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Commissioner renews call to boost college completion during second 'State of Higher Education' address

INDIANAPOLIS - Higher Education Commissioner Teresa Lubbers issued an urgent call to dramatically increase the percentage of Hoosiers completing education beyond high school during Indiana's second annual State of Higher Education address.

"The state of higher education in Indiana is strong and getting stronger, valued but becoming more valuable, changing but requiring even greater change and transformation," said Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers. "This annual address is our opportunity to highlight Indiana's recent progress but also to make a compelling case to move forward with an even greater sense of urgency and purpose."

Indiana currently ranks 40th nationally in education attainment and 39th in personal per capita income, numbers that Lubbers noted are clearly linked.

"Our impatience to improve these numbers is grounded in the understanding that every fact and figure represents real Hoosiers who want to achieve a better life for themselves and their families through higher education," Lubbers said.

During her address, Lubbers pointed to several recent policy reforms championed by the Commission that aim to increase college completion and student success, including:

- **Streamlining college credit requirements:** Nearly 90 percent of degree programs at Indiana's public colleges exceeded the traditional standard of 120 credit hours for a four-year degree and 60 credits for a two-year degree prior to the passage of legislation two years ago. The result was students taking longer to graduate and often ending up with more college debt in the process. Today, nearly 90 percent of Indiana degree programs meet the accepted standard, a change estimated to save students and taxpayers more than \$35 million a year.
- **Increasing college affordability:** After years of unconstrained tuition increases, Indiana colleges responded to the state's call to control costs with the vast majority of schools holding recent tuition increases at or below the rate of inflation. Indiana lawmakers are also promoting college affordability through new credit completion requirements aligned with on-time graduation and financial aid incentives that encourage students to earn good grades and stay on track to graduate.
- **Improving college transfer and completion:** One-third of students graduate from a different college than where they started. Recent legislation streamlined transfer agreements between Indiana colleges and created a 30 credit hour general education core to further simplify the transfer process for students. Governor Pence and the General Assembly also joined the Commission in supporting legislation that ensures every Hoosier student has a clear, step-by-step, degree map that guides their way to graduation.

"Our goal for Indiana remains the same: graduating more Hoosiers with quality degrees on time and at the lowest possible cost," stated Lubbers. "These student-friendly policies demonstrate our commitment to saving students time and money while working to propel Hoosiers up the economic ladder through higher education."

Visit www.che.in.gov for the full address or to read the Commission's "Reaching Higher, Achieving More" strategic plan.