

*What Virginia voters think about the impact of
public higher education on economic growth*

Results of Public Opinion Surveys

FREDERICK polls

 McLaughlin & Associates



GROW BY DEGREES

A Campaign of the Virginia Business Higher Education Council

www.growbydegrees.org



METHODOLOGY

Two Virginia statewide surveys were conducted among 500 registered voters in December 2008 and March 2009. The surveys were conducted jointly by two highly respected national polling organizations: McLaughlin & Associates, a Republican firm, and Frederick Polls, a Democratic firm.

All interviews were conducted by professional interviewers via telephone. Interview selection was random within predetermined election units. These units were structured to statistically correlate with actual voter registration statewide.

The accuracy of the sample of 500 registered voters is within +/- 4.5% at a 95% confidence interval.

KEY FINDINGS

More than 75% of Virginians say a two- or four-year degree is needed to succeed in today's economy.

But only 35% of college-age Virginians enroll in college AND only 42% of working-age Virginians have college degrees.

95% of Virginians say universities, colleges, and community colleges are important to improving the state and local economy; 64% say they are “very important.”

77% percent of Virginians say greater investment in higher education will result in higher average incomes for Virginia workers and a stronger economy.

A large majority of Virginia voters say they are more likely to vote for candidates for office who support plans to:

- Help more than 70,000 additional Virginia students gain two- or four-year college degrees over the next 10 years – 72% more likely
- Focus the additional degrees on science, technology, engineering, math and other high-demand sectors where skilled workers currently are lacking – 78% more likely
- Expand job-specific training and re-training at Virginia's community colleges – 78% more likely
- Increase state incentives for workforce training and advanced research at our public universities and community colleges – 71% more likely
- Expand the role of colleges and community colleges in regional economic development efforts – 74% more likely

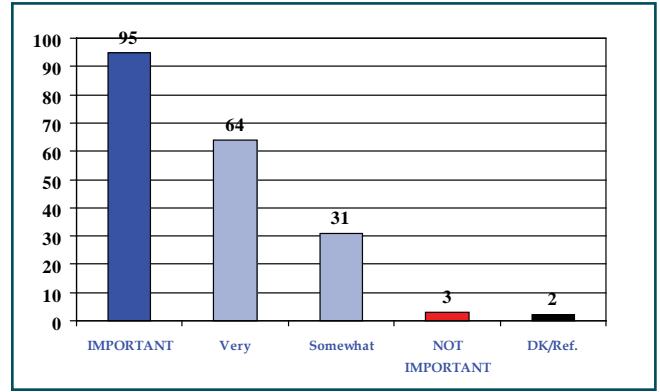
Virginians also want to ensure reliable state funding and affordable tuition by:

- Increasing financial aid eligibility for Virginia students from low- and middle-income families – 79%
- Setting up a “rainy day” reserve fund to protect against tuition spikes during future economic downturns – 80%
- Codifying the state's financial commitment to higher education like the SOQ laws do for K-12 education – 76%



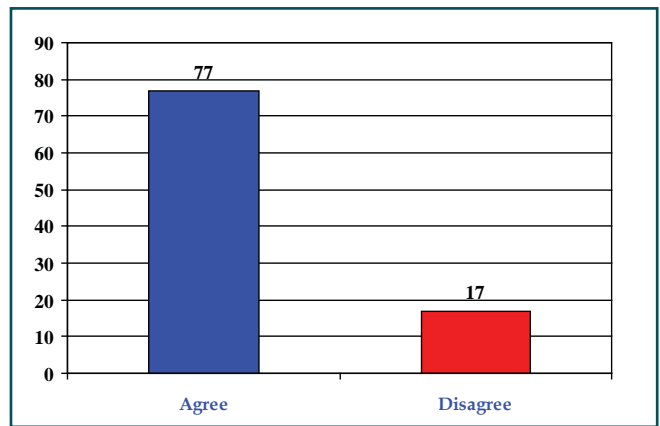
COLLEGES AND THE ECONOMY

How important would you say Virginia’s public universities, colleges and community colleges are to improving the state and local economy in Virginia? Would you say they are very important, somewhat important or not important at all?



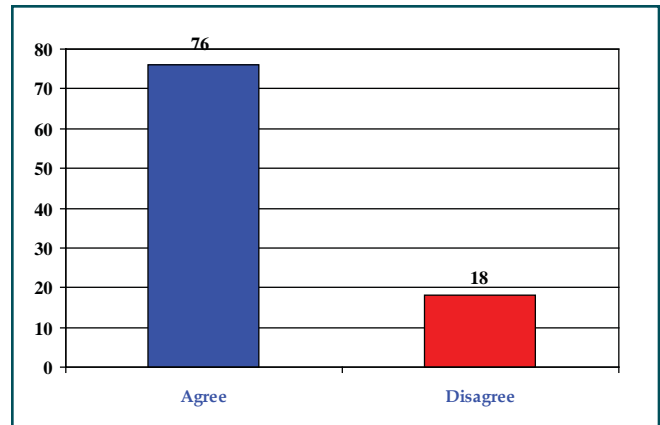
HIGHER INCOMES

Do you agree or disagree with this statement: Since in today’s economy, the best paying jobs generally go to the best educated workers, a greater state investment in Virginia’s colleges, universities and community colleges will result in higher average incomes for Virginia workers and a stronger economy?



