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## Commission for Higher Education Hires Two Associate Commissioners

*New executives are charged with addressing challenges facing higher education*

(INDIANAPOLIS) – The [Indiana Commission for Higher Education](https://www.in.gov/che/) announces the hiring of Michelle Ashcraft and Dr. Stacy Townsley as associate commissioner for K-12 strategy and associate commissioner for adult strategy, respectively.

Both positions are newly created to address Indiana's [declining college-going rate](#), increasing pressure on the value proposition of higher education and the roughly 2 million working-age Hoosiers without a credential beyond a high school diploma. The two new associate commissioners will work with the Commission's outreach team members, state agencies, community and philanthropic partners and employers to further the Commission's policies and programs.

"Michelle and Stacy are results- and outcomes-oriented leaders who will bring tremendous value to our work with K-12 and adult learners," said Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Chris Lowery. "The needs of K-12 students and adult learners vary greatly when it comes to deciding to pursue education and training beyond high school. The decision to add two new associate commissioners will allow our agency to address those needs and make the biggest impact for our work on behalf of Hoosiers."

**Michelle Ashcraft** joins the Commission as its first associate commissioner for K-12 strategy. Prior to joining the agency, Ashcraft served as the director of Purdue Promise at Purdue University West Lafayette since 2012. Her previous work in higher education focused on new and continuing student transitions. In her new role, Ashcraft will oversee the development, planning and implementation of the Commission's K-12 strategy with an intentional focus on improving [21st Century Scholars](#) program utilization, the college-going rate of high school graduates, completion of the Indiana College Core, increased participation in dual credit and dual enrollment, among others.



*Michelle Ashcraft*

"Whether a student's pathway leads them to employment, enrollment or enlistment leading to service, we know that they will need education or training beyond a high school diploma," said Indiana Secretary of Education Dr. Katie Jenner. "As we continue to help all Hoosiers chart that path, it takes an all-hands-on-deck approach to support Indiana's students, and with the addition of Michelle and Stacy, IDOE and CHE will continue to strengthen our collaboration and ultimately, our collective impact for students."

**Dr. Stacy Townsley** joins the Commission as its first associate commissioner for adult strategy. Townsley most recently served as vice president for adult strategy and statewide partnerships at Ivy Tech Community College. Within her work in higher education, she has actively contributed to the development of national policy and practice frameworks supporting adult learners. In her new role, Townsley



*Dr. Stacy Townsley*

will oversee the development, planning and implementation of the Commission's adult strategy for postsecondary attainment, intentionally focusing on decreasing the number of Hoosier adults without postsecondary credentials and increasing [Workforce Ready Grant](#) completions and [Adult Student Grant](#) utilization.

"The addition of these two leaders provides Indiana with the opportunity to further elevate its workforce and keep pace with the evolving job market," said Indiana Department of Workforce Development Commissioner David Adams. "We strive to better understand employers' requirements and can meet those goals by developing education strategies. This investment will better equip Hoosier students with the knowledge, skills and abilities employers need."

Ashcraft and Townsley were formally approved by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education at its September 8, 2022 meeting.

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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 celebrated 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).