

**State of Indiana
Commission for Higher Education**

Minutes of Meeting

Thursday, September 18, 2025

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Commission for Higher Education met in regular session starting at 9:10 a.m. ET at Vincennes University Jasper, 961 College Avenue, Jasper, IN 47546.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS AND DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Members Present: Mike Alley, Dennis Bland, Kathy Cabello, Ted Castronova, Jud Fisher, Samantha Fleischaker, Larry Garatoni, Bill Hanna, Nancy Jordan, Molly Kitchell, Kent Kramer, Pepper Mulherin, and Dan Peterson

Members Absent:

CHAIR'S REPORT

Hello everyone. I know today has turned out to be a very busy one for many of us, with several overlapping board commitments. We'd like to begin with something that is bittersweet—but also a moment of celebration—as this marks Commissioner Lowery's last official Commission Meeting.

I just want to say it's been an absolute honor and pleasure to work with Chris over the years—not only in his role as Commissioner, but even before that. Chris has been a deeply dedicated servant leader throughout his career, and especially here at the Commission, where he has led the team with grace and strength. His vision and organizational leadership have made a tremendous impact on higher education and, more broadly, on the state of Indiana.

You have my— and I know, our—utmost respect and gratitude for everything you've done for Indiana, for our Commission, for our higher education partners, and most importantly, for the students of Indiana. We've truly been blessed to have you. And while this is your last official meeting, we know you're not going far. You'll continue to be involved in conversations and initiatives moving forward, and we're grateful for that.

With that, I'd like to turn it over to my friend Dennis Bland to read a resolution in honor of Chris.

WHEREAS, Commissioner Chris Lowery has served the State of Indiana as Commissioner for Higher Education for more than three years and has devoted much of his life to increasing economic and social mobility and prosperity for all students through his previous leadership at Ivy Tech Community College and his long-tenured service on the board of the Batesville Community School Corporation; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Lowery led the development of the Commission’s HOPE (Hoosier Opportunities & Possibilities through Education) Agenda which serves as the agency’s strategic plan through 2030 and challenges Indiana to become a top 10 state in the nation in seven key measures centered on addressing enrollment, completion, and graduate retention; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Lowery brought clarity to the Commission’s strategy and actions by developing the agency’s first strategic management process, challenging every staff member to set audacious goals aligned to the agency’s HOPE Agenda; and

WHEREAS, under his leadership, Indiana enacted the most comprehensive overhaul of its Outcomes-Based Performance Funding formula, expanding beyond completion metrics to include new measures for enrollment, graduate retention, and research impact; and

WHEREAS, the comprehensive overhaul of Indiana’s funding formula has already yielded measurable success, including reversing a decade-long decline in college enrollment with two consecutive years of growth, and elevating the state’s college completion rate from 14th to 9th in the nation; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Lowery worked alongside statewide partners to champion the automatic enrollment of eligible students into the 21st Century Scholars program, increasing participation from fewer than 20,000 to nearly 50,000 students enrolled annually; and

WHEREAS, he has been a tireless advocate for college affordability, successfully increasing the maximum Frank O’Bannon Grant award and significantly improving Indiana’s FAFSA filing rate—reaching the state’s goal of 60% of high school seniors filing in 2025; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the importance of early college credit, Commissioner Lowery led the rapid expansion of the Indiana College Core, growing the number of high schools offering the certificate from 84 in 2022 to 312 in 2025; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Lowery led a significant shift in the Commission’s data strategy moving from relying on lagging data for analysis to utilizing relevant data as a source of leading indicators to evaluate strategic performance of policies and programs; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Lowery enhanced statewide awareness of Indiana’s world-class higher education opportunities through the *Indiana Pre-Admissions* and Enrollment Ready initiatives, which annually provide more than 300,000 high school students and their families with critical information to support informed college choices; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Commission for Higher Education expresses its deep appreciation for Commissioner Chris Lowery as he concludes his distinguished career in public service, and wishes him well as he finds new ways to serve his family, Hoosier students, and the state in this next chapter.

R-25-6.1 RESOLVED: That the Commission for Higher Education hereby approves the resolution honoring Commissioner Chris Lowery. (Motion – Garatoni, second – Mulherin, unanimously approved)

It's now my great pleasure to invite President Chuck Johnson, president of Vincennes University, to address the group.

Chuck Johnson, President of Vincennes University, and Adam Watkins, Assistant Vice President and Dean of the Vincennes University Jasper Campus, addressed the group.
Thank you.

II. CONSIDERATION OF THE MEETING MINUTES

R-25-6.2 RESOLVED: That the Commission for Higher Education hereby approves the minutes of the July 24, 2025, regular meeting, and the August 22, 2025, special meeting. (Motion – Cabello, second – Kramer, unanimously approved)

III. BUDGET ITEMS

A. Capital Projects for Full Discussion*

Commission Member Alley provided the Budget and Productivity Committee report out. Zach Smith Howard presented this item. Cody Blake Robison provided the staff recommendation.

R-25-6.3 RESOLVED: That the Commission for Higher Education hereby approves the Lease Agreement between the Trustees of Indiana University and Indiana University Foundation. (Motion – Hanna, second – Bland, opposed – Castronova, abstain – Garatoni, 11-1 approval)

B. Capital Projects for Expedited Action*

Cody Blake Robison provided the staff recommendation.

