



2024 Survey of Community College Outcomes



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A Note from the Richmond Fed's Community College Initiative

As researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, we are focused on economic conditions and employment outcomes in our region (Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia). Community colleges play a unique and often under-recognized role in educating and training workers for high-demand jobs. Our work through the Community College Initiative is designed to equip students, employers, policymakers, state agencies, and other stakeholders with data and insights to make sound decisions.

We released a high-level report of our 2024 Survey of Community College Outcomes (SCCO) in November 2024, but did not include identifiable school-level data. Instead, we have created a report for each participating school with a snapshot of their institution's data. This report is intended to give you and your colleagues a personalized view of your institution and other institutions in your state. It is also intended for you to use as a reference internally or externally. The charts included are just a sample of the data we have collected. If you are interested in digging further into the data for your institution, please reach out to us.

When we started this work, our goal was to develop a rich understanding of how community colleges serve students and tailor their programs to fit the needs of their communities. The SCCO has allowed us to share our findings with leaders in policy, business, and higher education, and learning directly from community college leaders and seeing the work happening at campuses across our district has been integral to our ability to put the numbers in context.

We could not do this work well without the insights you and your colleagues share. As we transition to collecting data for our 2025 survey, we look forward to continued collaboration with system and institution partners like you.

Sincerely,



Laura Ullrich
Director



Stephanie Norris
Associate Director

To learn more about the Richmond Fed's Survey of Community College Outcomes and view more data from the 2024 survey, visit: www.richmondfed.org/communitycolleges



2024 Survey of Community College Outcomes (SCCO) Key Findings

Prepared For Mitchell Community College

by the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond
Community College Initiative

February 25, 2025

About the 2024 SCCO

The Richmond Fed's Survey of Community College Outcomes (SCCO) is a quantitative, consistent system for measuring community college outcomes that provides a fuller view of what success looks like for community college students. We recognize that community colleges differ from four-year institutions in ways that make traditional measures of student success incomplete. By collecting data that reflect the unique mission of community colleges and the pathways to success their students take, we aim to improve understanding the contribution community colleges make to the workforce and the local economy.

Initially launched in 2021 as a pilot study of 10 schools, the 2024 SCCO covers 121 community colleges across five states. To collect these data, we work with state partners, including the North Carolina Community Colleges System (NCCCS). Our data captures enrollment and awards for the 2022-2023 academic year. It also features outcomes for the first so-called COVID-19 cohort of students who first entered their respective community colleges during the 2019-2020 academic year. Given the pandemic-related disruptions that upended the lives of students and forced institutions to quickly pivot, the success rates for this cohort are likely an anomaly. Still, they offer an important look at how students fared after the pandemic first interrupted higher education in spring 2020.

We released a broad set of findings from the 2024 SCCO in the fall of 2024, but we did not publish results for individual institutions. Instead, we are providing each institution in our survey with a tailored report highlight key metrics from the survey along with select institution-specific data points.

In 2025, we plan to expand this work to additional states outside of the Fifth District. By providing participating schools with access to the data for their institution and peer institutions across the country, we hope to elevate opportunities for collaborating and sharing best practices. More broadly, we hope that our data will provide useful insights into the role community colleges play in their unique service areas.

Context Matters: Interpreting the Data in this Report

Working closely with our state partners, we developed definitions and guidance to ensure consistent data across states and institutions. Still, there are external state factors and local service area characteristics that affect community colleges and students in ways that, in turn, affect the results of our survey.

State Context

At the state level, it is critical to keep in mind the unique structure, history, and geography of North Carolina's educational institutions and the systems in which they operate. The structure of a state's higher education system, along with funding and operating policies, plays an important role in the type of success achieved by students and community colleges across the state. For example:

Even though most community college bridge/transfer programs are structured as a 2+2, in North Carolina, many students are transferring to a four-year institution prior to degree or credential attainment.

