

COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Friday, June 11, 2010

DECISION ITEM F:

Approval of Indiana College Cost Estimator Contract

Staff Recommendation

That the Commission for Higher Education authorize staff to enter a two-year contract agreement with the National Center for College Costs for the statewide implementation of the Indiana College Cost Estimator.

Background

The available evidence suggests that the cost of college, both perceived and actual, poses a significant challenge to raising Indiana's education attainment level. Based on state survey data, 70 percent of first-generation college students believe that they cannot afford postsecondary education.

In recognition of this challenge, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education has engaged in ongoing discussions with the National Center for College Costs over the past two years related to the statewide deployment of an online resource that would make federal, state and institutional financial aid transparent for Indiana families.

As envisioned, the Indiana College Cost Estimator will be a "one stop shop" offering Hoosiers customized estimates and side-by-side comparisons of the net cost of college after financial aid at each of Indiana's public and private colleges. This output would include user-friendly explanations of how an individual's expected family contribution was calculated (EFC); how colleges use student data and EFCs to generate financial aid awards; "key tips" regarding these processes, calculations and procedures; access to "Ask the Expert" sessions; and relevant and timely reminder messages on an ongoing basis.

Under the proposed service agreement with the National Center for College Costs, the Commission for Higher Education would dedicate \$400,000 of federal College Access Challenge Grant funds for an initial two-year license offering unlimited statewide use of the Indiana College Cost Estimator tool (\$150,000 per year) and related training/support services fees (\$50,000 per year).

Supporting Document

To be distributed.