



INDIANA COMMISSION *for*
HIGHER EDUCATION

MEDIA CONTACT:

Charlee Beasor at (765) 720-0342 or CBeasor@che.in.gov

Jess Nejad at (812) 499-0771 or JNejad@che.in.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Thursday, September 24, 2020

New State Equity Report Highlights Educational Disparities Holding Indiana Back *21st Century Scholars early college promise program helps close achievement gaps*

(INDIANAPOLIS) – Even as Indiana’s graduating high school students are becoming more diverse and low-income, a new report released today by the [Indiana Commission for Higher Education](https://che.in.gov) shows persistent disparities in postsecondary readiness and completion. The [2020 College Equity Report](#) examines student college preparedness and success by race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender and location (rural and non-rural).

Governor Eric J. Holcomb recently announced several initiatives to promote equity, including tasking the Governor’s Workforce Cabinet to provide specific recommendations to adjust policies for workforce programs in order to create greater opportunity for people of color.

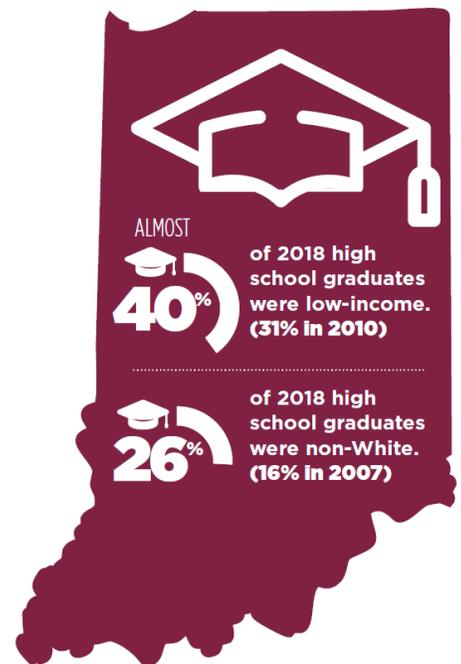
“We can’t know how and where to target our efforts without first zeroing in on the preparation gaps for our young Hoosiers. That’s why this educational equity data is significant for Indiana, because it helps us identify the areas and systems we need to challenge to ensure new generations of Hoosiers are fully equipped for a prosperous future,” said Gov. Holcomb.

Equity in education—the idea that life’s circumstances or obstacles should not dictate the opportunity to succeed—has long been a priority for the Commission. In 2013, the 14-member body passed a resolution to close the state’s achievement gaps by 2025. To shine light on the disparities in Indiana’s educational pipeline, the Commission issued its first Equity Report in 2018—the first of its kind in the nation.

The [2020 College Equity Report](#) is the third iteration of the report and includes policy recommendations designed to make progress toward closing achievement gaps.

Results of the report show:

- **Race and ethnicity:** Black and Hispanic/Latino Hoosiers are less likely than the statewide average to earn early college credit (dual credit or Advanced Placement), enroll in postsecondary programs and complete college on-time at two- and four-year public institutions in Indiana.
- **Socioeconomic Status:** Poverty has a direct impact on college-going rates. Only 38 percent of low-income high school graduates go to college. This is lower than the statewide college-going average of 61 percent as well as college-going rates for higher-income graduates (68 percent) and low-income peers who are part of the state’s [21st Century Scholars](#) program (86 percent).



- **Gender:** Women are more likely to go to college than men (67 percent of women versus 55 percent of men), and the gender disparity tracks among all races and ethnicities.
- **Rural v. Non-Rural:** The 21st Century Scholars program closes the college-going gap for rural students, as 85 percent of rural Scholars go to college and 86 percent of non-rural Scholars go to college. This compares to the college-going rates of non-Scholar low-income peers (31 percent rural and 39 percent non-rural) and higher-income peers (63 percent rural and 69 percent non-rural).

“These outcomes demonstrate why it is critical for the state of Indiana to focus on equity and student success for all Hoosiers,” Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers said. “We cannot reach Indiana’s 2025 goal of at least 60 percent of Hoosiers with quality education and training beyond high school without closing the state’s educational achievement and opportunity gaps.”

Equity is one of three priorities outlined in the Commission’s fourth strategic plan, [Reaching Higher in a State of Change](#), which was released early in 2020. COVID-19 has increased the economic pressures on certain Hoosiers, specifically low-income, Black and Hispanic/Latino Hoosiers as well as those with lower levels of educational attainment.

“Education can be a great equalizer, but it can also be the divider,” said Lubbers. “The recent economic impacts of COVID-19 have further exposed the reality that economic outcomes are linked to educational attainment, and Hoosiers with fewer opportunities due to social stratification or a lack of access to affordable higher education options have fared far worse.”

21st Century Scholars is closing gaps

The new report also shows the state’s early college promise program is effective at closing the achievement gaps. Hoosier students who graduate as 21st Century Scholars go to college 25 percentage points above the statewide college-going average (86 percent and 61 percent, respectively) and are the only students on track to close achievement gaps by 2025.