- Bridge programs and guaranteed admissions agreements from community colleges to four-year institutions have become common in many states, providing students a clear path to a bachelor's degree. In most states, including North Carolina, these are structured as 2+2 programs, meaning students attend the community college for 2 years, receive an associate degree, and then transfer to a four-year institution.
- The North Carolina data indicate that many students are taking a different approach, instead transferring prior to degree or credential attainment. This may be impacted by the relatively low acceptance rates at the two state flagship universities, UNC – Chapel Hill and NC State University – which each admit between 40 to 50 percent of in-state applicants; therefore, incentivizing students to use community colleges as gateways into these universities.

North Carolina has an extraordinarily robust dual enrollment program that is structured and funded differently than programs in many other states.

- North Carolina's dual enrollment program stands out from other states in the survey in terms of scale, number of credit hours earned, and awards/credentials attained by students. The Cooperative Innovative High Schools (early colleges) located on community college campuses are unique for the region and provide students with additional options when considering the ways in which they can earn college credits while still in high school.

The investment in non-credit programming at community colleges is evident in the data.

- North Carolina funds non-credit programs via state appropriations. This differs from many other states that do not provide any direct funding for non-credit programs. North Carolina's share of non-credit enrollment is more robust than in states who have not chosen to fund non-credit programs in similar ways. This being said, North Carolina is not funding non-credit at par, meaning that credit programs, on average,

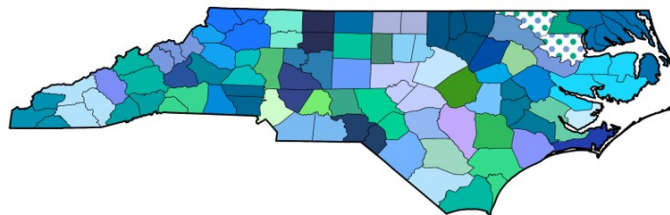
receive higher levels of funding than non-credit programs, per FTE. The only state in the survey that does fund at par is Maryland, and they have the highest levels of non-credit enrollment observed in the survey.

Local Context

Community colleges are deeply connected to the students, families, and employers within their unique service areas. Because of the wide range in student demographics and economic drivers across service areas, pathways to the workforce look different—and they should. We designed our success metric to highlight this as an asset that allows community colleges to serve local students and local employers. For example, community colleges in rural areas tend to award associate degrees at higher rates than those in urban areas, which tend to have higher rates of students transferring to four-year institutions prior to receiving an award.

Of course, there are barriers to student success that look different in each community. When comparing your institution to others, even within your state, it is important to keep in mind that the data in this report are descriptive point-in-time estimates.

North Carolina Community College System Service Areas



* Service areas as of January 31, 2025

Note: Dotted counties are served by multiple colleges

A New Approach to Success: Richmond Fed Success Rate

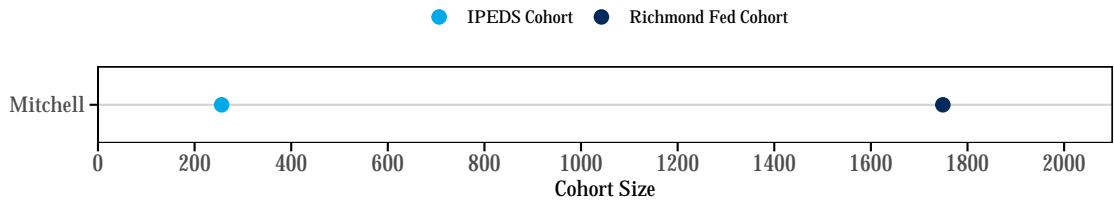
Traditional measures, including the standard Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) graduation rate, do not reflect the broad range of students community colleges serve. As a result, IPEDS graduation rates offer a far more limited view of student success for community colleges compared to four-year institutions. To calculate a community college-specific success rate, we broaden the cohort of students for whom we track outcomes, expand what qualifies as a success beyond degree attainment, and use a longer time horizon over which outcomes can be achieved.

