



**INDIANA COMMISSION** for  
HIGHER EDUCATION

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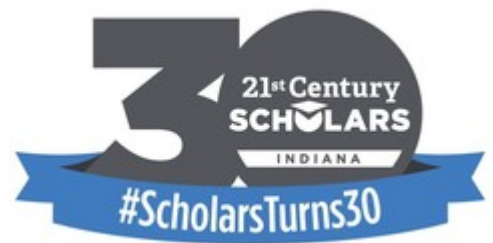
**Indiana Celebrates 30 Years of the 21st Century Scholars Program**

*Nationally-recognized early college promise scholarship is key to achieving educational equity*

**(INDIANAPOLIS)** – The [21st Century Scholars](#) program, Indiana’s nationally-recognized model of early college promise, is the key to achieving educational equity, says the [Indiana Commission for Higher Education](#). The program was created in 1990 and the Commission, alumni of the program, participating Indiana colleges and universities, community partners and others across the state are celebrating the 30th anniversary of 21st Century Scholars and its successes throughout 2020.

The 21st Century Scholars program, which requires students to apply while they are in seventh or eighth grade, offers income-eligible Hoosiers up to four years of paid tuition at a participating Indiana college or university.

“The vision that inspired the 21st Century Scholars program was born of the shared ideal that all Hoosiers should have the ability to go on to higher education,” said Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb. “Giving all Hoosier students the opportunity to achieve their dreams with an affordable option for college is one of the best ways for Indiana to keep driving our economic momentum.”



While the outcome of participation in the 21st Century Scholars program is paid tuition, the program was not designed to be only a scholarship program. The state set clear expectations to help prepare high school students for success after graduation, including maintaining at least a 2.5 grade point average, graduating with at least a Core 40 diploma, pledging to remain drug- and alcohol-free, and participating in college and career readiness measures through the [Scholars Success Program](#).

To date, over 40,000 students have earned a college degree with a 21st Century Scholarship and nearly 100,000 students are enrolled – from seventh graders through seniors in college – in the program today.

“Students who may question their ability to afford higher education can have that barrier removed by their participation in the Scholars program and successful completion of the supports that are designed to prepare them for their futures,” said Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers.

Throughout the 30-year history of the program, 21st Century Scholars has garnered strong bipartisan support in the state legislature. Previous Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education and past state representative Stan Jones co-authored the legislation, which was signed into law under then-Governor Evan Bayh.

“When we championed this program more than 30 years ago, the results we see today are exactly what we were working toward at the time,” said Bayh. “The 21st Century Scholars program continues to offer all of us the opportunity to come together and celebrate the hard work and dedication of young Hoosiers who aspire to go to college. Stan and I were proud to have been part of this program at the time and its continued legacy is significant to this day.”

**Commission’s focus on equity coincides with Scholars’ successes**

On February 11, the Commission will hold 21st Century Scholars Day from 1-4 p.m. at the Statehouse, followed by the annual State of Higher Education address at 4 p.m.

During the address, Lubbers will unveil the Commission's fourth strategic plan, *Reaching Higher in a State of Change*. Educational equity – the idea that a learner's life circumstances should not be an obstacle to success – is a foundational priority of *Reaching Higher in a State of Change* and follows the Commission's previous work surrounding equity, including resolving to close the state's educational achievement gaps by 2025.

While the achievement gaps have been closed halfway, the Commission's [2019 College Equity Report](#) shows that 21st Century Scholars are the only group on track to close the gap entirely by 2025.

The Equity Report also highlighted that compared to their low-income peers, Scholars are more than twice as likely to go to college, less likely to need remediation, more likely to persist to the second year, more likely to earn all the credits they attempt and the most likely to stay in Indiana for college.

Scholars are enrolling in college 86 percent of the time, which is greater than the statewide college-going average (63 percent) and far greater than their low-income peers who are not part of the program (39 percent).

"We know this program works," Lubbers said. "The success has been proven in the data. But it's also important to share the personal stories of Hoosiers whose lives have been impacted by the opportunity of the 21st Century Scholars program. There's a continual theme in their stories, that without the 21st Century Scholars program, their lives would be vastly different than they are today."

### **30th anniversary plans**

Continuing the positive momentum and growth of the 21st Century Scholars program over the past 30 years, the Commission is embarking on a year of celebration and a call to action for the future.

Plans to recognize Scholar alumni, current Scholars and the success of the program throughout 2020 include:

- **[21st Century Scholars Day](#)**: Tuesday, February 11, 2020
  - The public and Scholar alumni are invited to participate in 21st Century Scholars Day from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Indiana Statehouse. The Commission's annual State of Higher Education address will begin at 4 p.m. and a reception will follow.
- **21st Century Scholars 30th Anniversary Celebration**, Thursday, June 4, 2020
  - Hear from a panel of current 21st Century Scholars and Scholar alumni and special guests, and browse through historical pieces from throughout the 30-year history of the program.
- **2020 Student Advocates Conference**, December 2020
  - The state's annual educational conference for student advocates at the K-12 and postsecondary levels will include a call to the future and a look back over three decades of supporting income-eligible Hoosiers.

The Commission will also create digital and print materials throughout the year to highlight the program. Follow the Commission, Indiana's colleges and universities, community partners and more in celebration of the 21st Century Scholars program on social media at #ScholarsTurns30.

For more information, visit <https://learnmoreindiana.org/scholars-turns-30/>.

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### **About the Indiana Commission for Higher Education**

Created in 1971, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education plans, coordinates and defines Indiana's postsecondary education system to align higher learning with the needs of students and the state. The Commission also administers Indiana's financial aid programs, including the [21st Century Scholars](#) early college promise scholarship, which celebrates 30 years in 2020. Learn more about the Commission's *Reaching Higher in a State of Change* strategic plan at [www.in.gov/che](http://www.in.gov/che).

### **About 21st Century Scholars**

Indiana's [21st Century Scholars](#) program is an early college promise program designed to help ensure that every Hoosier student can afford the opportunity provided by a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential. Income-eligible students who maintain the Scholar Pledge through excellence in school and life can receive a scholarship for up to 100 percent of

tuition at an eligible Indiana college or university upon graduation from high school. The program was created in 1990 and celebrates 30 years of success in 2020.