RESEARCH BRIEF

Community College Research Center | June 2026

Making Short-Term Training Policy Work: Lessons From Virginia's G3 Program

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Across the U.S., there is growing interest in how community colleges can develop and improve short-term occupational training programs that lead to good jobs and careers. A recent report found that, by 2025, 34 states had invested approximately $8 billion in 111 short-term credential initiatives through incentives in funding models, direct financial aid to students, and, to a lesser extent, allocations for institutional capacity building (Murphy, 2025). The federal government is also encouraging colleges to move in this direction: Starting in July 2026, it will expand eligibility for the Pell Grant, the nation's primary financial aid program for low-income college students, to cover the costs of job training programs that run between 8 and 15 weeks and that are aligned with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand sectors and occupations. These investments are intended to help postsecondary learners enter the labor market quickly, advance in their careers, and adapt to emerging workforce opportunities.

Virginia's Get a Skill, Get a Job, Get Ahead (G3) program (virginiag3.com) is a forerunner of this trend. Enacted in 2021, G3 is a $35 million state-funded last-dollar scholarship program supporting community college students enrolled in workforce programs across five high-demand fields: healthcare, information technology and computer science, manufacturing and skilled trades, early childhood education, and public safety.[1] As a last-dollar scholarship, G3 covers remaining tuition after other financial aid and provides stipends to address basic needs. In this way, G3 primarily acts as a lever to improve affordability and incentivize students to enter fields where there is a demonstrated need for workers. The policy also requires stackable credentials, front-loaded industry skill instruction, and dedicated advising to support recruitment, persistence, and completion. Together, these design features position G3 not only as an affordability strategy but also as a state policy tool for strengthening the workforce relevance and long-term value of postsecondary education and training.

Beginning in fall 2022, CCRC partnered with the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) and researchers at the University of Pennsylvania to examine the implementation and early outcomes of G3. Early findings indicate that colleges are making progress in increasing enrollments in the five high-demand fields mentioned above (Cormier et al., 2024). And a quasi-experimental analysis shows that G3 increased the rate at which students completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and increased total financial aid and grant aid receipt in G3-eligible programs (Bonilla & Sparks, 2024).

This brief examines how Virginia community colleges implemented the institutional components of the G3 policy and what lessons G3 offers to other states and institutions interested in developing and strengthening short-term training programs targeting high-demand occupations. It draws on interviews and observations from a sample of eight community colleges CCRC researchers visited from spring 2023 through spring 2024 (see Appendix) and addresses the following questions:

1. How did colleges determine which short-term, high-need programs to make G3-eligible?
2. How did colleges create pathways from short-term certificates to longer-term programs and degrees?
3. How did colleges deliver advising and career services?

We found that colleges responded to the call for short-term programs that aligned with strong labor market demand. Still, resource availability and lengthy program approval processes limited colleges' ability to offer or expand some in-demand programs. Colleges welcomed the opportunity to more intentionally develop foundational program pathways that can scaffold students well for longer-term programs and the workplace. At the same time, many colleges had not fully developed the structures or supports needed for students to use these pathways. Finally, we observed that G3 advising funds appeared to enhance student support for persistence and completion and were prompting some colleges to expand career services. We conclude this brief with lessons and considerations for other states and colleges developing short-term training programs and with policy recommendations specifically for Virginia.

G3 Funding Structure and Eligibility Criteria

Most G3 program dollars follow the student as opposed to giving colleges funds to develop and administer programs. To receive G3 aid, a student must (1) be eligible for Virginia in-state tuition, (2) have a total household income less than or equal to 400% of the federal poverty level (roughly $100,000 for a family of four), (3) be enrolled or accepted for enrollment at a Virginia public community college and in an approved program, (4) be enrolled in a minimum of 6 credit hours per semester in a G3-eligible credit program or be enrolled in a G3-eligible noncredit program, and (5) apply for federal and state financial aid programs for which they may be eligible. In addition to the last-dollar scholarship, G3 provides a $900 per-semester stipend for living costs beyond tuition, referred to as the Student Support Incentive Grant (SSIG), to full-time Pell-eligible enrollees. Funding for advising is the one area in which G3 dollars are allocated to the institutions rather than the students. Approximately $4 million state dollars are earmarked each year for colleges to use for advising, marketing, and outreach.