R-25-6.4 RESOLVED: That the Commission for Higher Education hereby approves the following programs:

- Young Hall Roof Replacement Project on the West Lafayette Campus (B-1-26-2-07)
- Wade Utility Plant Condensate Polisher Installation on the West Lafayette Campus (B-1-26-2-06)
- Stanley Coulter Hall Southwest Wing Mechanical Project (B-1-26-2-04)
- Regional Deferred Maintenance Projects at Purdue University Fort Wayne and Northwest Campuses (B-0-26-2-01)
- Purchase of 518-520 Indiana Avenue from Purdue Research Foundation Project (B-6-26-3-08)
- Hicks Undergraduate Library Masonry Renovation Project (B-1-26-2-03)
- Elliott Hall of Music Ceiling Tile Replacement Project (B-1-26-2-02)

- Chiller Cleaning System at Purdue West Lafayette (B-1-26-2-05)
(Motion – Alley, second – Kitchell, unanimously approved)

C. Commission Procurement Policy*

Brooke Kile presented this item.

- R-25-6.5 RESOLVED:** That the Commission for Higher Education hereby approves the Commission Procurement Policy. (Motion – Hanna, second – Fleischaker, unanimously approved)

IV. ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

A. Academic Programs for Expedited Action*

- R-25-6.6 RESOLVED:** That the Commission for Higher Education hereby approves the following programs:
- Bachelor of Science in Public Relations to be offered by Indiana University Bloomington (On Campus Only)
 - Bachelor of Science in Media Advertising to be offered by Indiana University Bloomington (On Campus Only)
 - Bachelor of Science in Global Media to be offered by Indiana University Bloomington (On Campus Only)
 - Master of Science in Media Leadership & Business to be offered by Indiana University Bloomington (On Campus Only)
- (Motion – Kramer, second – Garatoni, abstain – Cabello, Castronova, Mulherin, unanimously approved)
- R-25-6.7 RESOLVED:** That the Commission for Higher Education hereby approves the Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences to be offered by Indiana University Indianapolis (On Campus Only). (Motion – Garatoni, second – Fleischaker, unanimously approved)

B. Academic Program Reviews Process – Brief Overview & Preview

Dr. Matt Butler presented this item.

V. DISCUSSION ITEM

A. K-12 and Postsecondary Transitions Update

Victoria Phair, Caitlin Mahoney, Doug Harter, and Kayla Walke presented this item.

COMMISSIONER’S REPORT

Commissioner Lowery reported on the following topics:

Data Updates

Data Strategy

1. In 2023, the Commission shifted to a business intelligence team, an intentional pivot to how it values data and creates value from its data.
 - i. Research- and data-informed challenges and solutions
 - ii. Leading indicators rather than lagging data
 - iii. Promote collaboration
 1. To prevent duplicative efforts and invite partnerships Partnership Pentagon

Enrollment

1. After a decade of decline, enrollment has increased by 2% each year for the past two years.
2. Over 187,000 Hoosier students have been automatically enrolled in 21st Century Scholars across four cohorts.
3. Over 198,000 Pre-Admissions letters have been mailed to high school seniors across three cohorts.
4. 60% of high school seniors filed the FAFSA this year.
5. The number of high schools offering the Indiana College Core increased from 84 in 2021 to 312 in 2025.

An additional \$250 million in need-based financial aid will be awarded to Hoosiers through 2030 (Frank O’Bannon).

Completion

1. Completion rates have increased from 14th in the nation to 9th in the nation.
2. Senate Enrolled Act 8-2024 supported reverse transfer and three-year degrees to support completion rates.
3. Senate Enrolled Act 448-2025 supported the Commission’s push for robust degree program review. In July, 404 programs were eliminated, suspended, or merged/consolidated.

Graduate Retention

1. Indiana gained an R1 research institution in 2025, bringing the total of R1 Indiana institutions to four.
2. Indiana institutions were 14th in the nation at attracting students in 2022, that has risen to 8th in the nation.

3. Indiana is the first and only state to include graduate retention in outcomes-based performance funding metrics.

Initiative Updates

The Need for Higher Education

1. According to Georgetown’s Projections of Jobs, Education, and Training Requirements through 2031 State Report:
 - i. Of Indiana’s 378,000 job openings that will be created or available from 2021-2031, 236,000 of those jobs will require education and training beyond high school.
2. Nationally, by 2031, 66% of “good jobs” will be distributed to those on a bachelor’s degree pathway.
 - i. Only 19% will be distributed to a middle-skills pathway and 15% to high school pathways.

The Future of Higher Education in Indiana

1. More collaboration with employers to strengthen the education to workforce pipeline.
2. Market alignment to better serve students and provide the best resources and programs at an affordable cost.
3. Embrace technology to set our institutions apart and to be globally competitive.

Partnership Weaves the Fabric of Civil Society

1. The CHE team has embraced changes and challenges.
2. Set stretch goals with high expectations that were met with high output.
3. Working with those within the agency, other agency partners, and external partners.
4. Thanks to the partners who have joined and led this work.
5. As we blur the lines of education, we blur the lines in working together towards a common goal.

VI. STUDENT SUCCESS & COMPLETION COMMITTEE

A. Vincennes University Presentation

Gaye Walthall and Alli Tempel presented this item.

VII. BUDGET & FINANCE

A. 2025-2027 Outcomes-Based Performance Funding Goals

Brooke Kile presented this item.

B. Agency FY26 Spend Plan and Budget Update

Cody Blake Robison presented this item.

VIII. INFORMATION ITEMS

- A. Academic Degree Programs Awaiting Action
- B. Academic Degree Program Actions Taken by Staff
- C. Media Coverage

**IX. OLD BUSINESS
NEW BUSINESS**

There was none.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 P.M. ET.

Dan Peterson, Chair

Kent Kramer, Secretary