

# INDIANA PARTNERSHIP PENTAGON

Meeting 4 | Improving Access to Higher Education



## CLOSING EQUITY GAPS IN POSTSECONDARY ACCESS

### MODERATOR

✉ [Claire Fiddian-Green](#), President & CEO | Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation

### RESOURCE EXPERTS

✉ [Brianna Morse](#), Director of Youth Initiatives | Indiana Department of Workforce Development

✉ [Dr. Joe Zachery, Jr.](#), Director | College Prep Institute at the Center for Leadership Development

### KEY TAKEAWAYS & CONSIDERATIONS

- *Efforts to engage students in the college going process must be strategic and community-focused due to disparities in enrollment for students from underserved communities.*
  - College going rates in Indiana are not uniform across demographics. Black students experienced a [7-percentage point](#) decrease in 2019, falling from 50% to 43% before gaining 2 percentage points in 2021.
  - The [College Prep Institute](#) engages in programming that strategically promotes student success in literacy, college applications, tutoring, especially for students from underserved communities, and engages them early in their academic careers.
  - For students in underserved communities, it is also imperative that once they enroll in postsecondary education, support services are consistent and persist throughout all four years.
- *Organizations and higher education institutions must target outreach and directly engage students and parents to aid them in the college going process. Directly involving communities will aid in ensuring that institutions are responsive to unique needs.*
  - Students experiencing basic needs insecurity, like transportation, housing, and food, do not have education as a top priority. Wraparound services that target these needs are key to removing these barriers for many students.
  - Collaborating with schools and community & faith-based organizations to inform students of programs like the [universal FAFSA](#) and [21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars](#) will also increase trust in higher education institutions and understanding of the process of applying for postsecondary education.
- *Spotlighting education opportunities that are not necessarily 4-year universities also aids in eliminating equity barriers.*
  - [Jobs for America's Graduates](#) provides advising, employer engagement, and other services to ensure that students understand all the options available to them for postsecondary education.
  - Establishing partnerships with local employers to create employer-sponsored tuition assistance programs for non-traditional students can aid in increasing postsecondary access. Programs such as [Lilly Scholars @ Ivy Tech](#) provide financial assistance and experiential learning opportunities, including opportunities to apply for summer programs and/or work-study programs.
- *Implementing an intrusive advising model within high schools will also aid in increasing college access for first generation students and in maintaining support as they start college.*
  - [Intrusive advising](#) refers to the proactive approach of identifying students who might need more assistance in applying for college and might need more support once they enroll. This model involves placing them with a specific advisor that they meet with regularly to help address challenges.

### RESOURCES

- [Completing the FAFSA \(Invest ED\)](#) | This resource, in partnership with CHE, provides step-by-step guides and assistance in helping students complete financial aid forms and understand their options for affording postsecondary education.
- [JAG in Action](#) | This program through Jobs for America's Graduates in Indiana allows JAG students to identify a concern in their communities and gain hands-on experience in civic engagement. Projects have involved mental health awareness, addressing the needs of unhoused individuals, and supporting veterans.
- [21st Century Scholars](#) | Indiana's 21st Century Scholars program is an early-college promise program designed to make college more affordable for students. Eligible students who meet requirements receive a two- or four-year scholarship that pays up to 100% tuition at an eligible Indiana college or university. With the new 21st Century Scholars automatic enrollment

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initiative, Indiana can increase the number of students enrolled by more than 20,000 each year and remove the financial aid barrier impacting Hoosiers across the state.

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## TAKING STEPS TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN THE COLLEGE-GOING PROCESS

### MODERATOR

✉ [Dr. Marlena Everett](#), Director of Higher Education | The Hunt Institute

### RESOURCE EXPERTS

✉ [Chad Addie](#), Assistant Superintendent of College and Workforce Readiness | GEAR UP South Bend!

✉ [Troy Byler](#), Director, Advance College Project | Indiana University- Bloomington

✉ [Letise Jenkins](#), President | Indiana TRIO

### KEY TAKEAWAYS & CONSIDERATIONS

- *Addressing the shortage of guidance counselors is key to improving postsecondary access. In 2022-2023, the American School Counselor Association found that in Indiana, there is an average ratio of [519 students to each counselor](#). Their recommended ratio is 250 to 1.*
  - When it comes to discussing postsecondary education options with students, guidance counselors are often the first point of contact. Excessively large caseloads prevent them from being able to provide customized and frequent postsecondary support for all students.
  - [Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs](#) (GEAR UP) supplements guidance counseling in schools by providing career services, college visits, and connections with industry partners to ensure that students and their families are aware of all postsecondary pathways available.
- *Expanding efforts that help students overcome financial barriers, like dual credit programs and work-based learning, can aid in increasing postsecondary access.*
  - The [Advance College Project](#), through Indiana University, is a dual enrollment initiative with select Indiana high schools. College courses are offered at these high schools and are taught by ACP-trained instructors. This year, approximately 19,000 students were enrolled in IU courses through ACP.
  - Work-based learning programs give students a direct connection to employers and allow them to see themselves in a career pathway. By creating a network of counselors, industry partners, career development coaches, and higher education institutions, students can make more meaningful connections with career pathways.
- *Engaging parents and families is key to ensuring that they can provide valuable information to their children about college options, financial planning, and the importance of higher education.*
  - Programs like GEAR UP and Indiana TRIO host educational sessions for parents to help them navigate FAFSA requirements and how to support their students in the college application process.
  - With several [studies](#) showing that Americans are losing confidence in the value of higher education, targeting educational programming for parents, especially for first-generation students, can help demystify the return on investment for postsecondary education.

### RESOURCES

- [TRIO Upward Bound Math Science](#) | This partnership between Purdue University Northwest and Indiana TRIO is a pre-college initiative that provides instruction and tutoring in math and science on the college campus to students at select Indiana high schools with the goal of preparing them to enter STEM careers.
- [Indiana College Core](#) | Indiana College Core is a block of 30 credit hours of general education and college-level coursework, which can be transferred between all Indiana public colleges and universities and select private colleges. Students who participated in Indiana College Core had a college-going rate of 90%, and 70% meeting benchmarks of early success in college
- [TeenWorks Scholarships Program](#) | This scholarship in Central Indiana helps place students with internships across a range of industries. Participants are able to receive a scholarship of \$10,000 per year that can be renewed for four years.