

Indiana Postsecondary Transitions Steering Committee Recommendations

The Postsecondary Transitions Steering Committee—a group chaired by Superintendent Jennifer McCormick and Commissioner Teresa Lubbers and representative of key K-12 and higher education stakeholders—puts forward the following recommendations for supporting students in their transitions between high school and higher education. We believe that cross-sector collaboration between K-12 and higher education can open doors to economic prosperity for all Hoosiers, and we are committed to an ongoing partnership to realize that vision.

For the state to meet its postsecondary preparation and success goals, and close equity gaps, collaboration across K-12 and higher education sectors is necessary. As state leaders, we are committed to partnering on both short- and long-term strategies to increase student success. The Steering Committee recommends the following actions:

1. **Develop and scale postsecondary transition pathways**, beginning with mathematics.
2. **Promote navigational supports** that smooth student transitions from secondary to postsecondary education and training, including but not limited to activities currently required for the 21st Century Scholars.
3. **Expand the use of key postsecondary transitions data** to facilitate cross-sector collaboration and support student success.

The Department of Education (DOE) and the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) will continue its ongoing collaboration to deliver on these recommendations and ensure their successful implementation. The development of a joint strategy is a necessary, but not sufficient step to dramatically improve students' postsecondary preparation and success. It will take strong implementation of the recommended activities, an ongoing commitment to monitor progress over time and course correct, where necessary. It will also necessitate ongoing communication about the importance of postsecondary credential attainment to meet the new economic realities, and the pathways and supports available to students to realize success.

Develop and Scale Postsecondary Transition Pathways

Success in postsecondary starts in high school, and even earlier. When students are able to place directly into credit-bearing coursework, they are more likely to persist and attain a credential. Building upon recent efforts to redesign remedial education at Indiana institutions of higher education, DOE and CHE will work to rethink course pathways—starting in mathematics—that promote positive student transitions and prepare students for a more robust set of entry-level courses in higher education. This will start with offering a 12th grade transitions math for students not yet ready for college that, if successfully completed, will enable them to enroll directly into credit-bearing coursework. And it will include further collaboration to recognize multiple mathematics pathways for high school students. This may mean rethinking the sequence of courses that students take in high school, identifying courses of equivalent rigor to Algebra 2, or even altering the traditional Algebra 2 course. Regardless of the approach, it is paramount that K-12 and higher education are both deeply engaged in the process to ensure consistency in rigor and feasibility in implementation.

In the short term:

- *Adopt the postsecondary transitions math course for use beginning in the 2019-2020 school year.* DOE and CHE have partnered to develop a postsecondary transitions math course to be piloted in up to 10 high schools across the state. The goal of the course is to increase college readiness rates and bridge the gap between high school and college-level math for students, decreasing their

chances of needing math remediation in college. Students who satisfactorily complete this course will be able to place directly into a gateway, credit-bearing math course at Indiana public institutions of higher education. The transitional math course is intended for students who have passed Algebra 2 (or any equivalent course) and yet are not projected ready for college-level coursework. The Steering Committee recommends the course for approval by the State Board of Education and Commission for Higher Education.

- *Support the implementation of the postsecondary transitions math course.* The initial pilot and subsequent expansion of the course will require state financial investment. DOE is seeking funding to purchase relevant student and teacher course materials, offer professional development, and expand the capacity of the state to support implementation.
- *Develop or identify Algebra 2 equivalent course(s) or course sequences that align with diversified set of introductory math courses in higher education.* DOE will lead a process to recommend to the State Board Algebra 2 equivalent course(s) or course sequences by the end of 2019. The process includes representation from CHE staff and higher education institutions. Additionally, the state will seek the assistance of leading national experts to support the development and validation process.

In the long term:

- *Evaluate the impact of the postsecondary transitions math course.* DOE and CHE will partner with an evaluator to study the implementation of the course pilot, understand students' trajectories beyond the course, and identify opportunities for improvement.
- *Scale the postsecondary transitions math course statewide.* Based on the availability of state funding, DOE and CHE will partner to develop and implement a strategic plan for scaling the course statewide. The goal is to initially pilot the course to generate feedback on the course structure, professional development and support, communications materials, and to monitor student success. That information will be used to make improvements, if necessary, in the implementation. In year 2, the goal will be to expand beyond the initial set of pilot high schools to a larger number of schools, based on available resources and capacity to support implementation. Long-term, the goal is to provide this course as an option to speed along students' transitions into higher education without the need for remediation statewide.

Promote Navigational Supports

The maze from high school to higher education is complicated, especially for students that are first in their families to attend college. Even when students do matriculate, there are hurdles that get in the way of students' persistence. K-12 and higher education leaders can partner to shrink the space between high school graduation and college matriculation and ensure that students start higher education on the right foot so that they are set up to persist through the first year of college and, ultimately, attain a credential.

