

## **Broad Partnership Needed to Help Students, School Counselors**

**By Teresa Lubbers, Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education**

In the past a high school diploma was good enough for a job and a secure middle-class life. That is no longer the case. Ninety-nine percent of the jobs created since the Great Recession went to individuals with education and training beyond high school.

That's some context as to why the state adopted a big goal of 60 percent of Hoosiers with a postsecondary degree or quality credential by 2025. We're currently at just over 43 percent. We must act with urgency to help our students graduate with the practical ability to apply what they've learned in school to their futures.

Graduation pathways, passed by the State Board of Education in 2017, will require students to attain the necessary requirements for a high school diploma, demonstrate readiness for life after high school and complete a work- or service-based project.

The Legislature's interim study committee on education recently held a meeting to discuss the demands facing schools and counselors, with a focus on the state's graduation pathways. These graduation pathways have not gone into effect yet – the first students that will graduate with the new requirements have just now entered high school and are set to graduate in 2023.

What the graduation pathways provide is a clear framework and structure so that counselors can provide the support that students need to not only graduate with a high school diploma, but graduate with the experience and readiness to succeed in college or career choices. Strengthening our workforce by supporting students and emphasizing lifelong learning for Hoosiers should not rest on counselors alone, but rather is a responsibility we all share.

The time that school counselors have been able to devote to college and career counseling duties has declined for decades, as shown by a 2014 [report](#) commissioned by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce Foundation. And that report updated a 1994 study that showed similar concerns for school counselors. I said at the [time](#) in 2014: the Chamber Foundation's report highlighted the need to redesign the counseling model and free up counselors to focus on the students and their needs.

The Governor's Workforce Cabinet, which I have the privilege to chair, recently awarded nearly \$1 million in 14 grants that will help create partnerships among K-12 schools, higher education institutions, employers and community-based organizations to build or plan a comprehensive career coaching system at the local level.

Graduation pathways will provide the opportunity to align our systems and do things differently for our students and our state. But it will take all of us moving in the same direction to make these changes meaningful and lasting.

***Teresa Lubbers is the Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education and chairs the Governor's Workforce Cabinet.***