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Creating Change One Step At a Time: Efforts to Improve College Access and Success in Indiana

BY WENDY ERISMAN, PH.D., AND MELISSA DEL RIOS

September 2008

A REPORT BY
Institute for Higher
Education Policy

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A REPORT PREPARED BY
Institute for Higher Education Policy

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Executive Summary

Over the past several decades, Indiana's policymakers, business leaders, and education officials have sought solutions to some of the major educational issues affecting the state, including instituting a more rigorous high school curriculum, expanding opportunities for need-based financial aid, creating a statewide community college system, and improving postsecondary completion rates. These efforts have already begun to make an impact on the state's college access issues (Thomson 2006). In 2006, more than two-thirds (68 percent) of Hoosier students completed a college preparatory curriculum in high school, compared with only 12 percent in 1994. In 1992, Indiana ranked 34th in the nation in the percentage of high school graduates who enrolled the following fall in postsecondary education. By 2004, its ranking had risen to 10th in the nation (Indiana Commission for Higher Education [ICHE] 2008a). Since 2001, more than 65,000 additional students have enrolled in college in the state, in part because of increased access made possible by the new community college system (ICHE 2008b).

The process Indiana has undertaken is evolutionary and offers a glimpse into how a state has been able to engineer policy and convene various interest groups for a common purpose: improving the postsecondary access and attainment of its residents. While policymakers in other states may not find all of Indiana's best practices relevant to their situations, Indiana is a remarkable example of how priorities can be shifted and consensus reached to increase educational opportunities for state residents.

Lessons Learned

Stakeholders in Indiana believe that academic preparation, higher education affordability, and a differentiated higher education system are integral to ensuring that more students can enroll in higher education. Addressing the needs of students while they are enrolled in postsecondary institutions leads to more students graduating with degrees and certificates, creating an effective workforce for the 21st century's global economy. The points listed below summarize some of the major lessons learned in each of these key areas:

Academic Preparation

- Demand that high academic expectations be the norm for all students.
- Develop clear and rigorous academic standards at all levels of education and ensure that these standards are aligned with the instruments used to test student progress.
- Institute a mandatory high school curriculum that will fully prepare students for college or work and assess the strength of that curriculum through end-of-course exams.
- Recognize that, for students to take full advantage of a rigorous high school curriculum, they must complete that curriculum. Improving high school graduation rates is essential.
- Make the rigorous high school curriculum the minimum admissions standard for the state's public four-year institutions, and hold high schools accountable for their graduates' postsecondary performance.
- Focus on teacher quality, recruitment, and retention.
- Develop an integrated student-level data system so students can be tracked through K–12, postsecondary education, and into the workforce.

Affordability

- Work to control the cost of public postsecondary institutions in the state, but recognize that cost increases are part of a national trend and are unlikely to end soon.
- Make substantial and sustained investments in need-based financial aid, especially in the form of grants.
- Provide an incentive for students to complete a rigorous high school curriculum by tying aid amounts to the diploma earned.
- Reach out to students and parents so they are aware of available financial aid and how to apply for it.
- Use programs like the Twenty-First Century Scholars to offer early-commitment financial aid to low-income students and to provide them with social and academic supports to increase the likelihood that they will enroll in college.
- Ensure that academic and social supports, as well as financial aid, for low-income students are continued once students enter college.
- Recognize the needs of part-time and nontraditional students in designing financial aid programs.

A Differentiated Higher Education System

- Clarify the mission of each of the state’s public postsecondary institutions—from major research institutions to community colleges—so it is clear what role each institution plays in meeting the state’s needs.
- Work to ensure that public colleges and universities are fully meeting the needs of their constituencies and that there are no gaps in educational opportunity because of limited program offerings or geographic distance.
- Recognize the importance of community colleges to postsecondary access. Money invested in the state’s community college system can pay off in increased college access and attainment.
- Focus remediation efforts at the community college level to reduce costs at four-year institutions.
- Increase links among the state’s public postsecondary institutions to build a seamless pipeline for postsecondary education through the graduate level.

Student Success

- Ensure that policy efforts focus on student success as well as on college access.
- Develop postsecondary performance accountability measures that tie funding increases to student outcomes, such as course and degree completion rates, rather than to enrollment growth.
- Establish clear policies for course transfer and program articulation among the state’s public postsecondary institutions.
- Ensure that information on transfer and articulation opportunities and policies is widely available to all interested parties.
- Encourage development of “passport” programs between two- and four-year institutions that serve the same areas of the state.
- Address the special needs of at-risk student populations such as low-income, minority, and adult students.

Key Factors in Creating Change

While work remains to be done, the successes Indiana has achieved place it at the forefront of the nation in efforts to improve access to and success in higher education. How was Indiana able to achieve such notable progress? In part, this progress can be attributed to a generally amicable and bipartisan political culture that focuses on creating change for the benefit of the state as a whole. However, Indiana also engages in a number of key practices that have enabled it to create substantial change in the educational policy arena. These practices include the following:

- Recognizing the need for change and expressing that need to all stakeholders.
- Moving forward incrementally—one step at a time—without letting initial setbacks stop the process of change.
- Using data to inform policy decisions. The work of experts inside and outside the state can provide a range of options to address identified problems.
- Connecting to national organizations working in the same areas. These connections offer support in developing new policies and links to other states that may have similar concerns or experiences.
- Seeking financial support for new policy initiatives from nonprofit organizations, foundations, and the federal government.
- Building public support through transparency and aggressive communication efforts.
- Making sure all stakeholders have a seat at the table so problems and policy solutions can be thoroughly discussed before implementation.
- Cultivating strong, sustained, and bipartisan state leadership. A few key individuals can make or break policy initiatives. ❧

Introduction

As the U.S. economy continues to transform and global competition increases, individual state economies must keep pace with new demands for educated workers. In Indiana, where the economy has been built primarily on manufacturing, the decline in employment and the increase in educational requirements in the industrial sector have led to considerable concern among state policymakers. There has been a growing realization that the state's workforce needs additional education and that, for this to happen, there must be greater postsecondary educational attainment among Indiana residents.

Living in the Midwestern area previously known as the Manufacturing Belt, Hoosiers were, in the past, able to graduate from high school and find jobs in the automotive and other manufacturing industries. Most of these jobs ensured a middle-class life style with a good salary, job security, health care, and a pension. However, during the 1970s, the Manufacturing Belt came to be known as the Rust Belt as factories closed, manufacturing jobs were outsourced to other countries, and unemployment rose. Indiana's population began to experience decreases in income. In 1952, the state ranked 22nd in the nation in per capita income; by 2002, it had dropped to 31st (ICHE 2003).

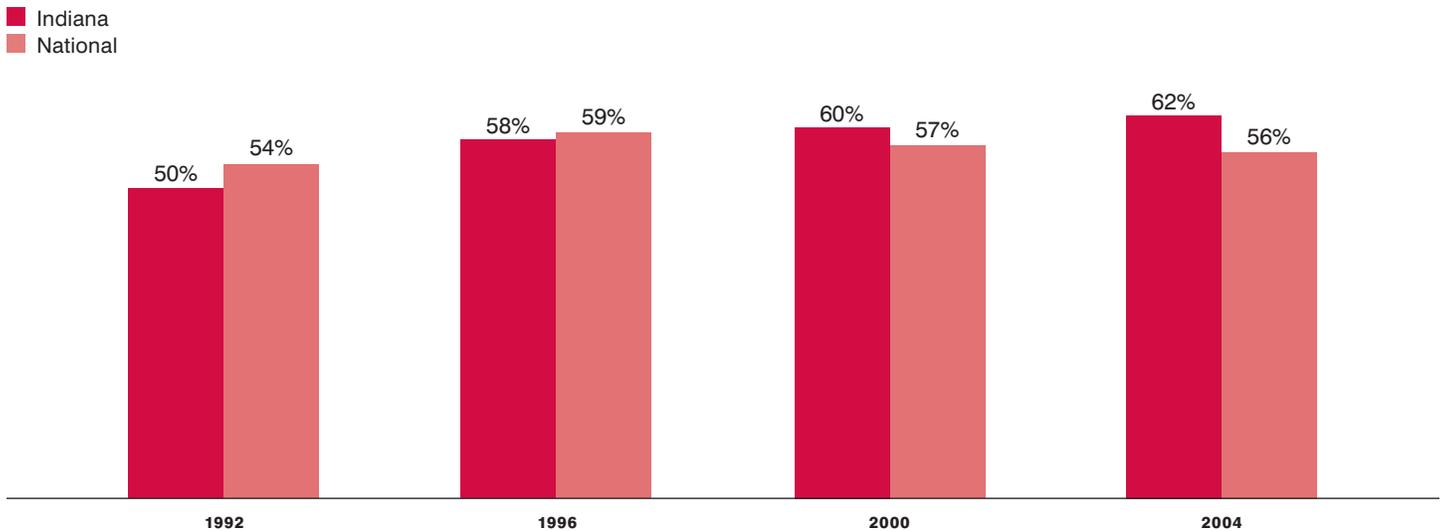
Because Hoosiers have not always needed a college degree to support a middle-class life style, the state did not develop a strong college-going culture. In 2005, Indiana ranked 42nd in the nation in the percentage of adults age 25 and over with a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau 2007). This low level of postsecondary educational attainment, along with the realization that the economy is rapidly changing, has been

a major motivator for state policymakers to change Indiana's educational system. These policymakers see higher education as "a key component to a diverse, strong, and growing economy for Indiana" (ICHE 2003).

Over the past several decades, Indiana's policymakers, business leaders, and education officials have sought solutions to some of the major educational issues affecting the state, including instituting a more rigorous high school curriculum, expanding opportunities for need-based financial aid, creating a statewide community college system, and improving postsecondary completion rates. These efforts have already begun to make an impact on the state's college access issues (Thomson 2006). In 2006, more than two-thirds (67 percent) of Hoosier students completed a college preparatory curriculum in high school, compared with only 12 percent in 1994 (ICHE 2008a). In 1992, Indiana ranked 34th in the nation in the percentage of high school graduates who enrolled the following fall in postsecondary education. By 2004, the state ranking had increased to 10th in

FIGURE 1

Percentage of High School Graduates Enrolled in College the Following Fall, 1992–2004



SOURCE: ICHE 2006A

the nation (**FIGURE 1**). Since 2001, more than 65,000 additional students have enrolled in college in the state, in part because of increased access made possible by the new community college system (ICHE 2008b).

This report examines how Indiana was able to make considerable progress in college access over the course of several decades. An extensive review of documents and in-depth interviews with higher education, K–12, business, and community leaders in the state helped clarify the challenges faced by policymakers throughout this process and the reasons behind their choices. The intent of the report is to describe both what happened in the higher education policy arena in Indiana over the past several decades and the effective practices policymakers used to promote policy change.

The Indiana Context

In examining how Indiana has been able to create change in the area of college access and success, it is important to understand the context in which these changes are taking place. Indiana's population was over 6.3 million in 2006. The state's population mirrors that of the nation in terms of its age and gender distribution but contains far fewer minorities. As of 2006, 9 percent of Indiana residents were Black and less than 5 percent were Latino, compared with 12 percent and 15 percent nationally. Manufacturing is a key industrial sector in the state, employing 21 percent of the population, compared with less than 12 percent nationally (U.S. Census Bureau 2006). However, opportunities in the manufacturing sector are decreasing, and Indiana's

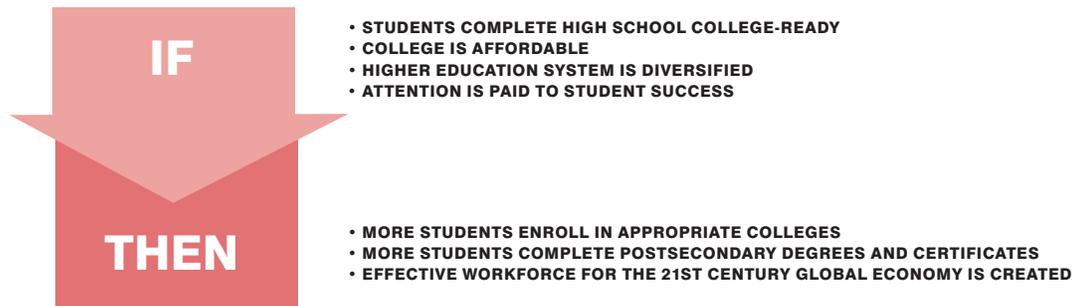
unemployment rate was 4.7 percent in April 2008, which, while still slightly below the national average, is considerably higher than the state's 2.8 unemployment rate of a decade ago (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008). Just under 13 percent of the state's residents are living below the federal poverty level, including 18 percent of those under the age of 18 (U.S. Census Bureau 2006).

