

# Return and Complete Initiative

## PURPOSE

Indiana has adopted a Big Goal that 60 percent of working-age adults hold a postsecondary degree or credential. To meet this goal, our public institutions will need to increase completion rates to 70 percent (for community colleges) and as high as 85 percent (for residential research institutions). Achieving these completion rates will only get Indiana halfway to the Big Goal. Beyond doing better with the current pipeline, we must also get 300,000 of the 737,000 Hoosiers with some college but no degree to come back and finish their degree. The strategy for the adult population must have two parts. First, there must be programs designed to meet the needs of adults. Second, these adults must be encouraged, financially and otherwise, to go back and complete their degree. The Commission and its higher education partners continue to make progress toward creating program structures to meet the needs of today's students. The "Return and Complete" project is designed for the other part – to reach out to students with some college and no degree and provide encouragement, tools, and when available, funding for the student to return to school and complete a degree.

The State has a fiduciary interest in this population as well. The State invests nearly \$2 billion in higher education including nearly \$300 million in student financial aid each year. The return for this investment is more degrees, a stronger workforce and enhanced income mobility. For many students who do not complete, the State has already invested in their success and should take every measure to ensure that students who are able to complete do. This is particularly true of financial aid recipients, for whom the investment is even greater. As part of this project, the Commission will directly reach out to students with remaining financial aid eligibility to let them know that finishing may be easier than they think.

## GOALS

- By January 1, 2016, Hoosiers with some college, no degree who previously attended an Indiana college receive a direct communication including:
  - The importance of college completion (with statistics from the Commission's Return on Investment Reports or other workforce reports)
  - Custom messages about how close the person is to completing
  - Information about "Returning Adult" pathways – customized transfer pathways between the school most recently attended and other programs that cater to adult populations, as well as reverse articulation pathways to community colleges for associate degrees or certificates
  - Financial resources available, including any special incentives targeted to this population by the previously attended school or other schools in that geographic area as well as remaining state and federal financial aid eligibility
- By May 15, 2020, 200,000 of these Hoosiers have completed a degree.

## HOW WE MEET THESE GOALS

- The Commission conducts a survey of this population and does research to inform the messaging of the campaign by December 1, 2014
- The Commission, the Governor's office and the Indiana Career Council ask the General Assembly to consider funding completion bonuses for this population of students who return and successfully complete before May 15, 2020
- The Commission provides suggested communications strategy (templates, text, channels, etc.) based on survey and other research
- Institutions finalize their inter-campus agreements for "Returning Adult" customized pathways by October 1, 2015
- Institutions adopt financial incentives targeted to this population by October 1, 2015
- The Commission, relying on its National Student Clearinghouse contract and the Student Financial Aid database, provides each public institution with a list of students in the target population and their remaining financial aid eligibility by November 1, 2015
- Institutions, relying on the population list supplemented with their own data, send letters and launch any related media campaigns by January 1, 2016