

# Measuring Opportunity: Definition, Metrics, and Strategy

Sarah Turner

*University of Virginia*

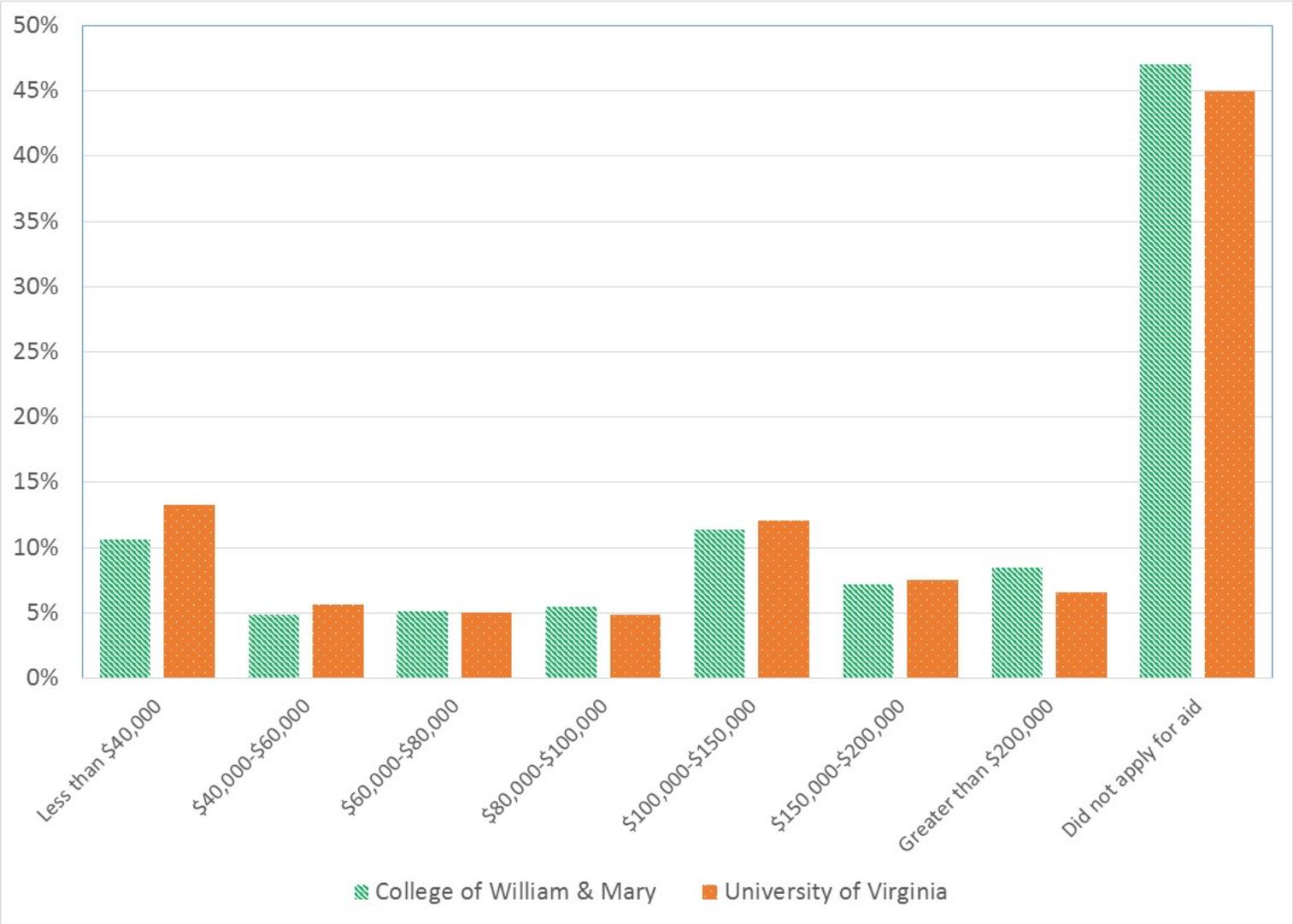
# Why should the Board of Visitors of the College of William & Mary care about “economic diversity”?

3. Published numbers appearing in places like the *New York Times* for Pell share and % bottom quintile “look bad.”

2. Policy makers raise concerns when it appears that public institutions may not be “affordable” or providing “access” to all citizens

1. Recruiting a well-qualified and diverse class is an investment in academic quality. Excellence and equity need not be tradeoffs.