Indiana currently has approximately 100 postsecondary institutions. Public universities include major research institutions such as Indiana University at Bloomington and Purdue University at West Lafayette, as well as regional campuses in the Indiana University (IU) and Purdue University systems and the single-campus institutions Ball State University, Indiana State University, Vincennes University, and the University of Southern Indiana. The state's recently developed community college system, Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana, has 23 campuses. The state also hosts another 40 or so private, nonprofit colleges and universities, including the well-known University of Notre Dame, and 26 for-profit, primarily two-year postsecondary institutions (Chronicle of Higher Education 2007). Public institutions in the state enrolled nearly 275,000 students in 2006–07, with independent colleges and universities adding another 81,000 (Independent Colleges of Indiana 2008).

Indiana does not have a statewide governing board, such as a board of regents, to control public higher education. Most changes to the higher education system are made through the General Assembly. The Indiana Commission for Higher Educa-

FIGURE 2

Indiana's Theory of Change



NOTE: ASSUMPTIONS ARE THAT MANUFACTURING ECONOMY DID NOT PROMOTE CULTURE OF COLLEGE-GOING; LOSS OF MANUFACTURING JOBS HAS DAMAGED ECONOMIC STANDING; AND BETTER EDUCATED WORKFORCE IS NEEDED FOR ECONOMIC EFFECTIVENESS.

tion (ICHE), created in 1971, is a coordinating body that works closely with the state's public colleges and universities. Commission members representing business and higher education are appointed by the governor and, in turn, hire the commissioner of education, who since 1995 has been Stanley G. Jones, a former state legislator. ICHE has statutory authority to:

- Define the educational missions of public colleges and universities.
- Plan and coordinate Indiana's state-supported system of postsecondary education.
- Review budget requests from public institutions and the State Student Assistance Commission and make budget recommendations to the governor and the General Assembly.
- Approve or disapprove for public institutions the establishment of new programs or expansion of campuses (ICHE 2008c).

Especially in recent years, ICHE has become a more activist body. Working closely with the governor's office, the General Assembly, the state superintendent of public instruction, the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, the Indiana Manufacturing Association, the Indiana State Teachers Association, and the leadership of the state's public and private colleges and universities, ICHE has become a major force for educational change by promoting policies to increase college readiness, access, and success for all Hoosiers.

Indiana's Theory of Change

From the numerous interviews conducted for this report, it is evident that Hoosier policymakers have a clear, although not always explicitly articulated, theory of change that directs their efforts to increase access to and success in higher education. Theories of change provide a visual map showing how specific interventions are expected to lead to certain outcomes. This mapping process can lead to a better understanding of stakeholders' long-term goals, how to reach those goals, and how to

measure progress toward them (ActKnowledge and the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change 2008). It is clear that Indiana stakeholders believe that academic preparation, higher education affordability, and a differentiated higher education system are integral to ensuring that more students can enroll in higher education. Addressing the needs of students while they are enrolled in postsecondary institutions leads to more students graduating with degrees and certificates, creating an effective workforce for the 21st century's global economy (**FIGURE 2**).

The organization of this report follows the theory of change identified above, rather than taking a purely chronological approach. In many cases, various interventions were happening simultaneously, making it difficult to sort out the strands of policy change. For a time line of key events, see **BOX 1** at the end of this introduction. The first three chapters of the report focus on how Indiana made interventions in the areas of academic preparation, higher education affordability, and a diversified system of higher education in an effort to increase the number of students enrolled in an appropriate postsecondary institution. The fourth chapter examines efforts to promote student success at the postsecondary level through new accountability efforts and work in the area of transfer and articulation. The report concludes by highlighting some of the major factors that have led to Indiana's achievements in promoting policy change in the areas of college access and success.

The evolutionary process Indiana has undertaken offers a glimpse into how a state has been able to convene various interest groups for one common purpose: improving the postsecondary access and attainment of its residents. While policymakers in other states may not find all of Indiana's best practices relevant to their individual situations, Indiana is a remarkable example of how policy priorities can be shifted and consensus reached to increase educational opportunities for state residents.

BOX 1**Timeline of Key Events in Indiana's Higher Education Policy Work**

- 1963 – Creation of Indiana Vocational and Technological College (Ivy Tech)
- 1965 – Creation of the State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana (SSACI)
- 1967 – First state appropriation for Ivy Tech
- 1971 – Creation of Indiana Commission for Higher Education (ICHE)
- 1986 – Indiana College Placement and Assessment Center (ICPAC) begins operations
- 1990 – Creation of Twenty-First Century Scholars Program
- 1994 – Initial development of Core 40 diploma as an option for high school students
- 1995 – Stanley G. Jones appointed commissioner of higher education
- 1995 – Ivy Tech's name changed to Ivy Tech State College
- 1998 – Formation of the Education Roundtable (formalized by legislation in 1999)
- 1999 – Creation of the Community College of Indiana as a partnership between Ivy Tech and Vincennes University (joint courses began in fall 2000)
- 2000 – Launch of Transfer Indiana initiative, including creation of the Statewide Transfer and Articulation Committee
- 2001 – Indiana joins the American Diploma Project as a founding state partner
- 2003 – Release of the Education Roundtable's *P-16 Plan for Improving Student Achievement*
- 2004 – Relaunch of ICPAC as Learn More Indiana
- 2004 – Release of the Indiana Government Efficiency Commission's *Report of the Subcommittee on Higher Education*
- 2005 – Partnership between Ivy Tech and Vincennes dissolves, and Ivy Tech becomes Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana
- 2005 – Core 40 becomes Indiana's required high school curriculum for the graduating class of 2011
- 2005 – Passage of HEA 1347, which requires high schools to more accurately calculate graduation rates, make it more difficult for students to drop out, and offer a minimum number of Advanced Placement and dual enrollment classes
- 2007 – ICHE adopts *Reaching Higher: Strategic Directions for Higher Education in Indiana*
- 2007 – General Assembly adopts performance funding measures for postsecondary institutions based on student outcomes
- 2008 – ICHE adopts *Reaching Higher: Strategic Initiatives for Higher Education in Indiana*—six action papers that make recommendations in key areas related to college access and success
- 2011 – General Assembly makes Core 40 the admissions requirement for public four-year postsecondary institutions in the state

Academic Preparation

In trying to expand opportunities for higher education access, state policymakers must ensure that students will be in a position to make the most of such opportunities. In Indiana, policymakers have recognized that increasing the number of students who enroll in college would be pointless if those students do not have the academic preparation necessary to succeed in college-level work. In fact, increases in college enrollment over the past several decades have led to large numbers of students requiring remediation before they can work at the college level (ICHE 2007a; ICHE 2008d). For that reason, improving academic standards at the K–12 level, particularly in high school, has been a central focus of Indiana’s efforts to increase college access and success. Underlying this focus on academic preparation has been a sense that the state must raise expectations for academic achievement on the part of its young people (Jones 2007). Policymakers believe that students in Indiana should graduate from high school ready for college and/or work and that the state has a responsibility to provide them with the resources needed to meet this expectation.

Indiana’s interest in raising academic expectations at the high school level is not unique. Across the country, many states have undertaken initiatives to improve academic achievement among young residents. National programs with the same agenda have brought states to the table, created a sense of urgency, and provided resources to develop new state programs. In 2001, for example, Indiana became one of the five original state partners in the American Diploma Project (The Education Trust 2007).

This group has now grown into a network of 22 states that are making efforts to “align high school standards and assessments with the knowledge and skills required for success after high school” (Achieve, Inc. 2008a). Projects like these have raised public awareness of Indiana’s efforts to improve academic standards and have positioned the state at the forefront of the high school reform movement.

Indiana's Education Roundtable

At the heart of the discussions about high school reform and college readiness in Indiana is the state's Education Roundtable. This 20- to 40-person group is charged by the General Assembly with ensuring the quality of the state's academic standards. Under the joint chairmanship of the governor and the superintendent of public instruction, the Roundtable makes recommendations to the State Board of Education, ICHE, the General Assembly, and the governor on topics such as assessment and accountability in K–12 education. Membership in the group is, by law, balanced among representatives from K–12 education, higher education, business, and community leaders, as well as representatives from the General Assembly itself, with members from both legislative houses and both political parties.

The Roundtable first came together in 1998 through the efforts of Superintendent of Public Instruction Suellen Reed and then-Governor Frank O'Bannon, with the active participation of Commissioner of Higher Education Stan Jones. These leaders were concerned that key groups in the state—including K–12 education, higher education, and business—were not working well together despite a shared interest in improving education in Indiana. They brought together an informal group of policymakers who met in the governor's office to talk about education issues. Over time, these conversations helped break down barriers as policymakers became better acquainted with each other and developed a clearer understanding of the state's needs. It soon became apparent that this approach was a very productive way to address the state's need for higher academic standards and increased college access.

After the General Assembly codified the Roundtable in legislation in 1999, the group gained formal staff support from ICHE. In the early days, the Roundtable met often and took on an aggressive agenda. An important aspect of this agenda was to bring in outside experts in the field of education, to learn from their research and experiences, and to keep a focus on the issues themselves instead of on the interests of specific constituencies. Rather than breaking into subcommittees, Roundtable leaders focused on building consensus and raising the level of debate above partisan concerns, an approach one outside observer described as “a truly collaborative ‘think-tank’ structure” (Rochford 2007). Input from the public was also a priority, and the Roundtable held public work sessions and solicited public comments on working documents via its Web site (Indiana's Education Roundtable 2008).

While academic standards and assessment were the Roundtable's central focus for several years, over time its members became interested in developing bigger picture recommendations intended to ensure student success throughout the P–16 (preschool through college) pipeline. The Roundtable spent more than a year learning about the key issues for students at all points in the educational pipeline and writing a comprehensive

plan for improving student achievement in the state. This plan, formally adopted by the Roundtable in 2003, covers a wide range of topics, from early learning and school readiness to college and workforce success. It was intended as a blueprint for improving student achievement in Indiana, not as something that would or could be implemented all at once. While developing the plan, participants often raised objections about the potential cost, but Roundtable leaders argued that funding concerns made it even more imperative to plan ahead, with the understanding that some proposals may take years to be implemented.

In the five years since its adoption, the P–16 plan has become a touchstone for Indiana policymakers as they think about the state's education needs. Recommendations that have been adopted by the state (many of which are discussed below) include requiring a more rigorous high school curriculum; improving opportunities for high school students to take Advanced Placement (AP) and dual-credit classes; making it more difficult for students to drop out of school; and easing the process of transferring credit from one postsecondary institution to another (Indiana's Education Roundtable 2003). While many of the Roundtable's recommendations have not yet been adopted, they continue to appear, in various forms, in the planning documents produced by state education agencies and other organizations, suggesting that the document continues to be relevant to state policymakers.

The Core 40 Diploma

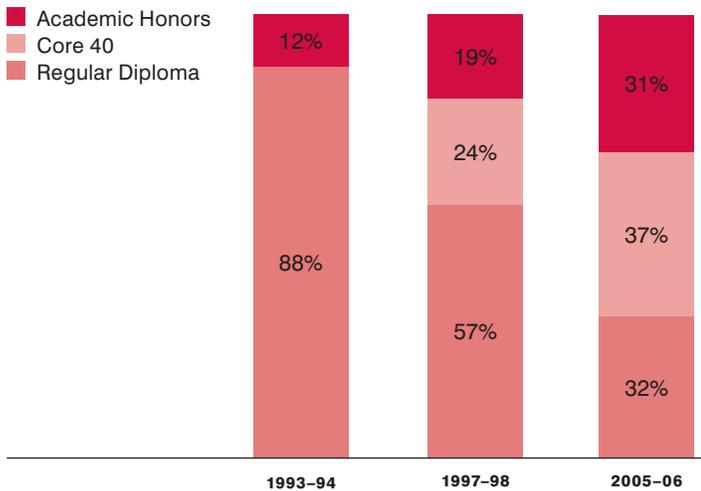
At the center of Indiana's efforts to improve academic preparation for high school graduates is the Core 40 diploma. Core 40 (named for the number of specific credits a student must take to complete the diploma) includes four years of English, three years of math through at least Algebra II, and three years of science. The Core 40 with Academic Honors diploma adds more credits in math, foreign languages, and fine arts, and requires that the students either take two college-level classes such as AP classes or attain a minimum score on a college entrance exam such as the American College Test (ACT) (Indiana Department of Education [IDOE] 2008a).

The Core 40 diploma was put into place as an option for Hoosier high school students in 1994. The original proposal for the diploma was developed by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce's Business–Higher Education Forum, a collaborative project between business leaders and college presidents. These groups were concerned about the lack of academic skills shown by students entering the workforce after high school and the high rates of remediation required to ready high school graduates for college. The curriculum itself was developed by IDOE, with input from the Chamber of Commerce and ICHE.