In the short term:

- *Broadly promote 21st Century Scholars activities for all students.* The 21st Century Scholar activities represent a robust set of steps along a student's path to postsecondary readiness and success. This should be used as a framework to guide all students, regardless of their eligibility to access the available financial support. It should not be used to hold students or schools accountable. DOE and CHE will partner to promote this framework to all students. This includes promoting the framework jointly through DOE and CHE communication channels, incorporating the framework into trainings and support resources for school counselors, developing routines to monitor and communicate about progress with local administrators, and highlighting schools and districts with significant numbers of high school students on track to complete all required activities. The agencies will also work together to update the framework over time to reflect new

research on college readiness expectations and will ensure any new advising activities are connected to this framework.

- *Leverage partnerships to expand advising supports.* There is a growing ecosystem of organizations providing college and career advising. DOE and CHE will work together to examine current advising supports within and across schools and identify partnerships that strengthen those structures, and potentially work with schools to bolster advising capacity in high school, and potentially earlier grades. For instance, College Advising Corps has established partnerships in other states to use near peers to connect with low income and first generation students to help them apply, enter and complete higher education. They have also begun piloting a virtual advising platform that could be used to expand access. Similarly, the Transition Collaborative is a research partnership (including a faculty member from IU-Bloomington) that has developed resources to improve students' sense of belonging in higher education. The resources are free and could be incorporated as a component of the 21st Century Scholars activities. The state will map available partnerships and determine ways to take advantage of them to accelerate student success.
- *Integrate study-skill development and time management training to support student success during and after their transition into postsecondary work.* As part of the broad promotion of the activities required for 21st Century Scholars, it will also be important to incorporate study-skill development and time management training into the support educators provide when helping students make the transition out of high school. These skills—such as how to study, how much time to spend on homework, and how to take notes—help student learn how to learn and ensure lifelong learning success.
- *Prioritize cross-agency support for FAFSA completion.* Access to financial aid remains a major barrier to student enrollment and success in higher education. Indiana has the capacity and infrastructure to lead the country in FAFSA completion. To support thousands more students in their efforts to understand college costs and access resources to attend higher education institutions in Indiana, DOE and CHE will continue their efforts to support students' FAFSA completion, including setting a clear completion goal for the state. Data staff from DOE and CHE will meet regularly to develop a system for sharing real-time FAFSA completion rates with school and district administrators beginning in the 2018-19 school year. And staff will share lessons learned and publicize efforts of leading districts across the state.

In the long term:

- *Bring guided pathways and other postsecondary advising down into high school.* There is a great opportunity for higher education institutions, supported by DOE and CHE, to begin their advising and summer bridge supports before students leave high school, and perhaps even earlier. The state will facilitate conversations among institutional leaders and school and district personnel about the opportunity to design and deliver advising supports during a high school senior's second semester. For instance, an institution may present its guided pathway options to students and engage them early in their areas of interest and recommended course taking patterns. State leaders will gather information on current aligned K-12 and higher education bridge activities and develop a plan to support the piloting of additional activities in a small number of high schools across the state.

Expand the use of Key Postsecondary Transitions Data

Both the K-12 and postsecondary systems have clear goals for progress that necessitate collaboration to achieve. DOE and CHE will build upon the strong foundation of these goals and the state's College Readiness report to make postsecondary transition data more apparent and support its use locally.

In the short term:

- *Include postsecondary transitions metrics as reported metrics on online school report cards.* As the state updates its online school report card to comply with the Every Student Succeeds Act, it will work to include more postsecondary transition data as reported metrics. That will make the data more transparent for students, parents, and educators.
- *Expand joint promotion activities for the College Readiness report release.* DOE will use its communication channels, including the weekly Superintendent's email, to make school and district leadership aware of the College Readiness report, and encourage its use in planning. And each agency will promote the report through its educator and administrator networks and conferences. In the future, the agencies will coordinate the College Readiness report release strategy, to amplify the information to a greater number of stakeholders.
- *Explore expansion of data on College Readiness report.* DOE and CHE will partner to determine feasibility and timeline for including additional data on students' postsecondary transitions in the College Readiness report. For instance, the report could include information on students' postsecondary GPA by levels of preparation. Additionally, the state may explore including information on student progression into apprenticeship or certificate programs.

In the long term:

- *Facilitate regional postsecondary transitions data conversations.* In partnership with Ivy Tech campuses, local school districts, and pre-established College Success Coalitions, bring together educators, parents, businesses, and advocates to review the data on postsecondary transitions available on the IN College Ready report, and identify opportunities for greater alignment and partnership. DOE and CHE will partner to create a template for hosting the conversations, based on lessons from the experience in hosting a similar forum in Madison. Similar conversations should also happen at the state level to support ongoing development and implementation of postsecondary transition policies and programs.