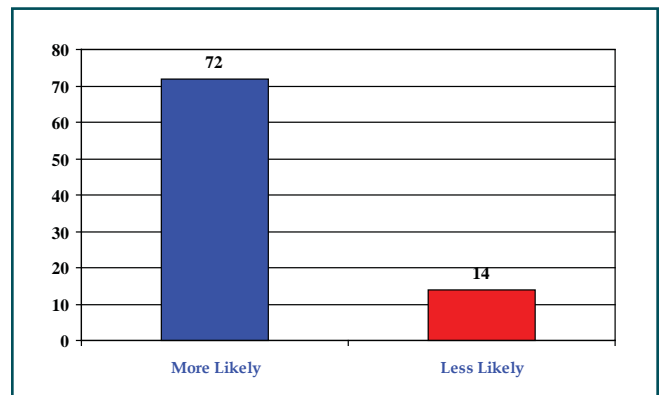
STIMULATING THE ECONOMY

Do you agree or disagree with this statement: Investing more in higher education so that more Virginia students receive college or community college degrees is one of the best ways to stimulate the Virginia economy and create a higher-income workforce for the future?



70,000 MORE DEGREES

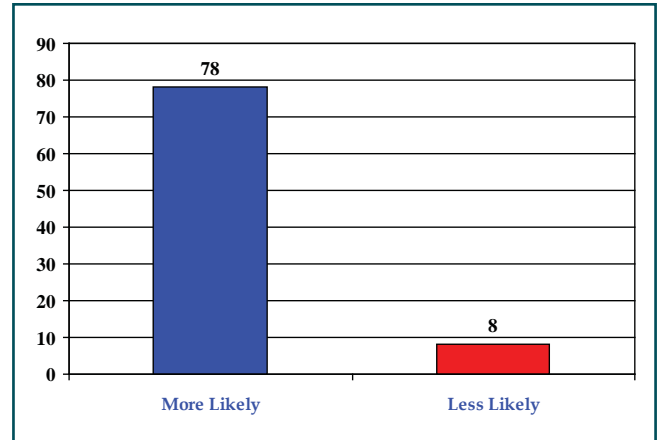
Would you be more or less likely to support a candidate who, as part of his economic growth plan, proposes increasing the capacity and funding of Virginia’s public colleges, universities and community colleges so they can help more than 70,000 additional students get college degrees over the next 10 years?





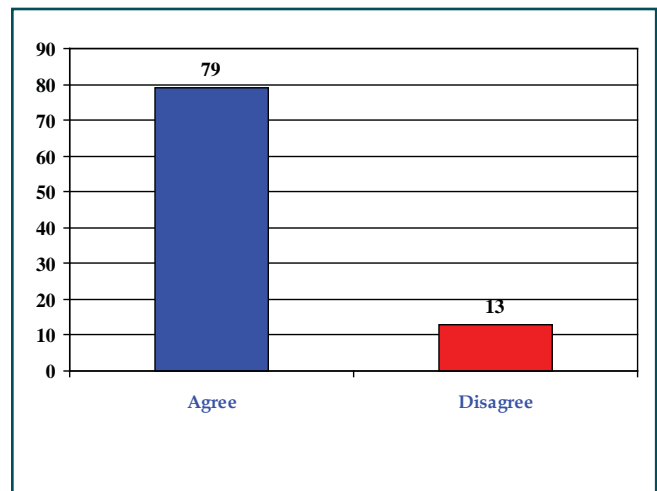
HIGH-WAGE, HIGH-DEMAND

Would you be more or less likely to support a candidate who, as part of his economic growth plan, proposes increasing the number of college and community college degrees earned by Virginia students in high-wage, high-demand sectors of the economy, such as science, technology, engineering and math, and in areas where there now are shortages of trained workers, such as health care professionals and teachers?



