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More Hoosier college students on track to graduate following recent state financial aid reforms

Hoosiers are responding to recent state financial aid reforms with double-digit improvements in the percentage of college students taking—and completing—the minimum number of courses needed to graduate on time. A new report released by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education spotlights early progress and lessons learned following sweeping state financial aid reform adopted in 2013 under House Enrolled Act 1348.

“Indiana lawmakers took bold action with student-friendly legislation that promotes college completion and rewards students for staying on track to graduate on time,” said Lubbers. “We are encouraged that students are responding to these incentives that promise to increase graduation rates and lower college debt.”

Indiana has one of the most generous need-based college financial aid systems in the U.S. with more than \$300 million in state aid awarded to Hoosier students annually. The majority of this aid is distributed through the state’s two largest programs: the Frank O’Bannon grant and the 21st Century Scholars program.

The key provision of HEA 1348 requires students to complete at least 30 credits each calendar year—the minimum amount required to graduate on time—in order to renew their aid for the following year at the same level. Both the O’Bannon and 21st Century Scholars programs have seen significant gains in the percentage of students taking and completing 30 credits since HEA 1348 took effect.

More students are enrolling in 30 or more credit hours:

- 21st Century Scholars’ course-taking improved by 55% over the prior year
- Frank O’Bannon recipients’ course-taking improved by 19% over the prior year

More students are completing 30 or more credit hours:

- 21st Century Scholars’ course-completion improved by 56% over the prior year
- Frank O’Bannon recipients’ course-completion improved by 21% over the prior year

“This law is a significant step toward better graduation rates, more affordable college degrees and a stronger Hoosier workforce,” said Governor Mike Pence who has championed efforts to decrease the cost of college and reward students for graduating early or on time.

Since the legislation’s passage, the Commission and Indiana colleges have been working to increase student awareness of the new requirements, ramp up academic advising efforts and provide new resources to keep students on track. Though it is too early to predict the long-term impact of these reforms, the dramatic progress to date suggests further improvement as ongoing awareness and intervention efforts take hold.

“It was our goal that more students graduate before their financial aid runs out, leading to better return on investment for students and the State,” said State Representative Tom Dermody who authored HEA 1348. “I am pleased that our students and colleges are responding the way we hoped and look forward to seeing even greater progress moving forward.”

Read the full report, titled *Reforming Student Financial Aid to Increase College Completion*, at www.che.in.gov.

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Indiana Colleges Leading the Pack in 2013-14

21st Century Scholars Enrolled in 30+ Credits

1. Ball State University (92.8%)
2. Purdue University West Lafayette (89.5%)
3. University of Southern Indiana (79.3%)

Frank O’Bannon Recipients Enrolled in 30+ Credits

1. Purdue University West Lafayette (80.5%)
2. Ball State University (80.0%)
3. Indiana State University (61.9%)

21st Century Scholars Completing 30+Credits

1. Purdue University West Lafayette (69.1%)
2. Ball State University (55.1%)
3. Indiana State University (41.1%)

O’Bannon Recipients Completing 30+ Credits

1. Purdue University West Lafayette (58.0%)
2. Ball State University (49.2%)
3. Indiana University Bloomington (31.7%)

Most Improved Indiana Colleges (2012-13 vs. 2013-14)

21st Century Scholars Enrolled in 30+ Credits

1. IUPUI (+46.5%)
2. IU Kokomo (+39.8%)
3. IPFW (+39.6%)

O’Bannon Recipients Enrolled in 30+ Credits

1. IUPUI (+20.7%)
2. University of Southern Indiana (+16.2%)
3. IPFW (+16.0%)

21st Century Scholars Completing 30+Credits

1. IPFW (+26.7%)
2. IUPUI (+23.3%)
3. IU South Bend (+19.8%)

O’Bannon Recipients Completing 30+ Credits

1. IUPUI (+13.5%)
 2. Purdue University Calumet (+12.7%)
 3. Indiana University East (+12.2%)
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