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Lubbers Presents State's New Agenda for Higher Education at Annual Address

Commission for Higher Education will use fourth strategic plan as a guide to 2025

(INDIANAPOLIS) – The [Indiana Commission for Higher Education](http://che.in.gov) is prioritizing college completion, equity and talent through its fourth strategic plan, [Reaching Higher in a State of Change](#). Teresa Lubbers, Indiana's Commissioner for Higher Education, introduced the new guiding document for the state of Indiana during the 2020 State of Higher Education Address.

Lubbers unveiled the details of the new plan today, during her eighth-annual address in the north atrium of the Indiana Statehouse in front of an audience of education, government, business and community leaders.

Reaching Higher in a State of Change is the Commission's plan to get to 2025, which is the deadline for Indiana's big goal of having at least 60 percent of Hoosiers with quality credentials beyond a high school diploma. Currently, 43.4 percent of Hoosiers have education and training past high school.

"*Reaching Higher in a State of Change* provides the vision to get us to our goal by 2025," said Lubbers. "We have outlined key strategies and policies in what we are calling our 'Blueprint for Change,' which are aggressive and essential to our success. These strategies have been selected to support our priorities of completion, equity and talent."

Completion

College completion has been a continual goal for the Commission. Approaching 2025, the changing landscape of higher education and the demands of a new and changing economy require an expanded definition of "completion" and "higher education." This means postsecondary education includes all quality credentials from short-term certificates, apprenticeships and industry certifications to two- and four-year college degrees.

Completion impacts the state's economy as well as individual prosperity. Indiana's college graduates contribute at least \$13 billion in additional spending and tax revenue compared to high school diploma holders. Since the Great Recession, 99 percent of jobs created require a credential beyond a high school diploma.

Equity

In defining equity, the Commission acknowledges that life's circumstances or obstacles should not dictate a person's opportunity to succeed. Since 2013, the Commission has been focused on reducing and eliminating the state's achievement gaps, resolving to cut those gaps in half by 2018 and close educational gaps by 2025. While the gaps are now halfway closed, more work is needed to eliminate the gaps entirely.

The Commission produced its first [College Equity Report](#) in 2018 to show a statewide analysis of the gaps in higher education, disaggregating data based on race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender and geography. This is an annual focus that will continue for the Commission.

Talent

The Commission also highlights the priority of talent, in order to unlock the state's talent needs and develop and unleash Indiana's potential. By taking into account a full range of education and workforce credentials, *Reaching Higher in a State of Change* goes beyond the "either-or" depiction of higher education and workforce to a more productive and meaningful focus on developing talent.

"Indiana's willingness to embrace this new higher education compact with a collective sense of urgency and optimism will determine our state's readiness and prosperity for decades to come. The Commission is focused on creating a talent system that affords all Hoosiers the benefits associated with higher learning – learning that can be attained in multiple ways to respond to a changing world of work," said Lubbers.

Measuring change

A key component of *Reaching Higher in a State of Change* is measuring the state's progress. The Commission will issue an annual report card leading up to 2025, highlighting these three metrics for change:

- **Educational attainment**, through progress toward 60 percent of Hoosiers with education above a high school diploma; as well as progress on college-going and completion indicators that move the needle on educational attainment
- **Career relevance and preparation**, through progress toward 100 percent of postsecondary programs requiring an internship, work-based learning, research project or other student engagement experience that has career relevance
- **Economic impact**, by measuring progress toward Indiana becoming a leading Midwest state for median household income (adjusted for cost of living), including short-term and long-term goals:
 - By 2025, Indiana will be above the average of peer states for median household income
 - By 2030, Indiana will be in the top five of its peer states for median household income

"These are ambitious goals but they're the right ones for Hoosiers and our state," Lubbers said. "We know that the Commission cannot meet these ambitious goals alone. We need strong partners inside state government and our institutions, along with employers and the philanthropic community."

Reaching Higher in a State of Change highlights several Hoosiers and stories about their individual journeys through education and training. During her address, Lubbers recognized those featured in the strategic plan and others who are making a difference in Indiana.

"The work we are doing across our state is impacting individuals' quality of life. Real Hoosiers are making the decisions to pursue education and new skills to the betterment of their families, their communities and their futures," said Lubbers.

