



**Partners for  
College Affordability**  
AND PUBLIC TRUST



**Impact Report  
2018-2019**



# How We Get Results

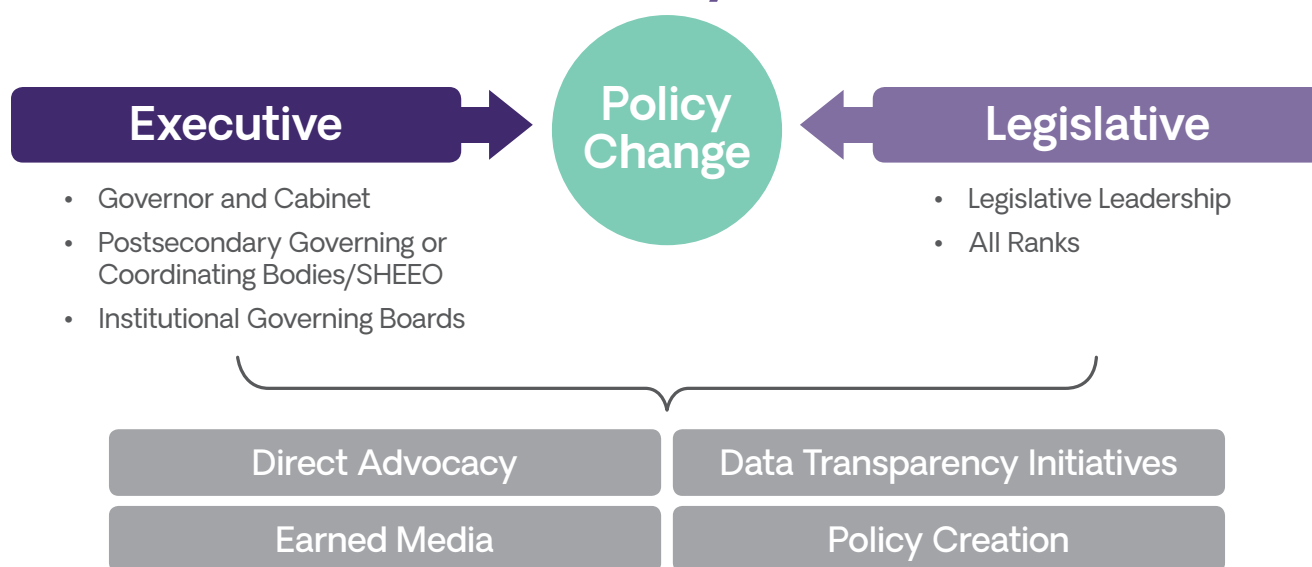
## About Partners for College Affordability and Public Trust

Partners for College Affordability and Public Trust is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to making high-quality, affordable college education a reality for all Americans. We are committed to accelerating the widespread adoption of public policies and institutional practices that improve quality and lower costs at America's public colleges and universities. We translate good ideas into action by bridging the gaps between research, policy, and practice. And we ensure that policymakers and college leaders are held accountable by an informed and engaged public.

## How We Get Results

We've successfully changed the public conversation about college affordability in our **pilot state** of Virginia. We raised public awareness about what it takes to address the root causes of the college affordability problem and built a diverse coalition of stakeholders to stand up for students and families. We successfully developed and coordinated activities across multiple levers of public policy to achieve change that will make college more affordable.

## State Policy Levers



We built on-the-ground movements at campuses and deployed student advocates to improve public policies and institutional practices regarding affordability. Finally, we developed tools and resources that hold policymakers and institutional leaders more accountable.

Moving forward, we will drive even greater results in Virginia and scale the lessons we have learned to make college more affordable in **other states**.



# State Policy Advocacy

In Virginia, we worked collaboratively with policymakers, coalition partners, and students to develop, introduce, and pass legislation that helps make college more affordable for students and families.