Virginia colleges must demonstrate that their programs meet G3 eligibility criteria before G3 funds flow to students or institutions. Specifically, colleges must demonstrate that their programs:

- **Satisfy the State Board's criteria for high-demand occupations and sectors.** To ensure that students are enrolling in high-demand programs, G3-eligible programs must fall under a state-approved Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) code.[2] These programs are identified by the Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE) and confirmed by VCCS. VOEE conducts an annual analysis to identify high-demand occupations based on key data points. These are then mapped to CIP codes to ensure alignment with an education program.

- **Offer a "stackable pathway"** in which students can start with skills training that leads to a short-term certificate or certification with immediate value in the job market. Short-term certificates typically last up to 12 weeks and usually require 40–180 total hours of instruction.
- **Provide academic and career advising to all students enrolled in G3 programs.** G3 legislation seeks to support student persistence and completion by providing funding for student advising in G3-eligible programs.

VCCS serves as the central administrator of G3, managing the distribution of funds and promoting consistent program delivery. Once a particular program receives state approval, colleges can begin awarding G3 funds to eligible students enrolled in the program.

G3 Program Growth, Student Characteristics, and Completions

Since the start of G3 implementation in fall 2021, VCCS system data indicate continued growth in eligible programs, enrollment, and aid disbursement. In academic year 2021-22, over 1,050 associate degree and certificate programs and 650 noncredit Workforce Credential Grant (WCG) programs were approved as G3-eligible, almost half of them in healthcare. In 2024-25, the number rose to 1,257 associate degree and certificate programs and 1,164 noncredit programs. Over the past four years, G3 has funded over 67,770 students enrolled in workforce training programs in high-demand fields (VCCS, 2025).

Table 1 presents year-over-year G3 student enrollment by program area (data shown in Tables 1–3 are from VCCS, 2025). The three largest program areas were healthcare, manufacturing and skilled trades, and information technology; early childhood development and public safety had much smaller enrollments. With the exception of manufacturing and skilled trades, a majority of G3 students enrolled in credit-bearing programs that lead to a postsecondary degree or certificate. Still, noncredit programs were popular and accounted for about 40% of all G3 enrollments.

Table 1.
G3 Program Enrollments Over Time

Program area	2021-22		2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		Total	
	Credit	Noncredit	Credit	Noncredit	Credit	Noncredit	Credit	Noncredit	Credit	Noncredit
Healthcare	3,854	1,779	3,974	2,275	4,365	2,527	4,469	4,418	16,662	10,999
Manufacturing and skilled trades	1,460	1,290	1,527	1,266	1,663	2,838	3,411	6,317	8,061	11,711
Information technology	2,105	539	2,325	656	2,627	1,049	4,378	1,416	11,435	3,660
Early childhood development	521	0	569	0	683	0	1,025	4	2,798	4
Public safety	492	8	492	19	461	65	720	183	2,165	275
Total	8,432	3,616	8,887	4,216	9,799	6,479	14,003	12,338	41,121	26,649

Table 2 shows selected characteristics of students receiving G3 aid in 2024-25. A majority of these students (58%) had family income levels below 200% of the federal poverty level (not shown in table). A quarter of G3 credit students were between 25 and 34, and 14% were over 34. A higher proportion of G3 credit students were 25 or older compared to the general college population, where only 35% of students (excluding high school dual enrollment students) were in that age group (VCCS, 2025). G3 noncredit students tended to be even older—65% were adults 25 or older.

