



PATHWAYS PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

As first announced in Mayor Stoney's 2023 State of the City Address, the Pathways Program will support Richmond Public School (RPS) students to and through community college. With an initial investment of \$1.7 million from the City of Richmond, this pilot program will be able to provide a traditional scholarship, which will be paired with a monthly cash allowance, mentorship and additional supports so that more RPS graduates have the opportunity to achieve postsecondary success—whether that translates to career-specific or skilled-trades credentials, or credits to be transferred to a four-year college.

VISION:

All RPS students will have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential. With the support of the City of Richmond and its partners, identified RPS students will benefit from strategic supports to and through community college.

We believe that, by building clear pathways to postsecondary success for RPS students, Richmond youth will be better positioned for their first career; Richmond residents will benefit from greater economic mobility; and the City will become an even greater place to live, raise a family and grow a business.

THE OPPORTUNITY:

Too many of Richmond's youth fail to fulfill their potential due to significant, but surmountable, barriers as they prepare to leave high school and seek postsecondary education and/or credentials. These barriers include:

- Tuition and fees
- Housing
- Food insecurity
- Transportation
- Childcare
- Opportunity cost of not working full time
- Lack of familiarity with postsecondary opportunities
- Lack of familiarity with pathways to achieve personal goals
- Lack of support (peer, adult) to set and achieve significant postsecondary goals



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To address these barriers, the Pathways Program will:

- build positive peer-to-peer and youth-to-adult relationships;
- provide opportunities to explore postsecondary opportunities;
- educate youth regarding how to set and achieve long-term goals;
- support youth to apply for financial aid and community college; and,
- provide both a last-dollar scholarship and a monthly cash allowance to youth for up to two years of community college.

THE PROPOSED APPROACH

In summer 2023, 25-50 rising RPS seniors will be identified to join the pilot Pathways Program cohort. These youth will benefit from the following strategic supports over the following three years:

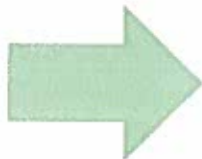
- Cohort-based peer-to-peer and peer-to-adult relationship building
- Mentorship
- Career exploration
- Soft skills workshops
- Financial aid education, counseling, and navigation
- Support to apply to postsecondary education and training programs
- Visits to community colleges, universities, and colleges
- Intensive, supportive programming the summer before matriculation to community college

Timing is sensitive:

1. This program will serve as a tool to retain RPS students at risk of dropping out of school. The sooner that funding availability is solidified, the sooner the program can be shared and prospective participants can be identified.
2. The total number of participants in the pilot and future cohorts depends on strategic fund development; the City's appropriation will be leveraged to catalyze private and philanthropic contributions.

COMMITTED PARTNERS:

- GRASP, Inc. (Richmond-based college access organization founded in 1983 to assist Virginia students and families in achieving postsecondary educational goals)
- City of Richmond's Office of Children and Families
- City of Richmond's Mayor's Youth Academy
- Reynolds Community College (the only VCCS community college in Richmond)¹
- Dominion*
- Altria*
- CoStar*
- Community Foundation*



**All have committed to providing funding to GRASP to support this program, AFTER the City's appropriation is completed.*

¹ Please note that we are also exploring partnerships with other VCCS community colleges, such as Brightpoint, but Reynolds Community College has been explicit in their commitment to this program.



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ORDINANCE NO. 2023-080 EXPLAINED

Ordinance NO. 2023-080, which is being considered by the Organizational Development Committee on April 3, 2023, is purely an appropriation paper, for which the Mayor has the authority to introduce. This paper appropriates \$1,752,480 to a new Non-Departmental Budget line item for Great Aspirations Scholarship Program, Inc. (GRASP) and titled, Great Aspirations Scholarship Program, Inc. (Pathways Program – Great Aspirations Scholarship Program).

Furthermore, per the City's Fund Balance Policy, up to 10% of any year surplus may be assigned for a special purpose reserve. Special purpose reserves must be only for one-time, non-recurring purposes and may not be for an installment or phase of a multi-installment or multi-phase project. As part of the FY 2022 year-end surplus, \$1,752,480 was set aside as a special purpose reserve, which can be viewed on page 59 of the FY 2022 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report, and the Mayor wishes to appropriate the total \$1,752,480 of this reserve to the Pathways Program.