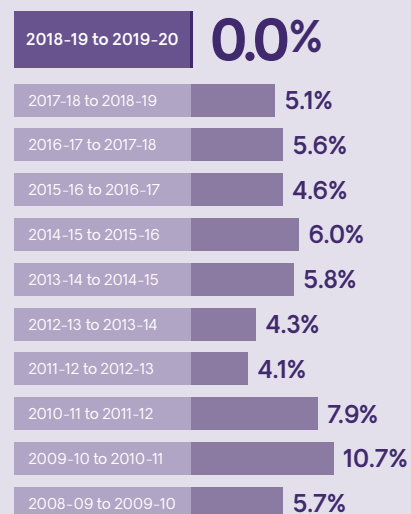
## Historic Fund & Freeze

- In 2019, the Virginia General Assembly allocated an additional \$52.5M in funding for public colleges and universities that freeze in-state tuition for the coming year.
  - The governing boards of every public college and university in Virginia voted to freeze in-state tuition and mandatory educational and general fees for the 2019-20 academic year, with six institutions also extending the tuition freeze to out-of-state students.
- Students and families will **save more than \$50 million** in tuition and fees.

## Transparency, Accountability, & Public Participation

- As a result of our efforts this year, public institutions will be **required to hear from students, families, and other members of the public** before tuition and fees are set.
- Financial aid award letters at public institutions will be more comparable and easier for students and families to understand.
- Public institutions will be required to clearly identify courses that use low-cost or no-cost textbooks in course catalogs.
- Public institutions must provide explanations for unexpected increases in tuition and fees that deviate from projections in their six-year financial plans.
- Governing boards of public institutions will receive training on their primary duty to the Commonwealth and on student debt trends.

### Percent Change in Average Tuition and Mandatory Fees, all VA Public Institutions



Note: Certain averages weighted by SCHEV. Figures not adjusted for inflation. Source: SCHEV Tuition and Fees Reports





# Building Public Awareness

**We have built broader public awareness of college affordability issues and solutions in Virginia and nationwide.**

- We hosted a series of **town hall events** on college affordability with state legislators, institutional leaders, business leaders, and the public that generated print and television coverage.
- We placed a total of 10 op-eds in Virginia publications such as the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* and national media making the case for our policy solutions.
- We contributed to the publication of over **60 news articles and opinion editorials** in both state and national media outlets, including *The Washington Post*, *Hechinger Report*, *Education Dive*, *GOVERNING*, and more.
- We co-authored an op-ed in *The Washington Post* with the minority leader of the Virginia House of Delegates describing solutions to make textbooks more affordable.
- We published an op-ed in *The New York Times* authored by one of our board members called “No College Kid Needs a Water Park to Study.”



Above: Partners-sponsored town hall in Richmond, VA.  
Right: Partners President James Toscano (right) testifying before a Virginia legislative committee.

# Increasing Transparency & Accountability



**We have developed tools and resources that hold policymakers and institutional leaders more accountable for policies and practices that increase college affordability, transparency, and quality.**

- We published a comprehensive online database detailing tuition and debt levels and current public policies on tuition freezes, public comment periods, and governing board training requirements in all 50 states.
- As part of an effort to incentivize and empower governing boards of public institutions to become better advocates for affordability, we published our Virginia **Trustee Votes Project**, a groundbreaking database of trustee voting records.
- We created a **College Affordability Dashboard** that helps members of the public evaluate how Virginia's public institutions compare on key metrics of affordability and value.
- We developed **Follow the Dollar: Revenues and Expenses at Public Colleges and Universities**, an analysis of public institutions' core revenues by source and core expenses by functional classification and how they've changed in the past five years.
- Following each legislative session in Virginia, we recognize members of the General Assembly who have demonstrated distinguished leadership and a commitment to making college more affordable.

Public comment at  
George Mason University.