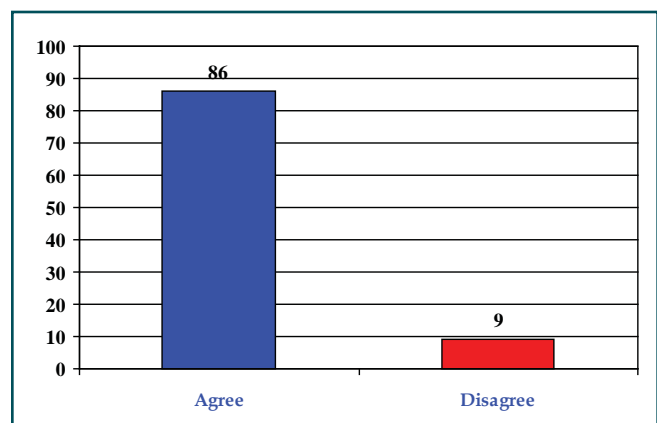
USING NEW TECHNOLOGY

Do you agree or disagree that the state of Virginia should expand the capacity of its public colleges, universities and community colleges in new and cost-efficient ways by using the Internet, technology and distance learning to educate more students?



ALTERNATIVE PATHS TO DEGREES

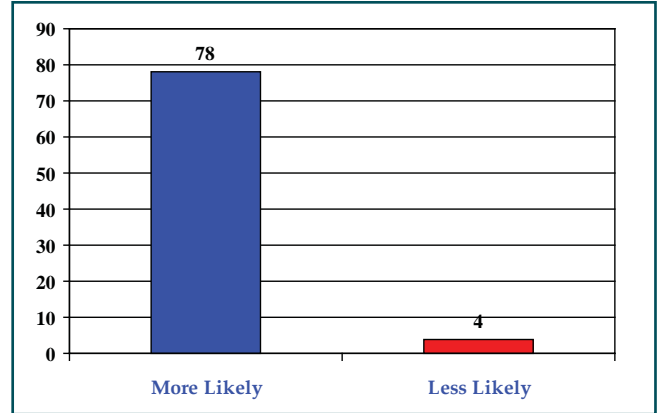
Do you agree or disagree that the state of Virginia should develop new and more cost-efficient ways for students to get four-year college degrees in crucial subject areas, such as science, technology, engineering, and math, by making more advanced, college-level courses available in high schools and community colleges?





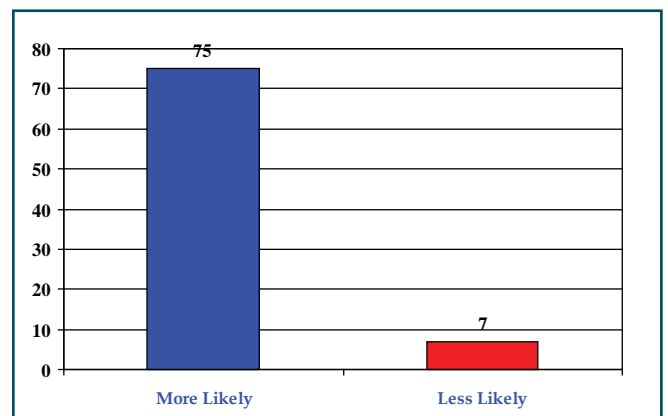
EXPANDING COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Would you be more or less likely to support a candidate who says Virginia's community colleges are a valuable resource to provide job skill retraining and career-specific courses for workers of all ages throughout their entire lifetimes. Thus, expanding the capacity at community colleges makes sense?



EMPLOYABLE WORK SKILLS

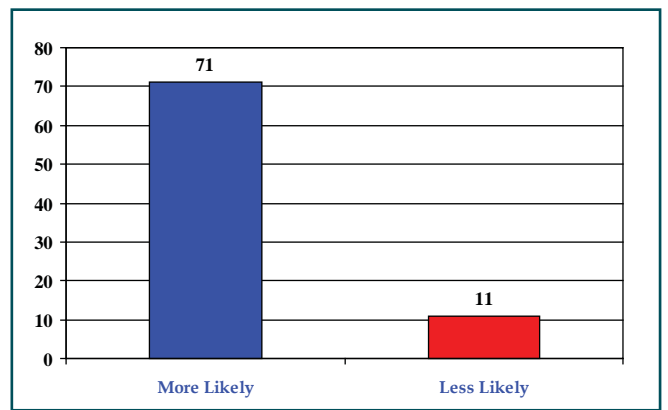
Would you be more or less likely to support a candidate who says investing in Virginia's two-year community colleges will provide more opportunity for students to learn employable work skills in today's high-tech economy that apply to everything from health care to construction to auto repair to manufacturing?



