



INDIANA'S PROMISE:  
**A REPORT ON THE**  
**21st CENTURY**  
**SCHOLARS**  
P R O G R A M



# 21st Century Scholars Program Impact

Since 1990, Indiana's 21st Century Scholars program has been leading the way as a model for early college promise programs across the country. It's Indiana's promise to students that no matter life's circumstances or obstacles, college is an option for them.

The impact of the program in Indiana has been immense. More than 45,000 students have earned a credential or degree through the program, and over 100,000 students are enrolled currently, from seventh graders to college seniors.

## 21st Century Scholars are more likely to:

- Be college-ready than their low-income peers (including taking and earning dual credit or Advanced Placement courses while in high school)
- Go to college than all high school graduates
- Complete college than their low-income peers

## Outcomes for 21st Century Scholars

In the report that follows, students are broken out into three groups by income level: Scholars, low-income non-Scholars and higher-income students.

This report follows students by their high school cohort, as opposed to a Scholars' higher education cohort, which will be most noticeable when reporting completion metrics as the data do not contain students who graduated high school outside of Indiana.

Data highlighted in the following pages show how the 21st Century Scholars program helps bridge the higher education achievement gap between low-income and higher-income students. Thus, the focus of the data is around college access, success and completion:

- College-going rates
- Freshman year GPA
- Number of credits earned as a college freshman
- On-time and extended-time completion rates

Another important factor is that the program has not remained unchanged over its 30-year history. The report will also highlight various policy changes, such as credit completion requirements, GPA and diploma requirements and the Scholar Success Program, among other changes.

An additional consideration is the changing demographics of Indiana's high school graduates over time, focusing specifically on income level but also drawing conclusions and recommendations for other demographic impacts, such as race and ethnicity, and gender as has been shown in the Commission's [Equity Reports](#).

Current supportive services for 21st Century Scholars include the Indiana ScholarCorps program, which has hosted hundreds of 21st Century Scholars coordinators at Indiana's college campuses over the past 10 years. Indiana also participates in the federal

GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) grant program, where specific high schools participate in 21st Century Scholars enrollment and other activities. Indiana will reapply for the next seven-year grant cycle in 2022-2023. (Find more about the GEAR UP and ScholarCorps programs on page 8-9.)

**Program timeline and milestones**

1990: Program Beginnings

In 1990, then-State Representative Stan Jones authored the legislation creating Indiana’s 21st Century Scholars program. Indiana’s Governor at the time, Gov. Evan Bayh, championed the bill, which received bipartisan support and was codified into Indiana law. Bayh and Jones (who later served as Indiana’s Commissioner for Higher Education between 1995 and 2009) didn’t create the program to be just a scholarship program. While the scholarship is the hallmark of 21st Century Scholars, it isn’t enough to simply pay for Hoosiers to go to college. Helping students from an early age aspire and prepare for higher learning is crucial to the program’s—and Hoosiers’ success.

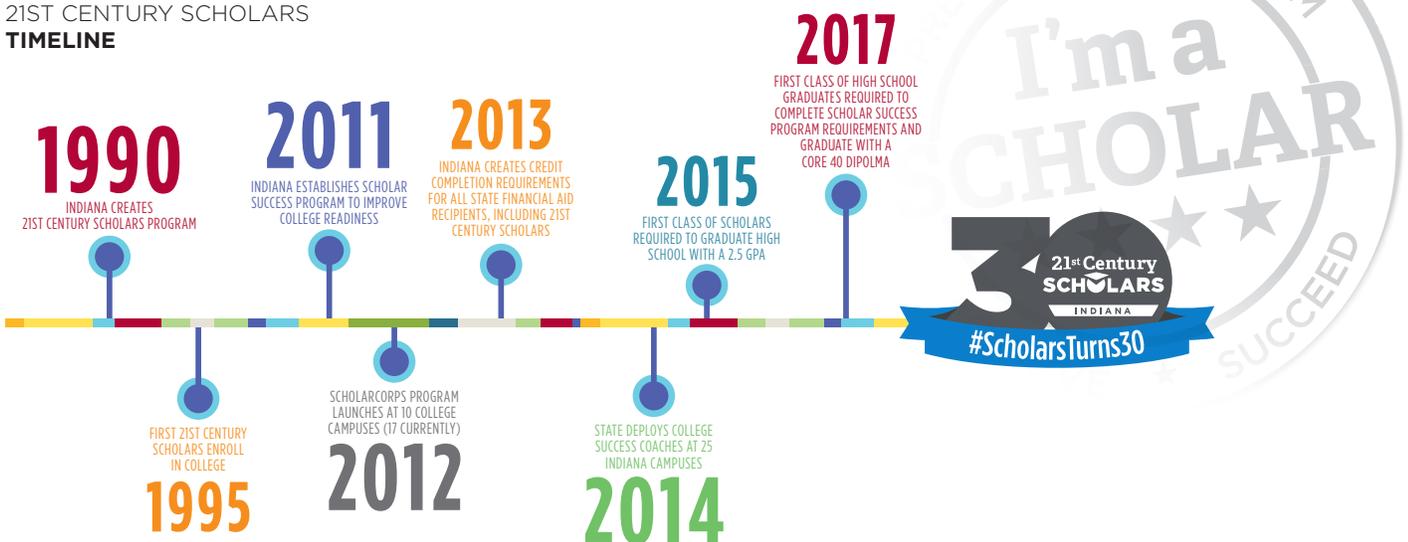
2009: ERA OF THE BIG GOAL

In 2009, Jones passed the baton for advocating for the 21st Century Scholars program to his successor Commissioner Teresa Lubbers. Since Lubbers became the state’s top education official, Indiana adopted its Big Goal: at least 60 percent of Hoosiers would have a quality credential by 2025. The Commission has also put a greater emphasis on data since 2009, including the state’s [College Equity Report](#).

2011-2013: POLICY CHANGES

To help students better prepare for the rigors of education beyond high school, Indiana created the Scholar Success Program in 2011, a series of required activities Scholars must complete each year of high school. Students create a graduation plan, view videos on how to pay for college, visit a college campus, submit college applications, file the Free Application for Federal State Aid (FAFSA) and more.

21ST CENTURY SCHOLARS  
**TIMELINE**



The first cohort of high school graduates to take part in the Scholar Success Program was the Class of 2017. Those students who sought four-year college degrees graduated this past spring.

While the Scholars program ensured access for eligible students, students were not as successful in college as they needed to be, making the case for several important reforms to the 21st Century Scholars program, which included:

- Raising minimum GPA from 2.0 to 2.5
- Requiring at least a Core 40 diploma
- Creating requirements for students to take at least 30 credit hours per calendar year
- Adding flexibility to use the scholarship during the summer
- Expanding on-campus support through the Indiana ScholarCorps program

2018: COLLEGE SCHOLAR SUCCESS PROGRAM

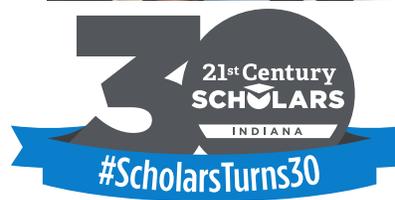
The Scholar Success Program helps prepare students for the rigors of higher education. Assisting Scholars with their transition to college life and success throughout higher learning is as critical as the preparation. The state created the College Scholar Success Program in 2018 to fill that need, focusing on the first-year experiences and integrating career relevance and preparation through internships and work-based learning. The program was piloted at several campuses around Indiana in 2020 and is required for class of 2021 high school graduates and beyond.

# CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF SUCCESS



**21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars** are more likely to:

1. Go to college than all Indiana students.
2. Be college ready than their low-income peers.
3. Complete college than their low-income peers.



**“ The 21st Century Scholars program made earning a degree possible for me. ”**

Liza Serafino, Scholar Alum

# Key Takeaways

- Since 1990, more than 45,000 Hoosiers have earned a college degree with the 21st Century Scholarship. There are more than 100,000 Hoosiers between 7th grade and college seniors enrolled in the program today.
- Nearly 9 in 10 qualifying Scholars go to college right after high school (88 percent), greater than the state average of about 6 in 10 students.
- Scholars are more likely to outperform and graduate college on time than their low-income peers. Scholars' overall on-time completion rate is 17 percentage points higher than their low-income peers.
- Scholars' college completion rates have improved significantly over the past decade, increasing overall from 20 percent to 37 percent between 2010 and 2016. Scholars at two-year colleges graduate the same percentage as their higher-income peers (26 percent). On-time completion rates at four-year colleges have improved 15 percentage points from 2010 to 40 percent in 2016.
- Most high schoolers in the Scholars program complete the Scholars Success Program (SSP), a requirement to maintain eligibility that helps prepare students for postsecondary success. Completions have been improving each year and 70 percent of high school Scholars now complete the SSP.
- The impact of the 21st Century Scholars program is significant, as nearly 10% of high school graduates are 21st Century Scholars. But there are many more students who could access the program, as approximately half of eligible students enroll each year.
- Race/ethnicity and gender play a role in who becomes a 21st Century Scholar. The percentage of White and Asian students who are enrolling as 21st Century Scholars is higher than the percentage of Scholars from other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Additionally, women make up a larger share of 21st Century Scholars than men.

Since  
**1990,**  
**45,000+**  
**HOOSIERS**

earned a college degree with the 21st Century Scholarship. Over **100,000 Hoosier students** are enrolled today (between 7th grade and college seniors).