Table 2.
G3 Student Characteristics in 2024-25

Characteristic	Credit students	Noncredit students
Gender		
Women	53%	55%
Race/ethnicity		
African American	23%	41%
Asian	10%	5%
Hispanic	17%	9%
White	42%	33%
Unknown	3%	8%
Age in years		
< 18	3%	0%
18–24	58%	35%
25–34	25%	32%
≥ 35	14%	33%

Table 3 shows information about G3 credit and noncredit program completions. Some students completed more than one program. In 2024-25, 2,699 credit students receiving G3 aid earned 3,648 postsecondary credentials. An additional 5,417 G3 noncredit students completed 8,993 WCG programs, some of whom earned 4,801 third-party licensures or certifications (VCCS, 2025). Over three-quarters of G3 program completions were in manufacturing and skilled trades or healthcare. This is mainly because many noncredit students completed programs in manufacturing and skilled trades, while only 30% of credit program completions were in that area.

Table 3.
G3 Awards and Completions in 2024-25

Program type	Award/completion type	Awards/completions
Credit program	Associate degree	1,665
	Long certificate (1–2 years)	298
	Short certificate (< 1 year)	1,643
	Diploma	42
Noncredit (WCG) program	Completion with third-party credential	4,801
	Completion without third-party credential	4,192
Total completions		12,641

Findings

How did colleges determine which short-term, high-need programs to offer?

Virginia lawmakers wanted to ensure that students who receive G3 aid enroll in programs with strong labor market demand. While the G3 legislation stipulates which CIP codes are eligible for G3 funding, it allows institutions to decide which specific programs to submit for approval based on their regional and institutional context. This flexibility enables colleges to remain responsive to local labor market conditions and employer needs. For example, we learned from one college that staff regularly reviewed job postings and growth trends to identify emerging in-demand credentials and worked with employer partners to confirm whether those credentials alone could lead to employment. Another college explained that while programs such as human services and HVAC may attract high student interest, they offered limited regional job opportunities. Colleges aimed to prioritize G3 funding for programs demonstrating strong employment pathways.

The G3 approval process encourages colleges to examine whether program credentials are likely to improve employment outcomes. For instance, one college discontinued its G3-eligible dental assisting and early childhood education programs after learning from industry partners that these credentials did not often lead to higher wages or greater employability. In this way, the G3 approval process serves as a tool for colleges to assess the economic value of their programs, encouraging institutions to focus on programs with clear employment pathways for students and to avoid funding programs that do not clearly provide advantageous labor market returns.

Implementation Challenges

While G3 policy encourages colleges to offer high-demand programs, colleges noted that resource constraints affected their decisions. Institutions were particularly concerned about their ability to recruit and retain qualified instructors, who often can earn more by working in their field rather than by teaching. The time and labor demands in specific occupational programs also made it difficult to recruit instructors in some fields. To maintain accreditation, some G3-eligible programs—including in healthcare subfields like surgical technology—must maintain a one-to-one student-to-clinical-instructor or supervising-technician ratio. Without sufficient funding to attract experienced instructors, colleges found themselves limited in their capacity to launch new programs or expand existing ones.

Some G3-eligible programs also had high facility and equipment costs. For example, welding programs require fully equipped welding booths, machinery, and spare materials. Health professions programs require lab space, patient simulation models, and diagnostic equipment. Colleges noted how the current funding model in the state further limits programs' ability to pay for operating and other costs. The model, which relies primarily on tuition revenue to fund college programs, does not account for the fact that some CTE and G3-eligible programs can enroll only small numbers of students due to mandated ratios or limited space. In these ways, the resources required to run programs—especially the investment in facilities, necessary equipment, and up-to-date technology for classrooms—hindered some colleges' ability to expand the enrollment capacity of G3-eligible programs, which in turn limited students' access to high-demand programs. Differences in available institutional resources across the colleges contributed to variation in which G3-eligible programs were offered and at what capacity.

