

Finding Funds for Your Higher Education

By Dr. Al Roberts

A study titled “Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements through 2020” by Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce noted, “The U.S. economy is slowly returning to normal—albeit a new normal—characterized by an increase in the natural rate of unemployment, permanent job losses in sectors employing the less-educated, and an ever-increasing demand for better education credentials and upskilling across an array of new fields.” The study also notes trends indicating that by 2020, 65% of all jobs in the national economy will require postsecondary education.

Obtaining a postsecondary education, however, can be costly. To succeed, most students need financial assistance.

Eligibility for federal financial aid is determined by a formula that considers family income, enrollment status (full or part-time), and costs of attendance, which include tuition, fees, books, materials, housing, food, transportation, and personal expenses. For most students, federal aid comprises the largest portion of an overall financial assistance package.

In addition to the federal government, primary sources of education funds include state and local governments, postsecondary institutions, employers, and private entities. The major types of financial aid are grants, scholarships, tuition reimbursement programs, loans, and work-study programs. For students in courses that lead to workforce credentials, financial assistance is available through opportunities such as Virginia’s New Economy Workforce Credential Grant and the Financial Assistance for Noncredit Training that leads to Industry Credentials (FANTIC) program.

At Southside Virginia Community College, our Financial Aid Department works with students to ensure they receive the maximum benefits for which they are eligible. In fact, 94% of students at SVCC receive some type of grant or scholarship.

The process of applying for financial aid begins with completing a standardized form called the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Instructions and helpful videos for completing the FAFSA can be found on the College’s Financial Aid Webpage at southside.edu/financial-aid. SVCC’s Financial Aid Department can also provide one-on-one assistance to anyone who needs help filling out the FAFSA. Just call 855-877-3943 or stop by the Christanna Campus in Alberta or the John H. Daniel Campus in Keysville between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

People seeking financial assistance so they can pursue short-term industry-approved credentials in high-demand careers, such as certified nursing assistant (CNA), power line worker, commercial truck driving, or precision machining, can get more information by calling 434-949-1026 or 434-736-2004.

Students are also invited to apply for scholarships administered by the SVCC Foundation. These awards are funded by private individuals, civic organizations, and others who establish scholarships as a way to give back to the community. An application portal with access to more than 50 different scholarship programs is available at southside.edu/college-foundation.

Dr. Al Roberts is president of Southside Virginia Community College, an institution of higher learning that provides a wide variety of education opportunities to a diverse student population within a service area that spans ten counties and the city of Emporia. He can be reached via email at al.roberts@southside.edu.