



## The Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges

901 East Byrd Street, Suite 1625  
Richmond, VA 23219

804.288.6609  
[www.vfic.org](http://www.vfic.org)

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 8, 2023

Matt Shank, VFIC

[shank@vfic.org](mailto:shank@vfic.org)

### **The Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges Awarded \$350,000 Grant to Build Transfer Pathways for Virginia's Community College Students**

#### **VFIC Awarded \$350,000 Grant to Support Student Transfer Program**

**Richmond, VA** - Thanks to a \$350,000 grant from the Teagle Foundation and the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation, the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges (VFIC) and the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) can begin to implement their plan to better recruit and serve transfer students on their campuses, enabling them to earn a bachelor's degree in four years.

"The Building Transfer Pathway Connections initiative will engage faculty and staff from thirteen VFIC schools directly with pathways work through the Transfer Virginia initiative," says Matt Shank, president of the VFIC. "The consortium has a great opportunity to build its collective transfer capacity and raise awareness among community college students about the opportunities our independent colleges offer," adds Shank.

The pathways initiative was developed as the result of a series of workshops funded in 2020 by a planning grant from the Teagle Foundation. That series brought together institutional action teams to discuss, explore, and learn about the challenges facing transfer students. The goal was to collectively identify next steps for addressing these challenges and improving transfer student success.

"Ultimately, the workshop series leveled the understanding of all colleges," Shank says, "by having them look internally at the challenges and barriers they currently face related to transfer. Workshops and ongoing discussion caused our university leadership to reflect more intentionally on the value of consortium-level work in leveraging resources to meet the needs of a greater number of students."

Building on the earlier collaboration between the VFIC and the VCCS, the Building Transfer Pathway Connections grant will focus on three activities. The first is to develop transfer guides that provide transparent and consistent academic information to students attending Virginia's community colleges. The second activity will be to support the onboarding of all thirteen participating VFIC institutions as full partners in the Transfer Virginia portal. Finally, the grant enables the VFIC and

the VCCS to implement a plan that will not only improve the VFIC's ability to engage with transfer students but also address the challenges many of these students face when they arrive on a new campus.

"We believe this increased awareness among transfer students will directly and positively impact the number of students choosing to transfer to an independent college," says Shank. "Not only can we help these students attain their four-year degree, but we can also enhance the efficiency of that process as it relates to transferring degree credits and course hours. That saves students time and money."

For more information on the Building Transfer Pathway Connections initiative, please contact Matt Shank, Ph.D., president of the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges. You can reach him at 804.288.6609 or [shank@vfic.org](mailto:shank@vfic.org).

### **About the Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges**

Established in 1952, the VFIC aims to advance the distinctive values and strengths of the sixteen colleges across Virginia that make up our consortium. We accomplish this mission by generating financial support for our schools – more than \$170 million since our inception – and then establishing and administering a range of programs that help attract the best and brightest, create a rigorous and affordable educational experience, prepare students for a fulfilling career, and cultivate responsible leaders.

The following sixteen schools make up our consortium: Bridgewater College, Emory & Henry College, Hampden-Sydney College, Hollins University, Mary Baldwin University, Marymount University, Randolph College, Randolph-Macon College, Roanoke College, Shenandoah University, Sweet Briar College, University of Lynchburg, University of Richmond, Virginia Union University, Virginia Wesleyan University, and Washington and Lee University. These schools educate nearly 30,000 students, 24,000 of whom are undergraduates. Of the fifteen chapters of Phi Beta Kappa in Virginia, nine reside on VFIC campuses. Twenty-nine percent of undergraduates from VFIC schools graduate with a STEM-H degree.

VFIC schools are racially, culturally, and economically diverse. According to research from the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia on VFIC students, 30 percent come from minority backgrounds, 31 percent receive a Pell Grant, and 27 percent come from households with incomes of \$40,000 or less. More than 23 percent of the students on our campuses fall into the first-generation category. With enrollments that range from 350 students to 3,500 students, our schools teach a broadly pragmatic liberal arts and sciences education in environments that value and encourage ethical leadership and responsible citizenship.

For additional information on the VFIC, visit [www.vfic.org](http://www.vfic.org).

.

###