Lubbers also highlighted the state's early college promise scholarship, the [21st Century Scholars](#) program. Earlier in the day during 21st Century Scholars Day, the Commission hosted current college Scholars, alumni of the program, key community partners, universities and colleges and others in celebration of the program's 30th anniversary. Governor Eric Holcomb recognized the day with a proclamation and both chambers of the General Assembly approved resolutions to acknowledge that 40,000 Hoosiers have completed a degree with the Scholars program and over 100,000 students – from seventh graders to seniors in college – are enrolled today.

To read the full 2020 State of Higher Education Address, [click here](#).

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About the Indiana Commission for Higher Education

Created in 1971, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education plans, coordinates and defines Indiana's postsecondary education system to align higher learning with the needs of students and the state. The Commission also administers

Indiana's financial aid programs, including the [21st Century Scholars](#) early college promise scholarship, which celebrates 30 years in 2020. Learn more about the Commission's *Reaching Higher in a State of Change* strategic plan at www.in.gov/che.

What people are saying about Indiana's new strategic plan for higher education, *Reaching Higher in a State of Change*

Government Leaders

Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb:

"Reaching Higher in a State of Change is rightly focused on improving the lives of all people in our state with a quality credential beyond a high school diploma—something we know Indiana's new economy demands. With commitment and collaboration from Indiana's government, educators, employers and community leaders, we can achieve the bold goals outlined in this plan."

Indiana State Senator Jeff Raatz, Chairman of Senate Education and Career Development Committee:

"As we reach toward the goal of the strategic plan, Indiana's workforce needs will be met. A 21st Century qualified workforce includes a variety of higher education goals. Whether an individual chooses a career or college pathway, Indiana has set in place the necessary education plan to meet the individual's desired pathway."

Indiana State Representative Bob Behning, Chairman of House Education Committee:

"This plan will help ensure Indiana's workforce needs are met as Hoosiers gain access to quality learning and training opportunities to achieve their career goals. Whether pursuing a traditional four-year college degree, obtaining a certificate or heading back to school, our state is in a unique position to connect employers with highly skilled individuals ready to work."

Indiana Department of Workforce Development Commissioner Fred Payne:

"The Indiana Department of Workforce Development fully supports the Commission's efforts to help working-age adults improve their livelihoods, and the latest strategic plan is proof-positive of that commitment. Indiana continues to be a recognized leader in helping create career pathways and lifelong learning for all Hoosiers, and we look forward to our continued collaboration with the Commission to ensure these goals are achieved."

Indiana Secretary for Career Connections and Talent Blair Milo:

"The Commission has done truly great work on this plan. I was happy to be a part of its development and to see so much attention towards community collaboration."

Community Organizations and Partners

Indiana Chamber president and CEO Kevin Brinegar:

“Reaching Higher in a State of Change properly focuses on individual talent, student completion and the importance of lifelong learning. The metrics and measurements included are essential to evaluating progress and helping ensure the state’s overall economic success.”

Lumina President Jamie Merisotis:

“I’m impressed with the Commission’s blueprint for the future and its focus on completion, equity and talent. Those themes are spot-on for Indiana, for our fast-paced, high-tech work environment, and for this time in history.”

Strada President Bill Hanson:

“Education consumers across the country are demanding post-secondary education that provides greater career and cost value and prepares them for meaningful work. Indiana’s new strategic plan recognizes that fact. By calling on all college programs to emphasize applied learning and career relevance, Indiana ensures that it will remain a national leader in education and workforce preparation.”

Parke Heritage High School Principal Dwight Ashley:

“This new strategic plan leverages the amazing talent of our Indiana educator workforce to streamline our pathways to help achieve a much higher rate of educational attainment, assisting our diverse communities and youth on to high wage and high demand careers.”

Indiana Latino Institute President and CEO Marlene Dotson:

“The Indiana Latino Institute commends the Indiana Commission for Higher Education for prioritizing completion and equity in its new strategic plan. ILI believes these efforts will help the state meet its goal of at least 60% of postsecondary attainment by 2025. ICHE works tirelessly to close the achievement gap and address higher education inequities across the state.”

Indiana Black Expo President Tanya McKinzie:

“We are excited to partner with the Indiana Commission for Higher Education to accomplish the goals set forth in Reaching Higher in a State of Change, a blueprint for higher education in Indiana. Over the last 13 years, Indiana Black Expo, in partnership with education advocates and supporters, educators and administrators from across the state, has worked to enhance K-12 outcomes for students, particularly students of color. In 2017, we added the post-secondary education track to our annual education conference. This track shares best practices on improving retention and graduation rates of students of color at post-secondary institutions and provides information on various pathways for student success after high school. We believe focusing on these strategies can help close the achievement gap by 2025.”

