



INDIANA COMMISSION *for*
HIGHER EDUCATION

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State Higher Education Commission Begins Research into Factors Impacting College Enrollment

The qualitative and quantitative research will be led by Heart+Mind Strategies

(INDIANAPOLIS) – The [Indiana Commission for Higher Education](#) (Commission) today announced it will begin research into the factors impacting college enrollment in Indiana. Through a \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., the Commission selected award-winning research-led consulting firm, [Heart+Mind Strategies](#), to lead the six-month-long research endeavor.

Increasing college enrollment is a key pillar of the [Commission’s HOPE \(Hoosier Opportunities & Possibilities through Education\) Agenda](#). Indiana currently ranks 31st in the nation in the college-going rate for high school students, and 21st in the nation in first-time undergraduate enrollment for adults. The Commission intends to become a top 10 state in post-high school training and education by 2030.

Using a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods, the Commission will incorporate input from a range of stakeholders such as high school students, young adult students, adult students, the general public, parents and family members, high school teachers, school counselors, additional school personnel, Indiana employers, youth-serving community- and faith-based organizations, and representatives from Indiana’s higher education institutions.

“Whether it’s a certificate, two- or four-year degree, education and training beyond high school is the cornerstone to social and economic mobility and prosperity of all Hoosiers,” said Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Chris Lowery. “Thanks to generous funding from the Lilly Endowment, the Commission can meet Hoosiers where they are, understand the barriers to college enrollment, and inform potential solutions. I look forward to the professional insight and leadership of Heart+Mind Strategies in this work.”

The research will include one-on-one in-depth interviews, focus groups, and a survey. Findings from the research will complement and inform the development of the Commission’s strategic objectives and initiatives around policy, communications, 2025 legislative priorities, and resource allocation.

Heart+Mind Strategies was founded in 2008. Its leadership team has been awarded 11 David Ogilvy awards which is the industry’s highest award for market research that leads to game-changing campaigns. Heart+Mind Strategies previously conducted research on behalf of Strada Education Network, Pearson, and Western Governors University.

“We are thrilled and honored to support the Commission in such vital and timely work,” said Founding Partner of Heart+Mind Strategies Jennifer Airey. “Understanding the needs, barriers, and rational and emotional components of how humans make decisions is our life’s work. Using this knowledge to meaningfully impact choice for enrolling in higher education is as critical as it is gratifying.”

The research is scheduled to conclude at the end of June 2024. A full report of findings will be published.

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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.