



2022

Vermont Student Assistance Corporation Credential of Value Scholarship Outcomes Study

Produced by VSAC for The Curtis Fund

January 2022



The Curtis Fund Credential of Value Scholarship: Outcomes Study

In 2018, The Curtis Fund established the Curtis Credential of Value scholarships (COV Scholarships) through an initial pilot project. Since the initial pilot in the 18-19 school year, The Curtis Fund has increased its investment in the COV Scholarship annually. This report examines data from the first two cohorts of students who participated in the COV scholarship program following the initial pilot year.

The COV Scholarships are need-based scholarships awarded to Vermonters who are trying to improve their employability either by gaining specific job skills through a training program or through ongoing, stackable, higher education programs. Students used this COV scholarship to access training programs for, e.g, CDL licenses, to obtain certification as childcare providers, to enter health professions such as LNAs and dental assistants, to enter the trades as construction workers, cosmetologists, and many other fields.

COV Scholarship background:

- Scholarships range from a minimum of \$500 up to a maximum of \$1,500.
- Applicants must also complete a Vermont Degree or Advancement Grant application so that VSAC can determine financial need and so that applicants are considered for a Vermont grant in addition to the Scholarship. Applicants who do not qualify for a Vermont grant for a reason *other than financial need* are considered for a COV scholarship on a case-by-case basis.
- Applicants must also participate in a VSAC Outreach program, which ensures they are provided other wrap-around supports and ongoing mentorship and education/career counseling while pursuing education and training.
- Scholarships can be used at any college that offers certificates or training programs identified by the applicant that will increase his or her employability. Approved training programs must either document that at least 50 percent of their students are employed in the field in which they were trained or be accredited by a national or state accreditation agency.

COV Scholar Demographics:

Table 1 outlines the number of students who received a Curtis COV scholarship and the total funding disbursed each year.

Table 1: Scholarship Recipients

| | Number of students who received a scholarship | Amount of funds disbursed |
|---------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Academic Year 19-20 | 83 | \$110,335 |
| Academic Year 20-21 | 112 | \$154,283 |
| Total | 195 | \$264,618 |

The program seeks diversity. Both cohort years included learners from all 14 Vermont counties.

Table 2 outlines the gender identification breakdown for all students who received a scholarship award.

Table 2: Scholar Gender Identity

| | Female | Male |
|---------------------|--------|------|
| Academic Year 19-20 | 58% | 42% |
| Academic Year 20-21 | 65% | 35% |

Table 3 outlines the race/ethnicity identification breakdown for the students who responded to the survey. (We did not have access to this information for all scholars.)

Table 3: Respondent Racial Identity

| | Asian | Black or African American | Hispanic | Multiracial | White | No Response |
|---------------------|-------|---------------------------|----------|-------------|-------|-------------|
| Academic Year 19-20 | 9% | 6% | 3% | 3% | 77% | 3% |
| Academic Year 20-21 | 6% | 6% | 4% | 6% | 74% | 2% |

Table 4 outlines the age range of all students who received a scholarship award.

Table 4: Scholar Age Range

| Age Range | 19-20 Scholars | 20-21 Scholars | Total |
|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 18 - 28 | 26 | 44 | 70 |
| 29 - 39 | 28 | 46 | 74 |
| 40 - 50 | 17 | 17 | 34 |
| 51 - 61 | 11 | 5 | 16 |
| 62+ | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 83 | 112 | 195 |

Table 5 outlines the age range for the students who responded to the survey.

Table 5: Respondent age range

| Age Range | 19-20 Respondents | 20-21 Respondents | Total |
|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| 18 - 28 | 23% | 19% | 19% |
| 29 - 39 | 35% | 51% | 42% |
| 40 - 50 | 16% | 33% | 24% |
| 51 - 61 | 26% | 7% | 14% |
| 62+ | 0% | 0% | 0% |

Methodology:

This report presents information collected on two cohorts of Curtis COV Scholarship recipients. Those cohorts are:

- Students who were disbursed a scholarship during the **19-20 academic year**. (These students likely completed the program for which their scholarship was provided at least 18 months ago.)
- Students who were disbursed a scholarship during the **20-21 academic year**. (These students likely completed the program for which their scholarship was provided at least 5 months ago.)

This report examines the following outcomes for the above listed students:

- Employment status
- Salary
- Ongoing postsecondary attendance
- Other aspects of their lives.

The survey used was constructed based on the non-degree grant survey. It was emailed to students in November of 2021. Email reminders and follow up calls by VSAC Outreach staff were done in December and January to try to reach all students and give them the opportunity to complete the survey.

Table 6 outlines the number of students who responded to the survey from each cohort.

