







SOAR Scholars: An Early Commitment Scholarship Program

What we will cover

- What is SOAR Scholars?
- Who is Eligible?
- Student Selection Process
- How SOAR Scholars Works
- Measuring Success



What is SOAR Scholars?

- ✓ Early commitment scholarship program sponsored by Virginia529SM
- ✓ Scholarship awards up to \$2,000
- ✓ 6 College Access Providers
 - Great Aspirations Scholarship Program 
 - Virginia's Community Colleges 
 - ACCESS College Foundation 
 - GMU-Early Access Identification Program 
 - College Access Fairfax 
 - Virginia College Advising Corps 



Program Goals



Inspire Students:

- to complete high school and earn diplomas
- to pursue post-secondary education, 2-year, 4-year college/university, technical training or a registered apprenticeship
- to complete post-secondary education and earn associate's, bachelor's, technical degrees or a registered apprenticeship



Improve outcomes for low- and moderate-income students in Virginia



Increase high school graduation rates



Expand the program... ultimately statewide

Who is Eligible?

To enroll in SOAR Scholars, students must:



- ✓ Have a valid Social Security Number (SSN) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)
- ✓ Be a Virginia resident
- ✓ Be in grades 10–12 in a participating VA high school*
- ✓ Have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5 at the time of enrollment
- ✓ Qualify to participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- ✓ Agree to comply with the SOAR Scholars pledge

*Highland High School students may begin in the 9th grade.

Student Selection Process



Early commitment advisors work with school guidance offices to determine potential participants



Advisors elicit interest in the program at schools to encourage students to self-identify



Up to 15 students at each participating school are selected per cohort (year)



SOAR Scholars Pledge

I pledge that:

- I will maintain a minimum cumulative GPA* of 2.5.
- I will meet with my early commitment advisor regularly.
- I will complete financial literacy training during high school.
- I will comply with my school's Code of Student Conduct.
- I will attend school regularly without unexcused absences.
- I will participate in community service activities.
- I will complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or Virginia Alternative State Aid Application (VASA) during my senior year.
- I will apply to an eligible 2- or 4-year college/university, technical school, or registered apprenticeship program.

*or comparable academic achievement as determined by SOAR Virginia.

How SOAR Scholars Works



- ✓ Students enroll in the 10th grade and work with an early commitment advisor during their 10th, 11th and 12th grade years*
- ✓ Eligible SOAR scholars are awarded \$500 each year if pledge requirements are met in 10th and 11th grade years
- ✓ Eligible SOAR scholars are awarded \$1,000 in their 12th grade year if pledge requirements are met
- ✓ Funds are invested in a Virginia529 Invest529 Stable Value Portfolio account
- ✓ SOAR scholarship funds can be applied toward qualified post-secondary education expenses and/or qualified expenses required for participation in an apprenticeship program registered and certified with the Secretary of Labor

*Highland High School students may begin in the 9th grade. Award amounts for 9th and 10th grades are \$250 for students beginning in 9th grade.

A School Counselor's Perspective on SOAR Scholars

Students are committed and excited about planning for their future. This type of excitement contributes to keeping students engaged in school and empowers them to not only plan for their future, but to plan to make a positive contribution to society.



Measuring Success



High school graduation rates



Rate of on-time FAFSA or VASA completion



Program participation, retention and completion rates



Scholarships awarded



College enrollment and completion rates

Want to apply?



If you are interested and meet the eligibility requirements, see your early commitment advisor for more information.

The deadline to apply is November 15th.



SOARScholars

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The material in this presentation has been prepared by Virginia529 and is general background information about SOAR Scholars activities current as of the date of this presentation. © 2023 Virginia College Savings Plan.