



2023



Vermont Student Assistance Corporation Credential of Value Scholarship Outcomes Study

Produced by VSAC for The Curtis Fund

January 2023



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 third and fourth cohorts of students who participated in the COV scholarship program.

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 \$50 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 20- 21	112	\$154,283
Academic Year 21-22	221	\$291,536
Total	333	\$445,819

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	Non-Binary
Academic Year 20-21	68%	32%	0%
Academic Year 21-22	61%	38%	>1%

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 20-21	3%	3%	3%	0%	83%	7%
Academic Year 21-22	3%	8%	0%	3%	79%	7%

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

Table 4: Scholar Age Range

Age Range	20-21 Scholars	21-22 Scholars	Total
18 - 28	39%	34%	35%
29 - 39	41%	42%	41%
40 - 50	15%	15%	14%
51 - 61	5%	10%	8%
62+	0%	1%	1%

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

Table 5: Respondent age range

Age Range	20-21 Respondents	21-22 Respondents	Total
18 - 28	7%	24%	20%
29 - 39	52%	37%	41%
40 - 50	28%	25%	25%
51 - 61	13%	13%	12%
62+	0%	2%	2%

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 **20-21 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 **21-22 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. Students were sent an email informing them the survey would be taking place, encouraging them to participate and describing the incentive (the opportunity to win one of two \$100 gifts cards) for participating. An invitation email, with a link to the survey, was sent to students on October 18, 2022; up to three reminder emails were sent to those students who did not complete the survey. Finally, additional email reminders and follow up calls were made by VSAC Outreach staff in November to try to reach all students who had not responded and give them the opportunity to complete the survey. This yielded an overall survey response rate of 40 percent.

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 20-21	29	26%
Academic Year 21-22	103	47%
Total	132	40%

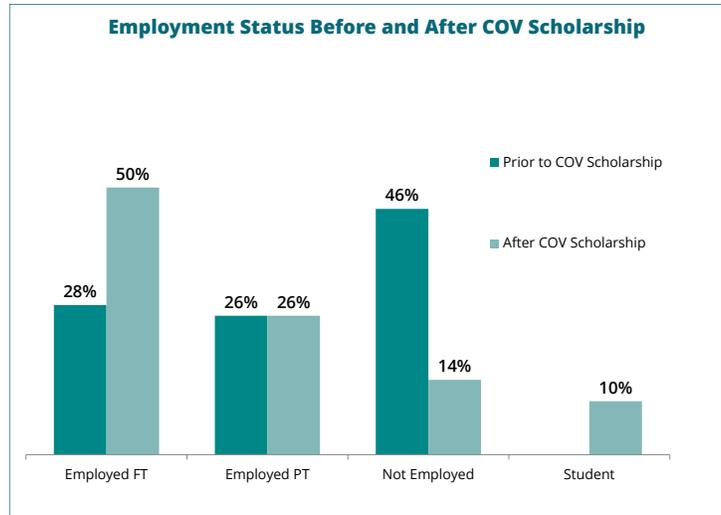
Given the small sample size and low response rate among the AY20-21 cohort, we were unable to analyze the survey data separately by cohort. The following report presents findings based on data for the combined cohorts (n=132).

Findings/Results:

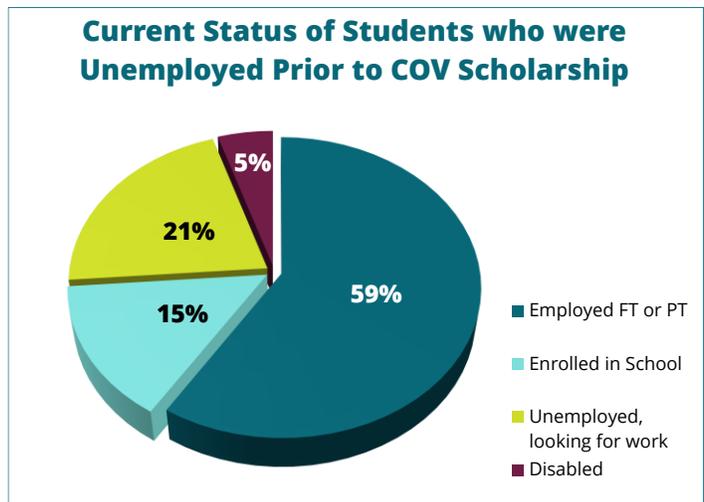
1. Respondents reported a significant positive shift in employment status after receiving the COV scholarship.

