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Indiana sees big gain in graduates earning workforce certificates

State aims to further boost certificate production with new 'Workforce Ready' grant

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana is making progress toward meeting the state’s big goal of 60 percent of Hoosiers having a quality degree or credential beyond high school by 2025, thanks in part to a significant increase in postsecondary certificates that has outpaced the national average in recent years.

A new report by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education shows that certificate production has increased by nearly a third (32 percent) since 2012, with 70 percent of certificates awarded by the state’s public colleges. Nearly three-quarters of these certificates took students more than one year, but less than two years to complete. Short-term certificates also saw significant growth since 2012.

“We understand that a two- or four-year degree is not the best fit for everyone, and that many Hoosiers need a shorter-term credential to get ahead,” said Commissioner Teresa Lubbers. “A high-demand certificate can be a win-win option that means higher earnings for individuals and more highly-skilled workers for employers.”

Certificates account for the largest growing type of credential earned by Indiana college graduates. Nearly 12,000 certificates were awarded in 2016—more than double the amount earned in 2011. The most popular areas of study for Indiana’s certificate earners were business and health-related programs, accounting for more than half (55 percent) of certificates awarded.

The majority of Indiana’s certificate programs are designed to be stackable—meaning credits earned can apply toward an associate or bachelor’s degree. More than half (55 percent) of the state’s certificate earners went on to complete an associate degree and a quarter (25 percent) earned multiple certificates in the same year.

New ‘Workforce Ready’ Grant to Pay for Certificates

To help more Hoosiers complete high-demand certificates, the Commission is partnering with Governor Holcomb, the Indiana Department of Workforce Development and the Indiana General Assembly to create a new financial aid opportunity for adult students: the Workforce Ready Grant. Currently under consideration as part of House Bill 1008, the Workforce Ready Grant would pay the cost for adults to earn a certificate in high-demand areas aligned with the state’s economy.

“We’re sending a clear message to working-age Hoosiers: If you enroll in a high-demand certificate program, Indiana will make sure your costs are covered,” said Lubbers.

Learn more about the Commission’s 2017 Certificate Report and “*Reaching Higher, Delivering Value*” Strategic plan at www.che.in.gov.