The scholarship program pays for up to four years of tuition at a participating Indiana college for income-eligible Hoosiers who have met educational benchmarks and other requirements to earn and use the scholarship. The state is celebrating 30 years of the program in 2020 and more than 40,000 Hoosiers have earned a degree with the scholarship.

New data and recommendations

The 2020 College Equity Report also includes data on educational attainment and the workforce, broken out by race and ethnicity, including enrollment in the state’s [Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant](#). Findings show, for example, that a disproportionately large percentage of Black Hoosiers and men enroll in the Workforce Ready Grant, which covers the cost of high-demand certificates in Indiana.

Also of note, less than 15% of students preparing for teaching careers are non-White. Science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) and health care fields are slightly more diverse; just over one-quarter of Hoosier graduates in those fields are non-White.

“We must encourage more minority students to consider teaching as a career. Research shows students of color are more successful in their education journey when they have the opportunity to be in the classroom with a teacher of color,” said Lubbers. “Indiana has scholarships and stipends for teaching students who are Black and Hispanic/Latino. Growing the awareness of these existing programs is one goal of the Commission to make real progress for educational equity.”

21st CENTURY SCHOLARS

86%

I'm a SCHOLAR

86% of 21st Century Scholars go to college, above the statewide average of 61%
21st Century Scholars are **the only group on track to close Indiana's college-going achievement gaps** by 2025.

Other recommendations included in the 2020 College Equity Report are aligned to the Commission's strategic plan, such as improving outreach and awareness of the state's financial aid programs among students of color, calling for sustained and adequate funding for dual credit, breaking out data by race and ethnicity whenever possible and increasing diversity in the teaching profession.

Data in the 2020 College Equity Report primarily come from the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, Independent Colleges of Indiana, Indiana Department of Education, National Student Clearinghouse, United States Census Bureau and Lumina Foundation.

Read the full report at che.in.gov/equity 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.

Support for the 2020 College Equity Report

Indiana Latino Institute President and CEO Marlene Dotson

The Indiana Latino Institute (ILI) commends the Indiana Commission for Higher Education for underscoring the importance of closing the postsecondary-credentials attainment gaps in Indiana, and for highlighting the achievements of 21st Century Scholars and the increases in degree-completion rates by Latino students.

"As the Equity Report points out, enacted policies and practices are beginning to bear fruit," said ILI President and CEO Marlene Dotson. "But with COVID-19 disrupting the entire educational pipeline, the fragility of those gains and the remaining disparities require all of us to reconfirm our commitments, implement new strategies, and adapt tactics to maintain our momentum."

For that reason, ILI is converting, for example, its college-access programming for Latino students and their parents into virtual formats. Dotson announced, "ILI is expanding the reach of our November 5 virtual Indiana Latino Education Summit to ALL Indiana Latino high school students. We look forward to collaborating with the Commission, colleges, and schools on efforts further closing all of Indiana's postsecondary attainment gaps."

UNCF Indianapolis Regional Development Director Andrea L. Neely

"The state's 2020 College Equity Report highlights important data that flows through our work at UNCF. Indiana continues to become more diverse and we must all work to ensure our children are prepared for success in higher education and in life. I am particularly pleased to see this report emphasize a greater need for more teachers of color in the college pipeline. Encouraging greater diversity in the teaching profession is one of the most critical steps we can take to strengthen our classrooms and our communities and UNCF will continue to support the state's efforts in this work."

Indiana Black Expo President and CEO Tanya Mckinzie

"IBE is glad to see that we have progressed in graduating more low-income and minority students over the past decade and that 21st Century Scholars currently have the highest college-going rates in Indiana. Based on other indicators highlighted in the Equity Report, we still have a lot of work to do to narrow low income and racial disparities at the secondary level so that our students are more prepared for college coursework and lack the need for remediation.

Specifically, the data shows that minority students that earn AP or dual credits are more likely to complete two-year and four-year degrees on time. Consequently, we must focus on providing high school students more early college opportunities, including dual credit and AP courses as well as exposure to college life and campuses. IBE is committed to working with school districts and high schools across the state of Indiana to ensure that minority and low-income students are taking advantage of these college ready opportunities.”

Starfish Initiative President and CEO Kimberly Bostic

“Starfish Initiative enthusiastically supports the great work of the Commission for Higher Education and the 21st Century Scholar program and its goal to address the education and career achievement gaps among minority and low and moderate families. It is because of the 21st Century Scholars program that Starfish Initiative is able to play its part as community partner to help the state of Indiana achieve its goals to ensure that more working-age Hoosiers have a quality college degree or credential by the year 2025.”

EDGE 21 (Putnam County) Director Vic Hunter

“Access to education unlocks the door to career success and community leadership. 86% of 21st Century Scholars go to college, and that is 40% above the statewide average of 61%. 21st Century Scholars are the only group on track to close Indiana’s college-going achievement gaps by 2025. Education closes the equity gap for all in poverty, but this access to education is of great importance to the future of each of our rural communities.”