

REACHING HIGHER, DELIVERING VALUE

A State Agenda to Increase the Value of Higher Education in Indiana



INDIANA COMMISSION *for*
HIGHER EDUCATION



COMPLETION



COMPETENCY



CAREER

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



The Indiana Commission for Higher Education presents its third strategic plan, *Reaching Higher, Delivering Value*, a bold agenda focused on increasing the value of higher education for the individual and the state. This guiding document reflects our commitment to a student-focused, mission-driven and work-force-aligned system of higher education as we continue to strive toward Indiana's big goal: at least 60 percent of Hoosiers with education beyond high school by the year 2025.

The three sections of the plan—**Completion**, **Competency** and **Career**—outline specific strategies designed to ensure that all Hoosier students have a clear path to college and career success while addressing key questions related to college value in the 21st Century: How do we keep more students on track to graduate with minimal debt? What do postsecondary degrees and credentials tell us about what students have learned and are able to do? How can we ensure that Hoosier students are prepared to succeed in fulfilling careers that support a stronger Indiana?

The Commission developed this plan with input from Indiana's higher education community, business leaders and state policymakers. We appreciate their ongoing counsel and essential partnership in achieving the promise of *Reaching Higher, Delivering Value*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Bland".

Dennis Bland, Chair

MISSION

The Indiana Commission for Higher Education is a 14-member public body created in 1971 to define the missions of Indiana's colleges and universities, plan and coordinate the state's postsecondary education system, and ensure that Indiana's higher education system is aligned to meet the needs of students and the state.

MEMBERS

The Commission includes representatives from each Congressional district, three at-large members, a college faculty representative and a college student representative.

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1st District

Michael "Jud" Fisher
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At-Large Member

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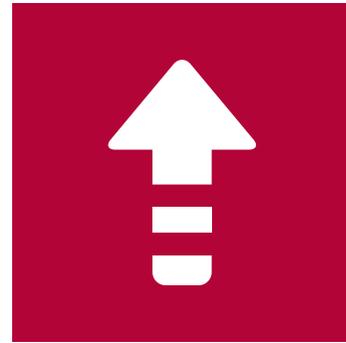
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Reaching Higher, Delivering Value

Reaching Higher, Delivering Value builds on Indiana’s commitment to establish one of the best and most student-centered higher education systems in the nation. With clear goals and aligned metrics reflecting past progress and new realities, this strategic plan charts a bold course between now and 2020 toward Indiana’s goal of: 1) **closing the college completion achievement gap** and 2) **increasing the number of Hoosiers with quality education and training beyond high school to 60 percent of the state’s population by 2025.**

CORE Strategies

KEY Metrics

COMPLETION

GOAL: By 2020, Indiana students will have clear and affordable paths to timely college completion that include purposeful planning, rigorous preparation and proactive support.

1.	Increase college affordability through simplified saving, reduced college costs and student-friendly financial practices.	Percentage of total college costs financed through student loan debt.
2.	Improve college readiness through more rigorous academic preparation and student support at key transition points.	Percentage of high school graduates who are prepared for college-level coursework.
3.	Strengthen student support through guided pathways and proactive advising practices that keep students on track to graduate.	Percentage of students who complete college (and percent completing on time).

CORE Strategies

KEY Metrics

COMPETENCY

GOAL: By 2020, Indiana college degree programs will have clearly defined student learning outcomes, comparable measures of student learning and flexible options for accelerated completion.

1.	Define learning outcomes for college programs in clear, consistent terms that are transparent to students and are aligned with the expectations of employers and continued education.	Percentage of graduates who say their college prepared them well for life outside of college.
2.	Measure student learning consistently, continuously and transparently with a multi-faceted approach that includes assessments and portfolios of student work.	Percentage of college graduates who demonstrate mastery of core competencies on comparable measures of student learning outcomes.
3.	Encourage innovative competency-based approaches that free colleges and students from the traditional restrictions of credit hours and academic calendars.	Percentage of college students enrolled in competency-based education programs.

CORE Strategies

KEY Metrics

CAREER

GOAL: By 2020, Indiana high school and college graduates will engage in intentional career preparation as a core component of their education experience.

1.	Ensure intentional career planning from K-12 through college completion.	Percentage of graduates who start and finish in the same college meta-major (grouping of related college majors).
2.	Integrate workplace experiences in high school and college that help students apply their learning, connect with employers and develop marketable skills.	Percentage of graduates who complete an internship or related workplace experience during college.
3.	Streamline job placement practices that smooth college graduates’ transition to careers and advanced education.	Percentage of alumni who say their college helped them find their first job after graduation.

Reaching Higher, Delivering Value will be supported by the **Indiana College Value Index**—a first-in-the-nation effort designed to help Hoosiers get the best possible return on their higher education investment.

A Decade of Reaching Higher in Indiana

Reaching Higher

In 2008, Indiana's first *Reaching Higher* strategic plan signaled a significant shift in focus—from college access to completion. While Indiana's longtime emphasis on expanding access had proved remarkably effective at enrolling record numbers of Hoosiers in college, it had not been nearly as successful at getting students to graduate. *Reaching Higher* refocused attention on student success and accelerated momentum to align Indiana's higher education system to meet the needs of the state's economy.

Reaching Higher, Achieving More

In 2012, Indiana built upon the strong foundation of the original plan with *Reaching Higher, Achieving More*, rallying Hoosiers around the big goal of increasing the proportion of adults with quality education and training beyond high school to 60 percent of the state's population by 2025. *Reaching Higher, Achieving More* charted a clear vision for increasing college **completion**, promoting increased **productivity** to safeguard college affordability, and ensuring academic **quality**.

Indiana's Record of Reaching Higher

Indiana's era of reaching higher has been based on a belief in measurable results and a philosophy of shared responsibility—between the state, Indiana colleges and Hoosier students. Together, Indiana has:

- **Paid for performance** with a higher education funding formula that drives dollars to colleges that increase completion, graduate more students on time, produce in-demand degrees and close the achievement gap for at-risk students—a change that has produced thousands of additional degrees in the past five years.
- **Strengthened student financial aid** with clearer college-readiness and credit completion expectations—changes that have achieved double-digit improvements in the percentage of financial aid recipients taking and completing the minimum number of courses needed to graduate on time.
- **Removed barriers to completion** with streamlined degree requirements and clear semester-by-semester degree maps that eliminate excess credits and keep students on track to graduate—changes estimated to save students and taxpayers more than \$35 million a year.
- **Redesigned remediation** by replacing non-credit remedial courses with a “co-requisite” model that combines direct placement in college-level courses with extra academic support—a change that has nearly doubled student pass rates in first-year math and English courses.
- **Simplified college transfer** by creating a state-wide transfer core and seamless transfer pathways accepted by Indiana colleges—changes that save Hoosiers time and money and prevent students from retaking comparable courses at different campuses.
- **Controlled college costs** by holding increases in tuition and fees to their lowest levels in decades and requiring truth-in-lending disclosures—changes that have resulted in double-digit decreases in student borrowing at Indiana campuses.

Reaching Higher, Delivering Value

During the decade since *Reaching Higher* and *Reaching Higher, Achieving More* were adopted, there has been unprecedented attention on higher education issues in Indiana, and Hoosiers have witnessed a growing momentum to establish one of the best and most student-focused higher education systems in the country.

Indiana's third strategic plan, *Reaching Higher, Delivering Value*, reflects this important progress, but it also responds to a troubling question that has been posed with increasing regularity by everyone from parents to policymakers: "Is College Still Worth It?" The indisputable answer is, yes, higher education is more important than ever, but there are ways for students and colleges to increase its value to Hoosiers and the state.

Reaching Higher, Delivering Value tackles these issues head on—setting a bold course between now and 2020 toward Indiana's big 2025 goal—with a vision to provide every Hoosier with clearer and more direct paths to timely college **completion**, quality **competency**-based credentials that deliver the learning outcomes students need and employers expect, and purposeful **career** preparation that equips graduates for fulfilling employment and lifelong learning.

The Complicating Question of Value

By any meaningful measure, higher education has never been more essential—incomes are higher, job security is greater, health is better and civic engagement is stronger for college graduates.

Even with these overwhelming benefits, higher education's value proposition and the path to Indiana's 60 percent attainment goal are complicated by legitimate concerns: disparities in college graduation rates between student demographic groups, unacceptable levels of student loan debt and nagging questions about whether Indiana graduates are equipped to meet the demands of a 21st century economy.

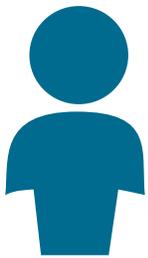


Reaching Higher, Delivering Value recognizes that overcoming these challenges depends on not only a strong partnership between Indiana colleges and the state but also on establishing deeper connections and more meaningful collaboration at both ends of the education continuum—the K-12 schools that prepare future college students to complete education beyond high school and the business, government and community champions that hire and inspire college graduates to live in, work in and contribute to a stronger Indiana.