### 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SCHOLARS

are more likely to go to college than all others



#### COLLEGE GOING RATES

- 21st Century Scholars: **88%**
- Higher-income students: 64%
- Statewide average: 59%
- Low-income non-Scholars: 36%

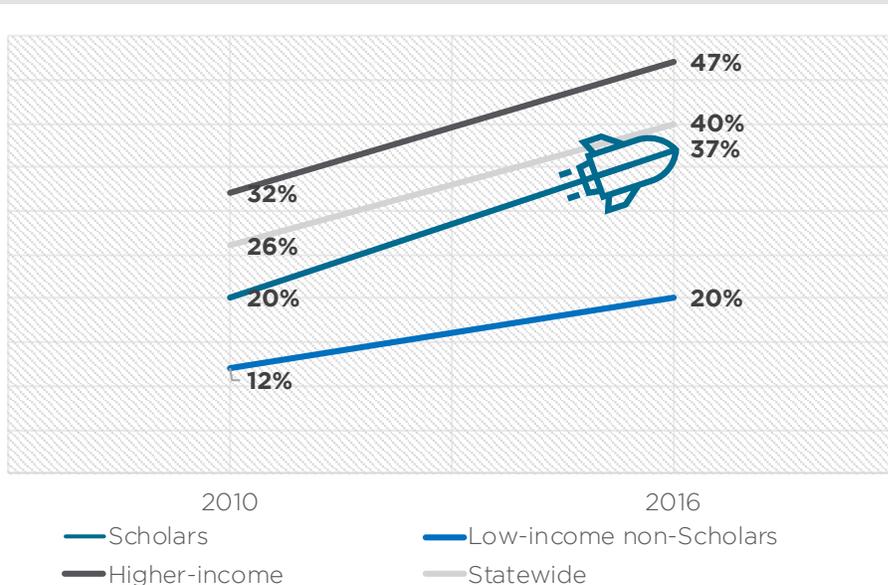
#### 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SCHOLARS ARE REQUIRED TO:

- Fulfill the Scholar Pledge
- Maintain a 2.5 GPA
- Earn at least a Core 40 high school diploma
- Complete the Scholar Success Program (series of 3 tasks per year, 9th-12th grade)



of Scholars complete all the requirements of the **21st Century Scholars program.**

**21st Century Scholars** college completion rates nearly doubled between 2010 and 2016 (on-time completion at two- and four-year colleges)



### ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

four in  
**10**

high school graduates are **financially** eligible for the program

but

About

**1/2**

of eligible students **enroll** in the 21st Century Scholars program



### GENDER GAPS

**Women** are almost twice as likely as men to be 21st Century Scholars.

In 2017-2019, **14%** of women and **8%** of men were Scholars.

**Women** are more likely to go to college than men.

**65%** of women in 2019 went to college, compared to **51%** of men.

**The Scholars program nearly closes the college-going gap between genders for all races and ethnicities.**

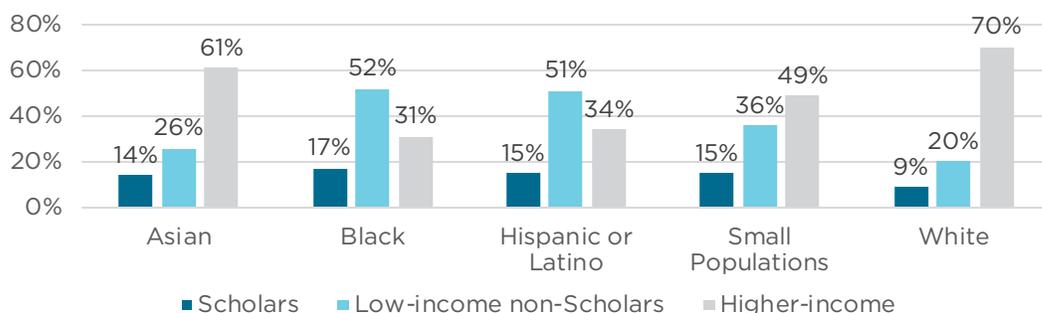
On average, **86%** of men who are Scholars go to college, compared to **37%** of low-income men who are not Scholars.

On average, **89%** of women who are Scholars go to college, compared to **47%** of low-income women who are not Scholars.

### WHO BECOMES A 21ST CENTURY SCHOLAR?

#### RACE & ETHNICITY DISPARITY

Students of color are more likely to come from low-income homes (2017 - 2019)



#### Black and Hispanic/Latino Hoosiers

are more likely to come from low-income homes (2017-2019), but a greater percentage of low-income students who are Scholars are White and Asian.

#### Percent of low-income students who are Scholars (2017 - 2019)

**ASIAN: 35%**  
**BLACK: 24%**  
**HISPANIC/LATINO: 23%**  
**WHITE: 31%**  
**SMALL POPULATIONS: 29%**

## Highlight: Indiana ScholarCorps

21st Century Scholars have the highest college-going rates in Indiana, with 88 percent of Scholars going to college, compared to the statewide average of 59 percent. Importantly, Scholars go to college at rates 2.5 times that of their low-income non-Scholar peers ([2019 data](#)).

However, it isn't enough to ensure Scholars enroll and attend college—they need to be prepared to succeed and earn a degree, which can help break the cycle of poverty and ensures the state's return on investment in the scholarship program is worthwhile.

That's why the State of Indiana participates in the federal AmeriCorps program, known as the Indiana ScholarCorps program, which is designed to expand the level of support provided for 21st Century Scholars on college campuses through individualized assistance and on-campus programs and services that promote college completion. ScholarCorps is modeled after the federal TRiO program, which has shown a strong correlation between academic success and engagement on campus for students who are directly involved in intrusive advising and multifaceted career coaching.

There are 25 ScholarCorps members placed around the state at public and private colleges that participate in the Scholars program. ScholarCorps members provide information and support to students in several ways, including:

1. Ensuring students know and understand the 21st Century Scholarship requirements and steps they must take to maintain eligibility.
2. Helping Scholars establish meaningful connections early on, by participating in community service projects, social activities and events.
3. Focusing on career interest and exploration resources and connections with Scholars to help them determine their career path and interests at an early stage.
4. Addressing financial literacy and debt management with students and families through financial literacy workshops, programming and events.

The ScholarCorps program was created in 2011 and the Commission is celebrating the 10th year of the program that has made an impact for students around the state.

### SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

#### ARLEN TALIAFERRO

Andrean High School

Wabash College

Indiana Commission for Higher Education

"SERVING AS A SCHOLARCORPS MEMBER FOR THE 21ST CENTURY SCHOLARS PROGRAM WAS SUCH AN EYE-OPENING EXPERIENCE! WHILE THE PANDEMIC WAS CERTAINLY A TWIST TO THE PROGRAM, IT ALLOWED ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET CREATIVE IN HOW I SERVED SCHOLARS IN BEING A RESOURCE IN THEIR COLLEGE CAREER."



# Highlights: Indiana GEAR UP

In support of its efforts to reduce poverty and increase educational attainment for low-income Hoosier students, Indiana is a recipient of a \$6.1 million, seven-year grant through the federal GEAR UP grant (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs).

The highly competitive grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Education awards six- or seven-year grants to states or partnerships, with the goal of increasing the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. The grants follow a group of students starting in sixth or seventh grade (a cohort) and follow the students throughout high school.

In 2012, Purdue University, in collaboration and with the support of the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, began running the current Indiana GEAR UP program, which supports 22 middle and high schools across nine Indiana school corporations. There are about 7,000 students who are currently enrolled in the Indiana GEAR UP program; these students will graduate in 2022 and 2023. Prior to 2012, previous multi-year GEAR UP grants funded support sites hosted at colleges and universities across the state of Indiana.

Supports for Indiana GEAR UP schools include tutoring, summer camps, afterschool programming, and professional development for teachers to track students' results and participation in the Scholar Success Program. Indiana's GEAR UP program also focuses on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) events and activities for students and aims to get parents and the local community involved in supporting students.

As the cohort of students in the current program moved along the pipeline from seventh grade to nearing high school graduation, the focus of the activities also shift to match what students need. Providing on-campus and immersive summer bridge activities for the cohort during the summer in 2021 and 2022, for example, helps ensure students are ready to take the next step from high school to college.

The program's funding also covers research on the impact the GEAR UP program has had on Indiana students over the grant cycle. Research will be conducted by Purdue University's College of Education.

## Partnering Schools

1. **Crawford County Community Schools**  
Crawford County High School  
Crawford County Middle School
2. **Gary Community School Corporation**  
Gary Middle School  
West Side Leadership Academy
3. **Greater Clark County Schools**  
Charlestown High School  
Charlestown Middle School  
Jeffersonville High School  
Parkview Middle School  
River Valley Middle School
4. **Indianapolis Public Schools**  
Arsenal Technical High School  
H.L. Harshman Magnet Middle School  
Purdue Polytechnic High School
5. **Kokomo School Corporation**  
Kokomo High School  
Maple Crest Middle School
6. **Lafayette School Corporation**  
Jefferson High School  
Tecumseh Junior High School
7. **Maconaquah School Corporation**  
Maconaquah High School  
Maconaquah Middle School
8. **Metropolitan School District of Warren Township**  
Warren Central High School
9. **Muncie Community Schools**  
Central High School  
Northside Middle School  
Southside Middle School