The cohort in the Richmond Fed Success Rate is designed to include a larger share of students than the IPEDS cohort, which is limited to first-time, full-time, fall-entry students. Since many community college students attend part-time, we extended the horizon for success to four years instead of the 150% expected-time-to-completion window over which the IPEDS cohort is measured.

Building a Better Cohort: Who is in the Denominator?		
	IPEDS 150% Graduation Rate	Richmond Fed Success Rate
Enrollment intensity (upon entry)	Full-time students	Full-time and part-time students
Enrollment history	First-time post-secondary students	First-time students at this institution
Semester of entry	2019 Fall semester	Anytime during 2019-2020 academic year
Enrollment status	Degree/certificate seeking-students	Degree/certificate seeking-students
Success timeline	150% expected time to completion	4 years after entry

In many cases, including part-time and students who may have prior postsecondary enrollment allows us to capture more of the students that community colleges serve.

Cohort Size Comparison: IPEDS vs. Richmond Fed



Source: 2024 SCCO, NCES 2022 IPEDS

Though the IPEDS and Richmond Fed cohorts are not directly comparable, the Richmond Fed student cohort in North Carolina is 566.1 percent larger than the IPEDS cohort.

For the purpose of this report, graphs with anonymized school comparisons will be a subset of North Carolina community colleges that have a Richmond Fed cohort size over 1,500 students, similar to Mitchell.

The definition of student success in traditional graduation rates can be problematic for community colleges, as they serve students who come to the institution for many reasons beyond degree attainment. In addition to expanding the cohort, we broaden the definition of success to include students who transfer to a four-year institution prior to earning an award, and students who complete a short-term workforce-recognized credential program, and students who have yet to earn a credential but are still enrolled, in good standing, four years after entry.

Redefining Success: Who is in the Numerator?	
IPEDS 150% Graduation Rate	Richmond Fed Success Rate
Awarded an associate degree, diploma or long-term certificate	Awarded an associate degree, diploma, or long-term certificate
	Awarded a workforce-recognized credential
	Transferred to a four-year institution prior to earning a credential
	Persisting (enrolled in good standing without earning a credential)

Using these two components, we calculate an overall student success rate for each institution and an aggregate success rate for each state. We also calculate success rates by student demographic and enrollment segments.

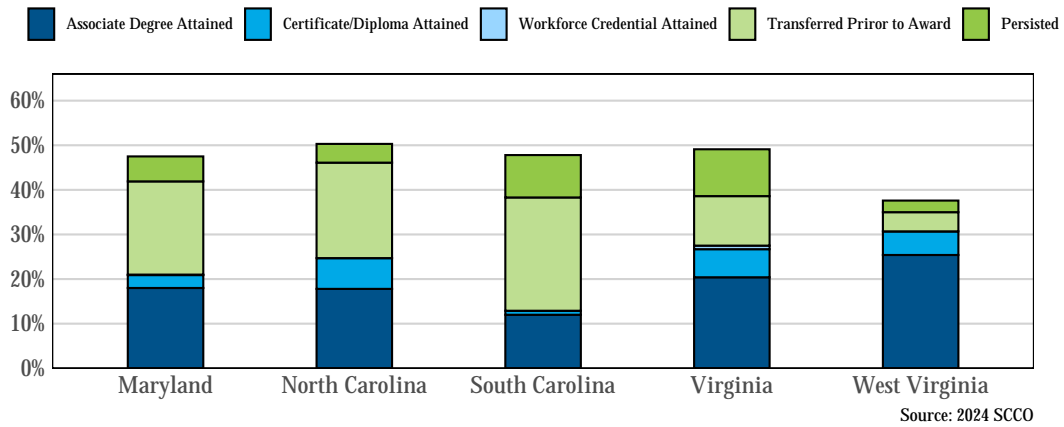
$$\text{Richmond Fed Success Rate} = \frac{\begin{array}{l} \text{Students who earned a degree, diploma,} \\ \text{certificate or industry recognized credential} \\ + \\ \text{Students who transferred without an award} \\ + \\ \text{Students who persisted and are in good standing} \end{array}}{\text{Students in cohort}}$$

Credit cohort: Measured 4 years after student entry

Results from the 2024 SCCO

The 2024 Richmond Fed Success Rate calculations are based on the outcomes (through the 2022-2023 academic year) of the cohort of students who entered community college during the 2019-2020 academic year. Aggregate state success rates ranged from 37.6 percent in West Virginia to 50.3 percent in North Carolina, though the composition of student success varied considerably (see Fig 1.1).