Reaching Higher, Delivering Value

Indiana's Guiding Principles

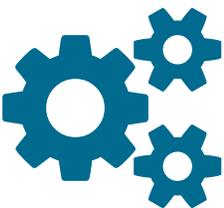
Though much has changed in higher education, three core principles continue to guide the work of the Commission and its collaborative partnership with the state's colleges and universities today:



1. Student-centered, recognizing the changing needs and demographics of Hoosier students and placing students at the center of each and every effort.



2. Mission-driven, recognizing Indiana's diverse landscape of public and private postsecondary institutions, each filling a distinct but integrated role within the higher education system.



3. Workforce-aligned, recognizing the increasing knowledge, skills and degree attainment needed for lifetime employment and ensuring Indiana's economic competitiveness.

Reaching Higher, Delivering Value

Indiana's Changing Higher Education Landscape

Throughout the Commission's 45-year history, a clear focus on mission differentiation has framed the perspective on how students are best served and how resources are best used by Indiana's higher education system. Given the rapidly changing landscape of higher education in recent years, it is important to consider: **What does mission differentiation look like in 2016?** Answering this question today requires both a reaffirmation and reconsideration of the historical missions and alignment of Indiana's colleges and universities, including:

- A statewide **community college system** that provides sub-baccalaureate degrees and other career training aligned with regional economic needs.
- A system of **regional campuses** that provides a lower-cost, close-to-home option for baccalaureate and advanced degrees for traditional, non-traditional and transfer students.
- **Comprehensive institutions** that provide strong undergraduate and graduate education in a residential campus setting.
- **Research institutions** that strengthen the state's economy through academic excellence, innovation, entrepreneurship and production of high-impact advanced degrees.

Building a stronger higher education system that delivers even greater value to Hoosiers requires:

- **Community colleges** that respond to regional labor market needs with programs that address shortage areas, graduate the majority of students and lead to gainful employment.
- **Regional campuses** that guide and support area students—with a special focus on first-generation and returning adult students—to graduation in close collaboration with regional employers and economic development needs.
- **Comprehensive institutions** with academic specialties and focused online options that draw students from within their region, across the state and beyond.
- **Research institutions** that maximize student learning and the impact of research funding through increased collaboration and leveraging each institution's sector strength.

Delivering on this promise will require unprecedented collaboration and agility across Indiana's higher education system.

Reaching Higher, Delivering Value

Indiana's Commitment to College Consumers

Indiana's policy agenda has been built on a commitment to using compelling data to increase transparency, inform practice and drive change for the benefit of all Hoosiers, including a series of consumer-friendly reports that spotlight progress at each stage of the postsecondary pipeline:

- **College Readiness Reports** that show where Indiana high school graduates go to college, whether they're prepared for college-level coursework and how they're performing.
- **College Completion Reports** that show how many Indiana college students graduate, how long it takes them to earn their degrees and where there are gaps in student achievement.
- **Return on Investment (ROI) Reports** that show how much college costs by campus, the average student debt, and the job prospects and earning potential associated with different degrees.



Reaching Higher, Delivering Value builds on this foundation with the **Indiana College Value Index**—a first-in-the-nation effort that leverages the best quantitative and qualitative data available to help Hoosiers answer the most fundamental questions in higher education today:

- **Will I graduate?**
- **Will I learn what I need to know?**
- **Will I find fulfilling employment?**

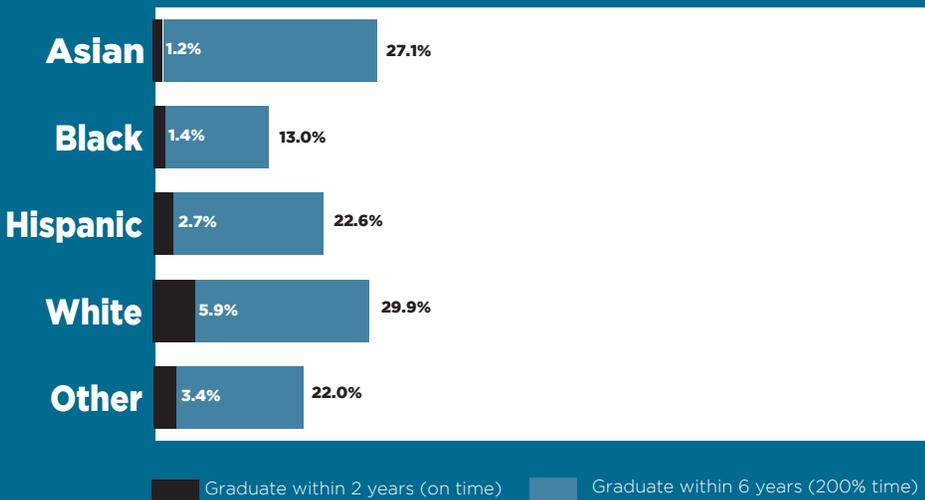
Ensuring that every Hoosier student can answer these questions with a resounding YES is the goal of *Reaching Higher, Delivering Value*.

Closing the Completion Gap

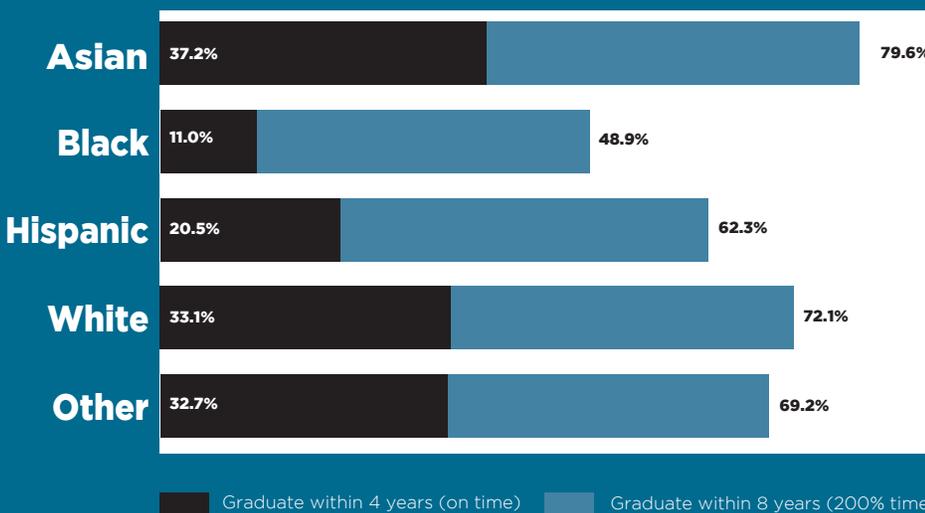
College completion rates in Indiana have shown signs of improvement in recent years across all student demographic groups, but significant achievement gaps remain between student populations by both income-level and race/ethnicity across the state's two- and four-year campuses.

Indiana is committed to closing these unacceptable disparities in college completion that create inequities in the economic well-being and opportunities afforded to all Hoosiers.

TWO-year colleges



FOUR-year colleges



In 2013, the Commission sent a strong signal in this regard with a public resolution to eliminate the completion gap between Indiana's underrepresented populations and the overall student population by 2025.

This goal was accompanied by a call for Indiana's colleges and universities to set targets for closing the achievement gaps on their campuses and a commitment by the Commission to:

1. Publish college completion rates for all student demographic groups annually at the state and campus levels and
2. Spotlight successful strategies and practices for closing the completion gap on an ongoing basis.