The original intention of the Chamber of Commerce was that the Core 40 diploma should be the minimum standard for high school graduation. However, this idea was met with some resistance,

FIGURE 3

Distribution of High School Diplomas Earned by Indiana Students, 1994–2006



SOURCE: ICHE 2008A

particularly on the part of K–12 educators who, despite the fact that the proposal was developed by the business community, argued that the curriculum was not suitable for students who would not be attending college. These concerns were addressed in several ways. First and foremost, the diploma was made an option rather than a requirement for high school graduation, reducing fears that it would lead to many students dropping out or failing to graduate. In addition, IDOE worked to improve elementary and middle school standards to help ensure that students would enter high school ready to pursue the Core 40 curriculum.

To counter negative perceptions about the Core 40 diploma and garner public support, IDOE and ICHE began a major outreach campaign in 2004. Shortly after that, Indiana joined the national State Scholars Initiative, a program funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Adult and Vocational Education and designed to support partnerships between business and education with the goal of convincing more students to pursue a rigorous curriculum in high school (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education 2008). Under the auspices of this program, led by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce and the Indiana Manufacturers Association, businesspeople across the state went into eighth grade classrooms to talk about the Core 40 curriculum and explain its value to students, regardless of their post-high-school plans.

Over time, efforts to educate Hoosier students about the Core 40 diploma have paid off, leading to substantial increases in the number of students completing more rigorous high school coursework. In 1994, before the introduction of Core 40, only

12 percent of high school graduates in Indiana earned an Academic Honors diploma. In 1998, that number had increased to 19 percent, with an additional 24 percent earning the regular Core 40 diploma. In 2006, more than two-thirds (68 percent) of Hoosier students completed a college preparatory curriculum in high school, 37 percent of them earning the Core 40 diploma and 31 percent completing the Core 40 with Academic Honors diploma (**FIGURE 3**).

The number of high school graduates who have completed at least the Core 40 diploma—together with increasing national recognition that a minimum level of academic preparation is needed to ensure that students leave high school ready for college or work—has enabled Indiana to revisit the idea of mandating the Core 40 diploma as a high school graduation requirement. In 2005, more than a decade after Core 40 was introduced, the Indiana General Assembly passed legislation to make Core 40 the default diploma for all Hoosier students, starting with the class of 2011. However, students can opt out of Core 40 if their parents decide they would be better served by a different curriculum. The legislation that made Core 40 the default high school curriculum also made it the minimum admissions standard for all public four-year universities in the state. This legislation was intended to send the message that Core 40 is essential for any student who might be considering higher education, and some policymakers have gone so far as to suggest that Core 40 should be required even for students who will enroll in community college right after high school (**BOX 2**).

Accountability: Setting Standards

Implementing a college- and work-ready high school curriculum is insufficient if the academic standards that underlie that curriculum are lacking, and in 1999, national reports indicated that Indiana’s standards were unacceptably low (Jacobs 2006). Since that time, Indiana has made a determined effort to clarify and strengthen academic standards for K–12 education in the state. Using the newly created Education Roundtable as a working group, state policymakers developed a set of math, science, language arts, and social studies standards that more closely reflected the material experts believe young people needed to learn at each grade level and that were aligned with the standardized tests used to ascertain academic proficiency.

Developing the new academic standards was a collaborative and iterative process. From the beginning, the Roundtable involved K–12 teachers in developing the standards, which helped to improve teacher buy-in. Higher education faculty were also involved in writing the high school standards, to help ensure that the material taught in high school classes provides students with the knowledge and skills to succeed in those subjects in college (Jacobs 2006). When a draft set of standards was complete, the state brought in several national organizations—including Achieve, Inc., and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation—to assess how well the standards compared with

Is Core 40 Indiana's College Readiness Indicator?

The standard Core 40 diploma requires four years of English, three years of math through at least Algebra II, and three years of science, together with additional credits in foreign languages, fine arts, and/or career and technical fields. This course sequence has been advertised as a college preparatory curriculum, and IDOE says, in its Core 40 promotional materials, “To succeed in college-level work, students need to complete Core 40 in high school” (IDOE 2008a). The national organization Achieve, Inc., considers Indiana to be one of only 18 states that require a “college and career-ready” high school curriculum (Achieve, Inc. 2008b). This perception of Core 40 as a college readiness indicator is bolstered by the fact that Core 40 is now the minimum admissions requirement for all public four-year institutions in the state.

However, from the perspective of ICHE and the flagship institutions, Core 40 is not a full college preparatory curriculum (which would, for example, require two years of a foreign language). In 2007, ICHE recommended that Indiana colleges and universities encourage students to pursue an Academic Honors curriculum, which includes additional credits in math, foreign languages, and fine arts, and requires that the students either take two college-level classes or attain a minimum score on a college entrance exam (ICHE 2007a; IDOE 2008a). In its 2008 action paper on college preparation, ICHE proposed adding

foreign languages to the standard Core 40 curriculum; set the goal of increasing the percentage of students earning Academic Honors diplomas to 50 percent by 2011; and suggested that the more elite public institutions in the state make the Academic Honors diploma a minimum admissions requirement (ICHE 2008d). These actions suggest that some state policymakers see the need for even more rigorous coursework if students are to graduate from high school college-ready.

those deemed to be the best in the nation and the world. When Achieve found that Indiana's standards were less rigorous than those of benchmark states and countries (such as California and Singapore), the Roundtable worked to increase the standards' rigor and to ensure that state assessments measured the full range of the standards (Achieve, Inc. 2000). This intensive process has paid off for the state. In a 2006 national report on state academic standards, Indiana, along with two other states, was ranked first in the nation for its clear and rigorous standards (Finn et al. 2006).

While improving the general standards for K–12 education has been beneficial for Indiana, the standards themselves and the general assessments used to test students' annual academic progress are not enough to show that students are learning the material covered in Core 40 classes. Some policymakers express concern that Core 40 classes may be lacking in rigor and that their quality varies from high school to high school, and assessment results support this conclusion (ICHE 2008d). To address this concern, the state has instituted Core 40 end-of-course exams intended "to ensure the quality, consistency, and rigor of Core 40 courses across the state" (IDOE 2008a). These exams are part of the state's accountability system for high schools, with schools required to show improvement in passing scores before being awarded the highest accountability ratings (IDOE 2008b).

The end-of-course exams are currently required for students completing Algebra I and II, Biology I, and English 11, and an exam for U.S. History is also being developed. For Algebra II, Indiana is pilot-testing three different end-of-course exams to see which proves to be the most effective. One of these exams was developed in partnership with nine other states as part of the American Diploma Project Network. Using this common exam will allow these states to compare student performance in Algebra II as well as to assess their own progress in improving curriculum and instruction in this key subject (Achieve, Inc. 2008c).

Hoosier students currently are not required to pass the mandatory Core 40 end-of-course exams to graduate from high school, although schools may choose to use the end-of-course exam in determining a student's grade in the class. The debate over what proficiencies students should demonstrate before graduating from high school has been a contentious one in Indiana. For now, students must complete all required courses and pass a Graduation Qualifying Exam, which is administered in the sophomore year of high school and covers material through Algebra I and English 9. From the perspective of the business and higher education communities, this assessment is inadequate, and they argue that students should be required to show higher levels of proficiency before leaving high school. In response, Indiana has mandated that, for the high school class of 2012, students will have to pass end-of-course exams in Algebra I and English 10 (IDOE 2008a), but many business and higher education leaders believe it is unacceptable to assess workforce and college readiness on the basis of only these two courses.

Some Indiana policymakers have proposed using Core 40 end-of-course exams, specifically Algebra II and English 11, as assessments of college readiness or even for college placement, which would help save money for college-bound students (Achieve, Inc. 2006). However, this idea is not universally accepted. In particular, the Indiana State Teachers Association believes that trying to use the same exams to assess both minimum high school competency and college readiness, as well as holding high schools accountable for course quality, places too great a burden on any one assessment tool. They propose, instead, that students take one of several possible exams such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), ACT, or WorkKeys to assess their college and/or workforce readiness. A similar proposal was adopted by the State Board of Education as a part of its comprehensive assessment plan. Under this proposal, a postsecondary assessment would be administered to all students starting in the junior year of high school, with the goal of confirming "student preparation for success in post-secondary activity, whether that is further study or work" (Indiana State Board of Education 2006). ICHE also endorses this plan and intends to develop a commonly agreed upon metric to assess college readiness (ICHE 2008d).

Accountability for student success in high school continues to be a crucial issue. Indiana has made graduation rates a key indicator of high school improvement. However, recent efforts to report more accurate graduation rates indicate that Indiana's high schools have not been graduating as many students as was assumed in the past and that certain schools have very high dropout rates. This issue has been brought to the attention of policymakers. In 2005, the General Assembly passed legislation to raise the legal dropout age to 18, require an exit interview before a student is allowed to withdraw, and deny driver's licenses and work permits to students who drop out without the school's permission (ICHE 2006c).

One approach to improving both high school retention and college readiness has been the development of an enhanced dual enrollment policy. Because one of the requirements for the Academic Honors diploma is taking AP or dual-credit courses and because research suggests that boredom is a major cause of high school dropout, the General Assembly in 2005 required that all high schools offer at least two AP and two dual-credit classes and that public funds be provided to help low-income students cover the cost of AP exams and dual-credit courses (ICHE 2006c). Some policymakers suggest, however, that current efforts do not go far enough, arguing that students are able to complete most of their Core 40 requirements in the 11th grade and should be able to take more state-subsidized dual credit courses as seniors.

Future Challenges

Indiana has made remarkable strides in improving academic preparation for its high school students, a crucial factor in increasing college access and success. However, a few challenges remain. One in which the Education Roundtable and ICHE are particularly interested is teacher quality. Without excellent

teachers, it will be difficult for the state to ensure that the classes offered in its high schools are adequately preparing students for college and the workforce, and the Roundtable's 2003 P-16 Plan emphasizes the importance of recruiting, training, and retaining high-quality teachers in all public schools. ICHE, in a 2008 action paper, goes a step further and calls for a rethinking of teacher preparation following the work of Arthur Levine, who proposes that schools of education should focus on professional training that emphasizes classroom practice (ICHE 2008d).

Other current initiatives around teacher quality include reviewing the research on teacher incentive programs and efforts to create partnerships between K–12 schools and postsecondary institutions to offer professional development opportunities for current and aspiring teachers. Indiana has received an Honor State Grant from the National Governors Association (2008), a portion of which will go to reforming teacher education by requiring that all aspiring teachers major in a specific subject area, particularly in science and math fields. In addition, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation (2008) offers an Indiana Teaching Fellowship to persons with a background in science or math. The fellowship provides financial support and mentoring while participants earn a master's degree in education and begin teaching in high-need schools.

An essential factor in ensuring both high-quality teaching and excellent academic preparation at the K–12 level is the availability of student-level data that can be used to analyze the postsecondary and workforce outcomes of students from specific high schools. In 2006, a strategic assessment of Indiana's education system concluded that there was a strong need for a "longitudinal data system to analyze and share data on student progress among schools, districts, higher education institutions, workforce development agencies, and so on" (Achieve, Inc., and Jobs for the Future 2006). This data system would allow the state to hold high schools accountable for the success of their students in college or the workforce and to hold schools of education accountable for the work of the teachers they produce (ICHE 2008d).

Efforts to connect existing K–12, higher education, and workforce databases into a comprehensive data system—to be called the Indiana Workforce Intelligence System—are under way, and the new data system is projected to be available. In addition, as part of its commitment in receiving the National Governors Association Honor State Grant, Indiana will participate in the National Education Data Partnership, a collaborative effort to improve the way education data are collected and used in the United States (Council of Chief State School Officers 2008). The hope is that these data collection efforts will place Indiana in a stronger position to make data-driven decisions to improve the quality of its educational system at all levels. ❧

Affordability

Given the interest on the part of Hoosier policymakers in continuing to increase college access and success in the state, maintaining affordability in postsecondary education is a crucial goal. However, keeping college affordable in Indiana has proved to be a significant challenge in an era when such costs have risen dramatically from year to year throughout the nation. As a result, this area is one in which policymakers have had to make considerable efforts to ensure that students who wish to attend college in Indiana can afford to do so.

These efforts have not been entirely successful. In the *Measuring Up 2006* higher education report card, Indiana was one of the many states awarded a low grade in affordability, in large part because the cost of attending college in the state, even after considering financial aid, represents a substantial share of family income for the state's poorest families. The average net price¹ of attending Indiana public two-year colleges as of 2005–06 represented 36 percent of the annual income of families in the two lowest income quintiles, while the average net price of attending a public four-year institution represented 44 percent (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education [NCPPE] 2006). As a result, students from these families would be unable to attend college in Indiana without relying heavily on student loans or working while they are enrolled in school.