Fig. 1.1: Breakdown of Success Rate Components by State

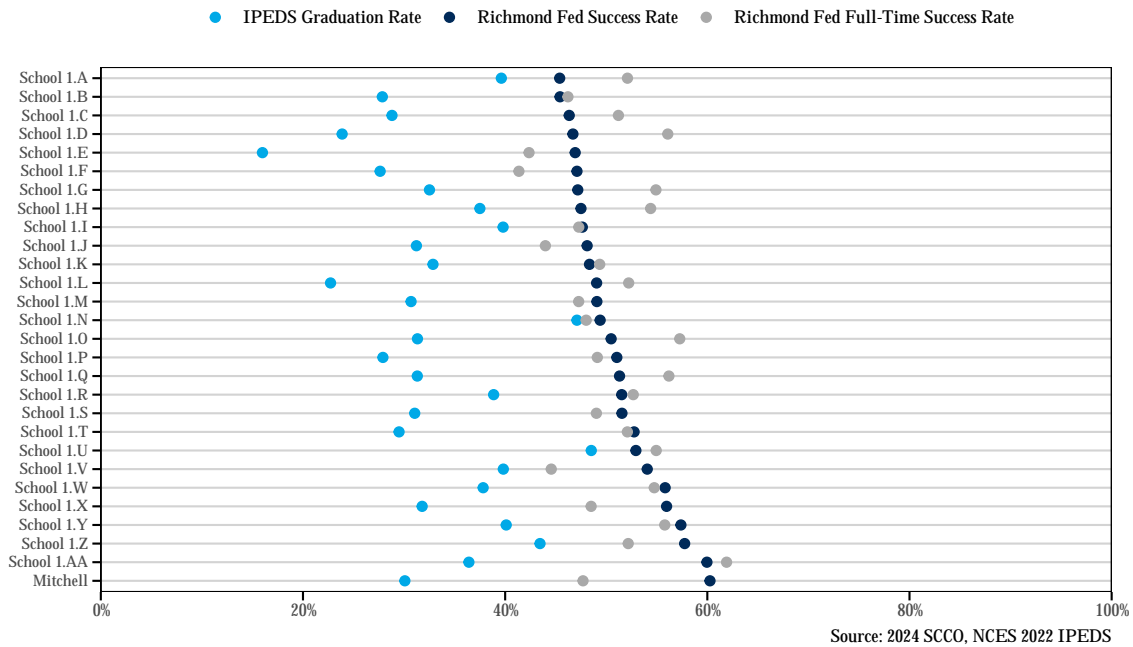


Differences in data collection schedules and cohort definitions prevent a direct comparison between an institution's IPEDS graduation rate and Richmond Fed Success Rate. However, we present the 2022 IPEDS 150% graduation rate as a useful reference point.

Mitchell Community College has a Richmond Fed Success Rate of **60.3 percent**. This indicates that when considering a broader range of common paths taken by community college students, 60.3 percent of students who entered their community college cohort in 2019-2020 had a successful outcome within four years.

