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High School Graduates are Better Prepared, but More Need Higher Education

State's new report outlines college-going decline, but 21st Century Scholars' rate steady at 86 percent

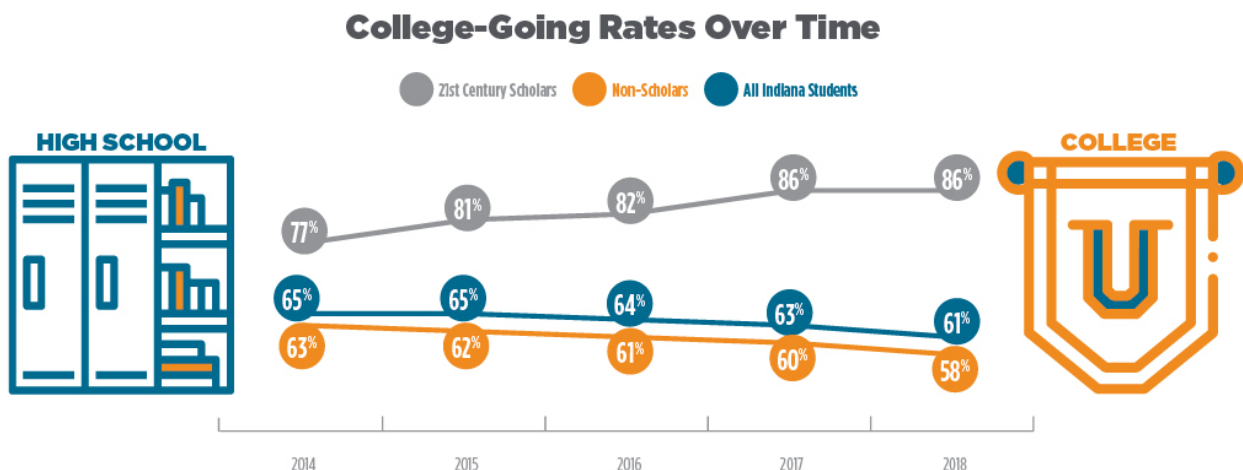
(INDIANAPOLIS) – College enrollment has declined for several years in Indiana and the trend continues, as outlined today in the state's [2020 College Readiness Report](#). The new report from the [Indiana Commission for Higher Education](#) shows 61 percent of Indiana's high school graduates in 2018 enrolled in postsecondary education at the certificate, two-year and four-year degree levels. This compares to college-going rates of 63 percent in 2017 and 65 percent in 2015.

"We have been keeping a sharp eye on this slow decline for several years. What we have found is that historically, fewer people enroll in college when the economy is strong, choosing instead to enter the workforce," said Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers. "It is too early to tell if that trend will continue due to the coronavirus-related downturn. However, for many Hoosiers who are out of work or considering a new career path, this is the time to re-skill or enhance their options with advanced education."

Though the college-going rate has declined, the report also shows high school graduates who go to college after graduation are better prepared for higher learning than ever before. Just 9 percent of the class of 2018 required remediation (additional classes or coursework to be able to take college-level courses), compared to 28 percent of the class of 2014.

Also highlighted: The college-going rate for students enrolled in the state's early college promise program, [21st Century Scholars](#), remains high at 86 percent. Grade point averages of the state's college freshmen are going up, particularly for Black and Hispanic Hoosiers.

"Again and again, the data show the 21st Century Scholars program is one of the best tools we have for educational equity in Indiana," Lubbers said. "It is encouraging to see this positive momentum for low-income Hoosiers and students of color."



Students are taking steps to prepare for college

High school graduates who earn the state's Academic Honors Diploma are significantly more likely to enroll in college, compared to the Core 40 and general diploma (91 percent, compared to 49 percent and 15 percent, respectively).

Additionally, a majority of Hoosier students pursue some form of early college credit while in high school, with 64 percent of graduates in 2018 earning dual credit or Advanced Placement credit. Of those students who earn any form of early college credit through an Indiana public college, nearly three-quarters enrolled in college.

The report also shows more high school graduates are choosing to study Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)-related programs than any other program. This is also the only program area that grew year-over-year for college-going high school graduates.

Finding the right pathway for every learner

More high school graduates who went straight to college after graduation in 2018 pursued a four-year degree than in the previous year (71 percent, compared to 69 percent); over a quarter of high school graduates pursued a two-year degree.

Additionally, the percentage of students pursuing certificates, including short- and long-term workforce certificates, has increased by over 50 percent since 2012.

The Commission's new strategic plan, [Reaching Higher in a State of Change](#), outlines numerous policy positions and action areas to drive college-going access and success, including improving completion rates and expanding the definition of "higher education" to include a full range of credentials – including short- and long-term certificates, apprenticeships, two- and four-year degrees and more.

"It is more crucial than ever to emphasize the value of higher education. That includes ensuring students connect with the most appropriate options for their futures, so that they persist and complete and are able to fully utilize the opportunities that come along with higher learning – whatever form it takes," Lubbers said.

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About the 2020 College Readiness Report

Data included in the 2020 College Readiness Report primarily come from the Indiana Commission for Higher Education Data Submission System; the Indiana Department of Education; and the National Student Clearinghouse.

Read the full report at www.che.in.gov/reports and explore resources available to help students plan, prepare and pay for college at www.LearnMoreIndiana.org.

About the Indiana Commission for Higher Education

Created in 1971, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education plans, coordinates and defines Indiana's postsecondary education system to align higher learning with the needs of students and the state. The Commission also administers Indiana's financial aid programs, including the [21st Century Scholars](#) early college promise scholarship, which celebrates 30 years in 2020. Learn more about the Commission's *Reaching Higher in a State of Change* strategic plan at www.in.gov/che.