Controlling Higher Education Costs

One reason for the situation described above is that Indiana's colleges and universities are relatively expensive. As of 2007–08,

the average postsecondary tuition and fees in the state were \$3,007 for public two-year institutions, \$6,877 for public four-year institutions, and \$24,856 for private four-year institutions, putting Indiana in the second quintile for college costs nationally for all three institutional types (Baum and Ma 2007). College costs in the state have also increased substantially over the past decade. Between 1995–96 and 2005–06, tuition and fees at two-year public colleges increased by 19 percent in constant 2006 dollars, while tuition and fees at public four-year schools increased by 66 percent (ICHE 2006a).

While college costs have increased dramatically in the past decade, Indiana's state appropriations for higher education have increased more slowly. In 2007–08, the state appropriated \$1.53 billion for higher education expenditures, an increase of 7 percent over 1997–98 after accounting for inflation. During the same period, the average increase in higher education appropriations for the nation as a whole was 19 percent in constant 2008 dollars, with Indiana ranking 36th in the nation in increased appropriations (Center for the Study of Education Policy 2008). As a result, the

¹ Net price equals tuition and fees plus room and board minus all grant aid.

share of higher education expenditures borne by Hoosier families as opposed to the state increased from 41 percent to 50 percent between 1995–96 and 2004–05 (ICHE 2006a).

In addition, Indiana currently places no limits on the ability of public colleges and universities to raise tuition and fees, and many policymakers have recognized a need to control excessive increases in tuition. In 1999, for example, when the Community College of Indiana was created, the General Assembly put in place a two-year tuition freeze to help make the college more affordable, and ICHE has suggested that the freeze may need to be reinstated in the future (ICHE 2008e). In 2003, ICHE recommended that “[u]ndergraduate resident tuition and fees should grow no faster than growth in family income” (ICHE 2003). While ICHE cannot mandate that institutions limit tuition increases, the commission is charged with making recommendations regarding such increases to the General Assembly. In addition, legislation now requires that public institutions set tuition and fees two years at a time and hold public hearings well in advance of any tuition increase in an effort to better communicate with the public about college costs.

However, while the issue of tuition caps has been much debated in Indiana and several bills to restrict tuition increases have been introduced in the General Assembly, none has yet passed, in part because of concerns about limiting the funding available to state colleges and universities in an era of tight state budgets. Some policymakers argue, moreover, that tuition caps are unnecessary and even counterproductive. They suggest that colleges and universities, particularly the flagship campuses, should be able to charge whatever the market will bear and that the state should focus its attention on providing sufficient financial aid to level the playing field for lower income students.

Financial Aid for Low-Income Students

Certainly, Indiana has made a substantial and sustained investment in student financial aid over the past several decades, particularly in need-based aid that targets low-income students who would not otherwise be able to attend college. Between 1995–96 and 2005–06, the state increased spending on need-based grant aid by 220 percent in constant 2006 dollars, compared with a national average increase of only 60 percent. This increase moved the state from ninth to sixth place in the nation in the total amount of need-based grant aid awarded (National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs [NASSGAP] 2006). In addition, between 1992 and 2006, Indiana’s investment in need-based aid increased from 43 percent of federal student aid dollars spent in the state to 70 percent (NCPPE 2006).

Indiana’s commitment to need-based grant aid can be clearly seen in comparing the state’s financial aid spending with that of the rest of the nation. In 2005–06, Indiana spent more than \$281 million on need-based grant aid; this represented about one-fifth

of total state appropriations for higher education. Nationally, states invest only about 10 percent of their state appropriations in need-based grant aid. In addition, approximately 86 percent of all undergraduate student aid in Indiana is awarded on the basis of financial need alone (rather than on academic merit or a combination of need and merit), compared with a national average of 49 percent. With need-based grant aid averaging \$690 per undergraduate full-time equivalent student, Indiana places fifth in the nation in per-student need-based grant aid (NASSGAP 2006).

The history of need-based student aid in Indiana dates to the establishment of the State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana (SSACI) in 1965. Initially, grants were based on a combination of financial need and academic merit, including grade point average (GPA) and admissions tests scores. In 1984, however, the state changed its Indiana Higher Education Grant program to focus on need-based aid, with only token scholarships awarded to top students on the basis of academic merit. This primarily need-based grant program remains the core of Indiana’s student financial aid efforts; it was renamed in 2003 to honor former governor Frank O’Bannon. The grant program also benefited early in its history from a \$50 million gift from the Lilly Endowment, which not only provided the state with funds to support more middle-income students and students attending private colleges but also helped demonstrate to policymakers the value of need-based financial aid.

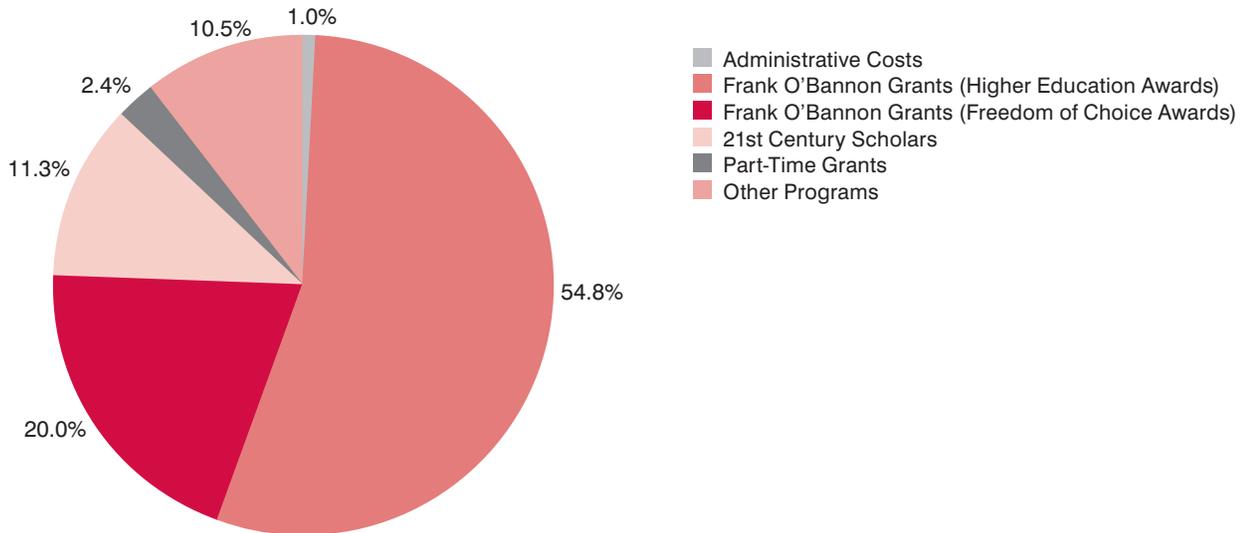
Today, Frank O’Bannon Grants provide assistance with tuition and fees for full-time students who are Indiana residents and demonstrate financial need. In 2006–07, the program was funded at \$163.4 million, representing approximately three-quarters of SSACI expenditures. Awards were provided to more than 48,000 students, with an average award amount of \$3,375.

The Frank O’Bannon Grant Program is made up of two separate award components. The first, the Higher Education Award, is available to all Hoosier students with financial need. The second component, the Freedom of Choice Award, provides additional funds for students attending private nonprofit colleges and universities in an effort to compensate for the higher tuition and fees charged by such institutions. State policymakers argue that it is important to provide financial aid to students who attend private institutions to keep students in the state and to recognize the important role played by independent institutions in the state’s higher education system. Support for students attending private as well as public universities has also helped to maintain bipartisan support for the grant program.

The funding amount provided to Frank O’Bannon Grant recipients is partially determined by academic merit. All eligible students can receive grants of 80 percent of allowable tuition and fees (an amount determined each year on the basis of available funds) minus their expected family contribution. Students who graduate

FIGURE 4

Distribution of State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana Funding, 2006–07



SOURCE: SSACI 2007

from high school with a Core 40 diploma and a minimum 2.0 GPA receive 90 percent of allowable tuition and fees, while students who complete an Academic Honors diploma with at least a 3.0 GPA receive 100 percent (SSACI 2007). This merit component of the award, instituted in 1997–98, is intended to encourage students to pursue more demanding high school coursework and to reduce any incentive for postsecondary institutions to enroll unqualified students, since those students would be eligible for less financial aid. Policymakers also suggest that adding the merit component has increased bipartisan support for continued funding of the program.

While the Frank O'Bannon Grant Program makes up the substantial majority of SSACI's funding, other state financial aid programs are available, including a grant program for part-time students who are not eligible for Frank O'Bannon Grants (FIGURE 4). This part-time grant program, established in 1992, provides funding to students with financial need who are taking at least three credit hours. Unlike the other grants administered by SSACI, funding is allocated directly to the postsecondary institutions, which then distribute grants to eligible students (SSACI 2007). This system allows schools to give grants each term rather than for the full year, but it also means that once the school's allocated funding has been used, there is no way to fund more students. At this time, the demand for grants through this program greatly exceeds the \$5.3 million allocated to it by the legislature, which means that many eligible part-time students do not receive a grant.

To ensure that students take advantage of available need-based financial aid, Indiana makes an explicit effort to raise public awareness of this aid and how to apply for it (ICHE 2008b). Information on financial aid is available to students on the state-supported Learn More Indiana Web site (Learn More Indiana 2008). Each January, Learn More Indiana sends FAFSA [Free Application for Federal Student Aid] on the Web worksheets to all prospective high school graduates in the state, rather than relying on high school counselors who may not have time to inform all students about the financial aid application process or who may make assumptions about which students are college bound. Since 1989, moreover, Indiana has been home to College Goal Sunday, a one-day event in which financial aid experts offer low-income students and families free assistance in completing the FAFSA. This outreach program—a collaboration among Learn More Indiana, SSACI, and the Indiana Student Financial Aid Association, with funding from the Lilly Endowment, USA Funds, and Lumina Foundation for Education—originated in Indiana and has been replicated in 36 states (College Goal Sunday 2008).

Policymakers emphasize Indiana's history of a strong, ongoing, and bipartisan commitment to need-based financial aid. State policymakers have consistently recognized the importance of higher education to economic development, as well as the fact that many talented students may be barred from obtaining a college degree because of cost, and they have been willing to

make continued investments in need-based grant aid. Budget limitations have sometimes prevented Indiana from increasing financial aid at rates that match rising college costs, but policymakers seem to agree that need-based financial aid is a key fiscal priority for the state. Earlier this year, for example, Governor Mitch Daniels proposed a large-scale program to guarantee two years of postsecondary funding to families with incomes at or below the state median, congruent with recommendations in an ICHE action paper on affordability in higher education (ICHE 2008b). This general consensus on the importance of need-based aid—which is quite unlike the contentious debates that surround the topic of financial aid in many other states—reflects Indiana’s relatively stable and amicable political culture and has made it easier to sustain and even increase funding for its need-based financial aid programs despite pressures on the state budget.

The Twenty-First Century Scholars Program

One way in which Indiana has specifically targeted its financial aid and outreach efforts to low-income students is through the Twenty-First Century Scholars Program. This early intervention program, begun in 1990, enrolls in middle school students, asks them to sign a pledge to complete high school and avoid illegal activities, and provides them with academic and college preparation assistance throughout high school.² Upon graduating from high school with a Core 40 diploma and at least a 2.0 GPA, and affirming their enrollment pledge, students are guaranteed four years of financial aid covering 100 percent of approved tuition and fees at an in-state public college or university or an equivalent amount at an in-state private institution.

Eligibility for the program is set at 185 percent of the federal poverty level, or around \$37,000 for a family of four, which is also the level at which students are eligible for free or reduced price school lunches (SSACI 2007). In actuality, Scholars’ families have a median income of \$29,000, lower than that of other state grant recipients. In addition, 58 percent of Scholars have parents who did not attend college, 49 percent are from single-parent families, and 32 percent are members of racial and ethnic minority groups, a percentage substantially above that in the state population (ICHE 2007b).

The Twenty-First Century Scholars Program was created by then-Governor Evan Bayh through legislation sponsored by State Representative Stan Jones, now commissioner of higher education. The structure was based on the model of Eugene Lange’s I Have a Dream Foundation (St. John et al. 2002). Indiana took that private philanthropy effort and applied it to the public sector with the idea that, if students know they will be able to afford to attend college, they are more likely to take the steps to prepare themselves for higher education. The original goals

² Currently, students are enrolled in the Twenty-First Century Scholars Program during seventh and eighth grades. As of the 2008–09 academic year, the enrollment period will be expanded to include students in the sixth grade (SSACI 2007).

of the program were to increase high school graduation and college enrollment rates for low-income students, decrease drug and alcohol use by encouraging students to aspire to a college education, and improve workforce preparation, economic productivity, and quality of life in Indiana (ICHE 2007b).

