



INDIANA COMMISSION *for* HIGHER EDUCATION

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Commissioner aims to restore confidence in higher education during annual address

Indiana Higher Education Commissioner Teresa Lubbers today made a compelling case for the growing need for higher education while confronting recent skepticism about its value during her sixth-annual State of Higher Education Address. Lubbers noted the paradox between mounting evidence showing the increasing economic and social benefits of education beyond high school and surveys suggesting that consumer confidence toward higher education has decreased in recent years. ([Click here to read the full text.](#))

“While we can debate whether perceptions align with reality, there’s definitely a problem when only half of Americans today have confidence in higher education,” said Lubbers. “We must work to restore and build confidence in higher education because it’s clear that the dividing line between the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ is increasingly marked by Hoosiers with higher levels of education and those who lack it.”

During her address, Lubbers acknowledged concerns about college costs and graduates’ readiness for the workforce, but also pointed to signs of progress in Indiana: tuition increases have slowed, student debt levels are decreasing, college graduation rates are improving and new efforts—like the state’s recently expanded Workforce Ready Grant—are providing more opportunities for Hoosiers to get the skills they need and employers expect.

Improving Indiana’s Return on Investment

Lubbers address was accompanied by the release of the Commission’s latest “[Return on Investment](#)” report. Among the report’s findings:

- **College is worth the cost.** The increased earnings of a college degree more than exceed total costs of college, including debt, for most students within only a few years after graduation. College graduates’ lifetime earnings often outweigh those of Hoosiers with a high school diploma by \$1 million or more, and about 99 percent of jobs created since the Great Recession went to workers with at least some college.
- **Higher education strengthens the economy.** Each graduating class of Indiana’s public colleges contributes at least \$13 billion more in additional spending and tax revenue compared to Hoosiers with only a high school diploma. Conversely, Hoosiers without college are more than twice as likely to file for unemployment, accounting for two-thirds of all unemployment claims in the past decade.
- **State financial aid pays off—for both students and the state.** At least one-third of each class of Indiana public college graduates benefits from state financial aid, and the wages of state aid recipients are more than double the cost of the investment within only a few years of graduation. Moreover, the wages of Indiana’s financial aid recipients are similar to those of other Hoosier graduates, suggesting the positive impact state aid programs can have on improving socioeconomic status.

Designed as a companion to the Commission’s “*Reaching Higher, Delivering Value*” strategic plan, the “*Return on Investment*” report is part of a series of consumer-friendly reports that use relevant data to spotlight student progress at each stage of the state’s postsecondary pipeline. To read the Commission’s strategic plan or the new Return on Investment report, visit www.che.in.gov.