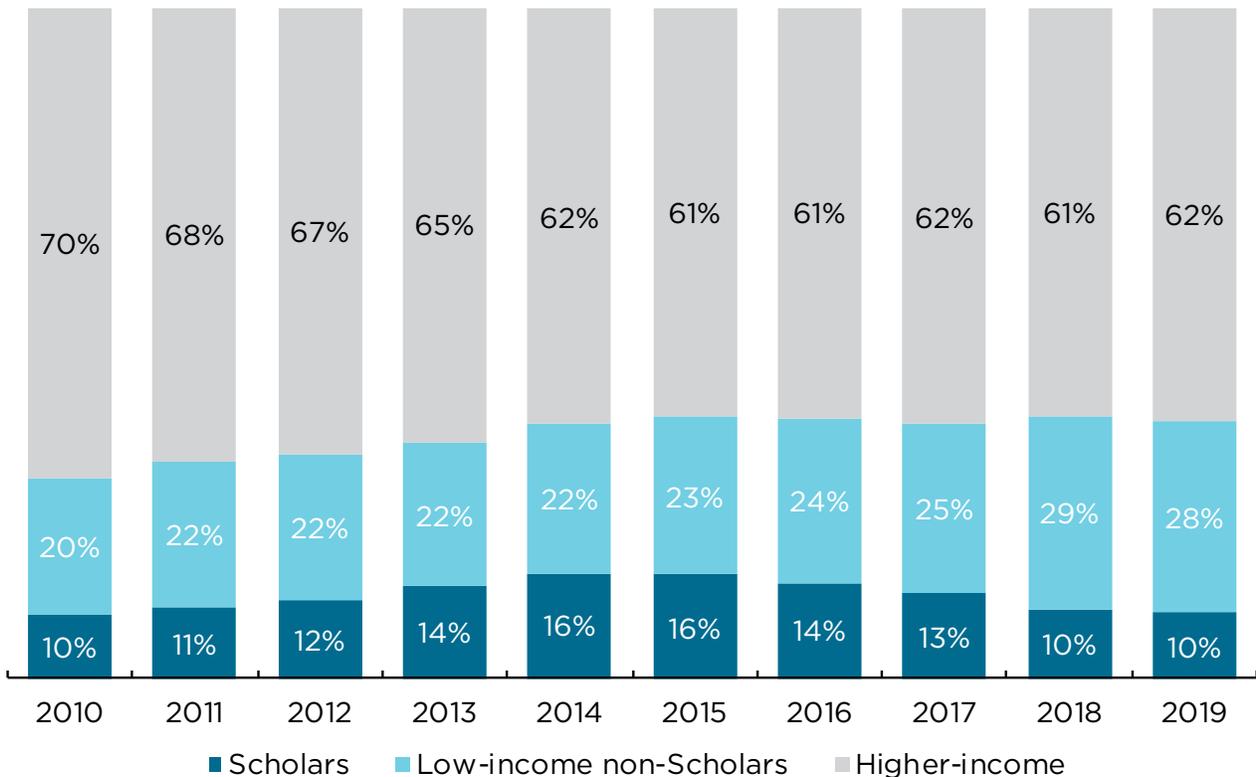
# High School Graduate Demographics

Over the past decade, the percentage of Indiana’s high school graduates coming from low-income homes has increased. In 2019, nearly two out of five Indiana high school graduates were from low-income homes, and fewer Hoosier high school graduates were from higher-income homes in 2019 (62 percent) than in 2010 (70 percent).

When considering low-income high school graduates, this report classifies low-income graduates as 21st Century Scholars (Scholars) or low-income non-Scholars. The percent of high school graduates who are low-income and not part of the Scholars program has increased every year over the past decade, from 20 percent in 2010 to 28 percent in 2019.

While there are more low-income non-Scholars than Scholars in Indiana, the percentage of 21st Century Scholars grew from 10 percent of all graduates in 2010 to 16 percent in 2014 before returning to 10 percent in 2019. The Great Recession may help explain some of the mid-decade increase in Scholars. Students must enroll in the Scholars program during middle school. Those students who were in middle school during the height of the recession would have been graduating high school between 2013 and 2016.

Nearly 2 out of 5 Indiana high school graduates are low-income

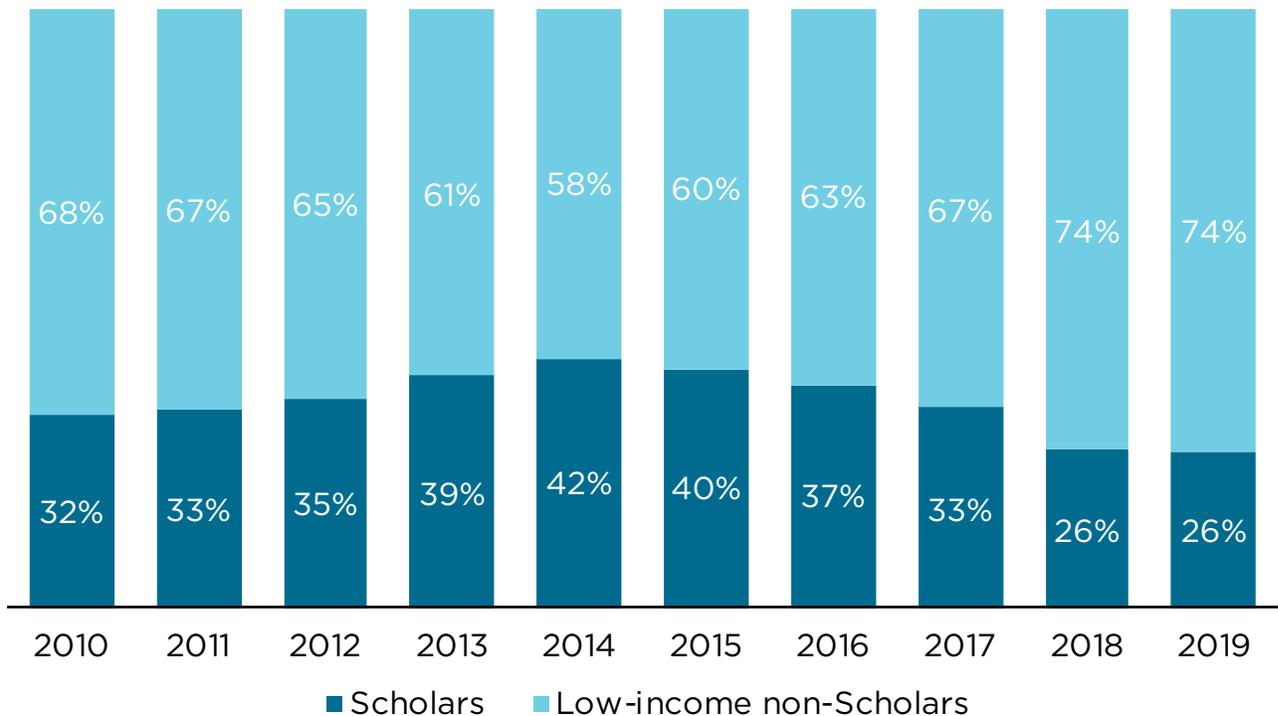


Because the percentage of high school students who are low-income grew between 2010 and 2019, Scholars made up a smaller percentage of low-income graduates in 2019 than they did in 2010. About 30 percent of all high school graduates were considered low-income in 2010, but by 2019, 38 percent were low-income.

Focusing only on low-income high school graduates, the percent of Scholars varied over the past decade. In 2010, 32 percent of low-income graduates were Scholars, peaking in 2014 with 42 percent of Scholars and falling to 26 percent with the 2019 cohort.

Having a larger pool of low-income students might be expected to lead to more 21st Century Scholars. However, this has not been the case, possibly indicating that fewer eligible students are enrolling in the Scholars program or those who enroll are failing to maintain eligibility through the program.

Many low-income students are eligible for 21st Century Scholars but do not appear to be enrolling or maintaining eligibility

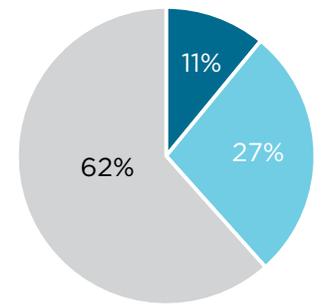


About 11 percent of all high school graduates from 2017 through 2019 were Scholars. Another 27 percent were low-income non-Scholars, and 62 percent were higher income.

These three cohorts saw wide disparity among racial and ethnic groups. As shown in the chart below, Black and Hispanic/Latino graduates were more likely to be from low-income homes generally, compared to Asian and White graduates and those representing Small Populations. However, White and Asian students from low-income homes are more likely to be Scholars than students from other races and ethnicities. In the 2017-2019 cohort, 1 in 3 White or Asian low-income students were Scholars, while 1 in 4 low-income students from Black, Hispanic/Latino and smaller populations were Scholars.

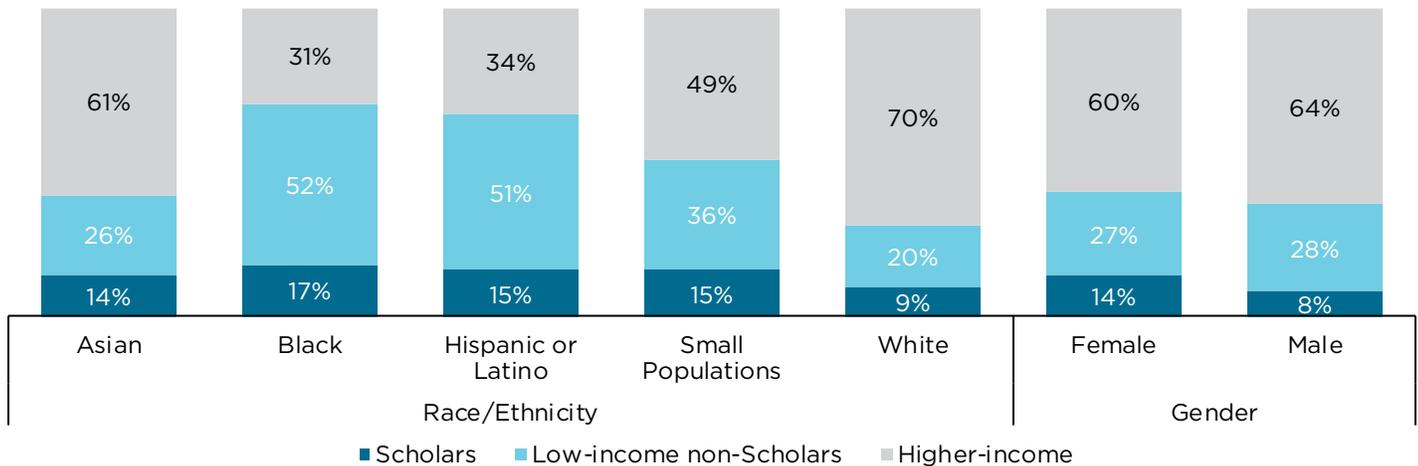
Additionally, women make up a larger share of 21st Century Scholars than men—almost twice as many women as men are Scholars (14 percent and 8 percent, respectively). The fact that female high school graduates are more likely to be low-income than male high school graduates does not mean men are more likely to be born wealthy. Rather, it indicates that low-income women are more likely to stay in school whereas low-income men are more likely to drop out of high school.