The creation of the Twenty-First Century Scholars Program was something of a gamble. While the General Assembly passed a statute creating the program, it did not appropriate funds for anything other than administrative costs. The state was willing to assume that the legislature would make good on its commitment and appropriate the money for scholarships when the first cohort of students was ready for college five years later, although this lack of guarantee led educators to fear that a promise was being made to students that would not be kept (St. John et al. 2002). Nonetheless, despite a divided legislature both at the time the initial bill passed and when the first students were ready to receive their scholarships, the program received bipartisan support, and funding for the scholarships has been appropriated at each subsequent legislative session.

Hopes for a high-impact intervention dimmed, however, when the first cohort of Twenty-First Century Scholars completed high school, because less than half of those who met the requirements went on to college. Research with the students who did not go to college found that many felt unprepared, were uncomfortable with the idea of attending college, or did not have adequate support from their families and high schools. In 1991, funding from the Lilly Endowment allowed SSACI to create a Parents’ Project at seven sites around the state to raise awareness of the value of higher education and provide additional support for eligible students. Additional funding from the state and from a federal National Early Intervention Scholarship and Partnership grant allowed this support program to expand to 16 sites, each with a full-time coordinator. Additional support for the early intervention program came from AmeriCorps volunteers and from two federal Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grants (SSACI 1999; 2007).

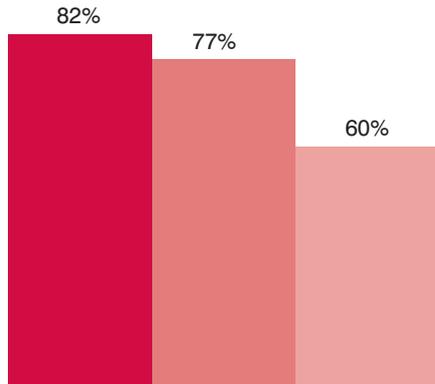
The Twenty-First Century Scholars Program continues to receive substantial state support. For 2006–07, the program was funded at \$25.4 million. Most of the money (80 percent) is spent on scholarships. In 2006–07, 8,949 students received scholarships through the program, with an average grant of \$2,255 in addition to any Frank O’Bannon Grant the student received. The cost of the scholarship to the state is kept relatively low because it is supplemental to the Frank O’Bannon Grant, for which these students would be eligible in any case. An additional \$4.6 million was spent on early intervention in 2006–07. Of the early intervention funding, 58 percent comes from the federal GEAR UP grant and the remainder directly from the state (SSACI 2007).

The early intervention component is a critical part of the Twenty-First Century Scholars Program. As an SSACI report explains:

FIGURE 5

Percentage of Indiana High School Seniors Graduating From High School, 2006

■ 21st Century Scholars
■ All Students
■ Free and Reduced Price Lunch Students



SOURCE: ICHE 2006B

In addition to enabling Scholars to earn tuition assistance, the program engages Scholars, their families, and their communities in a holistic network of support initiatives. The aim of these initiatives is to build resiliency—to foster an academically encouraging environment for Scholars, while empowering parents to serve as the educational leaders in Scholars' lives (SSACI 2007).

Services offered to Scholars at program support sites include academic tutoring, study skills workshops, mentoring, college and career advising, and campus visits. Parents are offered workshops on how to assist their children with college and career preparation, study skills, and test-taking and are required to participate in at least one campus visit (SSACI 2007).

Research suggests that the Twenty-First Century Scholars Program is making progress toward its goals of improving high school graduation and college enrollment rates among low-income students. Scholars are considerably more likely to graduate from high school than their peers, with over 80 percent of Scholars in the 2006 cohort graduating, compared with only 60 percent of high school seniors who received free and reduced price lunches (**FIGURE 5**). Scholars were also more likely than other Frank O'Bannon Grant recipients to earn a Core 40 or Academic Honors diploma—almost two-thirds of Scholars who graduated from high school in 2007 earned one of these diplomas, compared with 45 percent of other grant recipients (SSACI 2007). A statistically rigorous evaluation of the program indicates that Scholars from the 1999 cohort were

substantially more likely than their peers to enroll in college, even after controlling for other factors such as family background, academic aspirations, and high school characteristics that might affect this outcome (St. John et al. 2002).

The research findings regarding outcomes for Scholars after enrolling in college are less encouraging. Scholars are considerably less likely than the overall student population to persist in college. Four years after high school, half of the Scholars from the 1999 cohort had dropped out of college, compared with 39 percent of students who received other forms of financial aid and 35 percent of students who did not receive any financial aid. On the other hand, compared only with other low-income students who received financial aid, Scholars were equally likely to have persisted in college and to have earned a bachelor's degree, and were twice as likely to have earned an associate's degree (St. John et al. 2005).

The findings described above have suggested to policymakers that there is a need to improve undergraduate teaching, mentoring, and support services at Indiana's colleges and universities to improve the odds of success for Twenty-First Century Scholars and other low-income students. In addition, policymakers recognize that a financial aid program that covers only tuition and fees may not be sufficient for students from low-income families, given the other costs of attending college. One promising development in this area is the Twenty-First Century Scholar Covenant program at Indiana University's flagship campus in Bloomington. This program, which began with

the 2007–08 entering class, supplements federal and state grant aid to cover the full cost of attendance at the university (Indiana University 2006; ICHE 2008b).

Regardless of ongoing concerns about college completion rates, the Twenty-First Century Scholars Program has received considerable recognition for its contributions to college access in Indiana. It was featured at a financial aid workshop held by the National Governors Association in 2002, and the model of combining early intervention services with a guaranteed scholarship has been replicated in other states. From the perspective of Hoosier policymakers, this program has been a key factor in efforts to improve college enrollment rates in the state.

Future Challenges

One group of students that has not seen many benefits from Indiana's financial aid programs is adult learners, particularly those who attend school part time. Policymakers point to a burgeoning need to assist adult students who need retraining following mass layoffs or who are trying to return to the workforce after a period of unemployment. While these students are covered by the state's part-time grant program, funding for that program is very small in comparison with the grant program for full-time students, and ICHE has called for a more comprehensive aid program to serve part-time students (ICHE 2007a; 2008b). In addition, in 2008, the General Assembly passed legislation allowing students more than the current 10 years to use all their financial aid. SSACI officials had argued that this rule penalized adults who return to college after leaving for a time to pursue employment or raise children (SSACI 2007).

Increases in college enrollments over the past several decades suggest that Indiana's "high-tuition, high-aid" approach to post-secondary affordability has been reasonably successful (St. John et al. 2001). Nonetheless, college costs can be a burden, particularly for low-income families that may not be able to cover the full cost of college attendance and for middle-income families that may not be eligible for state grant aid. In response to these concerns, ICHE has recommended that the state develop a program to provide aid for middle-income students who have completed a Core 40 diploma and that colleges and universities offer more need-based aid to help cover the full cost of attendance for low-income students (ICHE 2007a; 2008b). Given the current economic slowdown, it seems likely that Indiana, like many other states, will face some difficult choices regarding which programs to fund. If state appropriations for financial aid remain stagnant or are reduced, the high cost of the state's colleges and universities will present a major barrier to low-income students who seek to earn a college degree. ❧

A Diversified Higher Education System

As Indiana continues its efforts to ensure that students graduate from high school college-ready and that higher education is affordable, the state also must clarify the roles postsecondary institutions play in the educational pipeline. Hoosiers need to understand the educational offerings of various colleges and universities so they can make appropriate choices based on their personal aspirations. In addition, if public postsecondary institutions have too much duplication in their programs, they will compete for a limited pool of potential students at the expense of more efficient ways of offering higher education.

Indiana is moving toward a more diversified and coordinated higher education system that will specify roles for the various institutions and make it clear to potential students which institution will meet their educational needs. Over the past decade, some important changes have been made to further this goal, most notably, the creation of a statewide comprehensive community college system. However, the state is still working to clarify the roles of other institutions, such as Indiana University's and Purdue University's flagship and regional campuses. This process of introspection will help Indiana initiate a greater level of differentiation and interdependence in its higher education system.

Creation of a Community College System

In the last half century or so, community college systems have become an essential part of American higher education, offering affordable college access, especially for nontraditional students

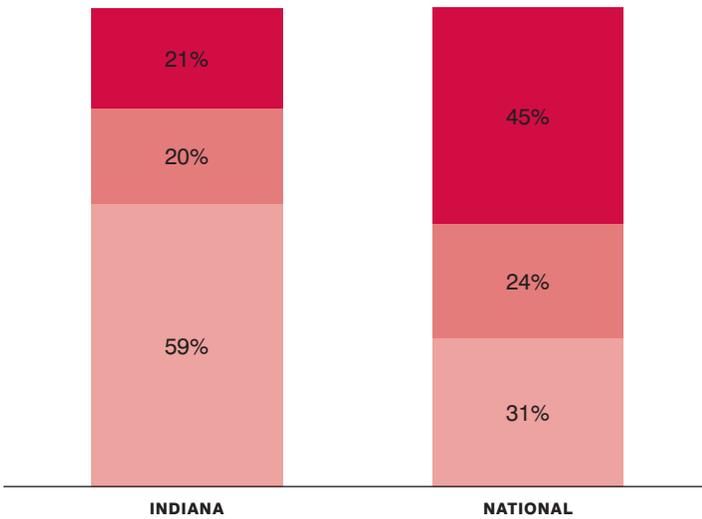
such as working adults and for underserved groups such as low-income and minority students. Community colleges in the United States educate nearly half of all undergraduate students; almost three-fifths of these students attend school part time. The average age of community college students is 29, and 35 percent are members of racial and ethnic minority groups (American Association of Community Colleges 2008). An effective community college system plays a crucial role in the higher education system by encouraging workforce development and promoting higher education across state populations, creating a more competitive economy (ICHE 2008e).

Until recently, Indiana had no statewide comprehensive community college system. With the increasing demand for higher education following World War II, Indiana University's and Purdue University's leadership pushed for, and the General Assembly

FIGURE 6

Distribution of Full-Time Undergraduates Enrolled in Different Types of Public Postsecondary Institutions, 2001

- Two-Year Institutions
- Master's/Bachelor's Institutions
- Research/Doctoral Institutions



SOURCE: IGEC 2004

approved, the development and expansion of regional campuses to provide two-year degree programs, as well as additional capacity for four-year degrees. University leaders believed that by expanding the regional campuses, they could avoid direct enrollment competition with a community college system while still serving the needs of the community. The legislature also created Indiana Vocational and Technical College (Ivy Tech) in 1963 to address the vocational and technical training needs of the state's population at various regional sites. At that time, only one two-year institution—Vincennes University—offered a liberal arts associate's degree, and it had only one location, in the southern part of the state.

Ivy Tech grew quickly because it met important workforce needs for the state. In 1967, Ivy Tech had only three campuses; by 1969, it had 13 campuses. The development of these additional sites came about as a result of local efforts to raise funds and purchase land or buildings. This intense local connection has played an important role in Ivy Tech's development, despite the fact that the bulk of its funding comes from state appropriations.

In the years after Ivy Tech's creation, the IU and Purdue regional campuses began offering more bachelor's and master's degrees, a change from the traditional role of a community college. As a

result, as Indiana moved into the 21st century, the percentage of undergraduates enrolled at four-year institutions in the state was much higher than the national average (FIGURE 6). Per-student expenses, as well as tuition, are higher at four-year institutions, making higher education less affordable for both the state and its residents. Together with growing concerns about the need for additional postsecondary education and training in the face of a changing economy, this situation led Hoosier policymakers to develop a community college system.

In 1999, then-Governor Frank O'Bannon launched the Community College of Indiana as a partnership between Ivy Tech and Vincennes University. The partnership was intended to take advantage of Vincennes' many liberal arts course offerings and its history of effective transfer preparation as well as Ivy Tech's vocational course offerings, many campuses across the state, and ability to provide daily management of the partnership. Courses and programs at the new community college began in the fall of 2000, while administrators and legislators continued to iron out the organizational structure. Tuition was frozen for two years to bring it more into line with the national average for community colleges. Indiana then began a \$1 million branding and communications effort to educate state residents about the community college concept. The state brought in the enrollment management consulting firm Noel Levitz to advise administrators on how to handle enrollment growth, and enrollment at Ivy Tech campuses increased by 30,000 students over the next six years (ICHE 2008e).