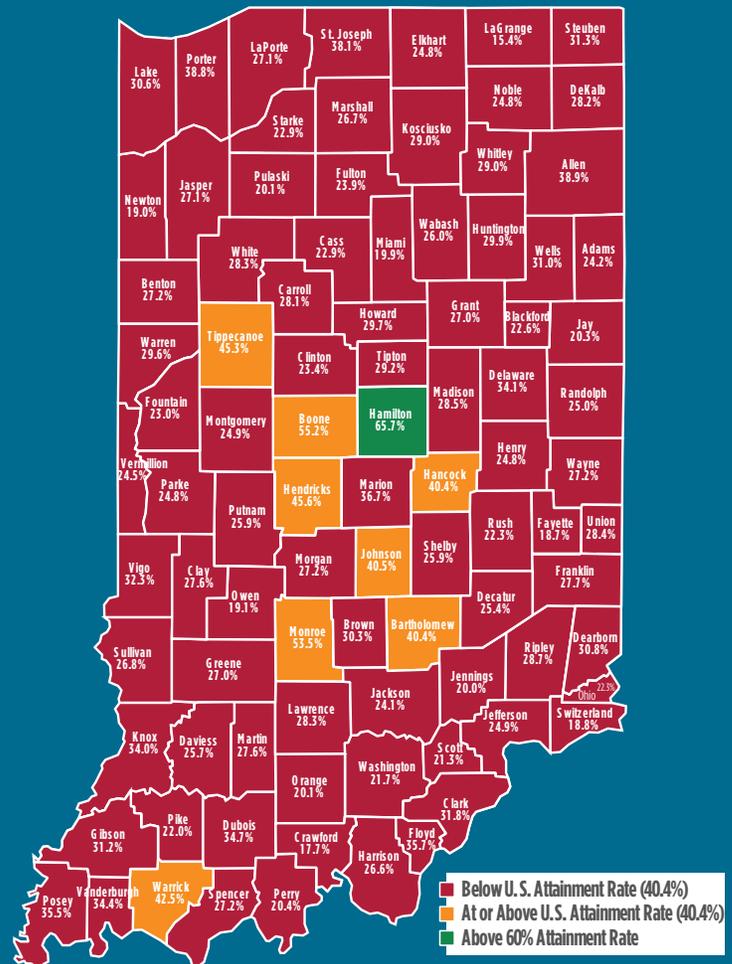
Reaching the Big Goal

Indiana's education attainment rate remains below the national average (40.4%) with just over a third (35.9%) of Hoosiers having completed an Associate degree or higher. Despite marginal improvement in recent years, Indiana consistently ranks in the bottom 10-12 states with respect to the education level of its citizens. Even with a commitment to include quality certificates and workforce credentials that are not currently measured by U.S. Census data, a significant gap remains between where Indiana is today and where the state needs to be. Recent analysis indicates that the inclusion of certificates would increase Indiana's overall attainment rate to approximately 41%, a significant improvement but still well short of the state's big 60% attainment goal.

A closer look reveals the extent of the challenge: only one of Indiana's 92 counties has reached the 60% goal and only nine counties are above the national average. To remain competitive in a 21st century economy, Indiana must dramatically increase the rate at which Hoosiers are completing higher education.

Rallying Communities around the Big Goal

The Commission is rallying communities around the common cause of reaching the big goal by supporting the development of College Success Coalitions in all 92 counties. More than three-quarters of Indiana counties have formed a coalition with member organizations representing local businesses, government, colleges, schools, community groups, youth-serving organizations, service clubs, community foundations, faith-based organizations and more. Collectively, these county coalitions have recruited more than 2,000 local organizations and implemented nearly 4,000 activities to help Hoosiers of all ages further their education. The collective impact of grassroots efforts such as these are a critical strategy in achieving the goals of *Reaching Higher, Delivering Value*.



COMPLETION



**All students deserve a clear and
affordable path to college
completion.**

Completion



At a time when higher education has never been more essential, the hard truth today is that many students who start college never finish.

Only a third of Indiana’s four-year college students graduate on time and less than two-thirds finish within six years. The challenge is even greater at Indiana two-year colleges where fewer than 1 in 10 students graduate on time and fewer than 2 in 10 finish within three years. A closer look reveals even more troubling gaps in graduation rates across all Indiana campuses among low-income, first-generation and minority students.

Indiana is by no means alone in confronting a nationwide college completion challenge. But, that provides little comfort in a state that already lags behind most states in terms of education attainment. The good news is that more Hoosier students are completing college—across all demographic groups—and more are graduating on time. In the past five years (2009-2014), Indiana four-year public colleges saw an overall increase in on-time completion of approximately 7 percentage points, while two-year campuses experienced a one percentage point gain.

Despite this progress, college completion remains at the core of Indiana’s higher education agenda and significant work lies ahead. To help more Hoosiers graduate, Indiana must double-down on its commitment to removing roadblocks that throw students off track and impede their path to completion. This requires a comprehensive approach that begins long before students set foot on campus and continues through to commencement with strategies that:

1. **Ensure college is affordable** for all Hoosier students by simplifying saving practices, reducing college costs and promoting student-friendly financial practices.
2. **Increase college readiness** by improving student preparation, smoothing key transitions and boosting statewide capacity to deliver quality college-prep programming.
3. **Strengthen student support** by scaling proven approaches that keep all students on track to graduate, with targeted support for at-risk and adult learners.

WHY IT MATTERS

A Student Perspective

Growing up in a low-income, single-parent home, Tonya Hall jumped at the opportunity to become a 21st Century Scholar in 7th grade. The promise of a full scholarship motivated Tonya to excel in high school and become the first in her family to go to college.

A summer bridge program at Indiana State University helped Tonya transition to college. Through the program, Tonya moved onto campus and took classes the summer before her freshman year—helping her adjust to her new surroundings and build relationships with faculty and staff. Toward the end of her freshman year, Tonya knew she wasn’t happy

“College... teaches you the skills you need to be successful in life.”

with her chosen major, and she relied on ISU staff to help her find a better fit and stay on track to graduate in four years.

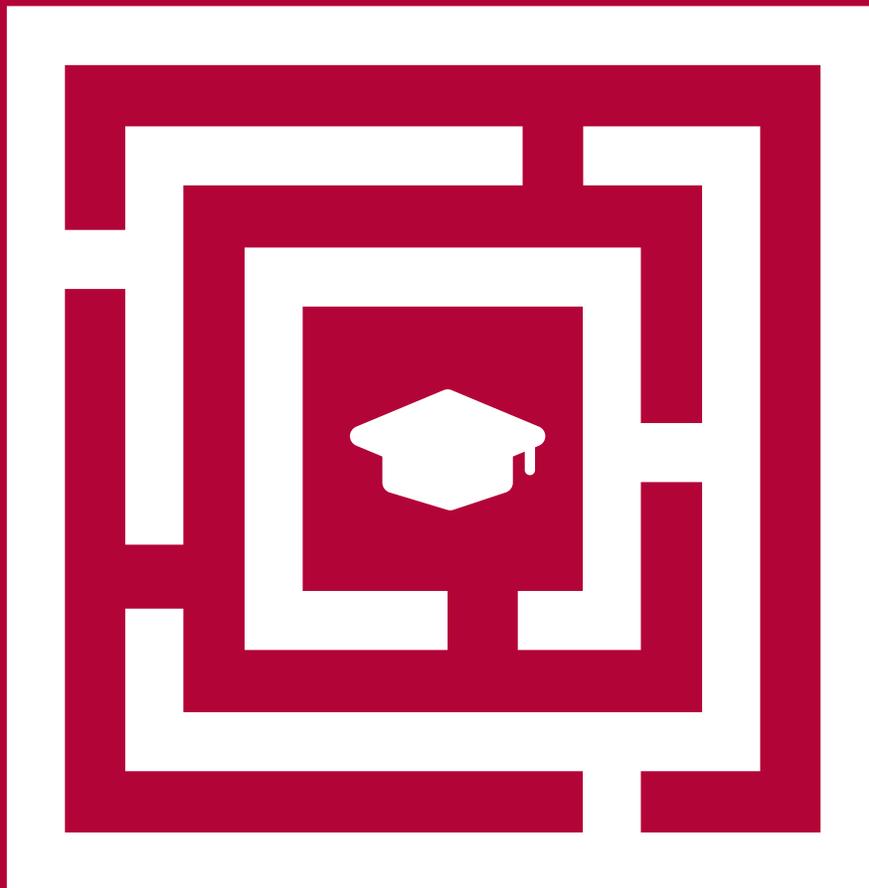
“College opened my eyes to different people and helped me become a lifelong learner,” Tonya said. “College teaches you more than just academic content; it teaches you the skills you need to be successful in life.”

Tonya graduated from ISU with a Bachelor’s degree in Communications and a Master’s degree in Student Affairs. Today Tonya uses her higher education and personal experience in her work as the Director of 21st Century Scholars Office at Marian University—helping the next generation of Scholars fulfill the promise of a college degree.

Today's College Completion Maze

For many Hoosier students today, the path to and through college is a confusing maze that all too often ends with debt and no degree.

1. **College Saving:** How much should I save? Will it be enough?
2. **College Planning:** What are my interests? What are my talents? What courses should I take?
3. **College Selection:** How do I choose a college? What should I study? What credential do I need?
4. **College Transition:** How do I adjust to college? Where do I go for help?
5. **College Completion:** What major should I choose? How do I stay on track to graduate?



What's Possible: A Guided Path to College Completion

Hoosier students need a clear path to college completion with more purposeful planning, rigorous preparation and proactive support every step of the way.



1. **Simplified Saving:** Parents of young children are prompted to open a college savings account and given clear guidance on how much to save based on income and academic goals.
2. **Purposeful Planning:** K-12 students learn how to plan, prepare and pay for college and careers as an integrated part of their core curriculum.
3. **Simplified Selection:** High school students explore how well potential college choices align with their interest areas and family finances as a precursor to the college application process.
4. **Seamless Transition:** First-year college students and returning adults have structured transitional support in the form of a summer bridge program, first-year experience course or related programming.
5. **On-time Completion:** Customized degree maps seamlessly integrate with guided course selection and “one click” registration and proactive advising that keeps students on track for graduation.

Increasing College Affordability

Many of the questions about the value of higher education today are rooted in concerns about why college costs so much and anxiety about how families can afford to pay for it.

