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Governor announces higher education innovation grant award

News Release

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INDIANAPOLIS (July 26, 2011) - Governor Mitch Daniels today announced a statewide focus on increasing college completion rates in Indiana, a state that ranks forty-first in the nation in the proportion of adults with a college credential. Indiana's efforts will be supported by a \$1 million innovation grant award from Complete College America, a national non-profit organization focused on working with states on policy reforms that boost college completion.

"Indiana's job climate is now among the nation's best in every dimension but one, and that is the educational attainment of our working age population," said Daniels. "Reinventing higher education means removing unnecessary obstacles that hold students back and expanding opportunities for Hoosiers to earn degrees faster at a lower cost."

Indiana's reputation as a national leader in promoting college completion has been buoyed by such innovations as the launch of WGU Indiana, an accelerated online university geared toward working adults, and a performance-based funding formula for higher education that drives dollars to colleges based primarily on the number of students they graduate.

"Governor Daniels gets it: doing more of the same will not boost student success or get Indiana the additional college graduates it needs to be competitive," said Complete College America President Stan Jones. "In our experience, there are two kinds of leaders: those who run from problems and disappointing numbers like these-and those who run toward them, seeking new solutions and a better path forward.

"I'm not qualified to judge Indiana on every score, but I know college completion and this state clearly has the leadership and the will to fix broken policies, speed achievement and redesign pathways to college graduation for the new majority of students who must balance work and school," added Jones.

Complete College America invited governors from all 50 states to submit proposals to win one of ten \$1 million, 18-month implementation grants for innovative, high-impact college completion initiatives designed to enhance student

success and close attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented populations. Thirty-three states ultimately entered the contest. As a winning state, Indiana was determined to have one of the nation's most promising strategies to smooth and shorten pathways to college completion for all students. Funding for the grant was provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Innovation Challenge: Smarter Choices, Faster Completion

The Indiana Commission for Higher Education's grant proposal, dubbed "*Smarter Choices, Faster Completion*," centers on two key strategies: redesigning the delivery of remedial coursework at Ivy Tech Community College and creating highly structured intervention strategies that better support student success at the regional campuses of Indiana University. Together, these efforts are designed to boost graduation rates at campuses that account for more than half of the state's total public higher education enrollment and serve the majority of Indiana's low-income and first-generation college students.

"We see this as another initiative to help us accelerate our efforts in remediation and get people on track to graduate faster," said Ivy Tech Community College President Tom Snyder. "We are focused on our retention and completion efforts at Ivy Tech and assistance such as this will help us reach our goals faster."

More than two-thirds of Indiana's community college students require remediation at an annual cost estimated to exceed \$35 million for what are essentially high school level courses. In a departure from traditional "one-size-fits all" remediation models that have proved to be largely ineffective, Indiana's approach will customize the level and type of support provided to students based on their level of need in an effort to get them through remedial courses more quickly, saving both time and money in the process.

Efforts to customize support for low-income and first-generation college students will continue at IU's regional campuses with a robust series of interventions that include clear "smart choices" degree maps and advising to support on-time completion, block scheduling that includes summer coursework, and cohort-based enrollment opportunities that allow students to move through their academic programs as a group for better support.

"Indiana faces a new paradigm in higher education that demands educating more students and relentlessly focusing on quality, efficiency and completion at all levels," said Higher Education Commissioner Teresa Lubbers. "The efforts supported by this grant to redesign remediation, streamline support and help students make smarter choices represent an important step in our broader strategy to transform higher education."

Reaching Higher in Indiana

Daniels has charged the Indiana Commission for Higher Education with formulating a comprehensive package of college completion and productivity recommendations by the end of the year. These will include clear degree production targets by college and campus and refinements to the state's performance funding formula that further support degree completion and workforce development. In consultation with the state's college and university leaders, this work will culminate in a new Reaching Higher strategic plan for Indiana designed to meet the state's education and economic needs.

For more information on the "Smarter Choices, Faster Completion" initiative and related efforts, or to download a fact sheet about college completion, visit www.che.in.gov.

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