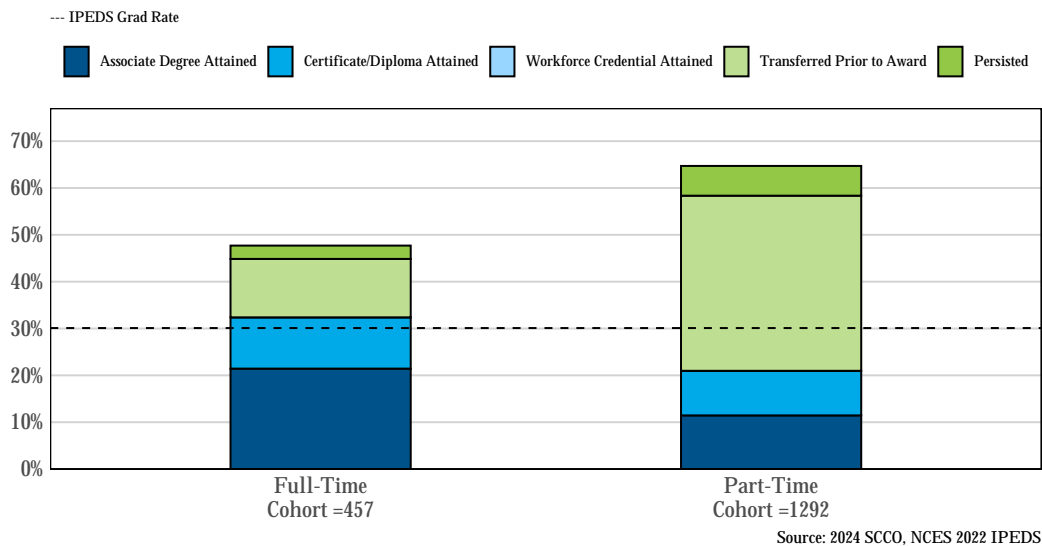
Institution	IPEDS Graduation Rate	Richmond Fed Success Rate	Richmond Fed Full-Time Success Rate
Mitchell	30.1%	60.3%	47.7%

Fig. 1.2: Richmond Fed Success Rate Compared to IPEDS Rate



In most cases, the success rate we calculate for a community college is higher than the comparable IPEDS graduation rate. Schools with graduation rates close to their success rate tend to have cohorts of predominantly full-time students and/or award primarily associate degrees, as these are largely captured in the IPEDS calculations. In rare cases, a school's graduation rate is higher than the Richmond Fed Success Rate. This usually occurs if the school's part-time student success rate is very low, bringing down the overall success rate, or if the school's IPEDS graduation rate fluctuates significantly year-to-year due to small cohort sizes.

Fig. 1.3: Breakdown of Mitchell's Success Rate Components by Enrollment Intensity

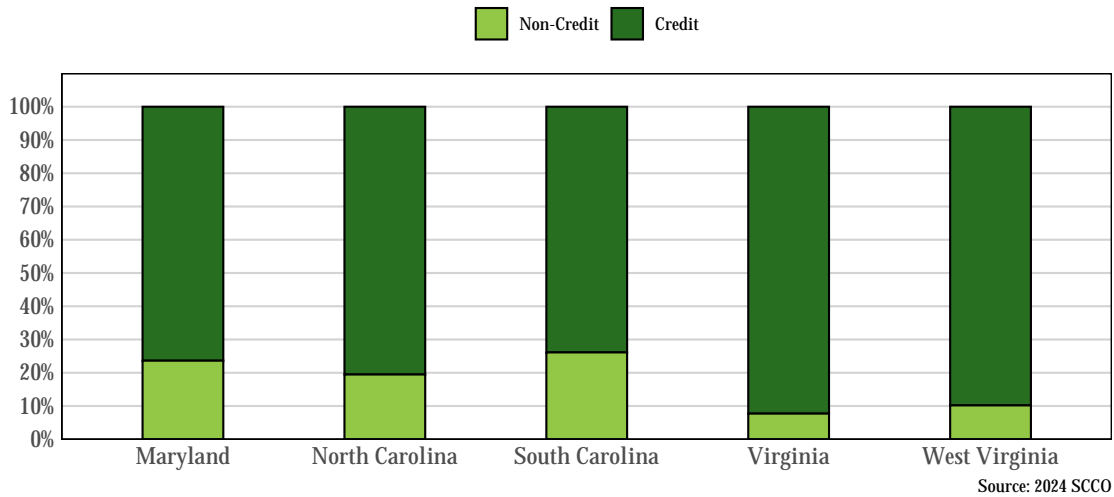


2022-2023 Non-Credit Enrollment

At four-year institutions, nearly all students enroll in credit-bearing programs. At community colleges, however, there are equally important non-credit programs that are often shorter term and workforce-focused. It is common to see programs such as commercial driver’s licenses (CDL), phlebotomy, or welding on the list of non-credit offerings.