# Distribution of In-State Undergraduates



# Definition

- What is (or should be) meant by economic diversity in college enrollment?
- To what extent does the pool of students matriculating at a college match the pool of students in a college's "market"?
  - "Market" is linked to mission, academic range and geography

# Metrics and Measures

Good measure: Capture enrollment at different levels of income relative to “market”

- Distinguish in-state vs out-of-state
- Limit pool to achievement eligible

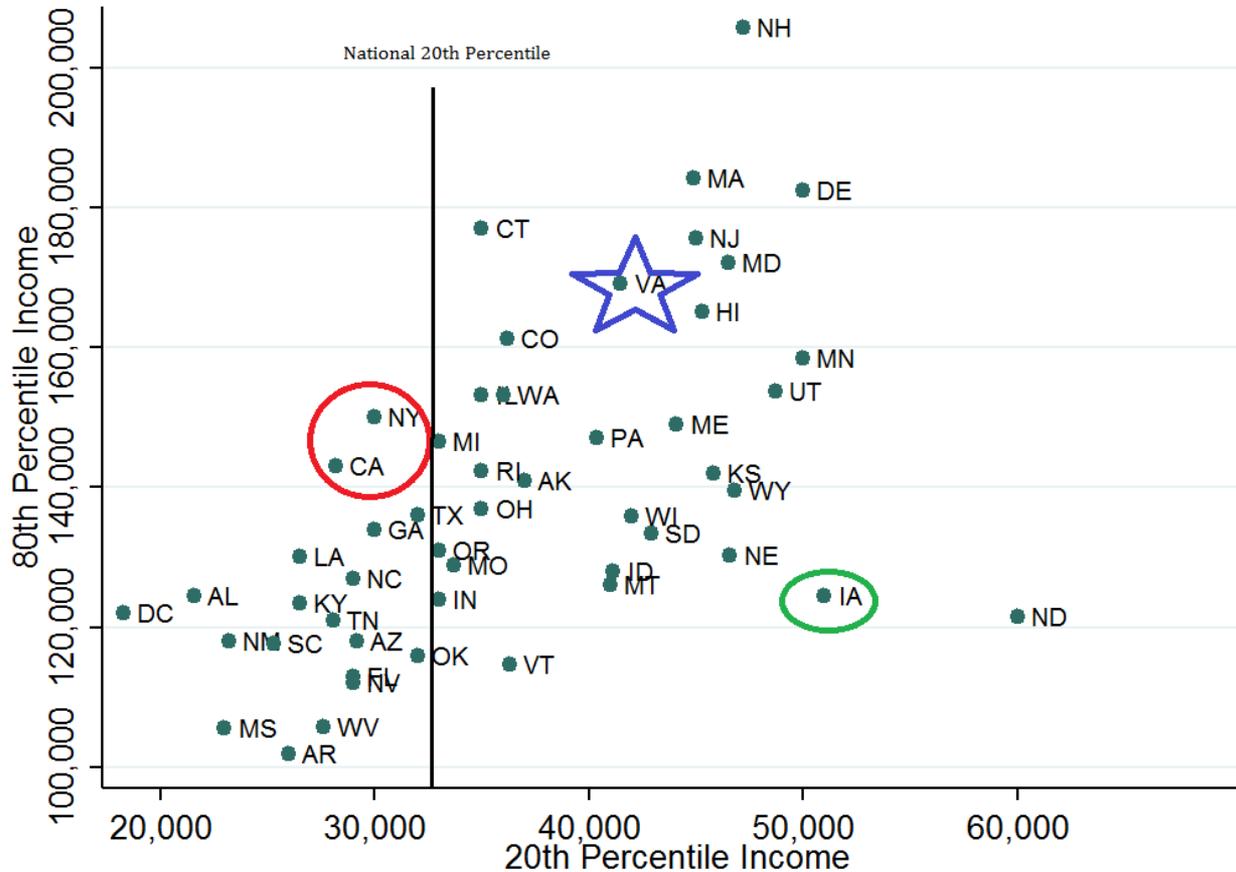
Flawed Measures:

- i) Pell shares
- ii) Percent bottom quintile of national distribution (Chetty, *New York Times*)

