



INDIANA COMMISSION *for* HIGHER EDUCATION

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State Higher Education Commission Kicks Off Movement to Highlight the Value of Higher Education

The campaign will encourage more Hoosiers to pursue education or training beyond high school

(INDIANAPOLIS) – The [Indiana Commission for Higher Education](https://che.in.gov) today launched its statewide “Education Value Movement” to help stem the college-going decline and encourage more Hoosier students and adult learners to pursue some form of education or training beyond high school.

Over the past 18 months, the Commission and its partners at the Governor’s Workforce Cabinet and VOX Global have undertaken in-depth qualitative and quantitative research, focus groups and surveys to understand why Hoosiers are – or increasingly aren’t – enrolling in or promoting college. The Commission’s [most recent data](#) show just over half (53 percent) of Indiana high school graduates in the class of 2020 pursued some form of education beyond high school. Additionally, nearly 2 million working-age Hoosiers do not have postsecondary credentials.



“Indiana’s current and future growth is directly related to the level of our skilled workforce,” said Gov. Eric J. Holcomb. “Not only do we need to better stress the value proposition of education beyond high school, but Hoosier families also need to be made more aware of Indiana’s generous financial aid at our many high-quality postsecondary institutions. The Commission’s research into attitudes about higher education will inform our state’s collective efforts in messaging to high school students and adult learners that college yields a high return on investment and is equally accessible.”

During its research, the Commission conducted in-depth interviews with more than 100 Hoosiers and fielded a survey reaching 1,254 Indiana residents with varying experiences and attitudes toward higher education. Audiences were comprised of the general population, adult learners, parents and current high school students. Two key themes emerged from the initial analysis: “College is too expensive,” and “College isn’t necessary.”

Eighty-four percent of survey respondents believe that college is too expensive, and 60 percent believe a degree doesn’t mean as much as it used to. However, when measuring the overall sentiment about college, Hoosiers still feel favorable – 82 percent of survey participants responded favorably toward “higher education.”

“Choosing to pursue education beyond high school is a deeply personal decision and there are often barriers that people must overcome to be successful in their pursuit – even if it is something people feel positively about for their lives or the lives of their loved ones,” said Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Chris Lowery. “It is important to approach the college conversation in ways that don’t automatically turn people off the idea, and that starts with acknowledging the skepticism, helping students and adult learners navigate the cost and connecting everyone to the myriad resources Indiana makes available.”

Using the research findings, the Commission developed a new message framework to better deliver positive messages around the value of higher education for the state overall. The messages were tested during interviews with educators and in focus groups comprised of high school students, adult learners and parents.

The Commission is equipping trusted messengers such as partner state agencies, educators, nonprofit organizations, community- and faith-based groups, and philanthropic teams with tools, information and resources to encourage high school students and adult learners to pursue a degree or credential beyond high school. Individuals interested in learning how to implement the message framework of the “Education Value Movement,” can complete the free [20-minute module](#). One [Professional Growth Plan \(PGP\)](#) point (to be used toward licensure renewal) will be awarded to Indiana educators who successfully complete the module.

Based on the Commission’s research, trusted messengers are more likely to be listened to and their messages more likely to resonate with students and adult learners. Twenty-seven percent of survey respondents view the state government as being trustworthy or extremely trustworthy when it comes to providing guidance, advice, and resources about education beyond high school. This is compared to 66 percent for school counselors/teachers, 70 percent for friends and 77 percent for family.

“Data consistently show the economic and social benefits that come with greater levels of education. And Indiana has a great story to tell about the value of higher education – when adjusted for inflation, tuition and fees at four-year, public Indiana colleges have gone down by 7 percent over the last year,” said Lowery. “We have to continue building this positive narrative, and leaning on our state’s trusted messengers – teachers, school counselors, business leaders, community partners, faith leaders and philanthropists – to add a voice to this movement.”

The “Education Value Movement” campaign kicks off today with radio, television and social media ad buys featuring football hall-of-famer and Indiana college graduate Jerome Bettis. Recently, the former Pittsburgh Steelers star and Detroit native went back to finish his business degree at the University of Notre Dame – where he started nearly three decades earlier. The Commission obtained an exclusive interview with Bettis about why completing his postsecondary education was important to him – and why he believes it’s important for others.

All campaign traffic will be driven to the redesigned [Learn More Indiana](#) website which will connect Hoosiers with updated resources and support for [21st Century Scholars](#). The Commission will be conducting follow-up surveys of Hoosiers to gauge the impact of its efforts.

Anyone who is interested in learning more about the Commission’s work or connecting with a staff member who can provide a messaging training opportunity can reach Charlee Beasor at cbeasor@che.in.gov or by calling 317-232-1060.

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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 celebrated 30 years in 2020. Learn more about the Commission’s [Reaching Higher in a State of Change](#) strategic plan at www.in.gov/che.

Comments About Indiana’s “Education Value Movement”

David J. Adams, commissioner, Indiana Department of Workforce Development

“Indiana is home to world-class education and learning to support individuals in our advancing economy. Developing talent with the knowledge, skills and abilities to support the high-impact employment opportunities is key. Through the ‘Education Value Movement,’ we can clearly illustrate the major opportunities and the pathways to achieve them. This is a great opportunity for individuals and employers.”