Full-time employment increased from 28 percent to 50 percent, a 22-percentage point increase. The increase was primarily made up of unemployed respondents moving to full-time employment.

Note that due to wording of questions, we do not know student status prior to COV scholarship receipt.



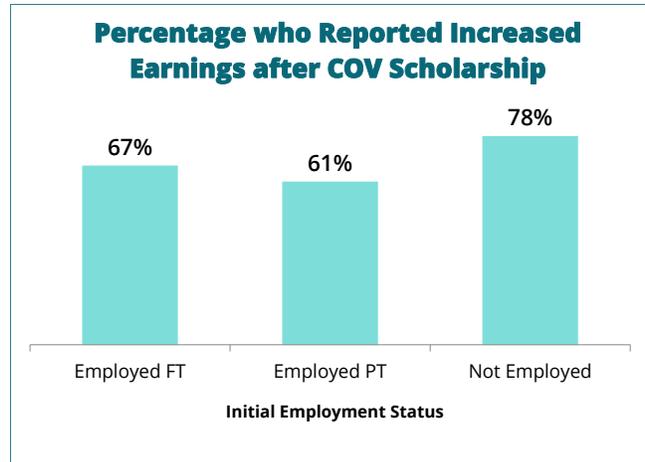
Among adult students who were unemployed prior to receiving the COV scholarship, 59 percent of respondents were employed either full-time or part-time at the time of the survey and an additional 15 percent were in school.



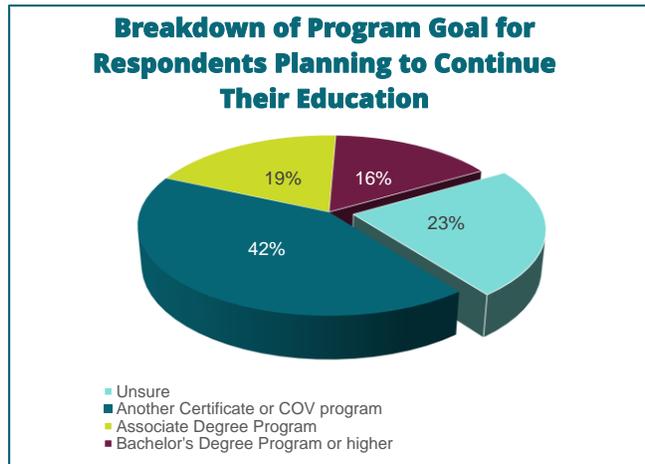
2. Respondents reported increased earnings after completing their certification, regardless of their initial employment status.

- 20/21 Cohort: 77%
- 21/22 Cohort: 66%

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

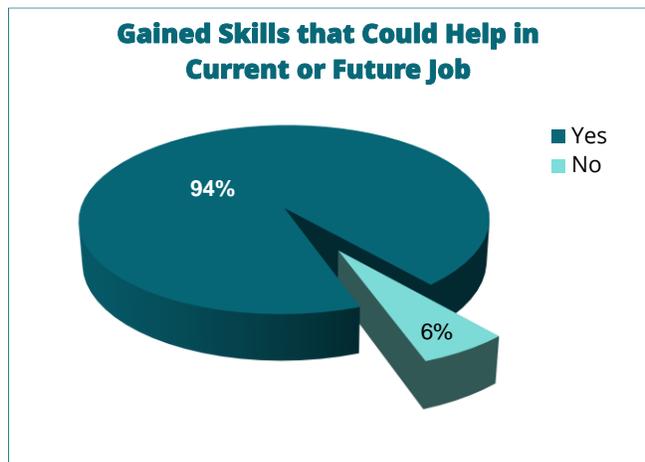


3. Of the 74 percent of respondents who pursued or plan to pursue additional education and training after completing a first credential with support from a COV scholarship, the goal program breakdown is 42 percent for another Certificate or Credential of Value program, 19 percent for an associate degree program, and 16 percent for a Bachelor’s degree or higher program.