More than three-quarters of Americans today do not believe education beyond high school is affordable for everyone who needs it. At one time, many college students could afford to pay as they go—now most rely on borrowing. Today, nearly two-thirds of Indiana college students finish with debt; average loan debt has reached nearly \$30,000 per student and average loan amounts have increased 50 percent in the past decade alone.

Anticipating the cost of college is hard for most families to understand with unpredictable increases in tuition and fees, other less-obvious costs of attendance, and significant variations between the advertised sticker price and the “packaged prices” offered to some students. Saving for college—when it happens at all—is often sporadic and inadequate. Paying for college out of pocket, while once an option for the majority of students, is now mostly out of reach to all but the wealthiest families. Indiana is justifiably proud of its status as one of the nation’s most generous providers of

need-based financial aid, an approach that helps thousands of students from low-income families afford a college education every year. Yet, the current system does relatively little to help middle-class Hoosiers pay for college. As a result, most families resort to student loans—credit that is easy to get but is often crippling to pay off.

Daunting as the challenges may seem, the data suggest they are not insurmountable. Students with a savings account in their name are both more likely to attend college and to graduate. Recent state financial aid reforms and Indiana’s *15 to Finish* campaign are keeping more students on track to graduate on time and cutting the cost of college in the process. Greater financial literacy and increased truth-in-lending transparency by Indiana colleges has produced double-digit decreases in student borrowing at some campuses. Indiana must sustain and build upon these efforts to support more proactive college planning, informed-decision-making and responsible borrowing by Hoosier students.

In recognition of these challenges and opportunities, the Commission will champion state policies and local practices that promote greater college affordability, including the following:

Increase College Saving

1. Champion state policies and local practices that encourage early and ongoing contributions to college 529 savings plans, including streamlined options for Hoosiers to dedicate state tax refunds to an Indiana college 529 savings plan.
2. Measure and publicly report student participation rates in college 529 savings plans in school reporting and the Indiana College Readiness Reports.
3. Provide greater transparency in college costs related to tuition discounting and institutional aid.

4. Explore college affordability strategies for middle-class Hoosiers, including clear benchmarks for college saving and shifting reliance on student debt.
5. Encourage more Indiana employers to offer their employees up-front tuition support, tuition reimbursement and matching contributions to college savings plans.

Reduce College Costs

6. Promote adoption of banded tuition structures that encourage students to take 15 credits per semester.
7. Leverage technology and on-line options to bring down the cost of learning materials and instructional costs.
8. Enhance state's Return on Investment reporting to increase transparency on the elements of college costs beyond tuition and fees, including books and room and board.
9. Promote institutional analysis and action plans to address gaps in student support, e.g., affordable transportation and close-to-campus childcare.

10. Increase access to a range of accelerated, online and competency-based options that enable students to attend college full time, balance work and family obligations and graduate faster.
11. Allow state financial aid to be used on an accelerated timeline for students in accelerated and competency-based degree programs.

Promote Student-Friendly Practices

12. Consider aligning Indiana's financial aid filing deadline with the federal tax-filing deadline, and encourage financial aid-filing assistance partnerships with tax preparers and other financial institutions.
13. Integrate financial literacy courses and instruction as required components of the core curricula for all Indiana high school and college students.
14. Increase student awareness and participation in income-based repayment and public service loan forgiveness programs for federal student loans.

The cost of college in Indiana has increased by more than **70% since **2000**.**

(The Institute for College Access & Success, 2015)

Tuition and fees account for only **about half of the total cost of college attendance.**

(The Institute for College Access & Success, 2015)

Nearly **2/3 of Indiana college students finish with debt and average loan debt has reached nearly **\$30,000** per student.**

(The Institute for College Access & Success, 2015)

Improving College Readiness

Indiana's success in increasing college access is marked by a growing recognition that "college-bound" often does not mean "college-ready."

Hoosier high school graduation rates are at an all-time high and Indiana's college-going rate—which once lagged behind most states—is now above the national average. Yet, a closer look at Indiana's college-going data reveals serious gaps in academic preparation for recent high school graduates, particularly in mathematics. More than a quarter of Indiana's college-prep diploma graduates today require remedial coursework in college. Readiness rates are even lower for students who graduate with the state's minimum high school diploma, nearly two-thirds of whom require remediation.

Hoosiers who leave high school lacking basic math and English skills are placed at a serious disadvantage. They are far less likely to complete a college degree or workforce credential and have fewer prospects for meaningful employment and career advancement. Indiana's college-readiness challenges are not limited to academic preparation alone, however. Many Hoosiers, especially students from low-income backgrounds and those who

are the first in their families to go to college, lack adequate college planning support, struggle to navigate the college testing, financial aid and admission processes, and often make uninformed or ill-advised decisions about where they choose to continue their education, what they study and what credential they pursue.

With a statewide student-to-counselor ratio that has grown to more than 600 to 1 in Indiana high schools today, it's clear that traditional guidance models are not sufficient at a time when purposeful planning for postsecondary education has become a necessity for all students. Indiana must take a more intentional, consistent and comprehensive approach to college preparation, from integrating college-readiness concepts into core classroom subjects and diploma requirements to engaging a broader base of business and community champions who can extend college-readiness experiences beyond the school counselor's office.

In recognition of these challenges and opportunities, the Commission will champion state policies and local practices that increase college readiness, including the following:

Improve Student Preparation

1. Establish a more academically rigorous high school diploma, including the completion of four years of high school math for all students.
2. Align high school math content and course sequences with the expectations of college programs of study and employers.
3. Encourage Indiana colleges to make four years of high school math an admissions requirement for recent high school graduates.
4. Incorporate a broader range of college-readiness measures into annual school performance reports and high school accountability measures, including student financial aid filing, 21st Century Scholar participation and postsecondary remediation rates.

Smooth College-Readiness Transitions

5. Integrate Indiana's Scholar Success Program expectations for 21st Century Scholars into high school graduation requirements for all students.
6. Support more intentional college and career planning by making the state's "Preparing for College & Careers" and "Personal Financial Responsibility" courses part of the state's high school diploma.
7. Explore transitioning from current state high school assessments to national college entrance exams to simplify the testing process, reduce test administration costs and better identify students for remediation interventions and advanced college-level coursework.
8. Expand statewide access and student participation in summer bridge programs and related experiences that prepare recent high school graduates to transition to college successfully.

Expand College-Readiness Capacity

9. Collaborate with teacher preparation programs to better integrate college and career planning content and best practices into educator and school counselor programs.
10. Address teacher shortages in high-need areas by recruiting retired educators, offering differentiated pay for current teachers and providing release time for qualified employees in non-teaching professions.
11. Expand statewide capacity for earning college credit in high school, including dual credit, Advanced Placement and career and technical education programs.
12. Encourage community engagement and investment in pre-college preparation and student support programs, including Indiana's network of College Success Coalitions and College & Career Mentoring program.



More than **1/4** of Indiana high school graduates who earn the state's college-prep diploma currently require remedial coursework in college. (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2016)

Nearly **2/3** of Hoosiers who graduate with the state-minimum diploma require remediation. (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2016)

Fewer than **1 in 10** remedial students nationwide graduate from community colleges within three years and little more than a third complete bachelor's degrees in six years. (Complete College America, 2012)

Strengthening Student Support

As Indiana's college-going population has become more diverse, the need for more structured support that keeps students on track for success has increased.

Significant gaps in college graduation rates exist by student income level, race and ethnicity at campuses across Indiana. For 25 years, the 21st Century Scholars program has demonstrated the state's commitment to closing these education attainment gaps. The promise of four years of paid college tuition has helped nearly 70,000 low-income Hoosiers pursue higher education. Scholars now enroll in college at greater rates than their peers across all income levels—but far too many never graduate.

Efforts to increase Scholar success rates have ramped up in recent years, coupling financial support for college with more explicit expectations and proactive interventions. Many of the practices that are proving effective for Scholars could benefit all students—approaches that simplify choices, streamline processes and target support to students when they need it.

At the same time, some at-risk populations benefit from policies and practices that are often at odds with what traditional students want or expect. Because returning adults and commuter students must often balance school and work with family responsibilities, they need more flexible on-line options and on-campus classes condensed to as few days as possible without long breaks in between. These students also need courses offered at consistent times during the day or evening throughout the year—predictability that their families need and their employers expect.

Some practices work for all students, including: supportive faculty and mentors, clear maps to graduation, math requirements aligned with each college major and career path, and proactive advising at the first sign of trouble. Such approaches should be implemented fully at scale at each campus across the state.

In recognition of these challenges and opportunities, the Commission will champion state policies and local practices that strengthen student support, including the following:

Scale Guided Pathways

1. Simplify student choice by organizing programs of study around broad groupings of related majors, or meta-majors, that help students narrow their focus to a specific major without extending their time to graduation.
2. Encourage adoption of whole programs of study that provide a default set of recommended courses each semester and link college degree maps to course registration.
3. Ensure required math courses are aligned with college students' programs of study and career paths with quantitative reasoning as the default placement for non-technical programs.