However, it became apparent over time that the partnership between Ivy Tech and Vincennes was not working, resulting in its dissolution by then-Governor Joe Kernan in 2004. Policymakers offer various reasons why the partnership was not effective. One major problem was a managerial and operational disconnect between the two institutions, which continued to operate as separate entities with different institutional missions and a lack of clarity about their respective roles in the partnership. Students who took liberal art courses at Ivy Tech campuses, for example, were considered to be Vincennes students, and Vincennes had employees at some Ivy Tech sites who managed enrollment, classroom scheduling, and faculty hires. Some policymakers also mentioned contention between the institutions as to which had primacy in individual academic areas.

Nonetheless, the process of creating and dissolving this partnership only highlighted Indiana's continuing need for a functional and comprehensive community college system. In 2005, the General Assembly passed legislation converting Ivy Tech into Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana. Creating a statewide comprehensive community college system involved many players, but it was largely driven from the top down, by Governors O'Bannon and Kernan, ICHE, state legislators, and Ivy Tech leaders. Enormous personal and political capital was invested in the development of a statewide community college system,

because many policymakers saw it as a vital initiative to improve academic achievement for adults and nontraditional students.

Currently, there are 23 Ivy Tech campuses across 14 regions in the state, offering more than 150 academic programs. In 2004–05, Ivy Tech enrolled approximately 73,000 students; more than half (53 percent) of Ivy Tech students are age 25 or older. By 2006–07, enrollment had increased to more than 110,000, making Ivy Tech the second largest public institution of higher education in Indiana after the IU system (Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana 2006)

These numbers suggest the extent to which the new community college system is helping Indiana deal with the issue of college access by offering more students (many of them nontraditional) the opportunity to attend college. With a strong community college system, students have the option of earning an associate's degree or taking courses toward the first two years of a bachelor's degree at a lower cost than would be possible at one of the IU or Purdue regional campuses. However, when private institutions are included, Ivy Tech enrolls only 12 percent of full-time equivalent undergraduate students in Indiana, placing the state 47th in the nation in the share of students enrolled at community colleges (Jaschik 2008). This statistic suggests that the state still is not able to offer enough lower cost postsecondary options, especially for the nontraditional and low-income students who are most likely to rely on community colleges.

Ivy Tech has benefited in a number of ways from its new status as a statewide community college. Currently, it is the nation's only solely and fully state-supported community college system, receiving funding from state appropriations and private foundations but not from local governments. All 23 regional Ivy Tech sites form one college, which helps promote a single identity and assists with accreditation. In many states, each locality has its own separately accredited and funded community college system.

Ivy Tech still faces some important challenges and must continue to explore new ways to strengthen its role in the state's higher education system. Administrators are working with the state's four-year colleges and universities to facilitate better student mobility across institutions. As a solely state-funded institution, moreover, Ivy Tech has to concern itself with funding in an era when many states are facing significant budget cuts. As Indiana continues to develop this new community college system, it will be vital to clarify and strengthen its central mission, especially since community colleges are routinely called on to provide basic and secondary education for adults, remedial education, general education and transfer preparation, vocational programs leading to certificates and associate's degrees, short-term workforce training, and a host of other functions, not all of which Ivy Tech may be able to take on immediately.

Remediation is an area of particular importance to Ivy Tech. Indiana is trying to increase academic preparation and reduce the need for remediation by making the Core 40 curriculum a requirement in its high schools. Nonetheless, remediation is still necessary for some recent high school graduates and will continue to be necessary in the foreseeable future for adults returning to college. To ensure the greatest level of college access, Indiana must place responsibility for remediation where it will cost the student and the state the least, which makes Ivy Tech the obvious choice for this educational function.

The Role of Flagship Institutions and Regional Campuses

The establishment of a statewide community college system has had an impact on the entire higher education pipeline by allowing public four-year institutions to raise admissions standards, namely, the Core 40 diploma as the minimum admissions requirement beginning in 2011. Indiana's flagship institutions—Purdue University at West Lafayette and Indiana University at Bloomington—can now focus on research, graduate education, and high-achieving undergraduates. Agreements within each university system allow the flagship institutions to maintain high admissions standards. For example, a student who applies for acceptance to Purdue's West Lafayette campus but does not qualify for admission will be referred to the institution's regional campuses. This situation has been challenging for some Hoosiers who see the flagship campuses as the most desirable institutions and are unhappy if they, or their children, must enroll at one of the regional campuses. As Indiana moves to a more differentiated higher education system, the state will have to continue to work to persuade the public of the educational quality of the regional campuses and Ivy Tech.

An important part of this work has been accomplished through a 2001 agreement among ICHE, Indiana University, and Purdue University regarding the development of the regional campuses and the jointly managed Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). The goal of this agreement was to develop “a strong regional campus system and a strong community college system that complement one another” (ICHE 2001). To this end, the universities agreed that the Community College of Indiana would become the primary site for associate's degree programs and for remediation. At the same time, the regional campuses were expected to place greater emphasis on bachelor's degree programs and to expand selected master's degree programs on the basis of regional employment needs (ICHE 2001). At first the regional campuses feared that Ivy Tech would take away from their student base, but the community college has actually begun to serve as a feeder institution to the campuses in each of its regions. The transition has been slow but steady. In 2008, for example, IU shifted almost all remaining associate degrees to Ivy Tech (Lederman 2008).

Mission Differentiation

Indiana's higher education system is still in transition. Although missions are more clearly differentiated than in the past, the state's many public postsecondary institutions still need to clarify their appropriate roles in a changing economy. New leadership at IU, Purdue, and Ivy Tech is enabling conversations to take place regarding each institution's place in the educational pipeline. While these conversations are in the early stages, it seems increasingly obvious to policymakers that they need to create a seamless higher education system with clearly defined institutional roles. There is also a need to prevent "mission creep," which occurs when postsecondary institutions begin to expand degree offerings and programs beyond their original purpose.

By developing clear and distinct institutional missions, colleges and universities in Indiana can provide higher education for Hoosiers in the most effective and efficient ways. There seems to be a general consensus among policymakers that the flagship institutions of IU and Purdue should continue to focus on their research missions, provide graduate education through the doctoral level, and admit undergraduate students who meet their rigorous academic standards. The regional campuses of these institutions—along with Indiana State, Ball State, and the University of Southern Indiana—should provide opportunities for students who seek to obtain bachelor's degrees and, in limited areas of regional need, master's degrees. These regional institutions must also work to meet the specific needs of the communities that surround them. IUPUI has a special role to play as the state's primary urban postsecondary institution and a center for graduate study in health sciences (Indiana Government Efficiency Commission 2004). Ivy Tech, on the other hand, must play various roles, including providing a low-cost option for associate's degrees and the first two years of the bachelor's degree and offering remediation.

Future Challenges

The development of Ivy Tech into a statewide comprehensive community college system has played an integral part in promoting postsecondary access, but Indiana still has some steps to take to ensure that Ivy Tech is a strong institution with a clear role in the state's higher education system. Ivy Tech is still confronting issues of maintaining funding, building new facilities, and hiring more employees. At the same time, the new community college system needs to focus on increasing efforts to reach both underserved students of traditional college-going age and working adults who will need additional education to function in a knowledge-based economy. Ivy Tech has set itself the goal of increasing by 50 percent its production of technical certificates, associate's degrees, and successful transfers to four-year institutions. It proposes to accomplish this by 2010, only five years after taking on its new role in the state. If this ambitious goal is to be achieved, much work remains to be done (Ivy Tech 2006).

Equally essential is for the various institutions in the state to clarify their missions to improve efficiency and meet the educational needs of all Hoosiers. Some of the recent changes in Indiana suggest a shift to a highly structured and differentiated higher education system similar to that of California, where community colleges, baccalaureate institutions, and research-oriented institutions are clearly separated. While this vision is embraced by some (although not all) Hoosier policymakers, the state has yet to fully achieve this kind of mission differentiation. In particular, more clarity is still needed on the role of four-year institutions that are not research-focused. Moreover, because ICHE functions as a coordinating board, with limited statutory authority over the state's postsecondary institutions, ultimately, only the General Assembly has the power to rein in any institution that is expanding in ways that threaten policymakers' vision of a seamless higher education system. ❌

Student Success

The ultimate goal of Indiana’s policy changes over the past decade has been to increase educational attainment in the state. To achieve this goal, it is not enough to improve access to college; students must also be assisted in completing a college degree. The state’s effort to improve academic preparation at the K–12 level is an important part of this process. Students who are college-ready when they graduate from high school have less need for remedial coursework in college and more chance of completing a college degree. Research shows that earning a Core 40 or Honors diploma correlates with persistence through the first few years of college and eventual completion of a bachelor’s degree (St. John et al. 2004b; ICHE 2008f).

However, work also needs to be done within higher education to ensure that students have the support they need to earn a degree. More than two-fifths of full-time Hoosier college students do not complete a bachelor’s degree within six years. Policymakers have recognized this as a critical area, and in 2007, ICHE adopted an “access-to-completion agenda” that calls for “increasing opportunities for student persistence and success and removing any remaining barriers to college completion” (ICHE 2008f). This agenda can be expected to shape a number of critical policy decisions over the next several years, particularly with regard to the state’s system of accountability for postsecondary institutions.

Persistence and Completion

As in many states, students in Indiana face considerable challenges in completing a college degree. The six-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time bachelor’s-degree-seeking students at all Indiana colleges and universities, public and private, is 57 percent (ICHE 2008f).³ However, bachelor’s degree completion rates vary considerably by institution. The two flagship public universities have six-year graduation rates of 65 percent or better, while the Purdue and IU regional campuses have six-year graduation rates of 30 percent or less (FIGURE 7). At Ivy Tech, which enrolls a third of all public college students in the state, three-year graduation rates for first-time, full-time students seeking associate’s degrees are only 18 percent (ICHE 2006a).

³ Some researchers consider this sort of graduation rate calculation problematic because it excludes part-time and returning students as well as those who do not indicate an intent to seek a degree.

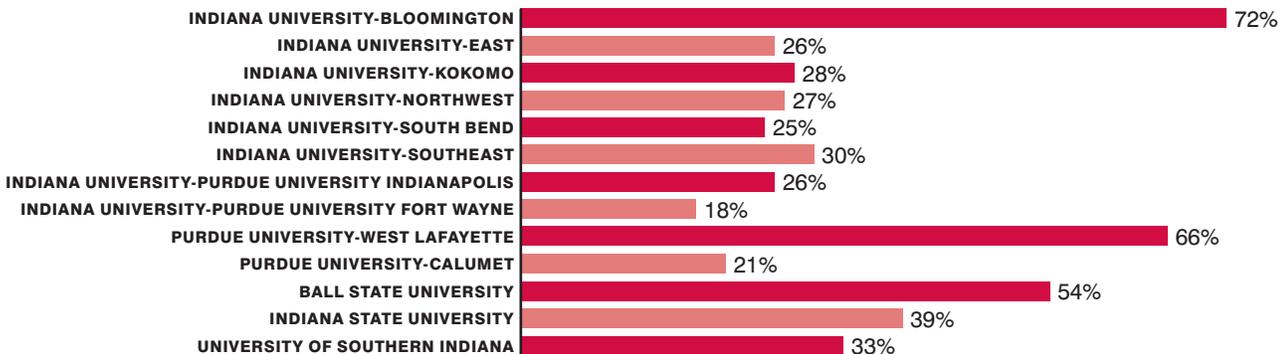
Timely graduation is a concern for Indiana policymakers, many of whom believe that six years is too long for full-time students to take to complete a bachelor’s degree. From this perspective, the financial costs of spending six years enrolled in college, together with the greater likelihood that a student who does not complete a degree quickly may not complete it at all, suggest that the state needs to improve its four-year graduation rate, which stands at 36 percent for public colleges and universities and has not improved significantly over the past decade (ICHE 2008f). Policymakers also raise the concern that as the percentage of traditional students enrolled at Ivy Tech increases, there will be a need to encourage timely completion of associate’s degrees.

Because ICHE’s function in Indiana’s higher education system is largely one of coordination, the agency has little direct authority over postsecondary institutions. The funding of public colleges and universities through the biennial state budget process plays a key role in efforts to hold institutions accountable for student success. In 2004, the Indiana Government Efficiency Commission’s Subcommittee on Higher Education noted that the state’s funding policies offered few mechanisms for encouraging institutions to work toward state policy goals (IGEC 2004). The primary determinant for institutional funding was enrollment growth, which policymakers feared could encourage institutions to enroll many new students without sufficient attention to their success in college.