Some institutions also expressed concern that the requirement to submit programs for state approval impeded their efforts to respond to rapidly changing labor market demand. They noted that the time required to move a credit program through multiple approval phases can delay the launch of G3-eligible programs. Moving a new credit program through the internal curriculum committee and all state-level approvals can take about a year or more. At one college, for instance, faculty and deans collaborate to develop proposals supported by labor market data and employer input, including letters of support when applicable. These proposals then undergo several layers of review, including by the local curriculum committee, the college board, VCCS, and, for associate degree programs, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). Noncredit workforce programs typically do not require the same extensive approval process, allowing them to be more agile and responsive to employer demand. As staff at one college explained, noncredit programs are often developed in direct response to labor market data and employer requests. However, they noted that while noncredit programs can adapt quickly, the G3 approval requirements can still limit how quickly new offerings are scaled.

Combined, these factors suggest that while G3 supports program alignment with labor market needs, colleges must balance responsiveness with available resources and program approval requirements when deciding which programs to develop and expand.

How did colleges create pathways from short-term certificates to longer-term programs and degrees?

As part of the program approval process, the G3 legislation requires colleges to front-load technical skills and create stackable credentials that lead from short-term certificates to longer-term programs, such as associate degree programs. When implemented effectively, stackable credentials ensure that students who stop out before finishing a degree leave with a shorter-term credential and the option to apply some of the same courses toward a longer-term credential in the same field upon returning to college. Meantime, they still leave with industry-relevant skills that are useful in the job market, rather than just general education credits.

The colleges in our study embraced the idea of stackable credentials and the opportunity to develop foundational programs that can scaffold learning for longer-term programs and the workplace. Faculty reported that, while time-consuming, the process of organizing relevant stackable credentials pushed them to identify overlapping curricula and to revise and streamline course sequences and programs. Faculty and administrators also engaged with regional employers to align their stackable programs with current workforce needs. For example, one college in our sample learned that manufacturing employers in the region wanted advanced manufacturing program graduates to be specialized in either mechanical or maintenance rather than general manufacturing. Hence, the college developed stackable short-term credentials around those specializations.

College leaders and faculty also reported that the G3 requirement to embed stackable credentials encouraged them to consider ways to strengthen pathways between noncredit and credit-bearing programs, so that a noncredit program can stack into an associate degree pathway. Strengthening noncredit-to-credit connections may expand college access and improve outcomes such as student retention, associate degree completion, and transfer rates, because once students are successful in a short-term program, they may be more likely to

return to complete additional credentials. These benefits may be especially important for nontraditional students, who may feel more hesitation and uncertainty about college.

In accord with the vision for G3, some colleges made changes in course sequencing to front-load skills instruction and back-load general education courses. This meant that instead of taking gateway English and math in their first semester, for example, students could take a job skills course and obtain an industry certification in their first semester. Faculty and administrators noted that general education courses tend to be unpopular among students, so front-loading skills instruction exposes students to their field earlier and may boost students' interest and motivation. Even though students may enter courses with lower levels of math, English, and science preparation, the alternative course sequencing creates opportunities for faculty to teach the foundational content and skills in engaging, field-relevant ways. In addition, colleges sometimes include relevant academic instruction in program courses. One welding program faculty member, for example, explained how they contextualized geometry content and helped make geometry more concrete and applicable for students through hands-on welding experience.

Implementation Challenges

Our fieldwork suggests that stackable credentials in conjunction with front-loaded skills instruction has the potential to better align program structure with students' near-term goals. Nevertheless, several colleges in our sample noted that G3's program structure can also create a "stop-out bubble," as some practitioners called it, by pushing general education requirements to the end of course sequences in associate degree programs. Faculty members across colleges and programs observed that many of their students seek technical skills and are primarily interested in entering or advancing in the workforce as soon as possible, so getting students to continue in or to degree programs after their initial training proved challenging. They explained that by the time many students reach general education courses at the end of a program, they already have the skills they need to get a job, and they decide, therefore, not to continue, especially if they are reluctant to take math. As a result, students leave before completing the associate degree, and they may be even less likely to transfer to a four-year institution.

Lack of student interest in general education courses was not the only issue: Many colleges had not fully developed the structures or supports needed for students to use stackable credential pathways. Strong advising and clear course catalogs and program maps, for example, are often needed to adequately inform students about stackable credentials and encourage them to pursue a pathway that best serves their long-term goals. By the time we completed our field visits, most colleges had not created such materials.