4. Implement early-warning data systems and proactive advising practices that leverage technology to monitor student progress and proactively target interventions based on individual student need.

Support At-Risk Students

5. Extend annual Scholar Success Program expectations for 21st Century Scholars beyond high school graduation through college completion.

6. Ensure state financial aid recipients are equipped to succeed in college through consistent placement in first-year experience courses and cohort-based student learning communities.

7. Strengthen eligibility requirements and participation agreements for higher education providers that serve state financial recipients to include high-impact practices for academic advising, student-faculty engagement, financial literacy and career preparation.

8. Encourage cohort-based models and block-scheduling for degree-seeking, part-time students that ensure a more timely path to completion.

9. Encourage campuses with significant commuter-student populations to offer courses in predictable scheduling blocks that limit trips to campus, reduce down time between classes and provide greater flexibility for balancing employment and family obligations.

10. Establish a one-stop-shop model and streamlined administrative processes for returning adults, veterans and transfer students.

11. Ensure more productive college transfer by encouraging degree-seeking students to complete the general education core curriculum or an Associate degree before transferring to another college.



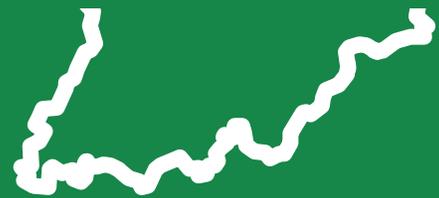
More than **750,000** Hoosier adults have some college but no degree. (Lumina Foundation for Education, 2015)

Only **14%** of graduates strongly agree they were supported by professors who cared, made them excited about learning and encouraged their dreams. (Gallup-Purdue Index, 2013)

Graduates who felt “supported” during college are **nearly 3 times** as likely to be thriving than those who didn’t feel supported. (Gallup-Purdue Index, 2013)



COMPETENCY



**Competency—what students know
and are able to do—should be the
building block of higher education.**

Competency



Learning has always been the foundation of higher education, but Hoosiers need more options to show what they know and progress as they master the material.

The traditional college degree tells society that an individual had the aptitude and perseverance required to complete a collection of credit hours and courses. Yet, what students have mastered as a result of their learning often is not particularly clear to graduates or the employers who hire them.

Competency-based approaches aim to clarify the expectations and outcomes of college credentials—while more closely aligning what employers expect with what graduates can do. Though the concept may seem simple or merely a new label for a long-standing practice, competency-based models offer new opportunities to rethink how education is designed and delivered, student learning is demonstrated and degrees are granted.

Reflecting Indiana’s commitment to a student-centered, mission-driven and workforce-aligned system of higher education, the state must:

1. **Define learning outcomes** (or competencies) for college programs in clear, consistent terms that are transparent to students and aligned with employer expectations and continued education.
2. **Measure student learning** consistently, continuously and transparently with a multi-faceted approach that includes ongoing assessment and portfolios of student work.
3. **Encourage innovative competency-based approaches** that free colleges and students from the restrictions of credit hours and traditional academic calendars.

WHY IT MATTERS

A Student Perspective

Purdue University professors have found a way to prepare students for ever-changing workforce demands. Students in the transdisciplinary program not only earn a degree and credits for coursework completed, they are guided by faculty mentors to become proficient in eight broad competencies, such as Effective Communication and Teamwork—skills that are desired by employers, but not always mastered in a traditional degree program.

Faculty mentors meet with students to develop individualized plans of study and then track student progress in each competency—rating them either developing, emerging or proficient. Students must show mastery of each competency

“What you do in life is who you are, and I want to show employers that I’m well rounded and prepared for the challenges of the workforce.”

to advance, either through experiences gained in the classroom or in extracurricular activities.

Upon completing their undergraduate programs, graduates will have an online portfolio containing their college transcript and a list of badges they earned for completing activities in each competency. AJ Hocker, a Purdue sophomore taking classes in Aeronautical Engineering Technology, Unmanned Aerial Systems and Psychology thinks his portfolio will help him stand out.

“I want potential employers to see everything I can do, not just what’s on my résumé,” said AJ. “What you do in life is who you are, and I want to show employers that I’m well rounded and prepared for the challenges of the workforce.”

Credit Hours Were Not Designed to Measure Student Learning

Hoosiers might be surprised to discover that the credit-hour system upon which higher education has operated for generations was not created to measure student learning. At the turn of the 20th century, the Carnegie Unit—created by industrialist Andrew Carnegie in collaboration with Cornell University—was designed as a standard measure of college professors’ full-time status required to receive a pension. The “credit-hour” of today is derived directly from the Carnegie Unit.

Over time, the credit hour became the proxy for student learning and the standardizing infrastructure of America’s entire higher education system, making it possible to track and organize student and faculty work across a wide array of colleges and programs.

Some argue the credit-hour system fails to provide adequate transparency about the knowledge and skills students acquire in college. These criticisms are not without merit. Whether a student completes a course having mastered some of the material or all the material, the credits awarded

are the same. Whether a student graduates at the top or bottom of the class, the credential awarded is the same.

The credit-hour system may have its limitations, but it also provides great administrative efficiency and consistency across higher education that would be time consuming, burdensome and unrealistic to eliminate outright. For that reason, Indiana will focus its efforts on:

1. Providing clearer definitions, more explicit evidence of student learning and greater flexibility for students and colleges.
2. Moving state-level policies and institutional practices beyond the credit hour to support a more flexible and student-friendly higher education system.
3. Better measuring student learning outcomes in existing credit-hour-based programs while embracing the emergence of new competency-based programs.



The credit hour was created as a measure of college professors’ full-time status to receive a pension... rather than as a measure of student learning.

A Movement Toward Competency-Based Education

Colleges across the country are building innovative programs that look beyond the limitations of the credit hour—enabling students to progress as skills are mastered and ensuring that each skill is mastered before awarding a degree. These approaches have opened the door to new possibilities for safeguarding academic quality while helping students graduate faster and at a lower cost. The U.S. Department of Education’s 2013 decision that federal financial aid could be awarded to students based on the mastery of competencies as well as credit hours was the latest acknowledgment of this new period of innovation.

So, what’s the difference between credit- and competency-based programs? Here are some common distinctions:

SIMILARITIES	Historical Approach	Modern Credit-Hour Approach	Modern Competency Approach
Focus on Learning	Learning has always been the foundation of higher education		
Assessment of Learning	Faculty have always used assessments to validate learning		
DIFFERENCES	Historical Approach	Modern Credit-Hour Approach	Modern Competency Approach
How Learning is Described	Learning outcomes included in syllabi for some courses	Learning outcomes developed at the course level for all courses and, increasingly, at the program level	Learning outcomes developed at the program level with delivery and sequencing designed around them
How Learning is Assessed	More reliance on pencil-and-paper exams and assignments	Best practice: supplement traditional exams with portfolios, project-based work and alternative assessments	Consistent use of multi-faceted assessment techniques for each competency
How Content is Delivered	More reliance on in-person lecturing	Best practice: multiple and varying delivery methods, increased use of technology	Consistent use of multiple and varying delivery methods, increased use of technology
When Students Progress	When semesters conclude, if they mastered the majority of learning outcomes	When semesters conclude, if they mastered the majority of learning outcomes	When they master learning outcomes; must master 100 percent to graduate
What Grades Represent	Combination of portion of learning outcomes mastered and level of mastery, achieved in set period of time	Combination of portion of learning outcomes mastered and level of mastery, achieved in set period of time	If used, level of mastery the student achieved across the full range of learning outcomes, achieved within whatever timeframe the student took to master them
What Faculty Do	Design curriculum and deliver course content	Handle increasingly more responsibility from course content and delivery to student advising	Faculty and staff more likely to specialize: subject matter expert, coach, assessor or curriculum designer

Source: Informed by HCM Strategists, 2015.

Defining Learning Outcomes

As more Hoosiers pursue education beyond high school, a focus on clear competencies ensures that college credentials represent the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in their careers and in life.

Competency must become a common currency that is universally understood by students, utilized by colleges and recognized by employers. This requires greater clarity and consistency as to how student learning outcomes are defined and conveyed, both the core competencies all Hoosier graduates need for success in the 21st century as well as those competencies that are distinct among programs and disciplines.

Traditional programs have long established learning outcomes, built at the course level then aggregated by program. An emerging practice reverses this process, first establishing program-level competencies and then building academic delivery around them. Regardless of the approach,

the benefits of Indiana colleges describing competencies consistently in terms that are easily understood by students and employers are clear.

Indiana created a strong foundation on which to build when college faculty established a statewide transfer core curriculum composed of competencies every transfer student should master within 30 credit hours. This list can serve more than just transfer students. It can become the foundation for a set of skills and abilities that all Hoosier graduates should possess. By focusing intently on the goal that all graduates acquire this core set of competencies, Indiana can clearly convey—or better yet, improve—the value of its college degrees and credentials in terms of student learning.