Dennis E. Bland, president, Center for Leadership Development

“It is my pleasure to support Indiana’s ‘Education Value’ campaign. I have been blessed with the opportunity and privilege to pursue and attain a level of education beyond high school, and I have reaped many, many benefits from the education I have been afforded. Moreover, I promote and advance the value proposition of education and learning beyond high school because I have observed, oftentimes with true respect and great admiration, just how much education, training and skill-building has empowered and elevated the lives of countless men and women with whom I have had the pleasure to come in contact.”

Dr. Deborah J. Curtis, president, Indiana State University

“Pursuing study in higher education will light your passion and open doors to places you might not even be able to imagine yet. As a first-generation college student, myself, I know the transformative impact that engaging in higher education opportunities can have on an individual. At Indiana State University, students from all backgrounds find financial resources and help navigating the process. Reach out and let us help you light the runway to your future.”

Mitch Daniels, president, Purdue University

“As our state’s land-grant institution, Purdue University continues to place a special emphasis on delivering higher education at the highest proven value. This message has resonated across the state of Indiana as we’ve lowered the cost of attendance and pushed our enrollment to record levels for eight consecutive years. It’s never been more important for young people to go beyond high school and learn more, if not at a place like Purdue, then through a host of other choices. It’s vitally important for them to pick one and pursue a degree. Our state’s economic future depends on having graduates with postsecondary credentials fully prepared for promising careers in Indiana’s burgeoning technology, manufacturing and service sectors.”

Marlene Dotson, president/CEO, Indiana Latino Institute

“The decline in college-going rates is alarming for all Hoosiers and we must act with urgency. The Indiana Commission for Higher Education’s ‘Education Value’ effort will uplift all students by addressing the college-going decline, negatively impacting Latino students’ success across the state. The Indiana Latino Institute commends the work of Commissioner Lowery and his colleagues for not only acknowledging inequities in our education systems but actively working toward solutions that better serve Indiana students.”

Kurt D. Dykstra, president and CEO, Independent Colleges of Indiana

“We are pleased to partner with the Commission on this campaign to help educate Hoosiers about the benefits of higher education. This extensive research will help us effectively communicate to students and their families the different available paths beyond high school. We want all Hoosiers to know that Indiana’s private colleges and universities have many options to open doors and expand career options to help create a meaningful and rewarding life in Indiana.”

Dr. Sue Ellspermann, president, Ivy Tech Community College

“Research is clear that individuals with education beyond high school benefit in a number of ways – better health, better employment options, higher income and a higher quality of life. Indiana benefits, too, through a stronger economy, more engaged citizens, healthier communities and less government spending. Ivy Tech’s role is to ensure there are postsecondary opportunities for every Hoosier, and the ‘Education Value Movement’ will emphasize to high school students and returning adults alike the advantage of postsecondary credentials.”

Claire Fiddian-Green, president & CEO, Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation

“The Commission for Higher Education’s new Education Value campaign comes at a critical inflection point for our state.

As we continue to see the college-going rate for Hoosiers decrease at the same time Indiana is hurting for skilled talent, the campaign provides critical research and resources to help Indiana students pursue higher education, be it a four-year degree, two-year degree, trade school or career certification. Not only do these educational paths open doors for Hoosiers, having a more educated population will help our state flourish for years to come.”

Dr. Katie Jenner, Indiana Secretary of Education

“As students consider life beyond high school, parents and families play the most influential role in shaping a student’s path. Indiana’s educators also play a key role in supporting both students and families as students consider the benefits of pursuing continued learning and training after high school. There are many examples across our state, where high schools are removing barriers and providing opportunities for students to earn a postsecondary credential of value before even graduating high school, thus opening as many doors as possible for their students. There is more work to be done in this space, and K-12 educators stand ready to be part of the solution.”

Dr. Chuck Johnson, president, Vincennes University

“Education changes lives. We have seen this for generations. The work being done by Indiana’s Commission for Higher Education affirms the value of not only education but of the need for Hoosiers to be able to adapt and add new skills as technology and industries change. Vincennes University is proud to support these efforts, and we look forward to working with the Indiana Commission on developing more ways to help develop new, relevant education pathways that will be available to current and future generations of Hoosiers.”

Teresa Lubbers, president, Sagamore Institute

“Indiana students, families and our state benefit when we convey the value of higher education in clear and compelling ways. I believe the ‘Step Into Your Future’ campaign is poised to do just that and will help Indiana reach its 60 percent attainment goal. Meeting that goal is essential to ensuring personal opportunity and to meeting employment needs.”

Geoffrey Mearns, president, Ball State University

“At Ball State University, we are grateful for the urgency with which the Indiana Commission for Higher Education is promoting the value of higher education options at institutions across our state. We encourage all Hoosiers to take advantage of the wide array of educational experiences that we provide at Ball State, which empower our students to have fulfilling careers and to lead meaningful lives.”

Dr. Ronald Rochon, president, University of Southern Indiana

“From student support services like mentoring and counseling, to financial literacy and assistance, and flexible options for learning, we are meeting students where their needs are greatest. We look forward to continued collaboration with the Commission for Higher Education on the ‘Education Value’ campaign as we work collaboratively to create a positive narrative around accessibility and the importance of post-high school education.”

Pamela Whitten, president, Indiana University

“Earning a college degree has a profound influence on the lives of students and their families for generations because it opens the door to enhanced career opportunities and higher wages. Our graduates also have a tremendous impact on our communities when they use the knowledge and critical thinking skills they gain during their time at Indiana University to contribute to our state’s civic, economic and cultural life.”