Table 6: Survey Respondents

| | # of Respondents* | % of Cohort* |
|---------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Academic Year 19-20 | 35 | 42% |
| Academic Year 20-21 | 47 | 42% |
| Total | 82 | 42% |

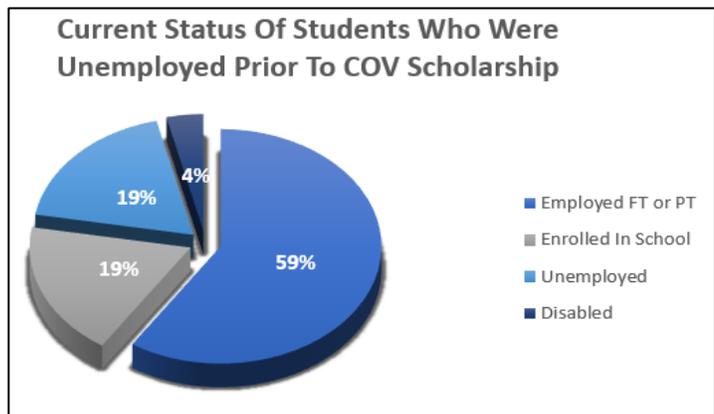
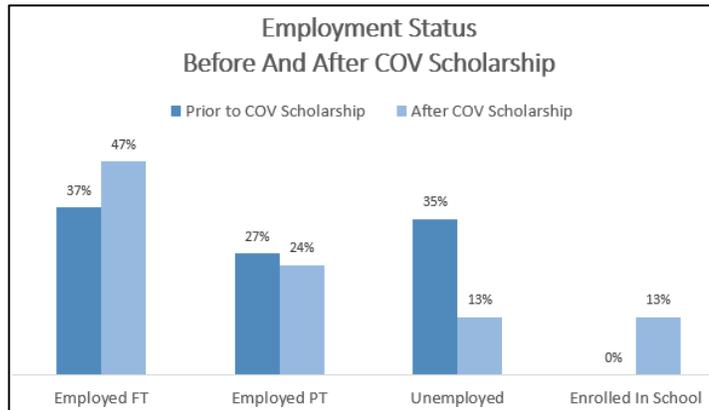
** 6 students participated in both academic years. Of these 4 completed the survey and 2 did not. For percentages shown on subsequent pages the responses for these participants are only counted once and only for the most recent participation year. Therefore, you will see 78 as the respondent count instead of the 82 shown above.*

Findings/Results:

1. Respondents reported a significant positive shift in employment status after receiving the COV scholarship.

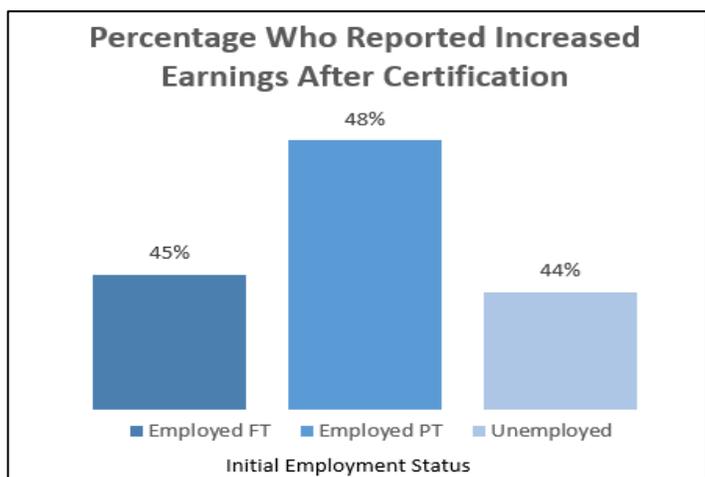
Full-time employment increased from 37 percent to 47 percent, a 10 percent increase. The increase was equally made up of unemployed and part-time employed respondents moving to full-time employment.

Among adult students who were unemployed prior to receiving the COV scholarship, 59 percent of respondents were employed either full-time or part-time at the time of the survey and an additional 19 percent were in school.

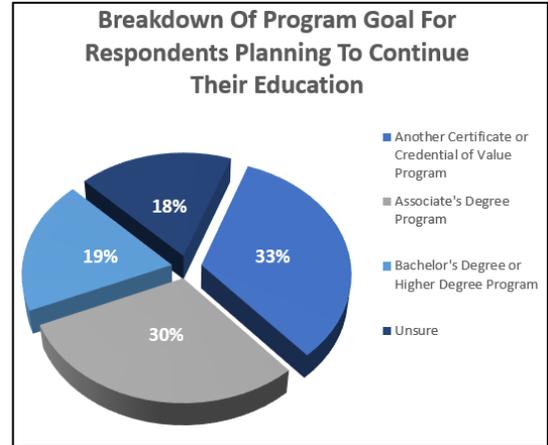


2. Respondents reported increased earnings after completing their certification, regardless of their initial employment status.

