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## **State Higher Education Chief Charts Path Forward at Annual Address**

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana must adapt to changing times and strengthen connections between educators and employers: That was the focus of Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers' remarks at the 2017 State of Higher Education Address. ([Click here to read the full text.](#))

Lubbers offered her fifth-annual address at Ivy Tech Community College in Indianapolis, before an audience of education, government, business and community leaders. Her remarks stressed more intentional partnerships between employers and educators and the need to remain adaptable in a 21st Century economy.

"Indiana's success and the well-being of our citizens depend on getting this right—preparing more people for the jobs of today and of the future," said Commissioner Lubbers. "Those who grasp the need for increased education and greater adaptability will thrive. Those who do not will be left behind."

### **Reaching the Big 60% Goal**

Commissioner Lubbers shared statistics showing Indiana is making progress toward meeting the big goal of 60 percent of Hoosiers having a quality degree or credential beyond high school by 2025. Since setting the goal in 2012, our higher education attainment rate has increased by more than 100,000 Hoosiers—reaching 41 percent. Indiana is also moving the needle on certificate completion, with a 32 percent increase in the last five years.

Commissioner Lubbers shared results from the first year of Indiana's **You Can. Go Back.** campaign, a targeted effort to reach Hoosier adults that have completed some college education, but haven't earned a degree. Through direct outreach over the last year, more than 9,000 former students have re-enrolled in college. In addition to Indiana's colleges stepping up and welcoming these students back to campus, many employers are offering incentives. Employers have found that offering incentives for their employees not only helps them skill up, it's an effective way to fill their workforce demands.

### **Intentional Career Exploration and Workforce Preparedness**

In her remarks, Commissioner Lubbers unveiled two new initiatives aimed at connecting Hoosiers with career opportunities—**Roadtrip Indiana** and the **Workforce Ready Grant**—and called for expanding new requirements for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars to all Hoosier students.

**Roadtrip Indiana**, a spinoff of the PBS Roadtrip Nation program, is set to roll out this spring. This program will follow the journey of Hoosier students as they explore their career interests with employers across the state. Not only will this program give these students the opportunity of a lifetime, it will provide career-focused curriculum and classroom materials for Indiana schools, highlight the state's diverse workforce, and show 70 million viewers nationally what Hoosier innovation is all about.

The Commission is partnering with Governor Eric Holcomb and Indiana's Department of Workforce Development to create a new financial aid opportunity: the **Workforce Ready Grant**. This grant, currently under consideration by the General Assembly, is aimed at the 1.4 million Hoosier adults who would benefit from a high-need credential. The Workforce Ready Grant will ensure a student's tuition costs for a high-demand certificate are covered.

“We must embrace more opportunities—like the Workforce Ready Grant—to adapt our approaches to the needs of working Hoosiers and employers,” said Lubbers.

### **Encouraging First-Generation and Low-Income Students to Complete College**

Lubbers touted the success of Indiana’s 21st Century Scholars program as a national model for promoting college and career readiness. In 2012, the Commission strengthened the program with new expectations for career exploration and workplace experience alongside standards for academic preparation and college planning. The new Scholar Success Program requirements took effect beginning with the graduating class of 2017, which is on track to outpace the historical average of students earning the Scholarship.

“It’s clear that more Hoosier students would benefit from these same experiences and expectations, which is why the Commission is advocating that the Scholar Success Program be extended to all high school students,” said Lubbers. “I look forward to working with Superintendent McCormick and the State Board of Education to revisit Indiana’s high school diploma standards and their alignment with the expectations of employers and higher education.”

Lubbers also noted that the Commission launched a new-and-improved version of the state’s ScholarTrack system this week that seamlessly integrates all state financial aid programs and tracks student completion of the Scholar Success Program. This fall, the Commission intends to open ScholarTrack to all Hoosier students as early as 7th grade to help more families and schools to keep their students on track for college and career success.

Learn more about the Indiana Commission for Higher Education and its *“Reaching Higher, Delivering Value”* strategic plan at [www.che.in.gov](http://www.che.in.gov).