

# Degree Completion In Higher Education



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# Factors of Influence

- Level of Student Preparation for College
- Affordability of College and Access to Financial Aid
- Institutional Efforts at Retention

# Level of Student Preparation for College

- Non-Majority Population
  - Low Income Students
  - First-Generation Students
  - Minority Students
- Higher Education Awareness and Outreach
- Early Interventions
- College and Career Readiness

# Affordability of College and Access to Financial Aid

- Average annual cost of tuition and mandatory fees in VA - \$21,228 for four-year college; \$4,275 for community colleges
- 128,485 VA Students with Financial Aid Needs
- 2015-2016 Tuition Assistance Grant Program budget is \$31.5 million

# Federal Work Study Program

- On and off campus positions
- Available to F/T & P/T students (Undergrad & Grad)
- Learn professional skills
- There is a financial award limit
- Does not guarantee you will find a job
- Pay based off of Federal minimum wage
- Grades may suffer

# Root Causes/Challenges for U.S. Students

- Nearly 33% of high school students taking the ACT tests are not prepared for college level English, Reading, Math or Science classes
- 1.7 million higher education students have to take remedial classes at a cost of \$3 billion/year
- Increase in Students' Loan Debt

# Institutional Efforts at Retention

Holistic approach





# Advancement of Youth in Other Countries

- Apprenticeships - Europe
- Dual Training program - Germany
- Vocational Education – Asia, China, and India
- Instructional days – Korea vs USA – 220 vs 180

# Learning Best Practices from Others

- NJ Stars & NJ Stars II Programs
- Florida - some community colleges offer four-year programs
- Florida State University's Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement (CARE) program

# Effective Ways to Structure Financial Aid in Virginia

- Provide two-years of college to eligible students at no cost
- Offer financial stability packages for low income students
- Use an “opt-out” method as a default instead of an “opt-in” method

# Effective Ways to Structure Financial Aid in Virginia

- Utilize first generation graduate financial incentive for successful graduation
- Increase awareness of grants and scholarships
- Increase student exposure to statewide STEM, arts and humanities symposiums with prize money
- Tie a percentage of the salary of the leadership of state colleges to improving graduation rates

# Summary

Key factors for improving graduation rates of non-majority students include:

Improving student preparation for college

Enhancing institutional retention efforts

Increasing affordability of college by restructuring financial aid

# References

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