One in Four High School Graduates is From a Low-Income Home (2017-2019 HS Cohorts)



- Scholars
- Low-income non-Scholars
- Higher-income

Students of Color and Women are More Likely to be Scholars (2017 - 2019 HS Cohorts)



From 2017 through 2019, 24,613 students completed high school with their 21st Century Scholarship eligibility intact. Yet over that timeframe, an additional 61,774 low-income Hoosiers graduated high school.

It is likely that many, if not most, of those 61,774 students met the financial requirements for the Scholars program, as both Scholars and low-income non-Scholar students have met the federal Free-or-Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) program income thresholds at least once.

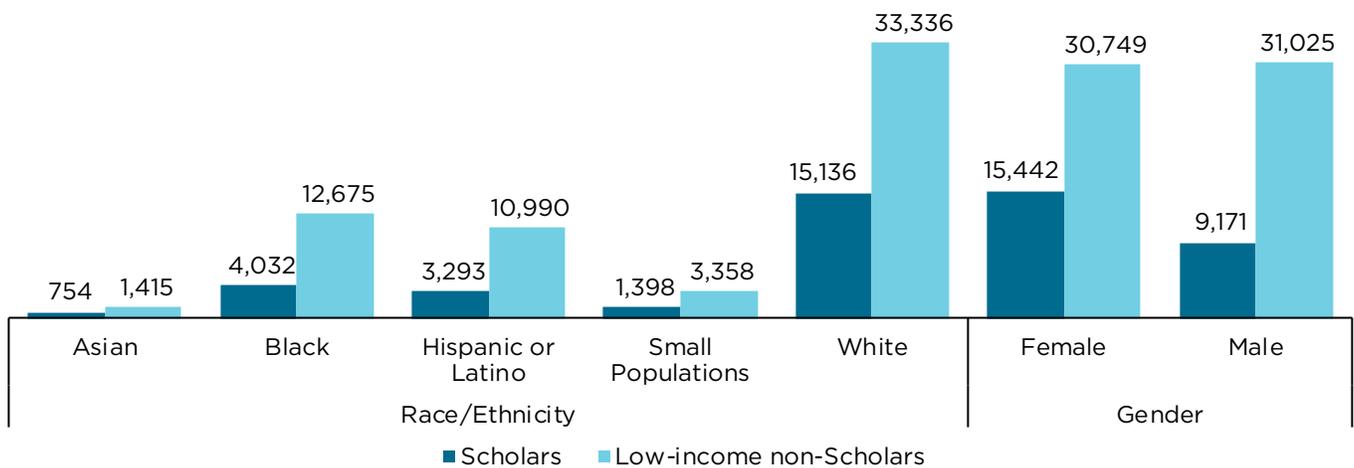
This shows that many low-income Hoosiers either do not enroll in the 21st Century Scholars program or else do not meet the high school GPA, diploma or other program requirements.

When considering the gender breakdown of Scholars and low-income non-Scholars, one-third of low-

income women (about 15,000) in the 2017 through 2019 cohorts are Scholars, while less than a quarter of low-income men are Scholars (about 9,000). This may be a sign that men are less likely to meet the GPA requirements or the Scholar Success Program requirements. Previous reports from the Commission show that men are less likely to go to college straight after high school.

By race and ethnicity, of the nearly 25,000 Scholars who graduated high school between 2017 and 2019, just over 15,000 (61 percent), identified as White. Black students made up 4,032 (16 percent) of all Scholars. Asian students were the most likely low-income group to graduate as Scholars. Over one-third (35 percent) of low-income Asian students were Scholars (754 total Scholars over the three cohorts).

Most 21st Century Scholars are White and Nearly Twice as Many Women as Men are Scholars (2017 - 2019 HS Cohorts)



One takeaway is that while the percentage of high school graduates who are from low-income homes is higher in the Black and Hispanic/Latino communities, the majority of 21st Century Scholars are White (15,000+ high school graduates in 2017-2019, compared to just over a combined 7,000 Black and Hispanic/Latino students). Poverty affects all student groups, regardless of race. Programs such as the 21st Century Scholarship can be an effective means of mitigating some—but not all—of the challenges and barriers for low-income students.

However, the percent of low-income students who are Scholars is very similar across race and ethnicity as well as gender. This speaks to a potential common barrier or reason—regardless of demographic—as to why the student does or does not take advantage of the Scholars program. Further research, resources and outreach are required to understand and confront the shared barriers for low-income students.

There are opportunities for male high school graduates, as well as those from Black and Hispanic/Latino homes to make up a larger portion of the 21st Century Scholars program, either by increasing enrollment rates into the program or by ensuring those students have the needed support to maintain their scholarship throughout the program.

**Only 28% of Low-Income High Schoolers Graduate with 21st Century Scholar Eligibility (Sum of 2017-2019 Cohorts)**

Demographic		Scholars	Low-income non-Scholars	% of low-income students who are Scholars
TOTAL		<b>24,613</b>	<b>61,774</b>	<b>28%</b>
Race/Ethnicity	Asian	754	1,415	35%
	Black	4,032	12,675	24%
	Hispanic or Latino	3,293	10,990	23%
	White	15,136	33,336	31%
	Small Populations	1,398	3,358	29%
Gender	Female	15,442	30,749	33%
	Male	9,171	31,025	23%

# Scholar Success Program

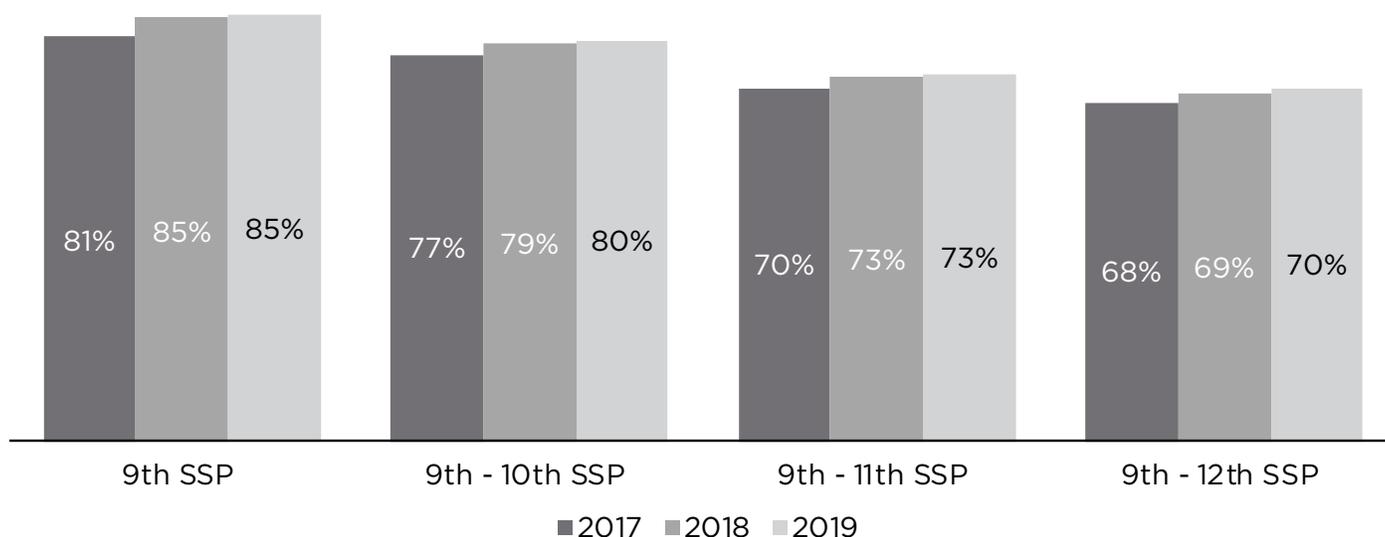
Designed to support college-bound Hoosiers, the 21st Century Scholars Program begins in middle school. Students whose families meet the income requirements may sign up in 7th or 8th grade. Once signed up, Scholars must maintain eligibility by meeting certain requirements in high school.

The central requirements are: fulfill the Scholar Pledge; maintain a 2.5 high school GPA; earn at least a Core 40 high school diploma; and complete the Scholars Success Program (SSP). The Scholar Pledge requires Scholars to avoid underage drinking, illegal drugs, and avoid committing criminal or delinquent acts. The SSP are a series of 12 tasks, three per year of high school. These tasks include creating a graduation plan, getting workplace experience and filing the FAFSA.

The SSP was established in 2011 and became required starting with the high school class of 2017. These tasks help prepare students for college. Parents, counselors and other adults can also use the requirements to begin important conversations or identify students who may need additional assistance in preparing for college.

Since it was first required, the percentage of Scholars who completed the SSP has grown with each graduating class. Now, 85 percent of Scholars complete the three 9th grade tasks and 70 percent of Scholars complete all 12 tasks. Even after accounting for those Scholars who did not meet one of the 2.5 GPA or Core 40 diploma requirements, most students who sign up for 21st Century Scholars in middle school are able to graduate high school with their eligibility intact.

