



Appalachian College of
Pharmacy

Appalachian School of Law

Averett University

Bluefield University

Bridgewater College

Eastern Mennonite University

Emory & Henry University

Ferrum College

Hampden-Sydney College

Hampton University

Hollins University

Liberty University

Mary Baldwin University

Marymount University

Randolph College

Randolph-Macon College

Regent University

Roanoke College

Shenandoah University

Southern Virginia University

Sweet Briar College

University of Lynchburg

University of Richmond

Edward Via College of
Osteopathic Medicine

Virginia Union University

Virginia Wesleyan University

Washington and Lee University

The George Washington
University (*Affiliate Institution*)

**Council of Independent
Colleges in Virginia**
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**Virginia Colleges, Business Leaders Partner Again to Grow Workforce
Pipeline & Open Greater Access to Affordable Degree Pathways**

*Virginia Business Higher Education Council (VBHEC) and Council of Independent
Colleges in Virginia (Virginia Private Colleges) renew a strategic partnership*

Richmond, VA – The Virginia Business Higher Education Council (VBHEC) voted unanimously on August 21, 2025 to renew a strategic partnership first launched in 2011 with the Council of Independent Colleges in Virginia (Virginia Private Colleges) to strengthen Virginia’s workforce and expand attainment with a goal for reaching 70% credential attainment by 2030.

“The VBHEC has been a driving force for sound public policy in aligning higher education with workforce needs,” said Christopher Peace, President of Virginia Private Colleges. “VBHEC’s leadership—under the guidance of business leaders from across the Commonwealth and my former colleague, Kirk Cox—demonstrates the power of collaboration in shaping a stronger future for all students and families.” Peace will represent Virginia Private Colleges on the VBHEC board.

Nonprofit private colleges are central to Virginia’s economic progress, by enrolling more than one-third of four-year students in Virginia and awarding over 25 percent of bachelor’s degrees, one-third of master’s degrees, and nearly half of first professional degrees in the Commonwealth. In so doing, Virginia Private Colleges contribute nearly \$5 billion to the state economy, employ approximately 30,000 people, and give the state a 2:1 return on taxpayer investment in the Virginia Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG), currently \$5,250 per Virginia on-campus student.

“Virginia’s long-term prosperity depends on higher education that is both accessible and affordable,” said M. Kirkland “Kirk” Cox, President of VBHEC and former Speaker of the House of Delegates. “By renewing this partnership with Virginia Private Colleges, VBHEC is reinforcing our commitment to preparing students for the jobs of tomorrow while ensuring that families continue to benefit from proven investments like the Tuition Assistance Grant. TAG is one of Virginia’s most effective tools for broadening opportunity, and we will continue to champion it at the Capitol.”

Another focus for the partnership is the Virginia Talent + Opportunity Partnership (V-TOP), which is a statewide initiative that expands internships, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities by providing resources and technical support to employers and colleges. By connecting students with Virginia employers, V-TOP helps retain talent and align education with the state’s long-term economic needs. “Through initiatives like V-TOP, Virginia Private Colleges are connecting thousands of students with internships that strengthen the economy and improve career readiness,” said Peace.

VBHEC was founded in 1994 by Virginia business leaders on the principle that the Commonwealth’s prosperity depends on the strength of its higher education system. Today, VBHEC promotes investment and innovation through Growth4VA and has identified four major strategies that guide its mission: Talent, Affordability, Innovation,

and Opportunity. These strategies align with SCHEV's *Pathways to Opportunity* plan, the Virginia Chamber's *Blueprint Virginia* process, GO Virginia's focus on regional workforce needs, and recent bipartisan state investments in talent development and affordable access.

Virginia Private Colleges, founded in 1971, represents 28 nonprofit institutions across the Commonwealth. In addition to enrolling and graduating thousands of Virginians each year, CICV has long championed affordability through the Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG) program, which for more than 50 years has provided over 800,000 grants to Virginia students. More than 21,000 Virginians currently receive up to a \$5,250 TAG award.

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About the Virginia Business Higher Education Council (VBHEC):

The Virginia Business Higher Education Council (VBHEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan partnership between Virginia's business community and higher education leadership. Founded in 1994, VBHEC is dedicated to enhancing the performance and affordability of Virginia's public colleges, universities, and community colleges, while strengthening their funding by state government. VBHEC works to ensure that Virginia's higher education system produces the greatest possible positive impact on the Commonwealth's economy and citizens. Through initiatives such as *Growth4VA* and programs like V-TOP, VBHEC advances strategies in Talent, Affordability, Innovation, and Opportunity to keep Virginia competitive. Read more: <https://growth4va.com/>

About the Council of Independent Colleges in Virginia (Virginia Private Colleges):

The Council of Independent Colleges in Virginia, Inc. (CICV), more commonly known as Virginia Private Colleges, is a nonprofit association representing 28 accredited nonprofit institutions across the Commonwealth. Founded in 1971, CICV advocates for independent higher education, provides collaborative programs, and works to expand affordable access for Virginia families. CICV was instrumental in establishing the state's Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG) program, which for more than 50 years has helped make college more affordable. Read more: <https://www.cicv.org/>

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