To provide a common ground for institutions planning to create or expand competency-based options, the Commission will champion the following strategies:

1. Build on foundation of statewide transfer general education core with a set of core competencies—marketable skills that all college graduates should master.
2. Develop a clear set of competencies for all courses in the state's Core Transfer Library.
3. Expand opportunities for college faculty to collaborate with employers in workplace settings to better align curriculum and instruction.
4. Engage representatives from business and industry to ensure competencies reflect employer needs and are described in terms that resonate with employers.
5. Challenge Indiana colleges to develop degree programs that are designed around competencies rather than credit hours or courses.
6. Develop a statewide strategy to ensure that students in competency-based programs can transfer seamlessly without the need to back-map completed competencies to courses and credits.
7. Boost creation of competency-based education programs by compiling resources from national thought leaders and creating a statewide network for sharing competency best practices and collaborative problem-solving.

Measuring Student Learning

Competency-based learning enables students to progress in their programs by demonstrating what they have learned at the pace they learn it.

Letter grades have long served as a proxy for student learning, but it is not clear if a “C” means that a student mastered some competencies perfectly and others not at all or mastered each with average quality. Thought leaders in Indiana and across the country are tackling this challenge with important multi-state efforts, including the Degree Qualifications Profile, VALUE rubrics, and the Interstate Passport Initiative that are clarifying the competencies associated with different degree levels, creating consistent standards for assessing student learning outcomes and facilitating college transfer across states based on competencies.

In this era of new delivery models and accelerated degree options, clear measures of student learning are more important than ever in ensuring that innovation does not come at the expense of quality. College faculty overwhelmingly agree that the assessment of competency should take many forms. Meaningful measures of student learning

often use project-based assessments or portfolios of student work in addition to traditional assessments to provide a more comprehensive view of a student’s learning and abilities.

Such an approach to assessment could strengthen Indiana’s commitment to core competencies if faculty collaborate to determine the best way to assess the core and do so consistently for all students. This holds promise for students and employers as well, providing a ready, data-backed answer to the question: Will I learn marketable skills from my degree?

Measuring student learning using the building blocks of competencies must be coupled with recording progress based on them as well. A competency-based transcript and a super-charged résumé may well become one and the same, helping students articulate their learning to employers in ways never before possible.

The Commission will champion a statewide commitment to clear measures of student learning, including:

1. Encourage college faculty to develop consistent mechanisms for evaluating program quality in alignment with recent nationally-recognized approaches.
2. Develop a faculty-driven assessment strategy for Indiana’s core set of competencies using a multi-faceted approach, including portable e-portfolios and related evidence of student work product.
3. Adopt a statewide approach to prior learning assessments, both in terms of student awareness and support that ensures course credit and progress to completion.
4. Explore the application of competency-based models for delivering early college credit in high school.
5. Record completed competencies on high school and college transcripts as well as in state data collections.
6. Integrate and publicly report quantitative and qualitative measures of student learning as part of the Indiana College Value Index.
7. Encourage all Indiana colleges to participate in state-coordinated surveys of alumni that inform the Indiana College Value Index.

Encouraging Competency-Based Approaches

Indiana should support the development of innovative, competency-based programs that are freed from the traditional limitations of credit hours and academic calendars.

Indiana's coordinated system of higher education includes performance funding incentives for colleges and financial aid incentives for students. Each of these policies was designed to drive improvement in college completion, but both were built to fit the traditional credit-hour infrastructure.

Indiana must ensure that no state-level policy or practice is a barrier to the development of competency-based degrees that provide greater flexibility and learning opportunities for students. State performance funding metrics should reward the outcomes that competency-based education seeks to produce: enhanced academic quality, accelerated completion and stronger labor market outcomes.

Students and schools also need assurance that competency-based degrees are not incompatible with state financial aid policies and credit completion incentives.

Designing and implementing competency-based programs require colleges to invest significant time and already-stretched financial resources. The State should acknowledge these efforts and investments, and to the greatest extent possible, secure funding support to assist colleges with the start-up costs associated with developing competency-based programs. Whatever investment is made in these efforts will pay dividends for Hoosiers in terms of more efficient paths to student completion and greater quality assurance for employers.

The Commission will champion state policies and local practices that support competency-based education, including:

1. Consider college performance funding metrics that reward competency, including labor market outcomes, accelerated degree completion and academic quality.
2. Evaluate student progress for state financial aid as a percentage of program completed, not a specific number of credit hours.
3. Allow state financial aid dollars to pay fees associated with prior learning assessments to make the most efficient use of student time and taxpayer dollars.
4. Seek federal, state and philanthropic dollars to support the development and scaling of competency-based education programs.
5. Acknowledge innovation in development of competency-based education programs through annual recognition awards.
6. Report the progress of competency-based programs in Indiana College Completion Reports and Indiana College Value Index.



You Can. Go Back.

Indiana's focus on competency aligns with a critical state goal: helping the 750,000+ Hoosier adults with some college but no degree come back and finish what they started.

With \$1,000 state grants available for returning adults, Indiana's *You Can. Go Back.* campaign is reaching out to Hoosiers directly and matching them with college options that fit their needs and career aspirations. Many Indiana colleges are offering special programs and incentives—including flexible class schedules and online courses, college credit for work and military experience, grade- and debt-forgiveness programs—as well as scholarships and tuition discounts to support Hoosier adults in their journey back to college.

While not exclusively beneficial to adults, the flexibility and self-paced learning opportunities provided by competency-based programs have proved particularly popular with returning adults who must balance work and family obligations with their schooling. Moreover, adults with substantial work experience can shorten their time to

degree through prior learning assessments, particularly if costs are supported by state financial aid.

A focus on completion and career is also critically important for this population. More affordable options will be necessary for adults balancing the financial priorities of their family with the cost of returning to college. Predictable schedules and limited trips to campus will make it possible for adult students to have more time with their families while maintaining the job that supports them. An enhanced connection between higher education and Indiana employers will inherently benefit those who are already or are returning to the workforce.

You Can. Go Back. is just the first step. To fully realize the potential of this population and reach the 60 percent goal, Indiana's colleges, employers and communities must fundamentally shift their thinking about higher education to ensure it meets the needs of returning adults.





**Career preparation should be an
integral and intentional part
of a student's education.**

Career



The balance between teaching students “how to think” and equipping students to “get a job” has long been a source of tension on college campuses. Hoosiers cannot afford a focus on academic versus applied learning to be an either/or proposition.

Every student deserves the opportunity for a fulfilling career, and Indiana graduates expect that the credentials they earn will lead to meaningful employment and career advancement. But, just as the pathway to college success starts early in a child’s education, career exploration must be intentional from the beginning and career preparation should be integrated consistently across the education continuum.

In 2015, Indiana launched its inaugural *Career Ready* campaign as a call to action for educators and employers across the state to come together to ensure that Hoosier students have meaningful career experiences before graduating from high school and college. *Career Ready* is a visible example of a larger, ongoing effort to help Hoosiers at all levels know more about Indiana’s wide range

of career opportunities and in-demand jobs, the educational pathways that lead to employment, and the many workplace experiences—from job-shadowing to internships—that make them better prepared and more attractive to employers. This requires:

1. **Intentional career planning** that occurs early on, consistently and continuously—from K-12 through college completion.
2. **Integrated workplace experiences** in high school and college that help students apply their learning, connect with employers and develop marketable skills.
3. **Streamlined job placement** practices for all programs of study that smooth students’ transition from college to career and advanced education opportunities.

WHY IT MATTERS

A Student Perspective

When Salvador Espinoza’s college instructor saw the résumé he submitted for a career development assignment, she thought he lifted it from a website. It just seemed too complete and polished for an 18-year-old straight out of high school.

In the summer before his junior year of high school, Salvador had completed a six-week internship at Group Dekko, an Indiana-based manufacturing company. That led Salvador to more workplace experiences at Dekko over the next three years. Dekko’s interns gain experience in every division of the company, a process that matches students with the job roles best suited to their

“As an employer, if you’re sitting around waiting for great people to come to you, it’s just not going to happen.”

talents and helps them decide which education credential to earn after high school.

“As an employer, if you’re sitting around waiting for great people to come to you, it’s just not going to happen,” Theresa Peterson, Group Dekko Director of Human Resources, said. “We focus time and resources into building our own pool of potential employees. Investing in young people early on pays dividends long-term—in terms of employee expertise and loyalty.”

Today, Salvador is a freshman at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne studying business while working two days a week as a Group Dekko marketing intern. He’s already getting job offers from other companies, but he’s focused on finishing his degree—before starting full time at Dekko.

Today's Cracked Career Preparation Pipeline

Despite an increased emphasis on career readiness in recent years, for many students today career preparation is disjointed and inconsistent—if it happens at all.