Another challenge we heard across colleges was that stackable credentials are not feasible or appropriate for all fields. Credentials may be "stacked" in two ways: horizontally, in which students earn multiple credentials at the same level in different fields or specialties; or vertically, in which students earn credentials that build on one another, progressing to higher levels of skill or education. Some colleges ended up stacking some programs horizontally just to satisfy the G3 requirement, though this approach does not move students any closer to earning associate degrees. For example, one college in our sample offered year-long stackable certificate/certification programs in building construction, computer-aided drafting, and GIS surveying even as combining these programs offers no clear path to an associate degree.

Challenges in Increasing Access: The Implementation of G3 Pre-Health Pathways

Health programs have competitive admissions. Prospective students must complete 1–2 semesters' worth of prerequisite courses, apply, and be accepted before being placed in a program. Because students are not program-placed during the semesters when they are taking prerequisite courses, they are not eligible for G3 funding even though they are completing courses necessary to enroll in a G3-eligible program.

To expand G3 eligibility for students enrolled in prerequisites for health programs, one college created introductory programs in each of its nine associate-degree health professions programs. These pre-health programs consist of prerequisite courses and a job-skills course, such as phlebotomy or EMT, to meet eligibility requirements for G3. Students who complete the job skills course in the pre-health program can then earn a certificate along their pathway to the associate degree program. In this way, the pre-health program satisfies G3 criteria as a first-level stackable credential that allows students to enter the workforce with a job skills course under their belt.

In theory, this is an innovative way for the college to use more of the G3 funds available to its students and to support students pursuing health professions degree programs. However, in practice, a challenge emerged. Once implemented, the G3 pre-health certificate programs had high enrollment but low graduation rates because students were mainly interested in having their prerequisite courses covered by financial aid. Once they finished their prerequisites, students tended to stop out of the certificate program before taking the job-skills course. Instructors explained, for example, that students were skipping the phlebotomy course, figuring that they would take it once they formally entered the nursing program.

This example highlights one way the G3 policy's program structure requirements can be leveraged to expand enrollment in high-demand programs and increase the use of G3 funding, yet it also shows how stacking and front-loading courses can create a stop-out bubble for students. In this case, students who skipped the job skills course typically wanted to enter health programs more quickly.

How did colleges deliver advising and career services?

Prior to G3, there was no state funding specifically designated for advising. The colleges in our study described struggling with underfunded and often understaffed advising offices, and the additional advising funds from G3 helped bolster their ability to provide student support services and raise awareness of additional advising needs. Some colleges leveraged G3 to build out their advising services to support all students—G3 and non-G3. While this may not have been the original intention of the legislation, some colleges saw this as an opportunity to provide a critical service that they would not have been able to provide otherwise.

As Table 4 shows, while all colleges in our sample used G3 advising funds to support or further build out their advising models, specific strategies varied across colleges. Two colleges in our sample used

G3 advising funds to hire G3-specific advisors who advise only students receiving G3 aid or those enrolled in G3-eligible programs. In contrast, most colleges in our sample used the G3 funds to support advising for all students rather than to fund G3-specific advisors. Three colleges had generalist advisors who serve all students, and these colleges did not distinguish between advisors who serve G3 and non-G3 students when distributing funds. Three colleges implemented guided-pathways-based advising models where advisors specialize in program or career clusters. These colleges noted that while their advising reforms were underway before G3, the additional funding from G3 enabled them to hire one or more additional specialist advisors to reduce overall advisor caseloads. The specialist advisors support all students enrolled in the programs in their charge, not just those receiving G3 aid.

Table 4.

G3 College Advising Models

Advising model	Description	Number of colleges
G3-only	Provide advising services to students receiving G3 funds in eligible programs	2
General	Provide advising services universally to G3 and non-G3 students	3
Pathway-specific	Within prioritized program clusters, provide advising services to all students	3

Implementation Challenges

Regardless of the college's advising model, implementing G3 requires advisors to be knowledgeable about G3 programs and student eligibility criteria in order to have informed conversations with students. Students must be enrolled in an eligible academic program, take at least 6 credit hours per semester, and complete within three years. Furthermore, a student's eligibility can change over time, making it imperative that students receive ongoing guidance.