RESEARCH AND TRAINING

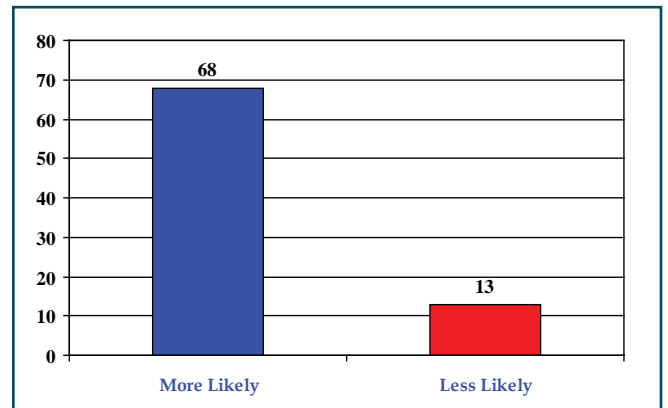
Would you be more or less likely to support a candidate who says that investing state funds in workforce training and advanced research at our public colleges and community colleges should be a top priority, because independent studies show that those programs generate about \$5 of increased economic activity for every \$1 of state investment?

[Note: 5:1 ratio based on recent analysis of research and operations at U.Va.]



GREEN TECHNOLOGY/CLEAN ENERGY

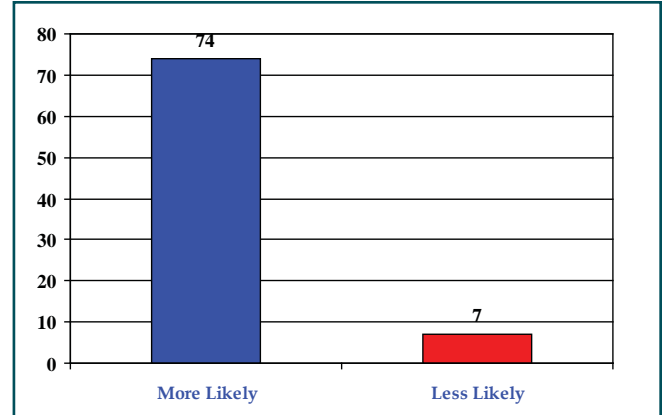
Would you more or less likely to support a candidate who says the key to our economic future in Virginia is investing in more university-based research on green technology and alternative sources of energy which will attract business investment to the state and create more high-paying jobs?





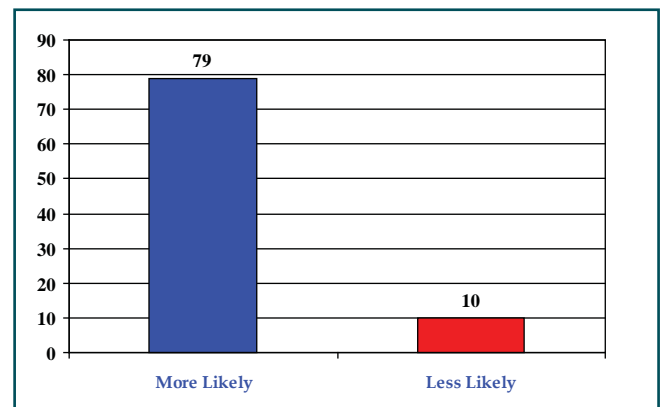
REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Would you be more or less likely to support a candidate who says we need to have strong universities, colleges and community colleges in each region of our state, because they improve the quality of life, supply a skilled workforce, and encourage public-private partnerships on research and economic development that attract new businesses and high-paying jobs to the region?



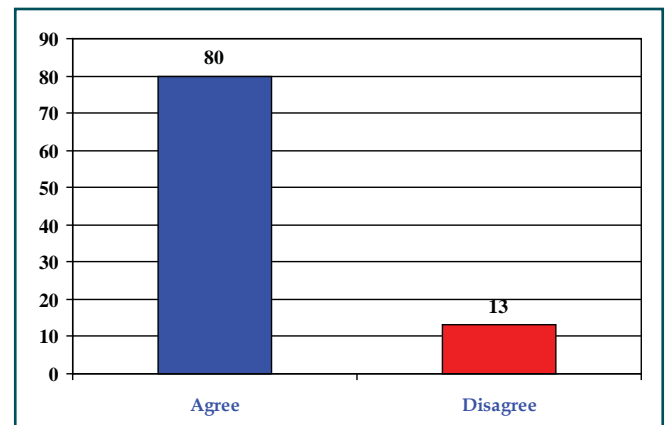
FINANCIAL AID

Would you be more or less likely to support a candidate who calls for increasing state funding of student financial aid so that more Virginia students, including those from middle-class families, can afford to attend Virginia's colleges, universities and community colleges?



TUITION "RAINY DAY" FUND

Do you agree or disagree that the state should set up a reserve, or "rainy day" fund, for higher education and put money into the fund when the economy is growing, so that when there is an economic downturn, students and parents will be protected from sharp increases in tuition?



STATUTORY COMMITMENT

Do you agree or disagree that the state should adopt a new law that spells out its long-term financial commitment to higher education, similar to the state's Standards of Quality law that currently guarantees funding for public schools in grades K-12?