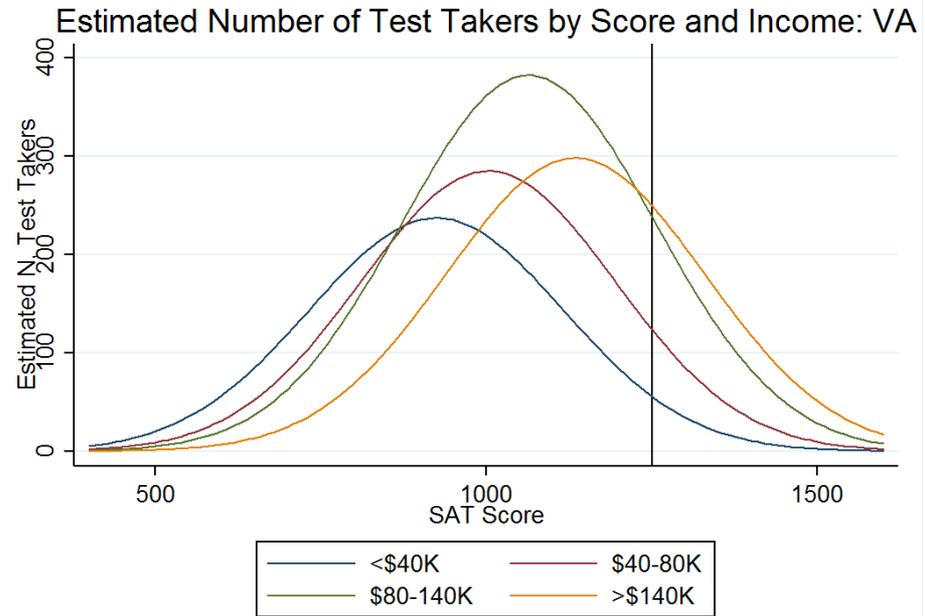
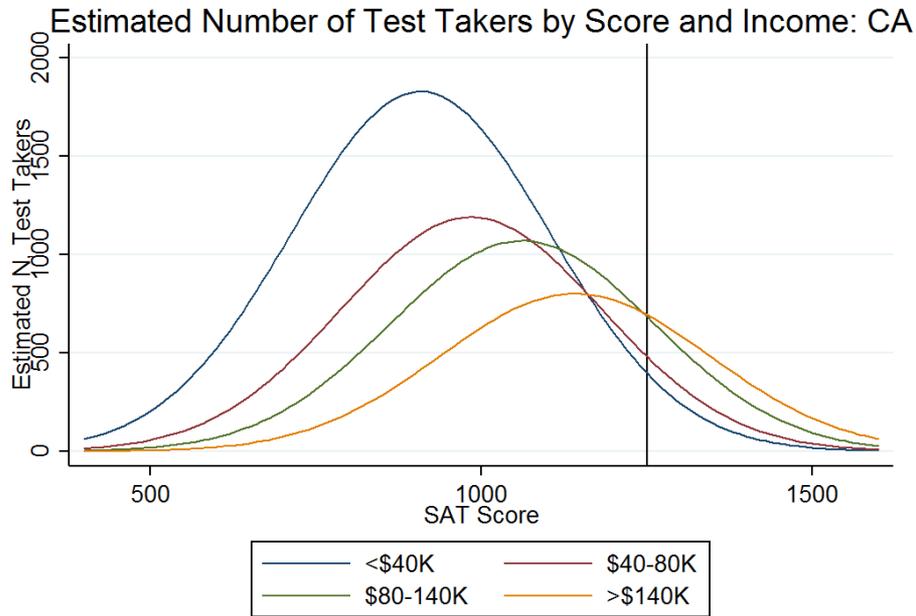
# Problems with “Common” Metrics

- Typically capture differences in state-local income distributions, not success of institutional policy
- Colleges and universities differ in ways that make cross-institution comparisons misleading:
  - Percent out-of-state
  - Percent independent
  - Academic preparation required for success
- Need to examine the distribution not just thresholds
  - More well-prepared students in the “near poor” range
  - Problem of distorting recruiting around threshold