The need for advisors to be knowledgeable about G3 inspired stronger interdepartmental communication and collaborative procedures at some colleges. For example, G3 implementation required advisors working with G3-eligible students to have access to financial aid information to advise on whether students were receiving G3 aid and to help students make course enrollment decisions based on G3 eligibility criteria. At one college, financial aid staff granted G3 advisors access to G3-eligible students' financial aid information in the student information system, which they had not previously had. At another college, financial aid staff developed a new routine of sharing updated lists of students receiving G3 aid to advisors to update their case files.

The G3 legislation also stipulates that colleges offer career services to students receiving G3 aid. Unlike advising, there is no state funding associated with this requirement. As a result, with a few exceptions, job placement/career services at colleges in our sample remained "business as usual." Career services were distinct from advising and other G3 student supports. They were largely contingent on the participation of individual faculty or career counselors who connected students to job opportunities through relationships they had with local employers. More generally, career counselors also strived to include career exploration discussions across multiple touchpoints in the student experience (e.g., new student orientation, workshops, and career fairs). Among colleges that were seeking to expand the reach of their career services, two reported using technology-based platforms such as Network2Work (n2work.org/ng), an online job-posting and career-services portal, to enhance their capacity to deliver career services to students enrolled in noncredit G3 programs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

G3 is a distinctive state-level financial aid program and a pivotal strategy for expanding access to postsecondary training programs aligned with good jobs and careers. G3 mandates specific criteria that programs must meet to be approved for G3 funding, and early findings suggest that G3 has been important for increasing access to programs in high-demand fields (Bonilla & Sparks, 2024). While most G3 funds provide tuition assistance and stipends for books and living expenses to low-income students, the policy also allocates resources to bolster advising capacity and innovation. By strengthening advising and raising awareness of career services, colleges implementing G3 aim to further enhance the human capital of their students by better supporting student persistence, completion, and transitions into employment. Notably, some colleges have also leveraged G3 funding to enhance advising broadly, extending benefits beyond G3 students.

Implementation research we conducted at eight colleges offers insights for other states and colleges considering a policy like G3. While G3 effectively incentivizes programs aligned with strong labor market demand, limited resources and lengthy program approval processes can slow the launch and scaling of suitable programs. And its emphasis on the front-loading of skills and stackable credentials supports rapid beneficial employment returns, but these features may also increase faculty workload and discourage students from pursuing longer-term degrees.

Based on our research, several policy adjustments could help Virginia and other states increase the impact of programs like G3.

Establish more streamlined approval processes for G3-eligible programs. State legislators, the VCCS, and colleges should consider ways to make it faster and easier to approve G3-eligible programs. Colleges may need to build in mechanisms that maintain program quality while streamlining review processes so approvals do not get delayed. This could include creating quicker, more flexible approval processes specifically for G3-eligible programs, such as using standardized templates that document program changes. It could also entail establishing lighter-touch faculty reviews and employer feedback to ensure programs stay aligned with labor-market needs. These steps can help colleges respond to workforce demands without getting bogged down in long procedures or stretching their resources too thin.

Revise program eligibility requirements to provide colleges greater flexibility with stacking. Revising programs to embed stackable credentials is a time- and labor-intensive task for faculty members and administrators. Still, not all shorter-term stackable credentials across all fields translate into advantages in the job market or the workplace. Additionally, in some fields, stackable credentials are not feasible due to accreditation regulations or the nature of the relevant occupations. Instead of requiring colleges to create short-term, stackable credentials in all G3-eligible programs to meet G3 funding requirements, policymakers may want to allow greater flexibility to develop short-term credential programs as part of a stacked pathway only in areas where stacking leads to greater labor-market value. Similar to the process by which VOEE determines which CIP codes are aligned with labor-market demand, it could also help identify which stacked pathways offer the greatest returns for students.

