



INDIANA *for* COMMISSION
HIGHER EDUCATION



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 13, 2014

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Commission promotes competency-based learning for college students

INDIANAPOLIS – The Indiana Commission for Higher Education invited leading experts from the Higher Learning Commission, Southern New Hampshire University and WGU Indiana to spotlight the growing importance of competency-based learning in postsecondary education during its Feb. 13 Commission meeting on the IUPUI campus.

Competency-based models award college credit for what students prove they know and are able to do rather than awarding credits for traditional “seat time.” The practice is a key strategy in the Commission’s “Reaching Higher, Achieving More” strategic plan for increasing college completion in alignment with quality learning outcomes.

“Competency-based models and prior learning assessments provide students—particularly working students and returning adults—with greater flexibility and often a shorter, less expensive path to a college degree,” said Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers. “We are committed to promoting these approaches to increase Hoosiers’ opportunities for degree attainment, on-time completion and degree attainment.”

Dr. Cathrael Kazin, Southern New Hampshire University’s Chief Academic Officer, noted that enabling students to demonstrate mastery through competency-based assessments increases efficiency and productivity for the institution and rewards experience and skills for student learners who can move at their own pace.

“In real life you rarely use one competency at a time,” said Kazin. “You use communication skills, qualitative skills, critical-thinking skills, and integrating the mastery of these skills is one thing about our program that distinguishes it from others.”

Karen Solinski, VP for Legal and Governmental Affairs with the Higher Learning Commission—the nation’s largest regional accreditor—directed the Commission to universities that have overlaid a Competency Based Learning education with a traditional academic university format. “In the direct assessment model, credit hours, courses and grades disappear and we are left with Competency Based Learning only. Colleges need to use every academic path available to help student,” said Solinski.

“Employers also appreciate competency since it bridges the gap between academic learning and relevant workplace skills,” said Allison Barber, Chancellor of WGU Indiana.

In recognition of the emerging role of competency-based learning in Indiana’s higher education system, the Commission adopted a resolution that encourages the expansion of these opportunities on the state’s campuses and promises to spotlight Indiana colleges that make meaningful progress toward the recognition of competency. Read the complete resolution online at www.che.in.gov.