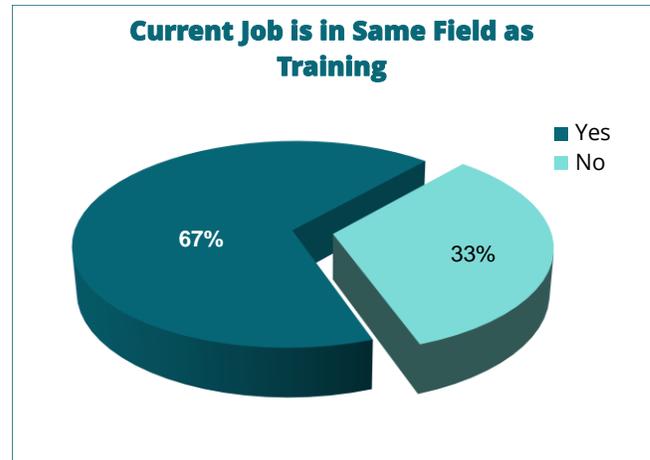
4. Recipients of the COV scholarship overwhelmingly reported that the skills they gained in their training would help them in their current or future jobs.

- 20/21 Cohort: 97%
- 21/22 Cohort: 93%

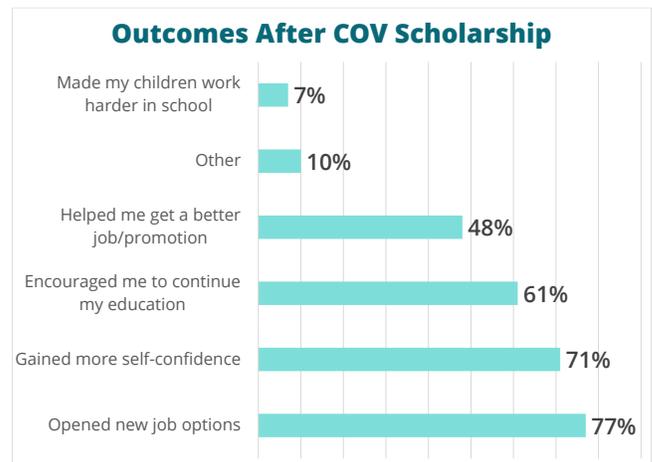


5. More than two-thirds of COV scholarship recipients surveyed reported their current job was in the field in which they received their training.

- 20/21 Cohort: 69%
- 21/22 Cohort: 66%



6. Pursuing 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:

- 49 percent reported having difficulty in making enough money to make ends meet while they were in school.
- 30 percent reported it was difficult to find time to study because of work.
- 21 percent reported it was difficult to arrange for childcare while in school.
- 17 percent reported having difficulty paying for housing or food while they were enrolled.
- 9 percent reported not having reliable internet access or computer equipment to take online courses.
- 9 percent reported it was difficult to find transportation to get to school.

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:

- *“I am trying to look 10 years down the road and see the need for CDL drivers growing. Its a fantastic trade to be in. Also having my CDL opens opportunity for my landscape business.”*
- *“...I was self-employed while in school and I am still self-employed. This scholarship allowed me to get the credentials I need to sit for the National exam. This makes me more competitive nationwide. Within Vermont, this training makes me better at my job and more in demand. As a self-employed person I need to do everything possible to maintain excellence in my field for my clients. Wellness Institute is a fabulous school and I learned so much more. My clients are extremely happy with my improvements.”*
- *“The Curtis scholarship made going back to school a possibility. Without it, I really don't think I would have been able to take my first part-time course. Because of the positive experience, I made the decision to pursue a full time boot camp in software development. I am one week away from graduation and applying for jobs with salaries that are significantly higher than my previous position. I am so optimistic about my future career!”*
- *“Made it feel possible that I can and will continue to strive to receive education. Made me believe I am a strong learner and that I just haven't had enough opportunity. “*
- *“I am so grateful for the opportunity to study. I am one year through my 2 year diploma program and I have a 4.0 average. I left high school when I was 16 and needed to prove to myself that I could make a living being an excellent councilor and I have.”*

Conclusion

The survey data gathered from 132 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.