# Differences in Income Distribution by State Families with 15-17 Child

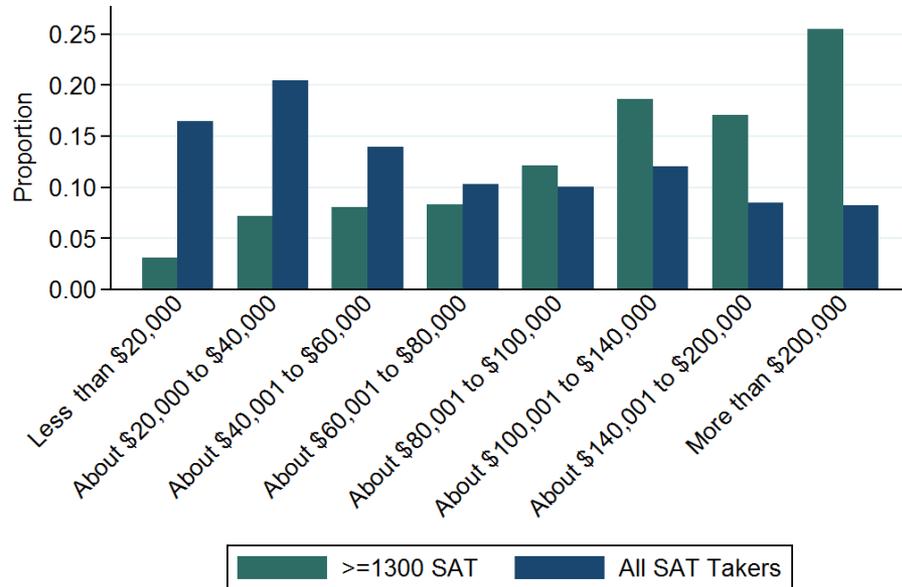


# Achievement and Income California and Virginia

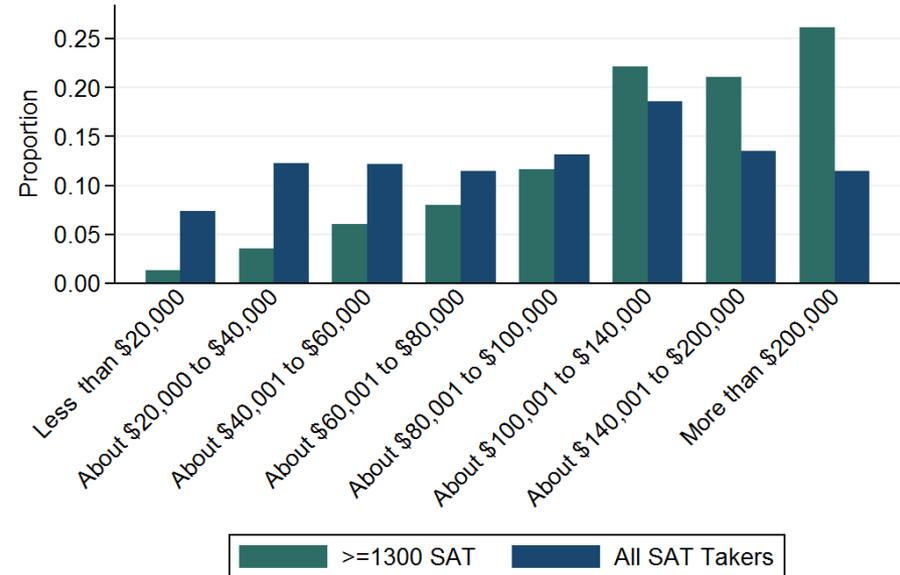


# Compare California and Virginia

## Income Distribution of SAT Test Takers: CA



## Income Distribution of SAT Test Takers: VA



