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Indiana Commission for Higher Education Approves Ivy Tech Report Recommendations

Ten years after Ivy Tech Community College was named Indiana's statewide community college system, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education today approved recommendations to strengthen Ivy Tech's student support services and ensure that Ivy Tech degrees and certificates lead to employment.

"Ivy Tech is well positioned to build upon the success of its first decade, and the Commission is confident the recommendations outlined in this report create a strong path forward for Ivy Tech and Indiana's workforce," Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers said. "These recommendations were developed in collaboration with Ivy Tech, and we look forward to continuing that partnership as these strategies are implemented across all Ivy Tech campuses."

This year the Indiana General Assembly charged the Commission to review Ivy Tech programs with low graduation rates and granted the Commission the authority to eliminate or restructure program offerings based on other successful models. In response, the Commission evaluated Ivy Tech's existing programs and researched best practices at community colleges nationwide. Based on those findings, the Commission presented seven recommendations focused on improving Ivy Tech's programs and expanding its successful student support efforts.

The report makes the following recommendations to improve Ivy Tech's educational programs:
- Perform annual program evaluations based on benchmarks for student demand, labor market demand, and effectiveness as measured by program completion.
- Discontinue, develop improvement plans, or provide justification for programs that fail to meet benchmarks.
- Provide predictable schedules and structured pathways for students.
- Target student interventions and advising to ensure completion.
- Smooth the transition from Ivy Tech to four-year colleges.
- Improve Ivy Tech's data system capabilities.
- Better reflect Ivy Tech's diverse mission in public reporting and performance funding.

In December, the Ivy Tech Board of Trustees approved a resolution in support of collaboration between the Commission and Ivy Tech and requesting that the college's leadership review, address and if appropriate implement new recommendations while continuing current best practices.

"We are pleased to see the Commission reinforce and recognize many of the success efforts and the improvements Ivy Tech has been making," Ivy Tech Board of Trustees Chair Paula Hughes said. "After our first decade we recognize our unique mission here in Indiana and how we can continue to improve in the areas of completion, transfer, job placement and workforce training."

The recommendations were developed based on the Commission's evaluation of Ivy Tech programs, which found the following:

- At most Ivy Tech's regional campuses, one-third or more programs enroll 30 students or less, though in some cases this is due to capacity limitations, recruitment challenges, or differences in regional workforce demand.
- After six years, more students are still enrolled at Ivy Tech (41 percent) than have graduated (24 percent).
- Of those students who transfer from Ivy Tech to four-year colleges, about one-quarter earn bachelor's degrees within six years.
- Like most Indiana colleges, Ivy Tech lacks the data systems and resources necessary to track labor market and job placement outcomes comprehensively.

The Commission's research on best practices found that successful community college programs are highly structured with proactive advising practices that keep students on track for completion and success after graduation. Successful programs also meet student and workforce demand, which makes improving Ivy Tech's data systems a key recommendation in the Commission's report.

"Ivy Tech is critically important to Indiana's workforce. The recommendation that Ivy Tech use labor market data to help drive current and future academic offerings is exactly what our economy needs," Indiana Department of Workforce Development Commissioner Steve Braun said.

Following today's approval, Ivy Tech will review its programs and report back to the Commission with a plan to discontinue, restructure or improve programs that fail to meet benchmarks. Ivy Tech will also report annually on progress made to restructure student supports by the target date of 2018. In the next three years, the Commission will expand both its performance funding incentives and its public data reports to include shorter-term workforce credentials and labor market outcomes.

Click here to read the full report.

Read *What They're Saying* about Indiana's Ivy Tech Report and Recommendations.

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