

Get REAL (Refocus Education on Adult Learners), 2020 to 2025

5-year, \$1.8-million grant from the U.S. Department of Education Title III Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP). VWCC President Dr. Robert H. Sandel calls it the **“holy grail” of community college grants**.

Purpose: To better serve and model stronger pathways to employment for the region’s **adult learners (age 20 and older)** – the new majority in higher education – especially adults from low-income backgrounds and students of color.

VWCC data (2018-19): Average age: 25 / 54% adult learners / 82% of all students attend part-time

Project director: Dr. Milan Hayward, Vice President of the School of Corporate and Career Training

National education reform organizations **Achieving the Dream (ATD)** and the **Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)** will provide data coaching, professional development, and expertise in the adult-learner space.

Now hiring:

- Activity Coordinator
- Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Specialist
- College Career Navigator
- Experiential Learning Coordinator
- College Affordability Navigator

Innovative approach: The College Affordability Navigator will serve as an internal and external connector — the hub who will connect critical resources for adult learners, starting with VWCC’s Office of Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs and the numerous scholarships offered by the Educational Foundation, including the Fralin Futures Finish Line scholarship. The navigator’s mission will go beyond one-on-one service to students and will be key to institutionalizing affordability and financial literacy education throughout the college.

Outcomes: Adult learners will not only gain hands-on training experiences, but will also learn how to manage their finances and thrive in the workplace.

Educational Foundation Impact: The Educational Foundation endowment will receive \$145,000 over 5 years to help bridge the affordability gap for adults. The Foundation will match with non-federal funds.

Why could this project be so transformative? Experienced new personnel, data-informed decision-making, strategic action, structural reorganization, stronger curricular platforms, and stakeholder commitment have uniquely positioned VWCC to model what an adult learner-focused community college could look like for Virginia and America.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected us all, but it has had a disproportionate impact on individuals who struggle to make ends meet during the best of times. Now we will have more opportunities to help these people find their pathway to the middle class through higher education.”

- Dr. Robert H. Sandel.

Get REAL Budget (\$1,802,034)