# Understanding Causes, Considering Strategies

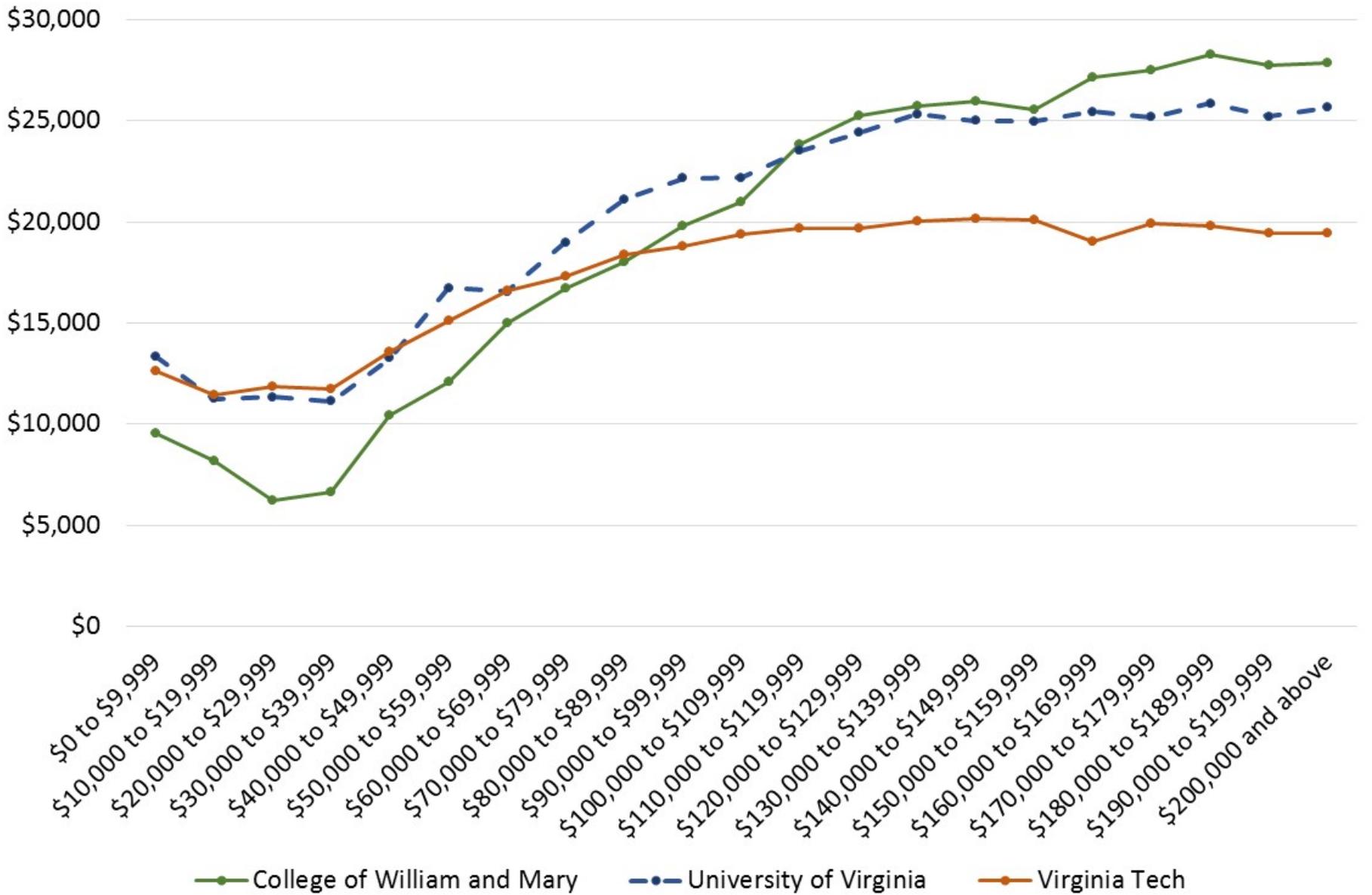
## *Attracting students in the existing market*

- *Net price*: Not binding given W&M aid, but information may be issue
- *Application strategies*: Consider UM example (“HAIL Scholars”)
- *Preferences*: Students or their parents may not think W&M a “fit”