The General Assembly adopted performance funding measures based on student outcomes in the 2007–09 budget, although not

FIGURE 7

Six-Year Graduation Rates for First-Time Full-Time Degree-Seeking Students at Indiana Public Four-Year Institutions, 2005



SOURCE: ICHE 2008A

without some resistance from the institutions themselves. This system provides financial incentives for increases in the number of degrees awarded and in the number of students who complete their degrees on time, as well as rewarding two-year institutions for increasing the number of students who transfer to four-year institutions (ICHE 2008f). The use of both on-time degree completion (which focuses on first-time, full-time students) and total degrees completed (which credits the institution with all students who complete a degree) was intended to stress that the state's goal is to increase educational attainment rather than just the number of students who enroll in college. On the basis of the results of this effort, ICHE has recommended continuing these performance measures in the 2009–11 budget and moving even further toward incentives based on student outcomes by replacing the financial benefit for enrollment growth with an incentive for course completion (ICHE 2008f).

Transfer and Articulation

With increasing degree attainment as a state policy goal, another essential focus for Hoosier policymakers has been articulation and transfer. For students to take advantage of lower costs by enrolling for the first two years of college at Ivy Tech and still move smoothly to a four-year institution to complete a bachelor's degree, Ivy Tech and the four-year institutions must agree on which courses can be transferred. The topic of transfer and articulation was, in fact, a matter of interest to policymakers even before the development of Ivy Tech as a statewide community college. During the late 1980s, there were increasing calls for improved transfer and articulation between what was then Indiana Vocational Technical College and public universities. A 1990 ICHE report, based on a review of a large sample of transcripts for students who transferred from Ivy Tech to public four-year institutions, concluded that public universities in Indiana were not accepting Ivy Tech credits. Some policymakers

noted that even credits from the various regional campuses in the same system would not always transfer to the flagship campus. In 1992, after a review of Ivy Tech's general education credits, the General Assembly passed a law requiring that 30 hours of general education courses must transfer among public postsecondary institutions (ICHE 2006b).

As a result of this legislation, ICHE began to work on articulation agreements between Ivy Tech and four-year institutions so that students who completed an associate's degree would receive credit for all their coursework toward a related bachelor's degree program and to develop a set of courses that students could be assured would transfer from one institution to another. This process was accelerated with the development of a comprehensive community college system in the state. In 2000, ICHE began its Transfer Indiana initiative, which led to the creation of the Statewide Transfer and Articulation Committee (STAC), made up of faculty and staff from all the public postsecondary institutions in the state as well as some of the private universities (ICHE 2006b). Since then, STAC has worked to improve articulation and transfer, using a set of guiding principles that include giving primary responsibility for developing and maintaining articulation and transfer agreements to faculty members; recognizing that two- and four-year institutions must work as partners in educating students; and insisting that information on transfer and articulation be made widely available to all interested parties (ICHE 2002).

These principles, together with the active involvement of all public colleges and universities in STAC's work, have helped overcome resistance to increased transfer and articulation at the state's four-year institutions. In addition, legislation passed by the General Assembly has given ICHE and STAC the statutory mandate to establish a Core Transfer Library—"a list of courses that will

transfer among all Indiana public college and university campuses, assuming adequate grades” (ICHE 2008h)—and to develop articulation agreements in 12 high-demand program areas that would apply to associate’s degrees earned at Vincennes University or any Ivy Tech campus. STAC also recommended that the General Assembly fund the development of a Web site to help students plan for transfer (ICHE 2006b). This Web site (TransferIN.net) shows the course equivalencies at all public postsecondary institutions for a core set of nearly 80 classes, making it easy for students to see how their coursework will transfer and what courses will apply toward degree requirements for a particular major (ICHE 2008h).

While ensuring that students can transfer coursework from a two-year to a four-year postsecondary institution is an important precondition to a smooth transition between institutions, it does not guarantee that students will transfer. In fact, Indiana’s annual transfer rate from two-year to four-year public institutions has remained relatively stable at 6 to 7 percent for close to a decade (ICHE 2005; 2006a). This low percentage of transfers, while not unusual, highlights the importance of institutional programs that facilitate student transfer, especially in the context of a vision of higher education that emphasizes community colleges as entry points for many degree-seeking students.

A key model of such programs is Passport, a joint effort between Ivy Tech Community College–Central Indiana and IUPUI that “strives to increase course and degree articulations between institutions, maintains advising offices at both campuses, offers cooperative student services, [and] facilitates shared access to student records” (IUPUI 2008). Established in 1990, this program allows students to take classes at either school and gives Ivy Tech students access to IUPUI services such as sports facilities, the library and bookstore, and even on-campus housing (IUPUI 2008). This program makes it easy for Ivy Tech students to move on to IUPUI after their first two years of college, and this ease is reflected in the fact that a quarter of students who transferred from an Ivy Tech campus to a four-year public university in Indiana in 2004–05 came from Ivy Tech Community College–Central Indiana, even though that campus’s share of the overall Ivy Tech enrollment is only 20 percent. Almost three-quarters of these transfer students went to IUPUI (ICHE 2006a).

A companion program to Passport is Partners, a cooperative effort between Ivy Tech and IUPUI to ensure that students admitted to IUPUI are prepared for college-level work. A student who does not meet IUPUI’s admissions requirements (e.g., one who has not completed a Core 40 high school diploma) can still be admitted to IUPUI, but admission is deferred until the student successfully completes selected general education coursework at Ivy Tech. Partners students can use financial aid offered by IUPUI at Ivy Tech and, like Passport students, they have access to IUPUI services (IUPUI 2008). Research shows that 60 percent of Partners students enroll at IUPUI within two years of deferred admission. This joint program has allowed IUPUI, which used to have open admissions, to tighten its admissions standards and improve retention and completion

rates while still serving the at-risk students who make up a key part of its student population (Donahue and Lally 2005).

Specific Student Populations

The success of at-risk students, including low-income students and racial minorities, is a particular concern for Indiana policymakers. Black students make up 12 percent of the state’s K–12 enrollment, and 34 percent of all K–12 students are eligible to receive free or reduced price lunches; these students tend to lag behind their White and more affluent peers throughout the educational pipeline. As of 2004–05, only a quarter of Black students and 35 percent of students receiving free or reduced price lunches passed the grade 10 English and math achievement tests, compared with nearly two-thirds of White and more affluent students. Black students in Indiana are also less likely than their White peers to take and score well on Advanced Placement exams and the SAT (Spradlin et al. 2005), and the high school dropout rate for Black students was 47 percent in 2004, compared with 26 percent for White students. Among Black students who graduated from high school in 2006, only 50 percent earned Core 40 diplomas, compared with 71 percent of White students, although the percentage of Black students earning Core 40 diplomas has increased considerably over the past decade (**FIGURE 8**).

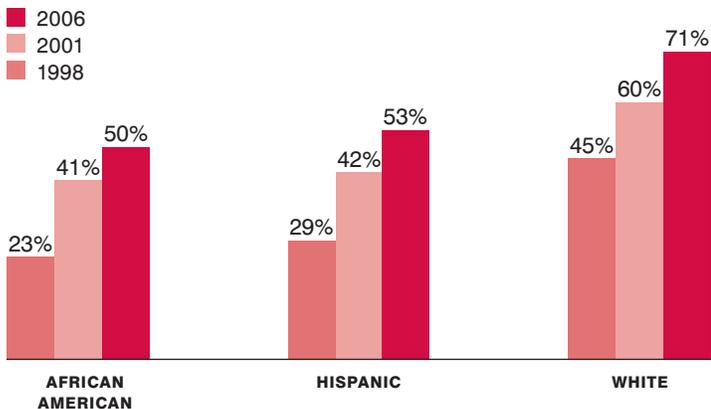
These achievement gaps at the K–12 level are reflected in lower postsecondary enrollment and attainment for at-risk students in Indiana. Both lower income students and members of racial minority groups are less likely than their higher income and White peers to enroll in college. While the racial gap in postsecondary enrollment has remained relatively stable over the past decade (during a period of steady enrollment growth), the income gap has increased. The percentage of Hoosier college students from families that earn more than \$40,000 a year increased 8 percent between 1999 and 2004 (Spradlin et al. 2005).

Research on persistence in college has found that only 53 percent of Black students remained continuously enrolled through the first two years of college, compared with 65 percent of White students. This pattern continued even among high-income students, with 64 percent of Black students from wealthier families persisting compared with 73 percent of more affluent White students. Persistence rates for low-income students of both races were considerably lower (St. John et al. 2004a). Postsecondary completion rates also vary by race: 31 percent of Black undergraduates completed a bachelor’s degree within six years, compared with 51 percent of White undergraduates (Spradlin et al. 2005). This achievement gap on the basis of race and income, while not surprising given similar gaps throughout the United States, raises concerns about Indiana’s ability to maintain its momentum toward increased college access and success for all students.

A second group of students of particular interest to policymakers is adult students. For Indiana to be competitive in the 21st century global economy, the many adults who have no college education will need additional postsecondary training. Nearly a quarter of

FIGURE 8

Percentage of Indiana high school graduates earning Core 40 diplomas, by race/ethnicity, 1998–2006



SOURCE: ICHE 2008A

adults ages 25 to 64 in Indiana either have not completed high school or have a high school credential but no college education and are not earning a living wage. Research suggests that the number of working adults who do not have the literacy skills needed to obtain a good job in the current economy is even higher. Indiana ranks 45th in the nation in the percentage of working-age adults who have completed high school but never attended college, and only 11 percent of state residents ages 25 to 49 who have completed high school but do not have a postsecondary credential were enrolled in college as of 2005, compared with 14 percent for the nation as a whole and 26 percent for top-performing states (Indiana Chamber of Commerce 2008). Unless Indiana can find ways to offer a college education to its working adults, economic competitiveness will remain an elusive goal.

The development of Ivy Tech as a comprehensive community college is one way the state is addressing this problem. Adult enrollment at Ivy Tech is increasing, with more than 27,400 additional adult students enrolling in 2005 compared with 1999. However, Ivy Tech continues to face challenges in reaching the adult student population. A 2004 report by the Indiana Government Efficiency Commission determined that Ivy Tech had low capacity to serve adult students in the areas of remedial education, general education, and transfer preparation and was performing only somewhat better in the area of career preparation (IGEC 2004). This report and others have noted that a particular problem in serving adult students is that a number of different state agencies address the educational needs of adult students. Better coordination is needed to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure smooth transitions among programs (Indiana Chamber of Commerce 2008).

ICHE has proposed that the state's postsecondary institutions, especially Ivy Tech, should work to offer "creative, flexible, and

compressed formats, delivery modes, sites, and schedules suitable attractive, and necessary for working adults" (ICHE 2007a). A \$1 million grant from the Joyce Foundation will help Ivy Tech partner with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce and the Indiana Department of Workforce Development to offer accelerated post-secondary programs for six key industries and to evaluate the effectiveness of adult education programs in meeting workforce needs (Joyce Foundation 2007). As Indiana moves forward in its educational policy work, meeting the needs of adult students will be a key challenge, and the state is taking steps to address this concern.

Future Challenges

Because Indiana's move to emphasize student success, as well as college access, is relatively recent, it remains to be seen whether it will succeed. Additional work remains to be done to reduce the achievement gap for low-income and minority students and to improve postsecondary access and success for adult students. Along with funding incentives offered through the biennial budget process (which ICHE recommends should include a premium for demonstrating success among low-income students), the commission has recommended that postsecondary institutions take a number of steps to improve persistence and completion rates. These recommendations include setting goals for improved graduation rates; working with high schools to ensure that Core 40 courses are aligned with first-year college courses and to provide feedback on student performance; raising expectations about timely degree completion; and pursuing a range of campus-level initiatives aimed at understanding and increasing student success (ICHE 2008f).

Indiana, like all states, faces pressure from the federal government for increased transparency and accountability in higher education, with particular emphasis on demonstrating that students at its public colleges and universities are not only completing degrees but also learning the information and skills necessary for success in work and life. ICHE has asked postsecondary institutions to develop and report on measures of student learning and is actively supporting efforts by individual institutions to participate in the Voluntary Accountability System developed by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) (ICHE 2007a; 2008g). This system provides a Web template with a standardized system of accountability reporting for colleges and universities and includes descriptive data on enrollment, cost and financial aid, admissions, degrees awarded, and campus life, as well as metrics for student progress and success and assessments of student learning using standardized tests such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment. As of July 2008, six Indiana public universities, including the two flagship institutions, had signed on to the system. However, the system is in a very early stage of development; only two of the six institutions have posted reports, and neither included data on student success or learning outcomes (AASCU and NASULGC 2008). ❧

Agents of Change in Indiana

By focusing its efforts on a clear policy goal—increasing college access and success—Indiana has been able to achieve a series of significant policy changes and outcomes over the past several decades. The underlying theory of change shared by policymakers—in which students graduate from high school college-ready, higher education is affordable, and a differentiated higher education system offers a range of postsecondary options—has helped focus these policy changes where they are most needed. From instituting a mandatory college-ready high school curriculum, raising the state’s K–12 academic standards to among the best in the nation, and offering substantial amounts of need-based financial aid to revamping the state’s vocational technical college system into a comprehensive community college system, Indiana has made considerable progress in improving college access. While work remains, particularly in the area of postsecondary completions, the state’s successes have placed it at the forefront of the nation in efforts to improve access to and success in higher education. How was Indiana able to achieve such notable results?