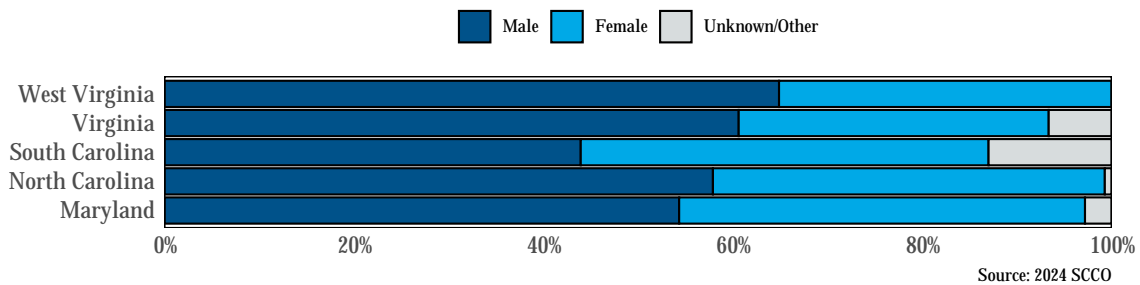
Higher education institutions are not required to submit non-credit data to IPEDS, and the data collection mechanisms for non-credit vary significantly across states and institutions. As a result, data quality and completeness are inconsistent. Because of increasing interest among employers and students in short-term workforce credentials, collecting these data and working to improve its quality is critical to telling the community college story.

Fig. 2.1: Non-Credit and Credit Shares of Award-Seeking Headcount Enrollment



Students in traditional higher education programs have been predominantly female for decades. The data we collected on non-credit enrollment suggest that male enrollment in non-credit workforce-oriented programs is outpacing female enrollment in most states. (Figure 2.2). Our results also indicate that adult learners (age 25+) are enrolling in non-credit courses at higher rates than credit courses.