70% of High School Scholars Complete the Required Scholars Success Program



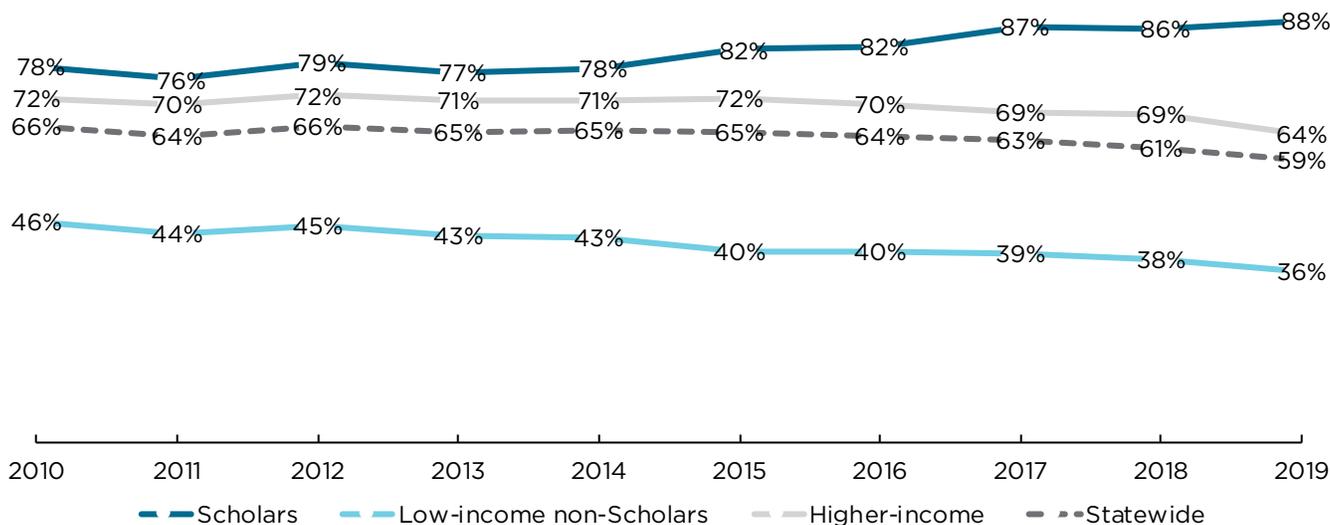
# College Access

## College-Going Rates

A 21st Century Scholar is more likely to go to college than the average Indiana high school graduate. The Scholars' college-going rate was 88 percent in 2019, compared to a 59 percent statewide average.

While overall college-going rates nationally and in Indiana have decreased over the past several years, the college-going rate for 21st Century Scholars has increased 10 percentage points in the past decade. Much of that increase occurred from 2015 onward. Conversely, the college-going rate for low-income non-Scholars has decreased 10 percentage points over a decade. The college-going rate for higher income students also decreased, from 72 percent in 2010 to 64 percent in 2019.

Scholars are more likely to go to college than non-Scholars



One potential cause for the rapid increase in college-going Scholars starting with the 2015 cohort may be due to changes in policy. The first class of Scholars were required to graduate high school with a 2.5 GPA in 2015. Likely, graduating Scholars in 2015 and beyond would be higher performing students who were more likely to enroll in a postsecondary opportunity, as compared to their low-income peers who fell below the 2.5 GPA requirement.

An increase in the college-going rate also occurred for Scholars graduating in 2017, lining up with the timing of the first class of Scholars who were required to earn a Core 40 diploma and also complete the high school Scholar Success Program. The Scholar Success Program requires Scholars to complete three activities each year of high school, such as physically or virtually visiting a campus and taking the ACT or SAT. As with the GPA requirement, stricter guidelines for being a Scholar result in a smaller, albeit higher performing cohort of Scholars.

**College-Going Rates and Demographics**

During the three most recent years for which data are available (2017 through 2019), Scholars were more than twice as likely than their low-income peers to enroll in college the year after high school.

This pattern held for every race and ethnicity. Importantly, although college-going gaps persist across racial and ethnic groups (see [ICHE's Equity Report](#)), the gap is all but closed among students in the Scholars program. Roughly 90 percent of Scholars from every racial or ethnic group go straight to college after high school.

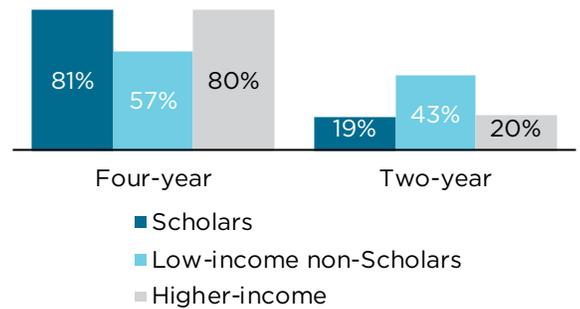
Likewise, there is almost no college-going gap between women and men in the Scholars program. While women are typically more likely to go to college straight after high school, 88 percent of women Scholars and 85 percent of men Scholars go—a gap of only 3 percentage points.

The college-going rate for low-income men who are not Scholars is just 32 percent, compared to 61 percent of higher-income male graduates. Similarly, 43 percent of low-income non-Scholar women enrolled in college and 74 percent higher-income graduates did so.

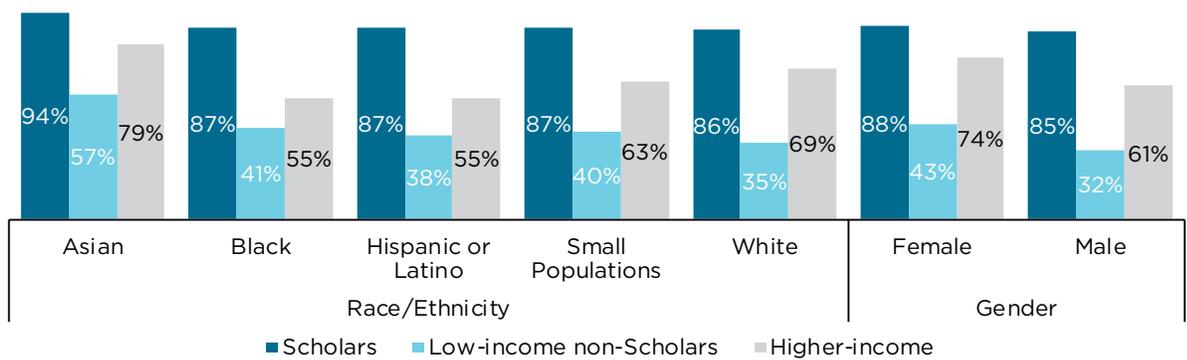
Also of note is where Scholars go to college, when comparing to their peers in other income level groups. Scholars between 2017-2019 were more likely to attend a four-year college than a two-year college, matching or surpassing their higher-

income peers in where they attend college. Low-income non-Scholars attend two-year colleges at twice the rate of Scholars and higher-income students.

8 out of 10 Scholars attend a four-year college (2017-2019 HS Cohorts)



21st Century Scholars close the college-going gap for all races/ethnicities and by gender (2017 - 2019 HS Cohorts)



# College Success

## Freshman Year GPA

It's not enough for students at all income levels to have access to the opportunities afforded by earning a degree or credential beyond high school. Students must also succeed while in the postsecondary system. In this report, the Commission considers freshman year GPA (college) and freshman year credits earned when attempting to quantify how students succeed.

21st Century Scholars are required to maintain a 2.5 GPA while in high school to remain eligible for the program. As mentioned previously in this report, this is one of several policy changes that was made to the Scholars program to increase student success and outcomes. In college, Scholars are required to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) as defined by the colleges and universities and includes factors such as student GPA, attendance and credit completion requirements.

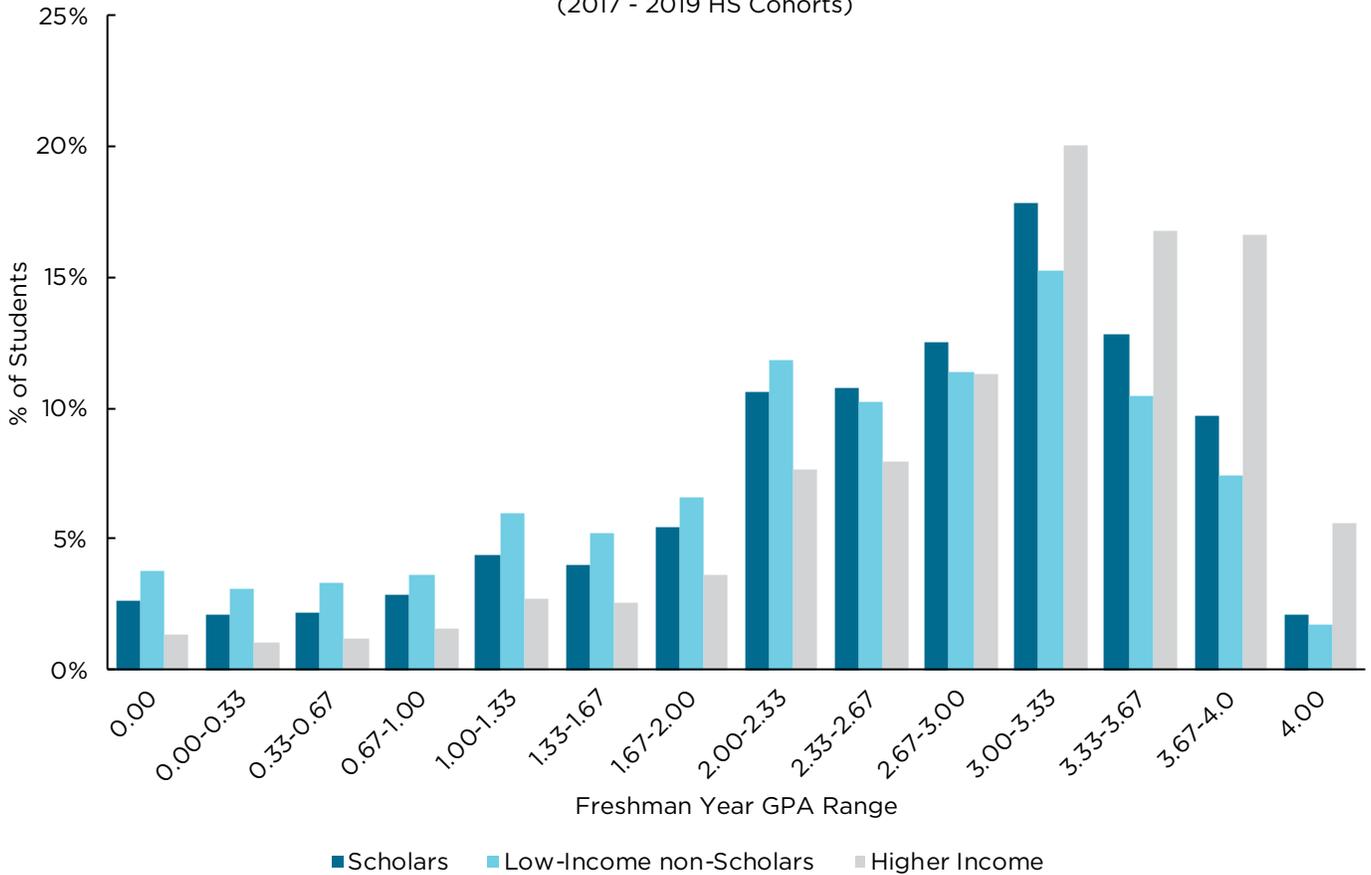
The histogram on the next page shows the percent of students by their freshman year GPA and income level. The largest share of students within each income level earned between 3.00 and 3.33 GPA during their freshman year (18 percent of Scholars, 15 percent of low-income non-Scholars, and 20 percent of higher income students).