Key Factors in Creating Change

One perhaps obvious, but certainly crucial, factor in Indiana’s success was that state policymakers recognized the need for change. The impetus for much of the work to improve college access and success came from the business community, whose representatives saw the need for better educated workers. Business leaders spoke with their legislators and with each successive governor to garner support for new policies. Moreover, while some K–12 and higher education officials resisted specific

changes that were being recommended, most of those involved quickly recognized the need for change if Indiana was to continue to compete in a global knowledge-based economy.

Once this recognition took place, policymakers made the strategic decision to move the process forward incrementally, acknowledging that large changes can be intimidating. Several of the policymakers interviewed for this report described an “evolutionary process” and indicated that this process is the way policy change is usually approached in the state. One person made

this point explicitly, saying, “The Indiana way is evolution, not revolution. Incremental baby steps are the typical pathway in the state.” Nonetheless, as Indiana took these baby steps, policymakers persisted in their efforts to reach their ultimate goal. The Core 40 diploma is an excellent example of this process. The business community hoped it would be mandatory from the first but backed off when faced with too much resistance. After the diploma had been an option for students for more than a decade, it seemed much less radical to make it the default curriculum for all students. Similarly, when the Ivy Tech–Vincennes University partnership failed, policymakers moved forward with a new plan, because they recognized that the state needed a comprehensive community college system.

During the evolutionary process of policy change, data-driven decision making was the standard practice. A reliance on data in making decisions about educational policy is a long-standing tradition in Indiana, with state agencies undertaking extensive data collection and research efforts. In addition, university-based projects such as the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy and the Indiana Project on Academic Success (both located at IU-Bloomington) have provided policymakers with data and analysis that allowed them to make informed decisions about the policies they implemented. Academic researchers have conducted evaluations of the Twenty-First Century Scholars Program and other financial aid initiatives, using data from ICHE and SSACI in their research. One person interviewed noted that it is rare for a state to allow researchers to work without restraints and to use their findings to design and improve programs. Indiana, he said, should be commended for taking this approach.

Hoosier policymakers did not limit themselves to getting help from home-grown experts. One strategy has been to turn to outside experts and national initiatives for help in designing new policies and programs. The support Indiana has received from national organizations such as Achieve, Inc., Jobs for the Future, the National Governors Association, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, State Higher Education Executive Officers, the Education Trust, and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems and from academic experts from across the country has enabled policymakers to familiarize themselves with cutting-edge research on college access and success. This process has helped eliminate what one interviewee called “legislation by anecdote” and has kept the focus on policies and programs supported by data. One key point that policymakers stress is that they have not relied on one expert in any area but rather have tried to get the best information possible from a variety of sources.

National organizations such as those mentioned have also been a source of funding for new and creative programs in the state. Indiana has been aggressive about seeking financial support from such organizations, from foundations, and from the federal government. Without federal funds, for example, the Twenty-First Century Scholars Program would not be able to offer its

support programs to students and families. Indiana has also benefited from being the home of two major foundations: the Lilly Endowment and Lumina Foundation for Education. The Lilly Endowment focuses its education grant-making entirely on Indiana, particularly by supporting research and other projects at colleges and universities. A Lilly Endowment grant provided the seed funding for what is now the Frank O’Bannon Grant Program and helped the state develop the first support centers for the Twenty-First Century Scholars. Lumina Foundation, which focuses its grant-making exclusively on college access and success, has a national agenda but reserves 10 percent of its funds for grants in Indiana. In 2007, for example, Lumina made 13 grants in Indiana, amounting to over \$1.6 million (Lumina Foundation for Education 2007).

In addition to data, intentional solicitation of public support played a key role in Indiana’s efforts to promote policy change. The Education Roundtable, for example, held its sessions in public and solicited public comment on its *P-16 Plan for Improving Student Achievement*. Similarly, ICHE’s 2007 *Reaching Higher: Strategic Directions for Higher Education in Indiana* document can be found on its Web site, along with action papers offering recommendations in six key areas addressed in the strategic plan. These efforts toward transparency and public accountability have gone far in helping the state garner support for its work. At the same time, state agencies have recognized the pressing need for better information on college-going and have initiated aggressive communications efforts aimed at Hoosier students and parents (**BOX 3**). These communications initiatives not only contribute to the substantive goal of developing a college-going culture, they also help ensure that the public knows about and supports the state’s work in this area.

While securing public support has played a key role in Indiana’s efforts to improve college access and success, another important factor has been building support among key constituencies, including political, business, K–12, higher education, philanthropic, and community leaders. As one interviewee put it, “There was a concentrated effort to bring all the interests together and support what needed to be done.” Groups such as the Indiana Chamber of Commerce’s Business–Higher Education Forum and the Education Roundtable provided venues where diverse groups could come together to discuss challenges and potential solutions in a collegial environment. As a result, the policy changes were not played out as battles on the floor of the General Assembly but were thought through and discussed—and in some cases even implemented—before they were introduced as legislation.

Indiana’s policy changes have also benefited from bipartisan support and an amicable political culture. The education policy work described in this report took place under at least five governors, two Republicans and three Democrats. The Education Roundtable, for example, was initiated by a Democratic governor and maintained by his Democratic successor but has also been

Indiana's Communication Initiatives

Strong communication initiatives that provide residents with information and resources on college access and success have been a key strategy for Indiana in promoting a move toward a college-going culture. In the mid-1980s, then-Governor Bob Orr charged ICHE with creating a program that would strengthen communication about postsecondary opportunities for parents and students. In response, ICHE, with the help of professors at Indiana University, created the Indiana College Placement and Assessment Center (ICPAC) in 1986–87.

ICPAC focused on providing high school students and their families with college-going information through five main activities:

1. Creating a student and parent database.
2. Mailing newsletters to students about financial aid and postsecondary opportunities.
3. Conducting surveys to better understand the needs of families and students.
4. Providing a postsecondary planning packet with information tailored to align with survey responses.
5. Establishing a toll-free information hotline to provide various services regarding planning for college (Hossler and Schmit 1995).

ICPAC also became the agency responsible for coordinating and publicizing the Twenty-First Century Scholars when that program was created in 1990.

In 2004, ICPAC was relaunched under the name Learn More Indiana and undertook a major campaign to provide students and their parents with information on making a successful transition from high school to college. Learn More Indiana continues to maintain the help line and surveys ICPAC initiated but also produces a range of publications, builds community alliances, and sponsors a Web site (www.learnmoreindiana.org).

org) to provide information about college-going to Hoosiers. The resources offered include grade-specific college preparation guides and handouts that direct families to free information on career and education opportunities. This communication initiative is a partnership among Learn More Indiana, ICHE, SSACI, IDOE, and the Indiana Department of Workforce Development and has received financial support from USA Funds and Lumina Foundation for Education.

Indiana has launched *Indiana Next: A Guide to Life After High School*, a magazine distributed to all 11th and 12th graders to help them prepare for their lives after graduation. The state also participates in KnowHow2Go, a national college access campaign sponsored by Lumina Foundation, the American Council on Education, and the Ad Council that provides customized media advertising to publicize the steps students must take to prepare for college. Another key communications project is Indiana's College Success Coalition, a network of community-based organizations in 14 regions of the state that seeks to build grassroots support for college-going, especially for underrepresented students. As more information gets into the hands of Hoosier families generally, the state is now focusing its efforts on low-income families and families with no experience of college-going. These statewide communication efforts have, for two decades, offered an important support to Indiana's goal of raising the educational attainment of its residents.

used by the current governor—Mitch Daniels, a Republican—to further his interest in promoting full-day kindergarten. Higher Education Commissioner Stan Jones, a Democrat, works closely with Superintendent of Public Instruction Suellen Reed, a Republican, who defeated Jones in the election for her current position in 1992 (Thomson 2006). Such bipartisan relationships are a deliberate attempt to create sustainable change—what one person interviewed for the report called “change for the benefit of the state”—as opposed to politically motivated change.

When asked how Indiana has been able to make such significant and sustained improvements in college access and success, policymakers point to the strong leadership of the governor’s office and state agencies such as the Indiana Department of Education. Most of those interviewed credit Jones with playing a key role in pushing for change. Jones, a former state legislator with an interest in education issues, was seen at first as an unusual choice for the position of higher education commissioner but has come to be viewed as an energetic and effective leader. ICHE itself has been reenergized in recent years by the appointment of new members who are seen as “change makers”—often individuals with close connections with the General Assembly and experience leading complex organizations, for whom managing change is a familiar process.

Perhaps most crucially, key leaders in Indiana have been in place for many years and know each other well. As one interviewee explained, “A lot more can be done if you know each other and can talk substantively with each other.... People are less likely to reject ideas from people they know.” Jones has been higher education commissioner since 1995 and Reed has been superintendent of public instruction since 1993, both serving under four different governors. Other key leaders have served in various roles—as members of ICHE, as state legislators, as business or philanthropic leaders. This community of individuals committed to creating change has helped Indiana move forward toward greater college access and success

Future Challenges

For all its progress in creating change and building a college-going culture, Indiana still has important work to do. This report has described a number of specific concerns, such as increasing postsecondary completion rates and doing more to assist low-income, minority, and adult students. The state also faces some larger challenges, one of which is the question of sustained funding. One interviewee noted that Indiana does not have sufficient economic strength “to pay for all the changes necessary to make it competitive.” As the United States as a whole faces economic challenges from the ongoing credit crisis and increasing costs for fuel and food, Indiana may have to direct state funds away from education, to the potential detriment of programs such as need-based financial aid.

Indiana also must work to keep from losing momentum in its process of change. To some extent, this has already happened in efforts to better align the P–16 education system. Individual parts of the *P-16 Plan for Improving Student Achievement* have been adopted, but its overall future is unclear. The current governor is up for election in 2008, and a change in administration could shift state priorities. Because ICHE is primarily a coordinating agency, it cannot create policy change without strong support from the governor’s office and the General Assembly, and the upcoming election could (as is always possible) change the balance of power in the state. Nonetheless, the very factors that have made Indiana successful in promoting policy change thus far—data-driven decision making, effective communication, broad and bipartisan support for change, and strong leadership—are likely to persist, offering hope that Indiana will continue to increase college access and success one step at a time. ❧

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Appendix: List of Interviewees

Fred Bauer: Partner, Bauer & Duffy; former majority leader, Indiana House of Representatives; and former member of the Indiana Commission for Higher Education

Kevin Brinegar: President and CEO, Indiana Chamber of Commerce

Fred Cate: Distinguished professor and director, Center for Applied Cybersecurity Research, Indiana University; senior policy advisor, Center for Information Policy Leadership at Hunton & Williams; and former member of the Indiana Commission for Higher Education

Dan Clark: Deputy executive director for programs, Indiana State Teacher's Association

Steve Ferguson: Chairman of Cook Group, Inc.; member of the Board of Trustees at Indiana University; and former member of the Indiana Commission for Higher Education

J. T. Forbes: Assistant vice president for government relations, Indiana University

Robert Garton: Vice president for professional development, Ivy Tech Community College; and former president pro tempore, Indiana State Senate

Laurie Gavrin: Director of policy analysis and research, State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana

Stan Jones: Commissioner, Indiana Commission for Higher Education

Pat Kiely: President, Indiana Manufacturers Association

Gerald Lamkin: President emeritus, Ivy Tech Community College

Chris Murphy: President and CEO, 1st Source Corporation; and chair, Indiana Commission for Higher Education

John Mutz: Chairman of the board, Lumina Foundation; former lieutenant governor, State of Indiana; and former president, Lilly Endowment

Dennis Obergfell: Deputy director, State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana

Cheryl Orr: Associate commissioner for communications, P-16 programs, and planning, Indiana Commission for Higher Education

Derek Redelman: Vice president, education and workforce development policy, Indiana Chamber of Commerce

Suellen Reed: Superintendent of public instruction, Indiana Department of Education

Ken Sauer: Senior associate commissioner for research and academic affairs, Indiana Commission for Higher Education

David N. Shane: President and CEO, LDI Ltd.; member of the Indiana State Board of Education; and former senior policy advisor for education and employment to Governor Mitch Daniels

Edward P. St. John: Professor of higher education, University of Michigan; and founder of the Indiana Project on Academic Success, University of Indiana

Terry Strueh: Vice president for government relations, Purdue University

Jeff Zaring: Chief of staff, Indiana Department of Education