Fig. 2.2: Gender Distribution of Non-Credit Award-seeking Enrollment by State

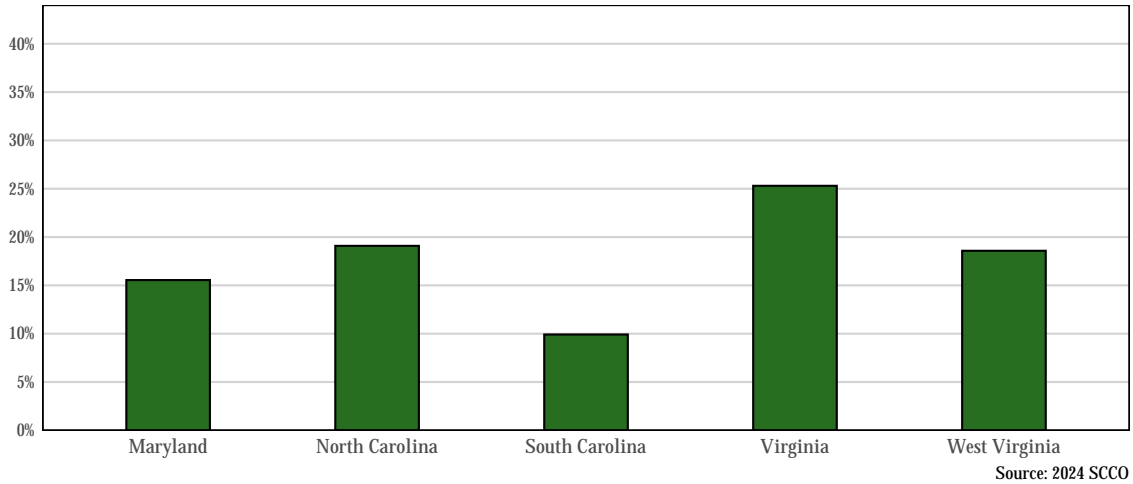


2022-2023 Dual Enrollment

By earning credits towards a college degree while in high school, dual enrollment students can save time and reduce the cost of attaining a college degree. Furthermore, dual enrollment helps community colleges strengthen ties with local schools, boosting postsecondary enrollment and increasing exposure of the services these institutions offer.

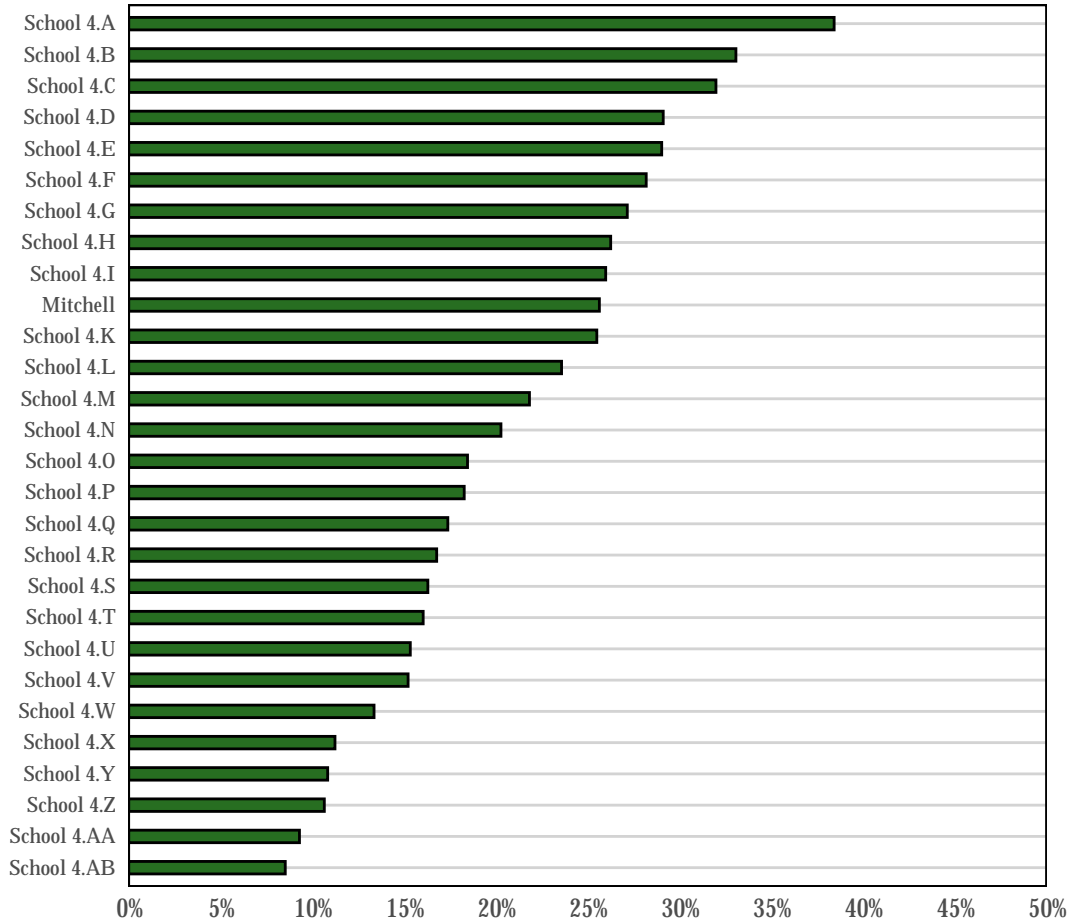
The definition of dual enrollment varies across states, making it difficult to collect consistent data. We collect data separately on early-college dual enrollment (students at high schools in which 100% of the students are enrolled in the community college) and regular dual enrollment and combine these two segments to calculate the share of credit enrollment comprising dually-enrolled high school students. While there are not huge variations between states' dual enrollment shares, Virginia has the highest share of dual enrollment students at 25.3 percent. North Carolina, West Virginia, and Maryland are close behind at 19.1 percent, 18.6 percent, and 15.5 percent, respectively. South Carolina's share was the lowest at 9.9 percent.