# Coalition Building

**In Virginia, we have built a diverse coalition of over 50 organizations and community leaders to stand up for college affordability for students, families, and taxpayers.**

- With our coordination, our partners testified before legislative committees, involved grassroots activists, garnered media attention, and signed a unified letter of support for the public comment legislation we championed.
  - AARP-Virginia
  - The Virginia Parent Teacher Association
  - The Virginia Education Association
  - The Virginia Coalition for Open Government
  - National Campus Leadership Council
  - The American Council of Trustees and Alumni
  - U.S. PIRG (Public Interest Research Group)
  - And more than 40 prominent Virginia political, business, and community leaders
- We published an op-ed co-authored by our president and the executive director of AARP-Virginia in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* calling for solutions to a student debt problem that spans generations.
- We published an op-ed in *GOVERNING* co-authored by our president and the executive director of the National Campus Leadership Council on the importance of student consumer engagement when it comes to decision-making in higher education.



# Campus Advocacy & Student Engagement



We have actively engaged students on college campuses throughout Virginia about college affordability issues and elevated their voices to change state and institutional policies and practices.

## Building Campus Movements

- We regularly meet with student leaders, student trustees, campus advocacy networks, and campus media representatives.
- We hired two campus coordinators with diverse political and advocacy backgrounds at the University of Virginia (UVA) and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU).
- We contributed to student op-eds and news articles in campus publications to inform students of upcoming decisions that impact their financial futures.
- In 2019, we ran **digital advocacy campaigns** at targeted campuses in Virginia, generating emails to institutional decision-makers and building grassroots support for the *Fund & Freeze* initiative.

## Deploying Student Advocates

- In response to a proposed tuition and fee increase at VCU in 2018, we launched a digital advocacy campaign that resulted in over **300 petition signatures and 1,700 emails** to institutional leaders.
- We partnered with a diverse group of VCU student organizations to release a statement expressing students' "unwavering opposition" to the proposed tuition increase.
  - Following our 2018 advocacy campaign, the VCU Board of Visitors allowed students to provide comments during its 2019 Budget Workshop.
- During Virginia's 2019 legislative session, we hosted a lobby day event with students across multiple public institutions and recruited them to testify during legislative committee and subcommittee meetings.



Partners campus coordinator and student Nick DaSilva gives public comment during a governing board meeting at Virginia Commonwealth University. Photo courtesy of Megan Pauly, Commonwealth Public Broadcasting Corporation.





# Empowering Trustees

We have driven changes in public policy and developed tools and resources to empower governing boards at public colleges and universities and help them make more informed decisions about college affordability.

- As a result of our policy advocacy efforts in Virginia, governing boards of public colleges and universities will receive training on their primary duty to the Commonwealth and on student debt trends.
- As part of an effort to incentivize and empower governing boards of public colleges and universities to become better advocates for affordability, we published our Virginia **Trustee Votes Project**, a groundbreaking database of trustee voting records.
- We created a **College Affordability Dashboard** that helps members of the public—including governing boards—evaluate how Virginia’s public colleges and universities compare on key metrics of affordability and value.
- We published a comprehensive online database detailing tuition and debt levels and current public policies on tuition freezes, public comment periods, and governing board training requirements in all 50 states.
- We published **Questions about College Affordability**, a set of questions that members of governing boards should ask themselves and the institutions they govern to make more informed decisions about college affordability.







# Textbook Affordability

**We have driven changes in public policy and developed tools and resources to increase transparency about the costs of attending college beyond tuition and fees.**

- As a result of our policy advocacy efforts in Virginia, public colleges and universities will be required to create guidelines for Open Educational Resources (OER) and clearly identify courses that use OER or other low-cost or no-cost materials in course catalogs.
- We co-authored an op-ed in *The Washington Post* with the minority leader of the Virginia House of Delegates describing solutions to make textbooks more affordable.
- We published **Shining a Brighter Light on Textbook Affordability** and a **Textbook Affordability Dashboard**, an online database detailing estimated academic year expenses for books and supplies for all public two-year and four-year institutions in the nation.





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1629 K Street N.W. Washington, DC 20006  
pcapt.org info@pcapt.org (757) 821-7973

