

# Pathways to Economic Mobility

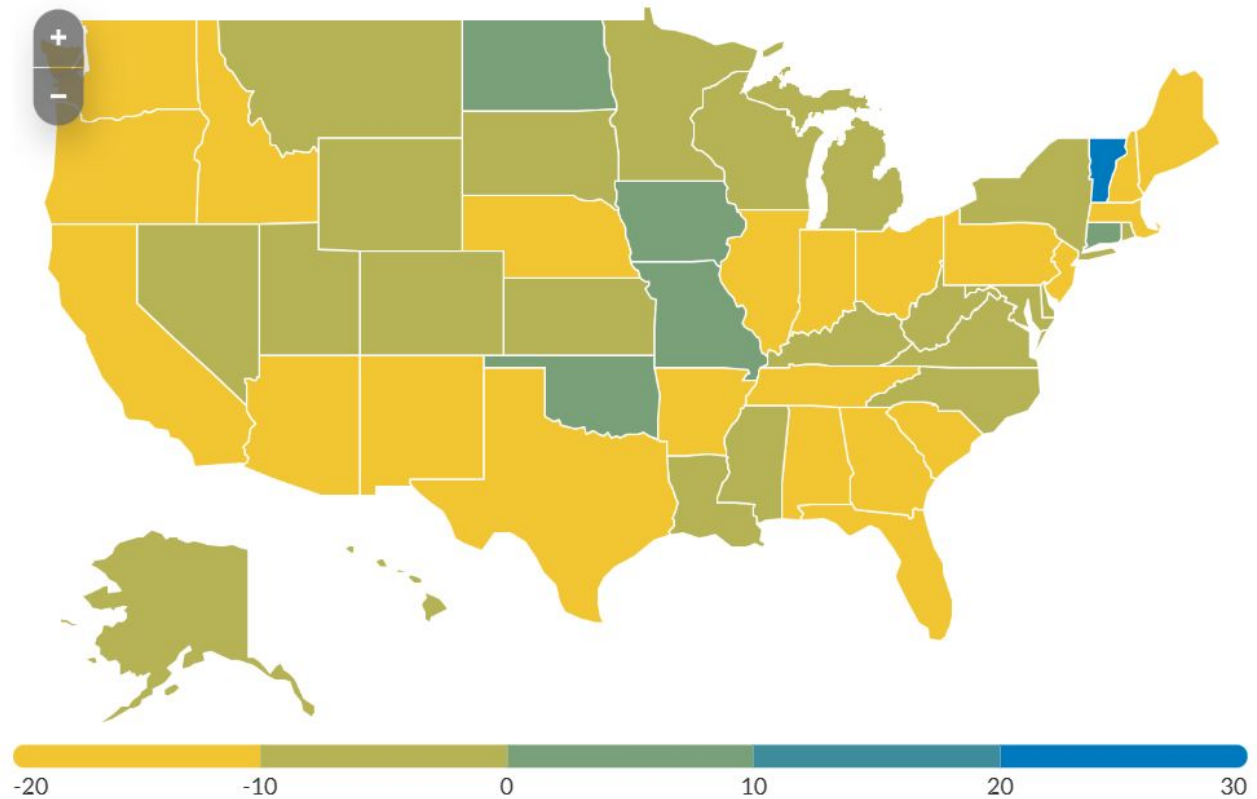
## Three Solutions toward Closing the Opportunity Gap

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THE J. WARREN  
& LOIS MCCLURE  
FOUNDATION

What we learned from  
our graduation gift to  
the VT high school  
class of 2020:

Accessible  
community college is  
a gamechanger for  
young adults.



Source: College Board, "College Enrollment and Retention in the Era of Covid," June 2021.

**Percentage change in community college enrollment rates of  
recent high school graduates**

*2020 cohort compared to 2019 cohort, by student state of residence*

# Three Solutions to the Opportunity Gap

1. Teacher workforce development and diversification
2. Community college = engine of economic mobility
3. *The Big Blur*: Accelerated degree pathways

# Teacher Workforce: Development & Diversification

Projected:

**7,460 job openings for VT teachers**

over the next decade.

**Our encouragement to you:**

- Continue supporting innovative pathways to licensure
- Extend teacher loan forgiveness
- Consider joining the six other states that have recently passed legislation to stipend student teaching placements for students at public institutions



# Community College: an Engine of Economic Mobility

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Postsecondary credentials – especially degrees – have enduring value. Last year, Strada Education Foundation found that **associate degree graduates in Vermont are the most likely in the country to achieve a positive ROI.**

## Our encouragement to you:

- **Be curious:** How do we ensure that funding commensurately and adequately supports the institutions that serve as engines of economic mobility for the Vermonters who are furthest from opportunity?



# CCV degrees align with VT's labor market needs

as defined by the VT Department of Labor and McClure Foundation's [Most Promising Vermont Jobs](#) resource. CCV degrees listed here are aligned with the bachelor's degrees required to obtain some featured occupations.