Fig. 3.1: Credit Dual Enrollment as a Share of Total Credit Enrollment



There are wide variations in the dual enrollment share of credit enrollment across institutions within each state (See Fig. 3.2). During the 2022-2023 academic year, Mitchell served 1161 credit dual enrollment students who earned on average 7.9 credit hours.

Fig. 3.2: Dual Enrollment as a Share of Total Credit Enrollment by School



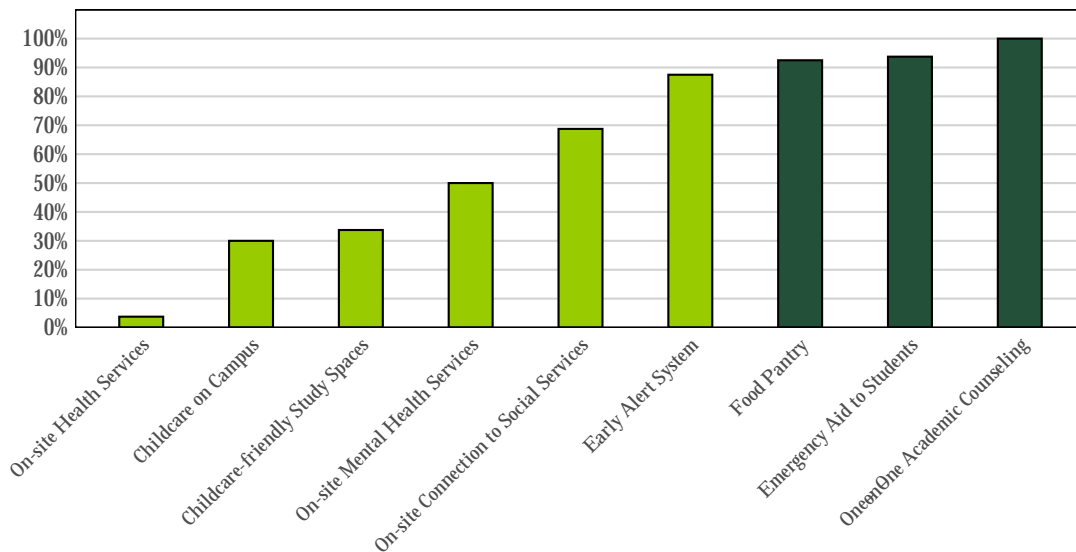
Insights from the First Survey of Institutional Wraparound Services

Community colleges play a crucial role in providing accessible education and support to diverse populations. However, many students face challenges that can impede their academic success, such as financial instability, mental health concerns, and lack of academic guidance. To address these challenges, community colleges increasingly offer wraparound services — comprehensive support systems designed to meet students’ holistic needs. In 2024, the Richmond Fed launched its first districtwide wraparound services survey to identify what services are offered, how they are funded, and what gaps still exist.

About fifty-four community colleges, or around 44 percent, in the Fifth District responded to the survey. As the survey continues to grow, the Richmond Fed hopes to increase the response rate to provide an even more accurate and detailed picture of wraparound services.

According to the results, the top three services offered by community colleges in the Fifth District are food pantries, emergency assistance funding, and one-on-one academic counseling, while childcare and on-site health services were the least likely to be provided on campus. This does not come as a surprise, as childcare and health services are more expensive to maintain than other programs.

Fig. 4: Share of Institutions Offering Select Wraparound Services to Students



Source: 2024 SCCO

How to Cite

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