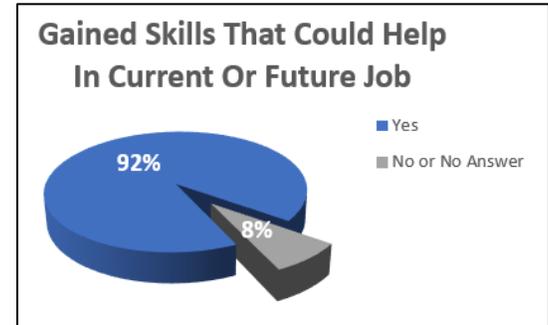
51 percent of students who reported increased earnings reported earning at least \$4 more per hour after completing their credential.



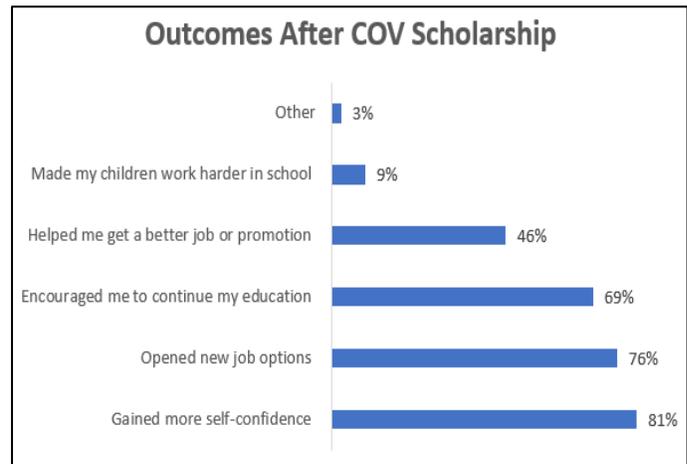
3. Of the 81 percent of respondents who pursued or plan to pursue additional education and training after completing a first credential with support from a COV scholarship, the goal program breakdown is 33 percent for another Certificate or Credential of Value program, 30 percent for an Associate's degree program, and 19 percent for a Bachelor's degree or higher program.



4. Recipients of the COV scholarship overwhelmingly reported that the skills they gained in their training would help them in their current or future jobs.



5. Pursing a credential of value can lead to a variety of outcomes in students' lives beyond employment and increased earnings. Among students surveyed, a significant majority reported an increase in self-confidence, encouragement to continue their education, and job options.



Challenges respondents faced:

Respondents stated that they faced many obstacles to attend their program:

- 44 percent reported having difficulty in making enough money to make ends meet while they were in school.
- 40 percent reported it was difficult to find time to study because of work.
- 23 percent reported it was difficult to arrange for childcare while in school.
- 21 percent reported not having reliable internet access or computer equipment to take online courses.
- 17 percent reported having difficulty paying for housing or food while they were enrolled.
- 6 percent reported not being able to complete their program due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also collected comments from survey respondents. The majority of challenge comments related to the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on their ability to concentrate or access training. The following are some of the comments:

- *"... going to nursing school and becoming a nurse during a pandemic."*
- *"... didn't get to practice on people due to COVID."*

Additional outcomes respondents shared:

Survey respondents also commented on the outcomes they experienced that were not necessarily what we were primarily measuring. Outcomes experienced by COV Scholarship recipients in addition to the skills gained included:

- *"Thanks to the scholarship I was able to take and complete a course and get a certificate which allowed me to pursue a dream I have had for many years which I would never have been able to do otherwise. I am so incredibly thankful!"*
- *"I was really struggling to "make ends meet" before receiving this scholarship. If I wasn't able to come up with the funds, I wouldn't have been able to complete the program and attain my cosmetology license. On average, I'd say I make about \$15 more an hour in comparison to my previous jobs. I finally can afford to have a savings account! Thank you again, it's changed my life!"*

- *"This scholarship helped me to be able to go back to school to try and provide a better life for my two children as a single mother of two."*
- *"I wasn't working throughout school so I could put all my focus into learning. I have been able to start a practice with a partner."*
- *"I was a volunteer EMT making \$3/hr before taking the LPN class. While taking the class, I went through a divorce and was homeless for a time as a result. I am now working per diem and studying to get my RN. This has opened lots of doors for me."*
- *"I thank you!! As being a single mother trying to make my son proud of me, that includes me getting a good career that can provide for my son and this money help me be less in debt so I can put more money toward my future and my son's future!! So thank you!!"*



Conclusion

The survey data gathered from 78 Curtis Scholarship recipients yielded important information on the impact of the program on the lives of adult students. The data and comments from scholarship recipients support the scholarship goal of having a significant positive impact on Vermonters' employment, salary and wages, their ongoing college attendance, and other important aspects of their lives. These findings also underscore the importance of programs like this and their power to transform lives through access to education and training.