Higher-income students have a higher median GPA (3.1) than Scholars (2.7) and low-income non-Scholars (2.5). Nearly half of Scholars have a GPA between 1.9 and 3.2 during their freshman year of college. While the 21st Century Scholars program does appear to close the gap in GPA between the lower and higher income levels, it is not entirely closed, which points to the likelihood that the scholarship program does not remove all the barriers low-income students face.

Freshman Year GPA  
(2017 - 2019 Cohorts)

Income Level	25th Percentile	Median	75th Percentile
Scholars	1.9	2.7	3.2
Low-income non-Scholars	1.6	2.5	3.1
Higher income	2.4	3.1	3.5

Scholars program helps to close the gap between income levels in freshman year GPA (2017 - 2019 HS Cohorts)



## SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

### PILAR SANCHEZ

Warren Central High School Class of 2023

"THE 21ST CENTURY SCHOLARS PROGRAM HAS IMPACTED MY LIFE BY CONNECTING ME WITH ANOTHER PROGRAM THAT HAS GIVEN ME A MENTOR FOR ONE-ON-ONE COLLEGE READINESS HELP. DUE TO THIS CONNECTION, I KNOW MORE ABOUT WHAT COLLEGES NEED AND LOOK FOR, AND THEREFORE, I AM MORE PREPARED AND READY FOR COLLEGE."



# College Success

## Freshman Year Total Credits Earned

As with GPA, freshman year students who complete 30 credit hours in their first year are more likely to be successful in college. 21st Century Scholars are required to have at least 30 credit hours per year to maintain their scholarship.

The histogram on the next page shows the percent of students by their freshman year credits earned and income level.

The largest share of students within each income level earned between 27.5 and 30 credits during their freshman year (25 percent of Scholars, 17 percent of low-income non-Scholars, and 26 percent of higher income students).

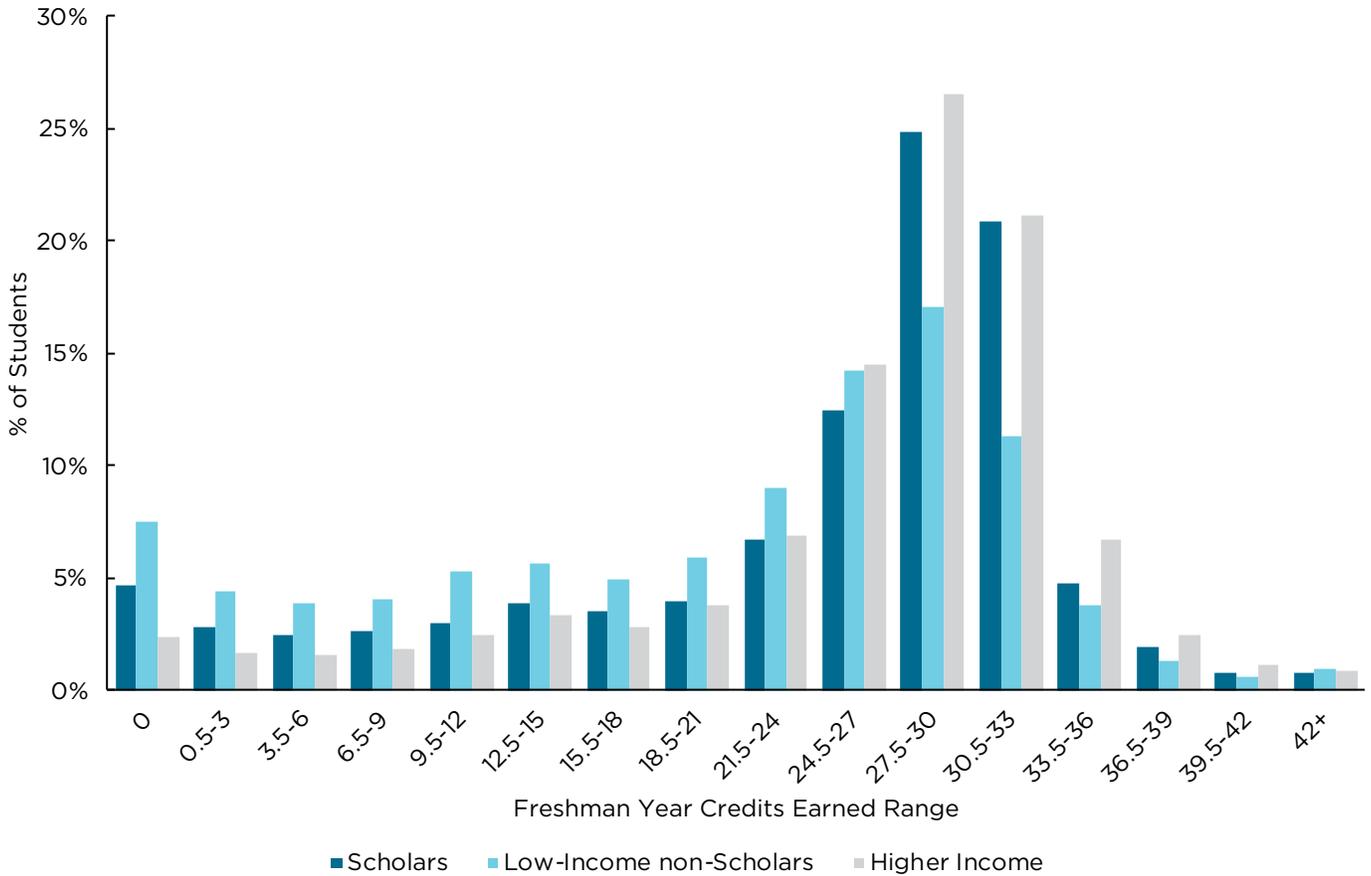
Across all three income levels, about three-quarters of students earned 30 credit hours during their freshman year. However, nearly one-quarter of low-income non-scholars earned less than 12 credit hours, while 25 percent of higher income students earned less than 24 credit hours.

Overall, freshman year credits earned by low-income non-Scholars tends to be lower and have greater variance than the other two groups. Scholars tend to earn a similar number of credits as their higher income peers at the end of their freshman year.

Freshman Year Credits Earned  
(2017 - 2019 Cohorts)

Income Level	25th Percentile	Median	75th Percentile
Scholars	18	27	31
Low-income non-Scholars	12	23	29
Higher income	24	28	31

Almost three in four students earn 30 credit hours during freshman year, across all income levels (2017-2019 HS Cohorts)



## SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

MAXWELL B. MALONE

JEFFERSONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

IVY TECH COMMUNITY COLLEGE - SELLERSBURG

COMPUTER AIDED DESIGN DRAFTER AT POWER OF DESIGN GROUP, LLC

"21ST CENTURY SCHOLARS ENABLED ME TO GO TO COLLEGE AND EARN MY DEGREE WITHOUT HAVING TO TAKE OUT ANY STUDENT LOAN DEBT. THIS IS A WONDERFUL PROGRAM, AND I AM VERY GRATEFUL TO HAVE BEEN A PART OF IT. I AM CURRENTLY EMPLOYED IN MY FIELD OF STUDY AND HAVE BEEN EVER SINCE 2005."



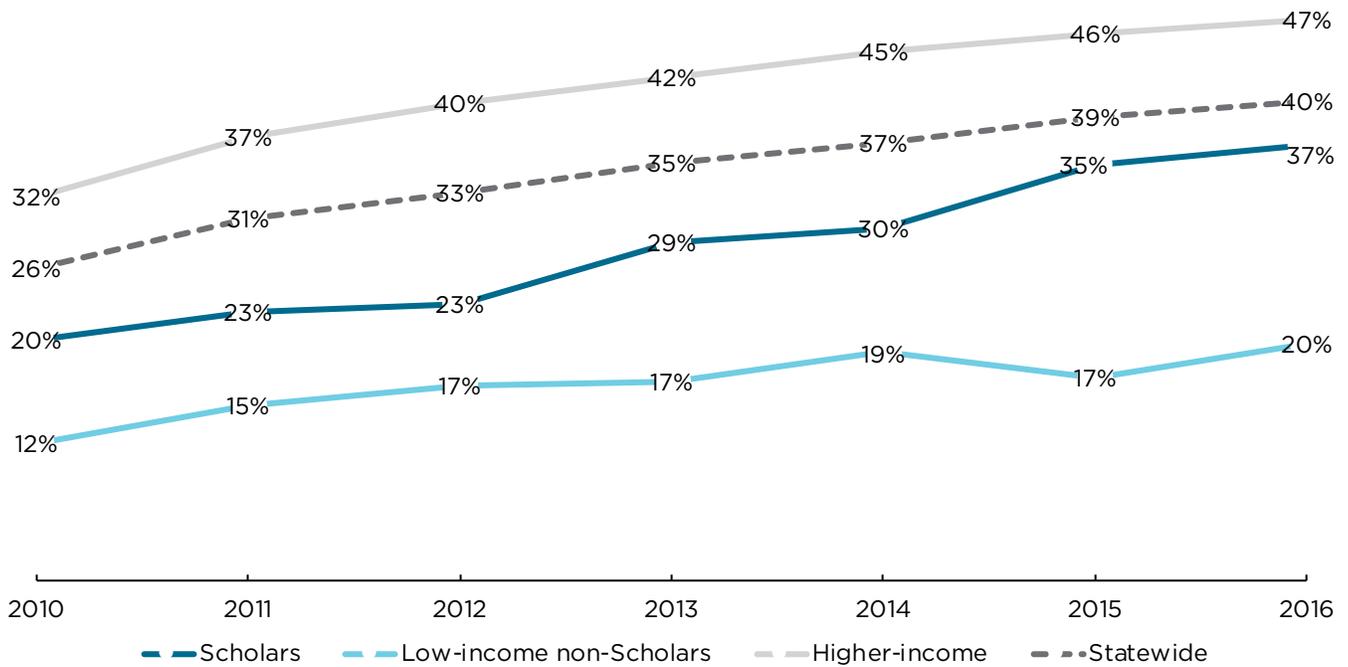


# College Completion

## Overall On-Time Completion

The on-time completion rates of Scholars have improved significantly over the past decade. While most groups have seen improvements in their completion rates, Scholar completion rates at two- and four-year colleges nearly doubled, from 20 percent to 37 percent between 2010 and 2016.

