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Indiana's College Completion Trends Improve, but Achievement Gaps Continue to Grow

New state report highlights college graduation rates; challenges remain for Black and Hispanic students

(INDIANAPOLIS) – Indiana's new [2020 College Completion Report](#) from the [Indiana Commission for Higher Education](#) highlights improving college graduation rates for the state as a whole, but shows a widening on-time completion gap for Black and Hispanic students.

The state measures college completion in two ways: on-time completion (students graduate within two years for an associate degree or four years for a bachelor's degree) and extended-time completion (students graduate within six years of beginning any degree program). New data reveal upward trends for both on-time and extended-time completion rates for two- and four-year campuses in Indiana.

Over 42 percent of all Hoosier college students graduated on time in 2019, while nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of all students graduate within six years. The data show increases in both metrics over the previous year and with five-year gains of more than 13 percentage points in on-time graduation and almost six percentage points in extended completion.

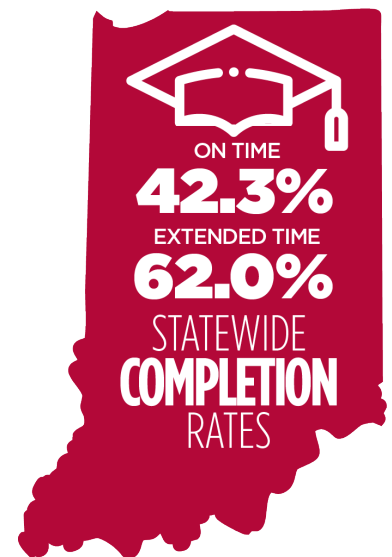
"Our best tool for gauging success in higher education is college completion; it is one of the three priority areas the Commission has outlined in our new strategic plan, *Reaching Higher in a State of Change*," said Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers. "The data in this report serve as an important measure for how Indiana's colleges and universities are preparing and supporting students. We use data to drive change and the unfortunate reality is the data show that while we've seen improvement, we are not closing the achievement gaps for Black and Hispanic students."

Completion challenges

The overall on-time and extended-time completion rates have trended upward in Indiana for underrepresented races and ethnicities (Asian, Black, Hispanic and Latino, and Other) over the past five years.

However, despite the 11 percentage point increase in on-time completion rates for Black students over that time, the gap between Black students and the statewide average continues to grow. There was a 21 percentage point gap in on-time completion between Black students and the statewide average in 2019 – the widest gap in at least 10 years.

The on-time completion gap for Hispanic and Latino students is smaller, around 8.5 percentage points below the statewide average. While the on-time completion rate for Hispanic and Latino students increased slightly over one year



(0.3 percent), the extended-time completion rate declined more than one percentage point – the only group to experience a decline.

“We know COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on Black and Hispanic Hoosiers, both in terms of health outcomes and economic burden,” said Lubbers. “It is critical for Indiana to work toward educational equity and close these achievement gaps to give all Hoosier students access to the opportunities afforded by quality higher learning. We cannot reach our goal of at least 60 percent of Hoosiers with a quality degree or credential beyond a high school diploma without closing these gaps.”

Completion rates differ by campus type

Nearly half (48.4 percent) of all Hoosier students who attend a public four-year campus graduate on time. This is a slight improvement (1.1 percentage points) in the past year and a marked increase of more than 12 percentage points over a five-year period.

Campuses with the highest overall on-time completion rates in 2019 are Ball State University (54.3 percent), Indiana University Bloomington (69.4 percent) and Purdue University West Lafayette (60.8 percent). Their extended-time completion rates are the highest, too, at 75.1 percent, 83.9 percent and 85.3 percent, respectively.

At two-year campuses in Indiana, on-time completion rates have more than doubled in five years, with 15.7 percent of students at Ivy Tech Community College and Vincennes University graduating on time in 2019, a nearly 2 percentage point increase over the previous year. Almost 37 percent of students graduate from two-year campuses within six years (a 1.6 percentage point one-year increase).

21st Century Scholars continue to improve

The on-time graduation rate for students in the state’s early college promise program, [21st Century Scholars](#), has nearly doubled since 2015. There is almost no gap between Scholars and the overall on-time completion rate at four-year non-main campuses. Scholars are also more likely to graduate on-time at two-year campuses than the overall student population (21.1 percent, compared to 15.7 percent).

“The data show a great story when it comes to the performance of our 21st Century Scholars,” said Lubbers. “As we continue to look back on the 30-year history of this vital scholarship program, I applaud the Indiana General Assembly for its strong support of 21st Century Scholars, which is so critical to the state’s continued success in higher education.”

Later this summer, the Commission will release its third [Equity Report](#). This report provides a deeper analysis of the performance of Indiana’s underrepresented populations and disaggregates data by race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender and location. The 2020 Equity Report will also highlight the intersectionality in the data – or how various social categorizations intersect – to show a fuller picture of disparity in education.

Data included in the report primarily come from the Indiana Commission for Higher Education Data Submission System (CHEDSS) and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC).

Read the full report at che.in.gov/completion and all of the Commission’s reports at che.in.gov/reports. 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.