Grades K-8

“Career Day” or related experience?
LIKELY

Ongoing career exploration?
MAYBE

Career-themed instruction in core academic subjects?
UNLIKELY

High School

College entrance exam?
LIKELY

Career assessments inform graduation plan?
MAYBE

Job shadowing, internships, etc.?
UNLIKELY

Entering College

College placement exam?
LIKELY

Career assessments inform degree plan?
MAYBE

Simplified program selection through meta-majors?
UNLIKELY

During College

Academic advising?
LIKELY

Intentional career planning?
MAYBE

Internship or related experience required for graduation?
UNLIKELY

End of College

Résumé, job search help available?
LIKELY

Ongoing surveys of alumni, employer satisfaction?
MAYBE

Intentional on-campus recruiting and interviewing for all majors?
UNLIKELY

What's Possible: A More Purposeful Approach to Career Preparation

Hoosier students need intentional, consistent and continuous career preparation from K-12 through college completion.



Grades K-8

Students are systematically exposed to a full range of potential career opportunities through well-coordinated exploration activities that include regular visits by area employers, workplace tours, career interest inventories and classroom instruction that incorporates career-focused topics and concepts.

High School

Students graduate with a meaningful diploma that integrates career assessment results, structured career exploration and intentional course-taking aligned with an identified career goal and postsecondary education plan.

Entering College

Incoming students participate in a first-year seminar course that includes built-in career assessments and labor market data to guide program selection from a handful of broad meta-majors. Students narrow and refine their course of study and career-interest focus with ongoing in-person and online advising support.

During College

Undergraduate students complete a seamless blend of academic and applied learning experiences that reflect clear competencies and result in transcripted credit. Proactive interventions occur if students deviate from their degree map or miss key career development milestones.

End of College

Graduating students participate in structured bridge programming that includes professional coaching, marketable-skill training and on-campus interviewing aligned with their core competencies and program of study. Colleges' job-placement practices are informed by ongoing surveys of alumni and employers.

Ensuring Intentional Career Planning

There is a tendency to talk about “college and career” as if these are purely sequential steps: first go to college ... then think about a career.

Perhaps it’s not surprising then that about half of college graduates say they would choose a different major or school if they could do it over again. The evidence suggests a range of benefits for students the earlier they identify a specific career goal or aspiration, including increased academic performance and persistence. In contrast, the cost of forgoing or even delaying intentional career planning is significant ... the added costs that result from multiple college major changes, the lost job opportunities and earning potential that come with extending time to degree, and the increased likelihood that a student leaves college with a collection of credits but no credential or career direction.

This problem is compounded for low-income and first-generation college students, who often have a narrow understanding of their career options. Without intentional exposure to the full range of possibilities, these students tend to have a limited career vocabulary that includes options like teacher and nurse but not related jobs like curriculum director and occupational therapist. It doesn’t have to be this way. All K-12 students could

be systematically exposed to a full range of career possibilities through career-themed instruction and exploration. In later grades, students could begin to narrow their interests with the help of career assessments, intentional course-taking and job-shadowing. By the end of high school, students could have a more-informed sense of their career direction when making decisions about where to continue their education and what to study. In college, academic advising could be complemented from the start with purposeful career planning supported by ongoing career assessment, exposure to labor market data and meta-majors (broad groupings of related college majors) that simplify program selection and reduce dramatic major changes that prevent on-time completion.

Many of these practices already exist at some level in schools and on campuses today, of course. The real issue is not whether the tools or approaches exist, but whether they are employed consistently and systematically as part of an integrated system that facilitates student exploration and informed choice.

In recognition of these challenges and opportunities, the Commission will champion state policies and local practices that promote intentional career planning at all levels, including the following:

Promote Early Career Planning

1. Encourage school districts and teacher preparation programs to incorporate career-themed curriculum and instruction into core academic subjects.
2. Encourage high schools to organize graduation plans and course offerings around a few broad career interest areas that align with college meta-majors.

3. Build in career interest assessment “checkpoints” at key transition points during middle school, high school and college as an expectation for all students.
4. Include results from career interest assessments on students’ high school graduation plans and college degree maps. Encourage counselors and advisors to use this information to guide academic and career planning.

Align Academic & Career Advising

5. Identify critical career preparation milestones—in addition to academic course milestones—on college degree maps that trigger advising alerts and proactive student interventions when not completed.
6. Expose college students to current labor market and return on investment data during career planning and program selection processes.
7. Embed specific learning objectives for career exploration and career plan development into colleges’ first-year experience courses, student success programming and general education courses when appropriate.

Encourage Employer Engagement

8. Expand partnerships between local employers and K-12 schools to sponsor workplace tours, job-shadowing experiences, career professional interviews and related opportunities that broaden students’ horizons regarding the range of career possibilities.
9. Expand training and tools for school counselors and academic advisors that incorporate current labor market and Return on Investment (ROI) information to help students understand which college majors and credentials best connect to their career goals.
10. Promote partnerships wherein local employers make early commitments to hire students who earn an industry-aligned postsecondary credential within a designated time frame after high school graduation.
11. Incorporate career preparation indicators in annual state data reporting, including Indiana College Readiness Reports and Return on Investment Reports.



50%

of college graduates would choose a different college major or school if they could do it over again. (McKinsey & Co., 2013)

50%

of college students say they’re prepared for the workplace. (Harris Interactive, 2013)

Integrating Workplace Experience

Blending educational preparation with workplace experience must become the rule rather than the exception in Indiana.

An internship is the #1 college experience that leads to a job, university administrators noted in a recent national survey. And yet, too few college programs expect students to complete an internship or related experience as part of earning their degrees. While most colleges have tended to emphasize a broad education experience that “teaches students how to think,” employers increasingly expect graduates to arrive knowing the specific skills required to do a job, too.

Colleges should not be expected to convert their campuses to vocational schools, but employers cannot abdicate all responsibility for training their workers either. It is clear though that graduates must be able to apply what they know outside the classroom and students benefit from relevant workplace experiences that enrich their academic learning. Unfortunately, even when college students understand the importance of relevant work experience, many face a difficult choice: take the unpaid internship aligned with their program of study or take an unrelated paid job to make ends meet now.

Many Hoosiers simply cannot afford to choose the former option. In 2013, Indiana took a small step to address this disconnect by reforming the state’s EARN Indiana work-study program to expand opportunities for paid, résumé-building internships for economically disadvantaged Hoosiers with both public and private employers. These changes, coupled with a critical partnership with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce’s INTERNnet platform, have swelled participation rates by 25% for students and nearly 350% for employers in only two years.

To make meaningful workplace experience a reality for all students, colleges must expand industry partnerships and integrate workplace experience as a graduation requirement, as part of the core curriculum or both. Employers must do their part by investing time and resources in internship programs and becoming more engaged partners in helping educators create the employees they need to succeed.

In recognition of these challenges and opportunities, the Commission will champion state policies and local practices that expand quality work-based learning, including the following:

Integrated Work Experience

1. Integrate work-based learning experiences, including internships, cooperative education, service learning and community service opportunities in high school diplomas and college degree programs.
2. Support college faculty in integrating work-based, applied learning experiences and collaborations with employers within the general education core curriculum and across academic programs and majors, including the liberal arts.

3. Award college credit for approved internships and related work-based learning and ensure that these experiences are reflected on student transcripts.
4. Document and report work-based learning experiences completed by high school and college students as part of annual state data collections.
5. Encourage colleges to award career-competency certificates and industry certifications to students who complete intensive career experiences as a complement to their degree program.
6. Consider funding and/or public recognition for schools and campuses that increase the percentage of students completing meaningful work-based and applied learning experiences.
7. Promote innovative models that integrate work-based learning experiences without extending students' time to degree.

Increase Work-and-Learn Opportunities

8. Engage employers, including small and mid-size businesses, with training, toolkits and on-demand support for offering

quality internship programs and formalizing collaborative partnerships with area high schools and colleges.

9. Expand partnerships and blended learning opportunities between colleges and employers that provide internship opportunities that run concurrently throughout the academic calendar as well as during the summer.
10. Promote a standard statewide platform—i.e., Indiana INTERNnet—for colleges and businesses to post and publicize internship opportunities by program major.
11. Expand the state's EARN Indiana program and partnership with Indiana INTERNnet to create more opportunities for high school and college students to explore careers through paid, résumé-building internships.
12. Explore opportunities for colleges and employer-collectives to devote collaborative on-campus workspace and supervision for students to complete virtual internships with employers across the state or nation.

97% of CEOs and company executives believe colleges should expand opportunities for experiential learning.

(Harris Interactive, 2013)

More than 80% of employers want new hires to have completed an internship, but only 8% of students say interning in a field related to their major is something they spend a lot of time doing.

(Harris Interactive, 2013)

Only 29% of college graduates had an internship or job during college.

(Gallup-Purdue Index, 2013)

Streamlining Job Placement

The pressure for colleges to smooth their graduates' transition into the workforce has never been more intense than it is today.

Some students are fortunate to have an established professional network before they even enter college, whether through family and friends, adult mentors or other connections. Many more students graduate college without the contacts or networking skills needed to navigate a highly competitive job market.