21st Century Scholars rates nearly doubled between 2010 and 2016

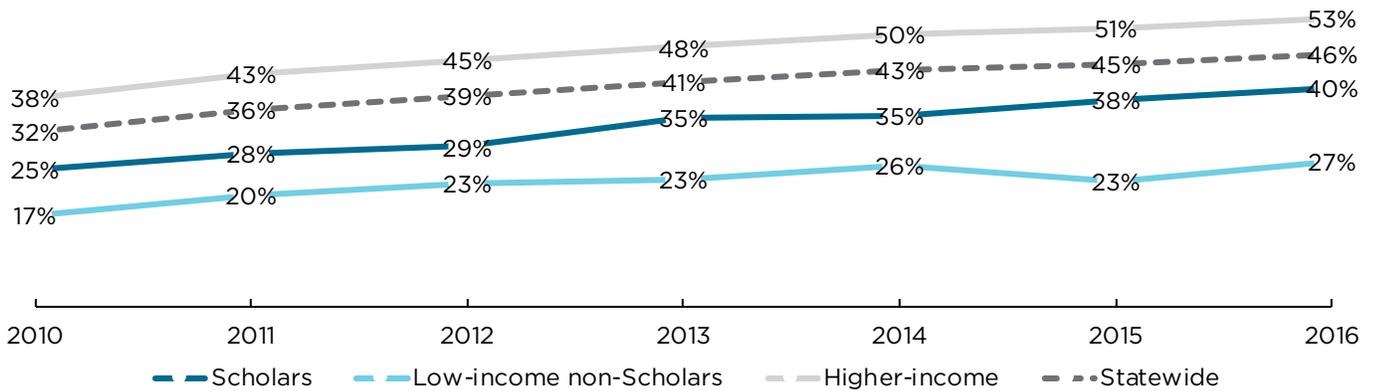


# College Completion

## Four-Year On-Time Completion

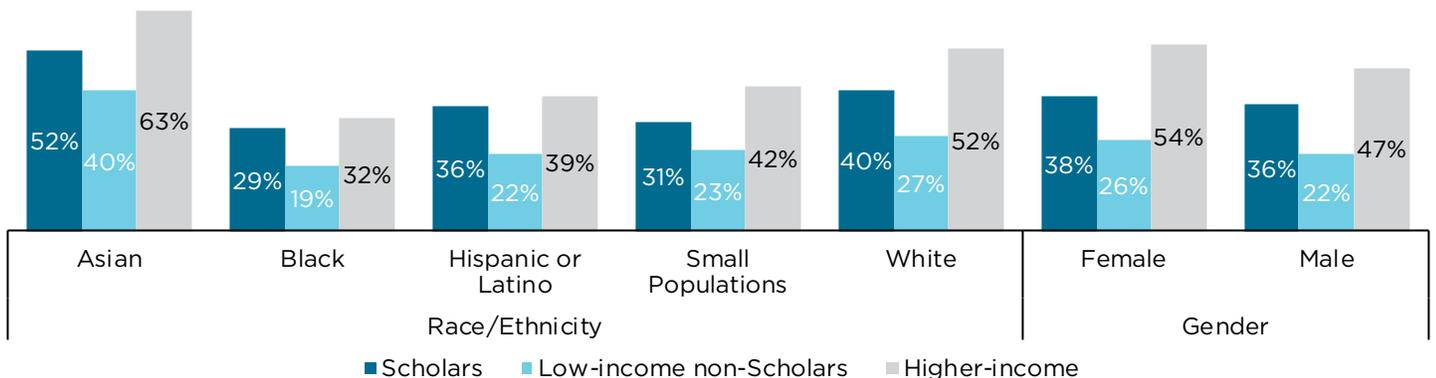
At four-year colleges, Scholars have improved their on-time completion rate from 25 percent for students who began in 2010 to 40 percent for students who began in 2016. This is faster than the 10-percentage point improvement among low-income non-Scholar students and on par with the 15-percentage point improvement among higher-income students.

21st Century Scholars improve in on-time completion at four-year colleges



Regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender, Scholars are more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree within four years than their low-income non-Scholar peers. In all cases, the difference is 10 percentage points or more. Higher-income graduates are still the most likely to complete college within four years, but the 21st Century Scholars program is helping to close the gap between income levels.

Higher-income graduates more likely to complete college within four years (2014 - 2016 HS Cohorts)

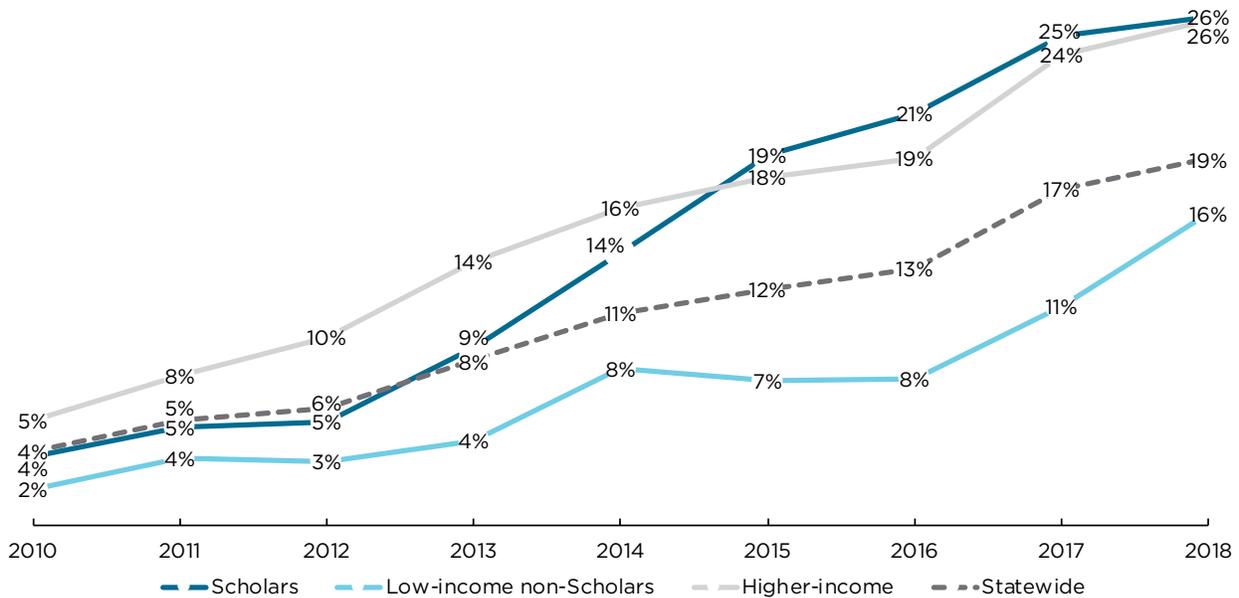


# College Completion

## Two-Year On-Time Completion

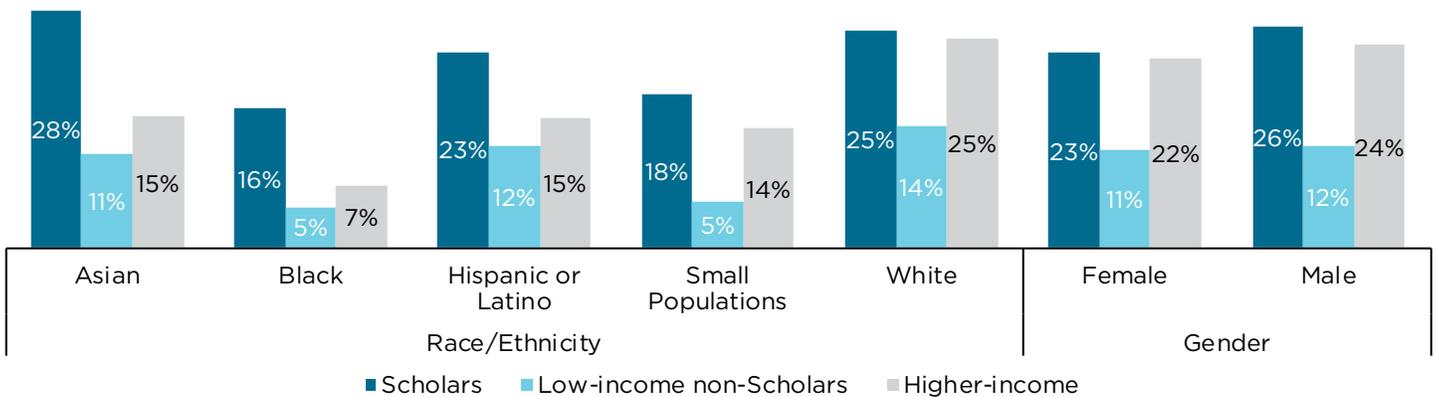
At two-year colleges, Scholars are as likely as their higher-income peers to graduate on time. However, there is still plenty of room for improvement. Scholars earn a two-year degree on-time at a rate of 10 percentage points above low-income non-Scholars and 7 percentage points above the statewide average.

