

Fall 2021



In this issue

Partnerships Creating Impact Now

Meet Tomorrow's Leaders

Double Your Impact

by October 15

Expanding Connections for Student Success

Securing Good Grades Starts with Ending Food Insecurity

A Message from the Executive Director: Sharing the Future

Hello Friends,

With November approaching, we face another tough holiday season. Yet there's so much to be thankful for—even this year. However, as the pandemic lingers, students looking to attend community colleges are among the hardest hit. It saddens me to consider how many have watched their career goals fall by the wayside. In so many cases, their goals lie just beyond reach. We're thankful for all you've done to help them, but there is more to be done.

Recently, we sent \$400 to a participant in our Great Expectations program (for students with experience in Virginia's foster care system). Contributions of this sort are always important, but lately they're critical. While thanking us, she said the contribution was "sustaining." That word stuck with me. To many, \$400 may seem relatively insignificant; to her and countless others, that's all it takes to get through another semester. Take heart in these stories and consider making a gift today.

Emergency funds are always helpful to students. Please consider making a gift for the future of a student, the strength of our workforce, and the economic benefit of the state. Your gift makes a difference. Thank you for helping us build student success and the Commonwealth's future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer".

Jennifer S. Gentry, Ed.D.

Vice Chancellor, Institutional Advancement
Executive Director, The Virginia Foundation for
Community College Education

The mission of the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education is to build student success and the Commonwealth's future by supporting Virginia's 23 community colleges.

Partnerships Creating Impact Now

Meet Tomorrow's Leaders



2021-22 Potomac Health Foundation Fellows
Caitlynn Holmes and Antoinette Bonsu

Launched in 2011, the Fellows program supports second-year community college students who share a passion to grow, lead, and serve their communities. Thanks to private and corporate partners, including Dominion Energy and the Potomac Health Foundation, this program has become a model to help students develop deeper skills, tools, and insights so they can have a greater impact in their communities and in the Commonwealth.

The 2021-22 Fellows will participate in virtual and in-person leadership development sessions to prepare them for the workforce. By providing networking opportunities with community leaders, mentoring for reaching academic and career goals, and community service experience, the Fellows program gives students the resources they need to pursue their dream jobs.

Meet the Fellows

Fellows represent different ages, genders, backgrounds, and ethnicities. Nearly half are first generation students.

[Click here](#) to learn more about some of this year's bright and focused Fellows.



2021-22 Potomac Health Foundation Fellows with Dr. Sam Hill,
Campus Provost, Woodbridge Campus of NVCC

Double Your Impact by October 15

On August 1, the VFCCE launched the Great Expectations Matching Gift Challenge to support foster youth. Through the generosity of a donor, the VFCCE can now double donations up to \$100k until October 15 to raise money for the Great Expectations Program.

The Great Expectations program is a signature initiative of the VFCCE. Its goal is to give foster youth the opportunity to attend college and to become more independent and successful in the workforce.

Thanks to Great Expectations and devoted coaches, students with experience in the foster care system can access the resources they need to pursue higher education and fulfilling careers. Join the Great Expectations Matching Gift Challenge to support foster youth at Virginia's Community Colleges.



All donations will go toward emergency funds, housing, and supplies for students in need. Join the Great Expectations Matching Gift Challenge and help foster youth today. [Donate here!](#)

[Click here](#) to see the Great Expectations Information Sheet for more information about the program.

Expanding Connections for Student Success



*Savanna Gwynn, 2018 Davenport Fellow,
with Ben Davenport*

"Thanks to the Davenport Fellows Program, which paved the way for me to follow my dreams and taught me to be proud of myself, I have learned that impossible things can become possible if you put your mind to them."

"It is crazy to think of myself graduating with my bachelor's degree as a 35-year-old mother of 2 young children," says Savanna Gwynn of southwest Virginia. "I have learned that anything is possible. All you have to do is believe in yourself

and have the motivation and drive to follow your passion." As a longtime director of an early childhood education program, Savanna always dreamed she would become a teacher. Thanks to her hard work and commitment to pursuing her studies, Savanna has her own classroom of first grade students at Campbell Court Elementary School in Henry County.

A graduate of Patrick Henry Community College, Savanna acknowledged the Davenport Fellows Program as key to her success. The Fellows program helps students achieve their potential and grow as leaders in their communities. "Thanks to the Davenport Fellows Program, which paved the way for me to follow my dreams and taught me to be proud of myself, I have learned that impossible things can become possible if you put your mind to them. I grew so much throughout my journey and met so many wonderful people who have offered support, love, and guidance," says Savanna.

Partners like the Davenports are inspiring students to achieve their dreams, changing lives for the better.

[Visit vfce.org](#) to learn more about how the VFCCE is helping students reach their goals.

Securing Good Grades Starts with Ending Food Insecurity

The Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation has awarded the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education (VFCCE) a \$100,000 grant to continue hunger relief initiatives for students attending Virginia's Community Colleges. The funding will support and expand efforts to help students access food-related programs and complement initiatives that connect students to public benefits.

During the fall 2020 semester, Anthem provided funding for the VCCS and the Hope Center to conduct the #realcollege survey at all 23 colleges. The results revealed significant need: one-third of all community college students are challenged by food insecurity. Furthermore, 63 percent do not apply for public benefits, including SNAP, because they are unaware of their eligibility. The information gained from the survey helped determine the best ways to connect students who are struggling to make ends meet with the resources needed to be successful in college.



Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation

"The flexible nature of the funding allows each college to decide how to best address the community's dynamic needs," said Stewart Roberson, chair of the VFCCE. "This tailored support will provide students with the stability they need, no matter the circumstances."

This marks the third consecutive year that Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation has partnered with the VFCCE to address food insecurity. Throughout 2019, fourteen (14) rural community colleges were able to establish or expand food emergency programs due to Anthem's gift, which proved to be essential to serving students during pandemic-related campus closures in March 2020. Anthem's support for hunger relief has been vital; a local survey at one college revealed that over 80 percent of respondents indicated that having food emergency support allowed them to remain enrolled, maintain virtual attendance, focus on academics, and improve grades.

"By giving colleges resources and flexibility to address food insecurity based on local needs, Anthem seeks to address the whole health of students and help them stay in college, reach their potential, and pursue fulfilling careers," said Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield president and VFCCE board member Jennie Reynolds. "Helping more students graduate today will provide better job opportunities, higher wages, and a healthier future."

Together, we can make a difference. Thank you for your generosity.

Your support makes a difference in students' lives today, and that difference can be measured across the Commonwealth for years to come. Contributing to the wellbeing of others creates a synergy that enables our communities and state to become better places to work and to live.

Please consider joining our mission and helping students succeed. You can make an immediate impact by giving online at www.vfcce.org

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