In a modern world of online applications and sophisticated screening algorithms, these connections are more important than ever for recent graduates to stand out among an ocean of applications and land a face-to-face interview, let alone a job. Employers have long recognized the value of these connections. What employer wouldn't be more likely to interview and hire a candidate referred by a trusted contact than a stranger with equivalent qualifications?

Whether they realize it or not, recent college graduates do have established professional relationships with professors, advisors and other campus

leaders. When recruiting and career placement happen on college campuses, it is the college itself—not family connections or pure luck—that gives students a foot in the door. Ironically, college programs that require the least imagination on the part of employers to determine what a graduate can do—like business and engineering—often do the most to help their students secure a job while students in disciplines like the liberal arts are often on their own.

Fortunately, more colleges and employers alike are getting the message that job recruitment and placement must begin long before an applicant submits a résumé. A recent national survey of university administrators noted a more than 60 percent increase in campus discussions about job preparation for their graduates in just the past three years. The challenge now is to make sure these conversations result in more consistent job-hunting and placement support for students across all academic programs and majors.

In recognition of these challenges and opportunities, the Commission will champion state policies and local practices that encourage and streamline job placement, including the following:

Job Placement Support

1. Replicate effective career placement practices across academic programs, including business school models that connect students with employers before graduation.
2. Support the expansion of a common online platform to help Hoosier undergraduate and graduate students across all disciplines connect with employers statewide.
3. Encourage employers to sponsor students' postsecondary education through tuition support and part-time employment in exchange for working for the employer for a specified time period after graduation.

4. Facilitate public/private-partnerships that provide job placement bridge programs and employability “boot camps” for undergraduates, including professional coaching, marketable-skill training, networking and on-campus interviewing.
5. Explore the expansion of structured one-year fellowship programs that connect recent graduates with new and existing Indiana companies in a supporting role based on their program discipline and area of expertise.
6. Collect and publicly report job placement and employment metrics by college and area of study.
7. Consider a performance-funding incentive that rewards in-state job placement.
8. Ensure regular state reporting of the most undersupplied high-skill and high-wage occupations to inform college program offerings, student outreach efforts and state policy.
9. Incorporate industry-recognized short-term (less than 1 year) and long-term (1-2 years) certificates granted by Indiana’s two-year colleges in state’s performance funding formula and public reporting of completion and education attainment rates.
10. Encourage colleges to survey and publicly report, including as part of Indiana College Value Index, alumni satisfaction rates by campus on an ongoing basis and to use results to inform academic, career development and student support programming.
11. Encourage colleges to conduct systematic and ongoing surveys of employer satisfaction and to use this information to improve academic programming and job placement practices.
12. Revisit approved academic programs systematically to ensure adequate completion rates, student demand, labor market outcomes and alignment with the institutional missions.

Consumer Demand & Satisfaction



Only 29% of graduates “strongly agree” that college prepared them well for life outside of college. (Gallup-Purdue Index, 2014)

3X The odds of being engaged at work increase nearly three times for alumni who feel their college prepared them well for life outside of it. (Gallup-Purdue Index, 2014)

ABOUT HALF (49%) of employed college graduates are not engaged at work, and 12% are actively disengaged. (Gallup-Purdue Index, 2014)

DELIVERING
VALUE



Recognizing What We Value

The **Indiana College Value Index** aims to help Hoosiers answer the most fundamental questions in higher education today using the best quantitative and qualitative data available. In partnership with Indiana's colleges and universities, the Commission is committed to providing state- and campus-level college value profiles on an ongoing basis.

	COMPLETION	COMPETENCY	CAREER
	Will I graduate?	Will I learn what I need to know?	Will I find fulfilling employment?
What the numbers say	Percent of students who complete college on time	Percent of graduates who demonstrate mastery of core learning competencies	Percent of graduates earning above state median income after 1 year
	Percent who complete 150% time Percent who complete 200% time		Percent above median after 5 years Percent above median after 10 years
Statewide context	Percent of all Indiana college students who graduate on time	No comparable statewide measure of student learning is currently available	Percent of all Indiana college graduates earning above state median income after 1 year
What the graduates say	Percent of alumni who say they received support outside the classroom that helped them graduate	Percent of alumni who say their college prepared them well for life outside of college	Percent of employed alumni who say they are fulfilled in their current work
Statewide context	Percent of all Indiana alumni who say they received support outside the classroom	Percent of all Indiana alumni who say their education prepared them for life outside college	Percent of all Indiana employed alumni who are fulfilled in their current work
What the college does to help	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides transition support to majority of entering students <input type="checkbox"/> Provides proactive advising support to majority of students	<input type="checkbox"/> Offers competency-based program options <input type="checkbox"/> Measures learning gains of all students	<input type="checkbox"/> Requires majority of students to gain work-place experience <input type="checkbox"/> Helps majority of students find their first job after graduation

Bottom Line: Percent of alumni who say they are satisfied with their college experience AND Percent of alumni who took out student loans and say their education was worth the cost

Paying for What We Value

Indiana has demonstrated its commitment to paying for the outcomes Hoosiers value most through performance-based funding for Indiana’s public colleges and state financial aid incentives for students. Indiana is committed to building upon this strong foundation through greater alignment with the goals and strategies outlined in *Reaching Higher, Delivering Value*.

Performance-Based Funding for Colleges

Since 2007, Indiana has continued to evolve a performance-based funding formula that drives more dollars to the state’s colleges and universities for improvement on key student success measures.

Completion	Competency	Career
<p>Current: Indiana’s focus on increasing college completion is reflected by performance metrics, including overall degree completion, on-time completion and at-risk student completion.</p> <p>Future: In alignment with <i>Reaching Higher, Delivering Value</i>, Indiana will consider a completion metric that rewards accelerated degree completion.</p>	<p>Current: Indiana’s focus on improving remediation success for underprepared students emphasizes competency with a performance metric that rewards successful completion of the college-level English or math course rather than non-credit remedial courses.</p> <p>Future: In alignment with <i>Reaching Higher, Delivering Value</i>, Indiana will consider a learning outcome metric that rewards demonstrated mastery of core competencies.</p>	<p>Current: Indiana’s focus on producing degrees aligned with the needs of the state’s economy is reflected by a performance metric for high-impact degrees.</p> <p>Future: In alignment with <i>Reaching Higher, Delivering Value</i>, Indiana will consider a metric that rewards key labor-market outcomes.</p>

Financial Aid Incentives for Students

Since 2010, Indiana has instituted a series of landmark reforms to its state financial aid system that have created clear incentives to keep college students on track to completion. The Commission is committed to building upon this strong foundation through greater alignment with the essential outcomes outlined in *Reaching Higher, Delivering Value*.

Completion	Competency	Career
<p>Indiana’s Frank O’Bannon Grant and 21st Century Scholars program include annual credit completion requirements that keep students on track to graduate. Moving forward, Indiana will consider accelerated state aid for students in accelerated degree programs.</p>	<p>Indiana will consider state financial aid policy changes that support competency-based programs and allow state aid to pay fees associated with prior learning assessments.</p>	<p>Indiana currently provides financial aid support for career experience through the state’s EARN Indiana work-study program. Moving forward, Indiana will consider financial aid flexibility and incentives that support more college students in gaining relevant workplace experience.</p>

Conclusion: A Shared Responsibility for Student Success

In the decade since Indiana's first *Reaching Higher* strategic plan was adopted, Hoosiers with education beyond high school have improved their economic standing while those with less education have experienced stagnated earnings and reduced job security.

Now, more than ever, higher education has become the dividing line between those with greater economic independence and a higher quality of life and those with fewer opportunities and limited options. Likewise, the State of Indiana benefits when more Hoosiers have the education and skills needed in the 21st century economy.

The question then is not whether Hoosiers need higher education, but rather how does Indiana deliver greater value and a fuller return on investment for students and the state. *Reaching Higher, Delivering Value* is based on the belief that success is a shared responsibility, and everyone has a part to play:

- **State policymakers** must sustain their commitment to higher education by supporting performance-based college funding, student financial aid and policies that promote college completion.
- **Colleges** must maintain their commitment to student success through proactive advising practices that keep students on track to graduate, high-quality degree programs that reflect clear learning outcomes and intentional career preparation that leads graduates to fulfilling employment.
- **Employers** must demonstrate their commitment to the workforce of the future by closely collaborating with higher education, offering more opportunities for high school and college students to gain relevant workplace experience, and encouraging their employees to complete postsecondary education and training.

Students, too, play a major role in maximizing the value of their college education. Even the most student-centered, flexible and responsive higher education system requires individuals who demonstrate sound judgment, exemplify a strong work ethic and stay engaged in and outside the classroom. To increase education attainment and per capita income, Indiana must set higher expectations for Hoosiers, and students must take full advantage of the opportunities to meet these expectations.

The curiosity to seek out new knowledge. The ability to apply what has been learned. The resiliency to adapt to changing circumstances. These are the skills that college graduates need, employers expect and a 21st century world demands. This is the promise of *Reaching Higher, Delivering Value*.





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