UNCF Regional Development Director Andrea Neely:

“This new strategic plan is forward-looking and focused on the right priorities to help more people earn a postsecondary credential, improve their lives and drive our economy. We are especially pleased to see such a strong emphasis on equity and closing achievement gaps. We look forward to greater efforts that lead to more equitable outcomes across the state.”

Higher Education Leaders

Independent Colleges of Indiana President David Wantz:

“Independent Colleges of Indiana deeply appreciates being included in the development of the Indiana Commission for Higher Education’s new strategic plan—Reaching Higher in a State of Change. The landscape is changing for higher education and this plan addresses the current challenges and possibilities. ICI recognizes and supports the efforts of the Commission to build upon its successes and reach higher to transform Indiana’s higher education system for years to come.”

Purdue University President Mitch Daniels:

“As Indiana’s land-grant institution, we at Purdue consider the higher education of our state’s citizens the most vital of our many roles. We are pleased to be a long-time partner of the Commission for Higher Education, and as it launches its newest strategic plan, we look forward to continuing our collective efforts to help students of all ages and from all walks of life achieve their educational and career goals.”

Ball State University President Geoffrey Mearns:

“The Indiana Commission for Higher Education’s new strategic plan, Reaching Higher in a State of Change, builds on much of the good work being done by Indiana’s postsecondary institutions and, in many important ways, amplifies the core goals of Ball State University’s own strategic plan, Destination 2040: Our Flight Path. We look forward to our continued partnership in bringing Reaching Higher in a State of Change to life.”

Ivy Tech Community College President Sue Ellspermann:

“We applaud the Commission for Higher Education’s new strategic plan, Reaching Higher in a State of Change. Ivy Tech especially appreciates that the Plan highlights equity because life should not get in the way or dictate any student’s opportunity to succeed. As Indiana’s Community College, Ivy Tech serves as the entry-point of higher education for many non-traditional students, which now make up the majority of those seeking higher education in Indiana and nationally. Reaching Higher in a State of Change rightfully acknowledges that higher education today must be much more responsive to the changing needs of our students, employers, communities and the state’s economy.”

Indiana State University President Deborah Curtis:

“Reaching Higher in a State of Change is another shining example of Indiana’s forward thinking approach to higher education delivery that ensures value to our citizens by addressing state priorities including completion, equity, and talent. As Indiana State University fulfills its mission to educate people from Indiana who will likely go on to live and work in Indiana, we embrace this blueprint. And, we are proud to partner with Governor Holcomb, the General Assembly, and the Indiana Commission for Higher Education to help position our great state to compete globally.”

Vincennes University President Chuck Johnson:

"Congratulations on completion of "Reaching Higher in a State of Change." It's a thoughtful and timely strategic initiative that sets essential goals for Indiana and its universities. The Commission's visionary leadership inspires all of us in higher education to reach higher for our students and our state. At Vincennes University, we are passionately committed to preparing students to excel in the workplace. Our strategic partnerships with major Indiana employers such as Cummins, Subaru, and Toyota mean that VU graduates are in high demand now and well prepared for success throughout their careers. We continue to forge new partnerships, such as our recent collaboration with Eleven Fifty Academy, that meet our state's need for a highly skilled, well-compensated workforce. We are proud to partner with the Commission for Higher Education in striving to achieve the goals set forth in "Reaching Higher in a State of Change."

Indiana University President Michael McRobbie:

"Indiana University shares the goals outlined in the Commission's updated strategic plan to see more students complete their degrees within four years, to continue to prepare Indiana's workforce talent for a 21st century economy, and to increase gains in diversity that make higher education truly affordable and accessible to all Hoosiers. While drafting this plan, the Commission rightly looked to the existing strategic plans of every public university in the state—including the Bicentennial Strategic Plan for Indiana University—in order to ensure the best innovations in our higher education system are also shared priorities for the state. We look forward to working with the Commission to implement this plan in a way that emphasizes the unique mission of each institution, while aligning incentives to successful outcomes."

University of Southern Indiana President Ronald Rochon:

"We appreciate the Indiana Commission for Higher Education and Commissioner Teresa Lubbers' efforts to seek input from the University of Southern Indiana during the development of the Commission's strategic plan. We are thankful for and value the academic partnership between our two institutions. USI will be mindful of the goals of the State of Indiana, and our collaborative efforts in achieving them, as we complete our own strategic planning process this year."