Enhance institutional capacity for faculty recruitment and development. G3 legislation and policymaking should consider allocating ongoing funds to help colleges build the capacity to scale G3-eligible programs. Colleges could use this funding to hire more faculty, better support faculty in their current work, and provide faculty professional development. The size of the faculty is a determining factor in the size of a G3-eligible program, as adding new seats for students is contingent on the number of instructors available to teach courses, labs, and clinicals. Additional funds to hire more faculty can help address shortages in programs where instructors may earn more income working in their designated field, such as nursing, than in

teaching. Colleges could also benefit by offering faculty release time to revise G3-eligible programs to front-load skills and include stackable credentials, and by providing professional development to more effectively incorporate relevant general education content and skills into their discipline-specific teaching.

Encourage program-specific advising and robust career services. Research points to the benefits of having program-specific advisors who understand the requirements and pathways for those areas. Although many of the colleges in our sample were moving in this direction, adoption remains uneven, suggesting an opportunity for VCCS to provide guidelines around advising staffing structures, processes for assigning students to advisors, and advisor training. Career services is another area that the state and individual colleges may want to target for improvement. While all colleges provide at least some support to students who are looking for jobs in their field, G3 students may require more than business-as-usual assistance. For example, many G3 students are already working, so their challenge may be less about finding a job than negotiating with employers for opportunities to advance within the company. Some students may also benefit from referrals to post-program employment services to help them keep or advance in a job.

Findings from the early implementation of G3 illustrate how states can meet growing demand for short-term, career-focused training that leads to credentials and jobs. In Virginia, colleges moved quickly to launch programs in high-demand fields. At the same time, our findings point to how colleges and the state can make it easier to approve new programs and strengthen advising and career services, so students are better supported from enrollment through job placement. With Workforce Pell on the horizon and continued investment by states in short-term training, G3 also shows how financial assistance, combined with changes in college practices, can expand access to high-demand programs while also working to improve retention, completion, and the transition into high-demand jobs.

Appendix. Research and Data Structures

From spring 2023 through spring 2024, we conducted three rounds of site visits to eight VCCS community colleges. The colleges represent Virginia's five major geographical regions: central (Brightpoint Community College, Piedmont Community College, Reynolds Community College, mid-central (Southside Virginia Community College), northern (Northern Virginia Community College), southwest (Virginia Highlands Community College, Virginia Western Community College), and tidewater (Tidewater Community College). The colleges vary according to their labor market context, including the high-demand industries and regional unemployment rates; institutional characteristics, including college size and the extent to which the college focuses on CTE and/or noncredit workforce credentials; G3 student demographics, including age, race/ethnicity, gender, and Pell recipient status; G3 financial aid allotments and disbursements; and G3 program structure and enrollment by field of study.

Each round of site visits focused on different elements of G3. Site visits included interviews and focus groups with administrators, staff (including G3 advisors), faculty, and students, as well as tours of occupational training facilities. In total, we conducted 20 in-person and virtual site visits to eight colleges, which included 156 interviews and focus groups, 14 occupational course observations, and 10 facility tours. We collected data from 328 research participants, of which nearly 100 were students. We analyzed all data using a flexible coding strategy that aligns with the evaluation research questions.

Endnotes

1. In July 2024, Virginia expanded G3 program eligibility to include transfer degrees and additional short-term programs. New eligible fields include culinary arts, hospitality administration and management, elementary education and teaching (transfer), secondary education and teaching (transfer), and engineering (transfer). These programs were not eligible during the time of our study. In academic year 2024-25, Virginia's community colleges received $34.5 million to be awarded to qualified students.
2. CIP codes are standardized six-digit codes developed by the U.S. Department of Education to classify postsecondary academic programs by field of study. They are used to organize and report data on enrollments, completions, and program outcomes across institutions and states.

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This research was supported by Lumina Foundation and by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education (through Grants R305X220024 and R305B200017). The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of Lumina Foundation, its officers or employees, the Institute, or the U.S. Department of Education.

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