INTRODUCTION

The Commission for Higher Education is committed to providing a clearer and more comprehensive picture of college completion.

Indiana’s Completion Challenge

In today’s dynamic economy, Hoosiers who complete education beyond high school will be better equipped for success that those who don’t. Nearly two-thirds of all new jobs in Indiana this decade will require a postsecondary credential, and Indiana will need roughly one million new skilled workers in the next decade to replace retiring baby boomers and fill positions being created each year.

At a time when higher education has never been more essential, the hard truth today is that many students who start college never finish. There are signs of progress: Statewide, 1 in 3 students graduates on time—a 2.3 percentage point improvement in the last year, and 1 in 2 students graduates within 6 years—a number that is holding relatively steady. A closer look at the data show significant differences among campus types that serve different student populations. Students at a four-year main campus are more than twice as likely to graduate on time compared to students attending a non-main campus, and are nearly five times more likely to graduate on time compared to students attending a two-year institution.

Rallying Hoosiers around the cause of college completion is at the heart of Indiana’s strategic plan for higher education, Reaching Higher, Delivering Value. That’s why six years ago Indiana established the Big Goal of 60% of Hoosiers completing education beyond high school by 2025.

Meeting the Challenge

Indiana is embracing its college completion challenge at all levels. Growing efforts by Indiana colleges and policymakers to expand student success initiatives, including tuition discounts, proactive advising strategies, and state financial aid credit completion requirements, have contributed to an uptick in on-time completion.

To help more Hoosiers graduate, Indiana must double-down on its commitment to remove roadblocks that impede students’ path to completion. Indiana must ensure college is affordable for all Hoosiers, increase college readiness by improving student preparation along the K-12 pipeline and strengthen student supports from kindergarten through college commencement.

Closing the Achievement Gap

In addition to differences by campus type, there are continued disparities in graduation rates among low-income and minority students. In 2013, the Commission passed a resolution calling on Indiana colleges to cut the achievement gap in half by 2018 and close it by 2025. The latest data shows progress. The achievement gap for black and Hispanic students is at least half closed at a majority of Indiana public campuses, yet Indiana is currently on track to only close the gap by two-thirds by 2025. The ongoing development of comprehensive supports for traditionally at-risk students will continue to be paramount to addressing barriers to degree completion.

About the Completion Report

The Commission for Higher Education is committed to providing a clearer and more comprehensive picture of college completion in order to inform and advance Indiana’s collective efforts to boost education attainment.

In partnership with Indiana public colleges and the National Student Clearinghouse, the Commission has collected completion data for Hoosier students who graduate in this state and out-of-state. Each Indiana college profile shows the percentage of students who start and finish at their campus of origin, as well as those who complete at another institution or with a different degree within six years. The profiles also highlight progress toward closing the achievement gap, as well as data on first-year credit completion and first-to-second year persistence. Additional supplements and interactive online dashboards provide trends by campus type and institution, illuminating how completion patterns differ by population based on financial need, race/ethnicity and age.

Improving college completion is complex, but overcoming it begins with a clear understanding of where we are, where we need to go and the best strategies and practices to get us there.
On-time college completion rates are consistently improving at all Indiana public campuses.

On-time rates at four-year campuses have improved by about 10 percentage points over five years, while two-year campuses improved by about 6 percentage points.

The five most improved campuses were: IU East, Purdue West Lafayette, Ball State, University of Southern Indiana, and IU Kokomo.

Progress must accelerate to close the achievement gap between minority students and their peers by 2025.

The achievement gap for black and Hispanic students is at least half closed at a majority of public Indiana campuses, yet the state is currently on track to close the gap only by two-thirds by 2025. A contributing factor in the achievement gap is the notable difference in first-to-second year persistence rates of minorities compared to their peers (67% vs. 78%, respectively). The ongoing development of comprehensive supports for traditionally at-risk students will continue to be key in addressing barriers to degree completion.

More students are on track to complete on time by earning 30 credits per year, with 21st Century Scholars making the largest gains.

Statewide, more students are on track to complete on time, with minority students and 21st Century Scholars in particular exceeding average improvement in the percentage of students earning at least 30 credits per year. Scholars have seen the most significant gains in completion rates at two-year institutions.