

Banded tuition pays off for Hoosier families

By Teresa Lubbers, Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education

Most people have heard of a baker's dozen: buy 12 and get an extra one free. Fewer people may be aware that many Indiana colleges offer an even better bargain called banded tuition.

Banded tuition allows students to take up to 18 credits per semester for the same price they would pay for taking 12 credits. That results in big savings for Hoosier families since students must complete at least 15 credits each semester (30 per year) to graduate on time and an extra year of college can cost them more than \$50,000 in added tuition and delayed earnings.

While not all students are able to attend college full time, those who can stand to benefit from taking at least 15 credits per semester. Data show that students who take 15 or more credits per semester earn higher grades, complete college at higher rates and are less likely to end up with debt but no degree.

About one-third of Indiana college students already are enrolled in 12 to 14 credits per semester. Taking just one more class each semester would put thousands more Hoosier students on track to graduate on time with a more affordable degree. That's why the Indiana Commission for Higher Education has encouraged all of the state's colleges to adopt banded tuition as a student success strategy.

Some Indiana colleges, including Ball State University, Indiana State University, Indiana University Bloomington and Purdue University West Lafayette have offered banded tuition for years, and more campuses have been moving in that direction recently. IU's seven regional campuses adopted banded tuition last year and Purdue announced that its two other campuses will transition to banded tuition next year.

We are encouraged that more Indiana campuses are embracing banded tuition and hopeful that this student-friendly practice will become the statewide standard. At a time when higher education has never been more important to our students and our state, we must do everything we can to remove financial barriers to college completion.