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Contacts: Daphne Borromeo, 408-792-3153
dborromeo@highereducation.org

Kari Hudnell, 202-955-9450 x314
khudnell@commworksllc.com

State News Summary: Virginia

Virginia Provides Solid College Opportunities for Some Residents, But Falls Short for Minorities

San Jose, Calif., and Washington, D.C. — Virginia young people face uneven college opportunities, preventing many from earning the education they need in a competitive economy. Among young adults, for example, 29 percent of blacks are enrolled in college, compared with 42 percent of whites.

In addition, college affordability has deteriorated in the state, as it has across the country. Poor and working-class families must devote 31 percent of their income, even after student financial aid, to pay for costs at public two-year colleges.

These are among the major findings of *Measuring Up 2008: The National Report Card on Higher Education*, released today by the independent, nonpartisan National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. According to the report:

- The likelihood of young Virginians enrolling in college by age 19 is 46 percent, compared with 57 percent for their peers in the top states.
- Forty-seven percent of black college students graduate with a bachelor's degree within six years, compared with 68 percent of whites.
- Nineteen percent of blacks have a bachelor's degree, compared with 38 percent of whites.
- Eighth graders perform well in math, science, and reading, which indicates that many students are being prepared for college.

“With demographic changes already transforming the U.S. workforce, states need to close the gaps in educational performance to help their residents compete in a global economy,” said Patrick M. Callan, president of the National Center. “The purpose of *Measuring Up 2008* is to identify the key areas where states can improve.”

Measuring Up 2008 grades all 50 states in six overall areas of higher education performance, based on quantitative measures. Grades are calculated by comparing each state's performance with that of the best states—defined as the median of the top five states. The report also identifies gaps in college opportunity and achievement by ethnic/racial groups within each state, as well as identifying each state's improvements or declines on key indicators since the early 1990s.

Virginia's Grades:

Preparation:	B+
Participation:	C
Affordability:	F
Completion:	B
Benefits:	A
Learning:	I

All states received an "Incomplete" in learning because there are not sufficient data to allow meaningful state-by-state comparisons.

Measuring Up 2008 includes a national report and 50 state reports. The national report offers a summary of the nation's current performance, and improvements or declines since the early 1990s. The state reports provide a detailed picture of higher education in each state. *Measuring Up 2008* is the latest in a series of higher education report cards that began in 2000.

Upon release of the report card on Dec. 3, 2008, the national and state reports will be available at www.highereducation.org. The Web site also offers state-by-state comparisons, as well as technical information about methodology.

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education promotes policies that enhance Americans' opportunities to pursue and achieve a quality higher education. Established in 1998, the National Center is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. It is not associated with any institution of higher education, with any political party, or with any government agency.

(Please note: *Measuring Up 2008* is embargoed until Wednesday, Dec. 3. The findings of the report cannot appear before December 3.)

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