21st Century Scholars close two-year on-time completion gap



As with four-year colleges, Scholars at two-year colleges are much more likely than their low-income peers to graduate on time. Unlike at four-year colleges, Scholars at two-year colleges are as likely or more likely than their higher-income peers to graduate on time.

Scholars more likely to complete on time at two-year colleges (2014-2016 HS Cohorts)



# Recommendations

## Preparation

- Filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the only way to secure state and federal financial aid (and many merit-based aid programs). Indiana's FAFSA filing rate has declined in recent years. While Scholars are required to fill out the FAFSA, the Commission calls for all high school seniors to be required to file the FAFSA (with opt-out provisions available), so Hoosier students aren't leaving money on the table.
- Students who take early college credit and/or earn the Academic Honors Diploma while in high school are better prepared for the rigors of higher education and more likely to graduate on time or even early. The Commission encourages those who counsel 21st Century Scholars to ensure these students are taking advantage of the opportunities available to them while in high school.

## Affordability

- While one in 10 high school students is a Scholar, nearly four in 10 are eligible. The Commission calls for schools, counselors, businesses, community partners and others to ensure all eligible high school students enrolls in the 21st Century Scholars program.
- Students and their families need accurate and clear information to help them make smart financial decisions, such as borrowing money for college. The Commission advocates for all students to gain financial literacy skills throughout middle and high school to help them make informed choices about education and training beyond high school.

## Outcomes

- The Commission commits to continued collection and analysis of data about the 21st Century Scholars program for high school and college students, with the goal of using data-driven information to make policy or programmatic changes to the Scholars program.
- As demonstrated in this report, policy changes to the 21st Century Scholars program have made an impact on student outcomes. Two of those policy changes—requiring at least a Core 40 high school diploma and requiring completion of the Scholar Success Program—would be useful for all high school students to adhere to in preparation for life beyond high school. The Commission encourages all high schools to implement the Scholar Success Program and calls for the elimination of the general diploma.

## Partnerships

- There is no one-size-fits-all approach to helping students find the right pathway for their individual lives. The Commission recommends direct and specific outreach to low-income Hoosier students across all demographics which includes helping students choose the right college and degree program for their individual lives.
- In partnering with the Indiana Department of Education, the Commission will help streamline and smooth transitions between K-12 and postsecondary education by providing additional and evolving opportunities to accelerate student learning.

# Conclusion

## 21st Century Scholars program closes achievement gaps, opportunities exist to increase utilization

Last year, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education celebrated 30 years of the 21st Century Scholars program. During that time, the program has made a tremendous impact on Indiana's educational attainment with more than 45,000 students having earned a degree with the scholarship.

The 21st Century Scholars program was created to be a promise to students that no matter life's circumstances or obstacles, college can be an option for everyone. When the program was created, it was not meant to only provide financial aid. It's an aspiration, preparation program designed to inspire students to see themselves as college material. If students work hard, perform academically and make a commitment to higher education, they can earn the full scholarship of four years of undergraduate tuition.

However, Scholars aren't alone in their pursuit of higher education—multiple support systems are in place to help them be successful. The Scholar Success Program, a requirement for high school Scholars, includes activities at each grade level and helps students stay on track for college and career success. Indiana GEAR UP schools provide tutoring, summer camps, afterschool programming and requires all students (not just Scholars) to complete Scholar Success Program activities. These supports keep students on track to earn the 21st Century Scholarship and be successful once they transition to college.

We're seeing these efforts pay off. As illustrated in our [2021 College Equity Report](#), Scholars are the only group on track to close Indiana's college-going achievement gap by 2025, across all races and ethnicities. Our new 21st Century Scholars report highlights the data around college access, success, and completion, and disaggregates it by race and ethnicity and gender. Top level findings from this year's report show:

- Over the past 10 years, completion rates for Scholars have improved significantly. Between 2010 and 2016, their completion rates improved by 17 percentage points at both two- and four-year institutions.
- While more high school graduates are considered low-income than ever before, there is more need, but not enough students are taking advantage of the program. About three in 10 high school graduates are eligible for the scholarship, but only one in 10 high school graduates is a 21st Century Scholar.
- Scholars are more likely to go to college than their low-income non-Scholar peers across all races and ethnicities. Nearly 9 in 10 Scholars go to college right after high school compared to only 4 in 10 low-income non-Scholar peers.

This college-going divide is even more visible when you disaggregate the data by race and ethnicity as well as gender. Seven in 10 low-income, non-Scholar White men do not go to college after high school, the highest rate of all race and ethnicity groups. This illustrates that there is currently a variety of opportunities in the workforce for men after high school, so many pursue careers instead of higher education. However, as automation and technology drive the future of work, it will soon become imperative for these Hoosiers to



seek out higher education and training to skill up for the jobs of tomorrow.

We know the transformative power of the 21st Century Scholars program, but we also understand that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to helping students find the right pathway for themselves. It's imperative for direct and specific outreach to all low-income Hoosier students so that they can choose the right degree, certification or training program for their needs.

It's also necessary for all students and families to be informed to make smart financial decisions about higher education. Financial literacy throughout middle and high school can prepare Hoosier students to make responsible choices about borrowing money for college. Graduating with little to no debt can make a large impact on an individual's economic mobility.

For 30 years, the Indiana General Assembly has provided bipartisan support of the 21st Century Scholars program, and I urge its continued investment. While it is not the silver bullet, the program is one of Indiana's best tools in the state's quest to close equity and achievement gaps.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Teresa Lubbers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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

## ABOUT THE DATA

### General Notes and Sources:

**Sources:** Indiana Commission for Higher Education (ICHE); Independent Colleges of Indiana (ICI); Indiana Department of Education (IDOE); National Student Clearinghouse (NSC).

**Indiana High School Graduates:** Count of Indiana high school graduates are based on the total count of graduates reported on the IDOE-GR reports. Graduate counts are not IDOE cohort graduate counts and thus, may not match cohort graduate counts reported in other places, such as DOE compass. SOURCE: IDOE

**College Enrollment:** Represents students reported as enrolled in postsecondary education, regardless of institution type, within the year following high school graduation (e.g., for 2019 high school graduates, postsecondary enrollment is counted for 2019-20 school year). A student was considered enrolled only if a) they were enrolled as a degree or certificate seeking undergraduate student and b) they were enrolled for the equivalent of at least one semester during the school year. SOURCES: ICHE, ICI, NSC

**Freshman GPA:** Cumulative grade point average for the latest term of enrollment at an Indiana public college in the year following high school graduation. SOURCE: CHE

**Freshman Credit Hours Earned:** Average number of credits earned during the year following high school graduation at an Indiana public college. SOURCE: CHE

**On-Time (same campus, same degree level):** Represents students in Indiana high school graduate cohorts (see above) who completed a degree on time at the same level initially sought at the same Indiana public college/university system in which they initially enrolled. SOURCE: ICHE

**Income Level:** Income level may be broken into three distinct groups: students who participated in the FRL program during senior year but did not graduate as a 21st Century Scholar; students who graduated as a 21st Century Scholar (most of whom were FRL participants during senior year and nearly all of whom were FRL in middle school); and non-FRL, non-Scholar students, who may also be referred to as middle- or higher income students. SOURCE: CHE, IDOE

**Gender:** Represents gender, male or female, as reported by IDOE (college going, early success in college) or by Indiana public institutions to ICHE (on-time college completion).

**Race/Ethnicity:** Represents race/ethnicity as reported by IDOE (college going, early success in college) or by Indiana public institutions to ICHE (on-time college completion). Groups include five mutually exclusive race/ethnicity categories: Asian, Black, Hispanic or Latino, Small Populations, and White. The Small Populations race/ethnicity category includes Native American/Alaskan Native, Two or More Races, Native Hawaiian groups and, in some instances, Undeclared.

**Percentile:** A value on a scale of 100 that indicates the percent of a distribution that is equal to or below it.

**Median:** The 50th percentile of a distribution.

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Indiana Commission for Higher Education builds a policy agenda on a commitment to using compelling data to increase transparency, inform practice and drive change for the benefit of all Hoosiers. By publishing a series of [consumer-friendly reports](#), the Commission spotlights progress at each stage of the postsecondary pipeline.




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### New: [Indiana's Promise: A Report on the 21st Century Scholars Program](#)

collects and analyzes data by income level and spotlights the 21st Century Scholars Program.

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[Reaching Higher in a State of Change](#) is the Commission's fourth strategic plan. It is the guiding document for Indiana to reach the goal of at least 60 percent of Hoosiers with education and training beyond high school by 2025. With the priorities of completion, equity and talent, its "Blueprint for Change" outlines action steps to achieve Indiana's attainment goal.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The [College Completion Reports](#) provide a clearer and more comprehensive picture of college completion in order to advance Indiana's collective efforts to boost educational attainment.

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The [College Readiness Reports](#) help schools and communities understand how students are performing in college, while informing state and local policies that increase college readiness, access and success.

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The [College Equity Report](#) disaggregates demographic data from the Commission's College Readiness and Completion reports to highlight outcomes in Indiana for race and ethnicity, gender, geography and socioeconomic status. The report also tracks the state's progress in closing the educational achievement gaps in Indiana.

05-20-2020


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# INDIANA COMMISSION *for* HIGHER EDUCATION

## MISSION

The Indiana Commission for Higher Education is a 14-member public body created in 1971 to define the missions of Indiana's colleges and universities, plan and coordinate the state's postsecondary education system, administer state financial aid, and ensure that Indiana's higher education system is aligned to meet the needs of students and the state.



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