## *Expanding the pool*

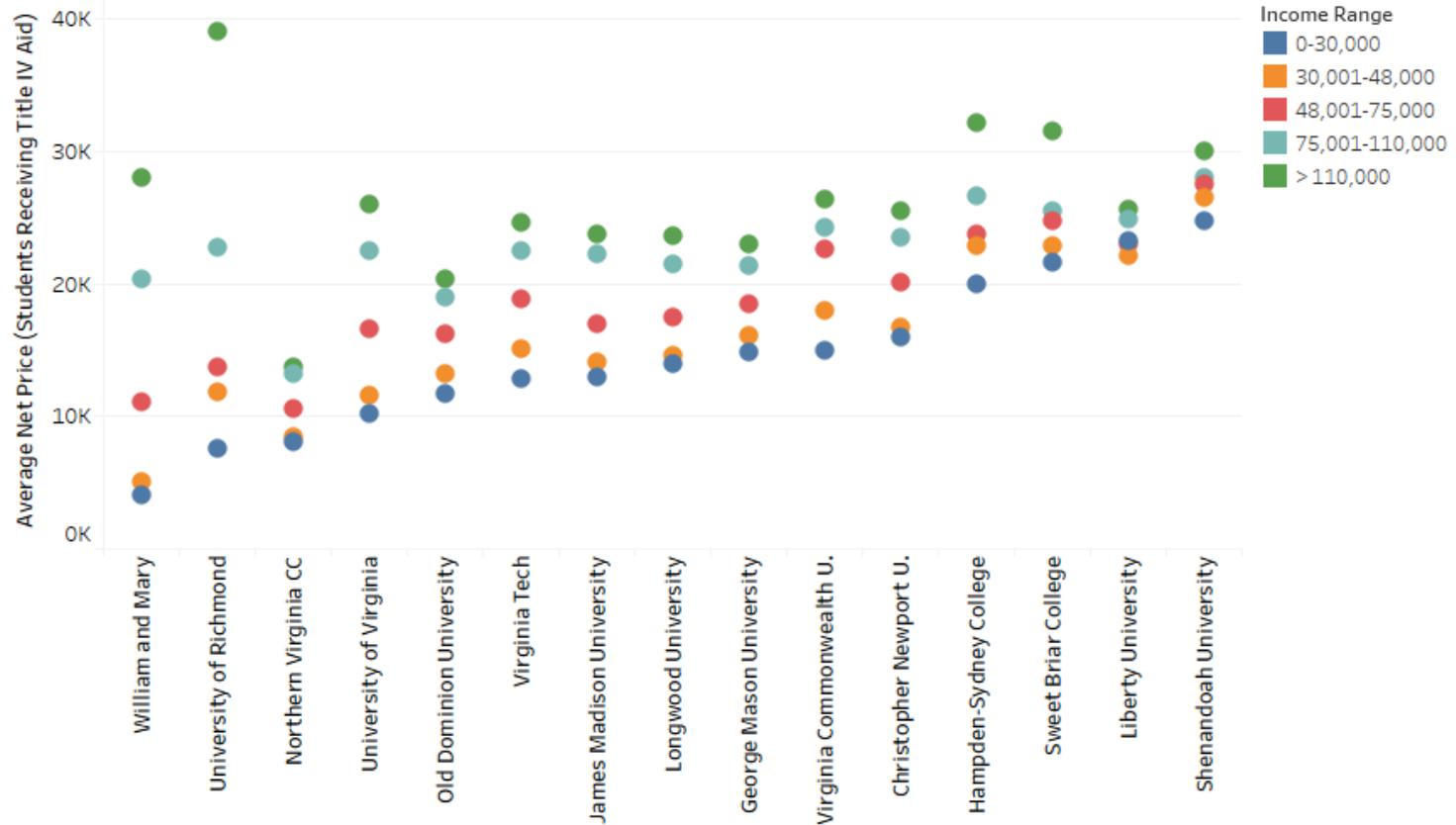
- Do some high-ability in-state students “fall off” academically between 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade? Can these behaviors be changed?
  - Note that W&M is not well positioned to “fix” this problem statewide
- Are there well-qualified community college transfer students from low- and moderate income families to recruit?
- Are there well-qualified out-of-state students from low- and moderate income families to recruit? Can W&M afford this strategy?

### Net Price by Family Income Range, In-state Students, SCHEV Data



# Net Price by Income

## Federal Data



# University of Michigan

## (Dynarski Experiment, HAIL Scholars)

- Promise of full tuition and fees for 4 years at UM conditional on admission, essentially existing aid
- Information delivered as student packet, letter to parents, letter to high school principal
- Provided to free lunch-eligible juniors in MI public schools who meet ACT/GPA requirements defined by UM
  - 43 ppt increase in application rate relative to control
  - 15 ppt increase in matriculation rate

Why couldn't this be done in Virginia?

**Answer: Data availability. All HS students take ACT in MI.**

# Takeaways & Next Steps

Recruit low- and moderate-income students for the benefit of the College of William & Mary

- Choose sensible measures rather than distorting behavior
- Monitor and evaluate the strategies chosen

Encourage SCHEV to compute and disseminate sensible measures of representation by income

Stay the course of William & Mary Promise!