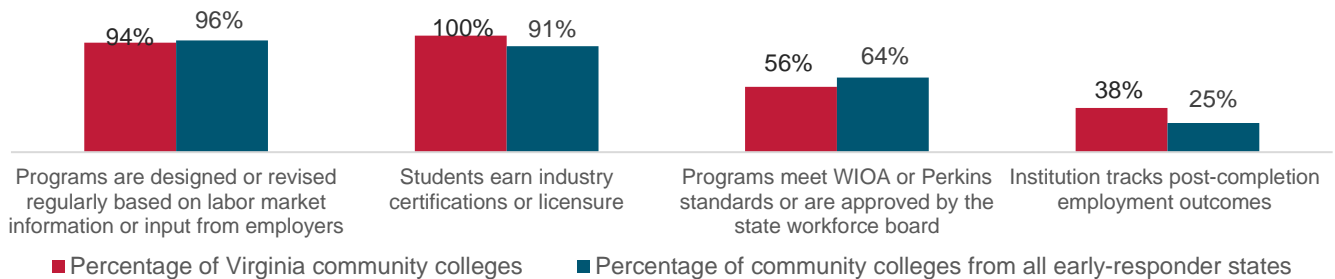
The **round dots** in this figure show the average percentage. The lines show the **minimum** and **maximum** percentages across participating colleges.



Quality assurance

Virginia community colleges use a variety of strategies to ensure the quality of noncredit occupational programs. Some 94 percent report using employer input or labor market information to design programs, and all report that their students earn industry certifications or licensure.

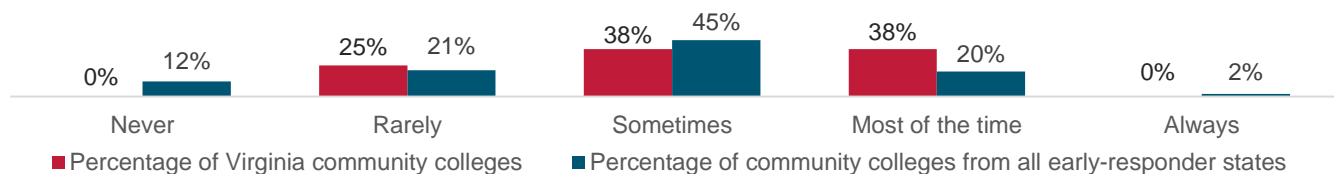
How community colleges ensure the quality of noncredit programs



Leveraging noncredit learning for college credit

Almost 40 percent of Virginia community colleges report that noncredit students who later enroll in credit-eligible programs can leverage most or all of what they learned in a noncredit program for college credit 'most of the time' – a higher percentage than community colleges across all early-responder states.

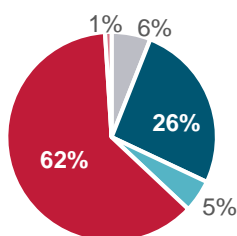
Colleges where noncredit occupational students who later enroll in credit-eligible programs can leverage what they learned for college credit



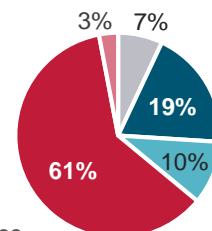
Demographics

Many community colleges do not track demographic data for noncredit workforce students. In Virginia, where data are available for two-thirds of the noncredit workforce student body, 38 percent of that group identify as underrepresented minorities – African American, Hispanic, Asian American, American Indian and two or more races or some other race. Overall, 39 percent of Virginia residents identify as underrepresented minorities.

Percentage of Virginia community college noncredit workforce students



Percentage of Virginia population

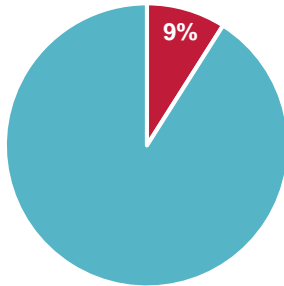


- American Indian
- Asian American
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- White
- Two or more races or some other race

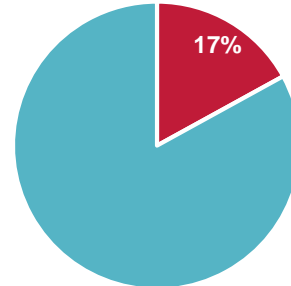
Employer engagement

Employers collaborate with community colleges in a wide variety of ways, from offering occasional labor market advice to partnering actively to design and provide instruction.

Employers offering customized contract training



Employers offering work-based learning, including internships, apprenticeships and co-ops



Percentage of employer partners at Virginia community colleges

More about this study

A total of 22 Virginia community colleges were invited to participate in this study in October 2020, and 18 responded by December 10, 2020, for an 82 percent response rate. This brief reflects the responses provided by participating colleges only and may not be representative of all community colleges in the state.

Virginia data were compared with data from 127 community colleges in 14 early-responder states.

All questions in the study asked about fiscal year 2019. Participating colleges could pass over questions they were unable to answer; missing responses were excluded from calculated percentages.

As postsecondary workforce education evolves, so does the language used to describe it, and different educators in different states often use different terminology. The language used in this study represents an effort to find common ground but may not conform exactly with the terminology used in every state.

The survey is still being administered in some parts of the country and is still open to Virginia colleges that have not yet responded.



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