	10-Year Projected Openings	Median Wage (hourly/yearly)	Degree
Environmental Scientists	360	\$36/\$74,791	Associate of Science: <b>Environmental Science</b>
Teachers, including Special Education & CTE	7,460	n.a./\$67,717	Associate of Arts: <b>Early Childhood Education</b>
Editors, Writers & Authors	1,100	\$36/\$75,010	Associate of Arts: <b>Liberal Studies</b>
Accountants & Auditors	2,280	\$38/\$78,221	Associate of Science: <b>Accounting</b>
Healthcare, Substance Use Disorder & Mental Health Social Workers	1,040	\$33/\$67,874	Associate of Science: <b>Behavioral Science</b>
Management Analysts	1,700	\$55/\$113,493	Associate of Science: <b>Business</b>
Laboratory Technologists	480	\$39/\$81,939	Associate of Science: <b>STEM Studies</b>
Registered Nurses	4,570	\$42/\$87,117	Associate of Science: <b>Health Science</b>
Computer Support Specialists	1,660	\$32/\$67,025	Associate of Science: <b>Information Technology</b>
Project Management Specialists	710	\$41/\$84,329	Associate of Science: <b>Professional Studies</b>
Mechanical Engineering	410	\$50/\$104,221	Associate of Science: <b>STEM Studies</b>

# The Big Blur: Accelerated Degree Pathways

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With only 40% of Vermont students choosing to continue onto college, free accelerated associate degree pathways are a **high-leverage opportunity to improve Vermont's college continuation rates** among students furthest from opportunity.

**Free Degree Promise students** are **graduating at twice the rate and in half the time** as community college students nationally.



# The Free Degree Promise Pathway

11<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

## Apply to Early College at CCV

Priority deadline is May 1 of junior year with a final application deadline of early August before senior year.



12<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

## Early College Year

High school seniors complete their last year of high school and their first year of college at the same time.

## Graduate from High School

With a successful Early College year, students graduate from their home high school with a year of college completed.

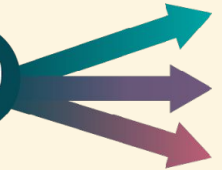


## Free Degree Year

Students who successfully complete Early College at CCV with 20+ credits can continue on the Free Degree Promise pathway and receive up to five debt-free semesters plus living stipends and enhanced advising.

## Graduate with debt-free Associate Degree

Upon completion of the Promise, students have a debt-free degree aligned with a labor market need and are prepared to enter the workforce or transfer to a bachelor's degree program.





## Inspiring hope

In a state with lots of narrowly scoped scholarships, only easily understood pathways available to all can transform youth and family perception that college is within reach.



## Universality

All students can apply and choose any CCV degree.



## Support beyond tuition

All students get living stipends and enhanced advising. CCV is supported to promote, administer, and evaluate the pathways.



## Rural is an asset

Young people are known and all adults are navigators.



Free Degree  
Promise

Core Values

# Since the Free Degree Promise was announced in spring 2022:

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- CCV has seen a **150% increase in the number of low-income students** in the Early College Program.
- Triple the number of Early College completers are **continuing their near-full-time enrollment** at CCV.
- Over half of this year's Free Degree Promise cohort are **first-generation college-going** students.

# Free Degree Promise Students' Degree Pathways (2024-25)



- Health Care: 30%
- Business: 18%
- Liberal Studies: 16%
- STEM, including IT: 15%
- Art, Design & Media: 11%
- Education & Early Childhood: 7%



# Envisioning Funding Sustainability

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**Goal:** In FY28, the Free Degree Promise will be sustained for the Vermont high school class of 2027 and beyond **with an ongoing General Fund appropriation** from the State of Vermont.

**FY26 General Fund Request:**  
**\$250,000**



**FY26:  
\$250K  
General  
Fund**



# The Big Blur: Accelerated Degree Pathways

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## Our encouragement to you:

- Free Degree Promise students are graduating at twice the rate and in half the time as community college students nationally. Continue that impact going.
- Look for opportunities to support career-connected learning.

# Questions?

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# Pathway Components and Supports



## 12 associate degrees aligned with labor market needs

All CCV degrees and introductory courses have career exploration as an essential learning objective. Many degree programs embed one or more career-focused certificate programs like Bookkeeping, Clinical Medical Assisting, and Cybersecurity.



## Career learning supports aligned with Guided Pathways

Degree programs include advising on course sequencing and career pathways in addition to work-based learning. Business partnerships offer direct pathways to employment in fast-growing industries.



## Stipends and enhanced advising to drive equitable outcomes

All students receive living stipends and have access to a team of advisors who specialize in serving high school students.



## 2+2 pathways and transfer supports to public universities

The **University of Vermont** offers 30 pathways that guarantee junior status for CCV transfer students.

As a sister institution using a common transcript and program pathways, **Vermont State University** is working to ensure seamless transfer pathways.

# Vermont's Free Degree Promise: Funding Coverage

