

State of Indiana Announces New Initiative to Encourage Adults to Complete College Degrees

Effort supported by \$7.5 million in state grants, incentives by colleges and employers

Indianapolis – Governor Mike Pence and Commissioner for Higher Education Teresa Lubbers joined Indiana business and local government leaders today to kick off “You Can. Go Back.”— a coordinated campaign to help 750,000 Hoosier adults who have some college credit but no degree finish what they started. The statewide effort is a key strategy in reaching Indiana’s goal to increase the percentage of Hoosiers with education beyond high school to 60 percent by 2025.

“There are 750,000 Hoosier adults who started working toward a degree or credential that will help them in their professional lives but for one reason or another, they had to put their education on hold,” said Governor Pence. “What we are doing here today is telling these Hoosiers, ‘We can help. And yes, you can go back.’ We want to improve the quality of our workforce, and help put Hoosiers on a path to even greater success. To achieve this goal, it is imperative that we look beyond our K-12 pipeline. Our ‘You Can. Go Back.’ campaign will encourage a continuing education that helps working Hoosiers meet the qualifications of the fastest growing, high-wage jobs that will provide opportunity and improve lives.”

With support from state lawmakers and Indiana colleges, the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) is reaching out directly to prospective returning adults and easing their transition back to college with a variety of special programs and incentives, including \$1,000 scholarships through a \$7.5 million state grant, flexible class schedules and online courses, college credit for work and military experience, grade- and debt-forgiveness programs, and tuition discounts.

“Many adults who started a degree or credential but didn’t finish have a strong desire to return to college, but they don’t know where to start,” CHE Commissioner Lubbers said. “You Can. Go Back. will guide students through the process of returning to school and give them the support they need to be successful.”

This month, thousands of former college students will receive messages in their

mailboxes and email inboxes highlighting the benefits of completing their degree and directing them to resources designed to support their return to school.

At YouCanGoBack.org, Hoosiers will be matched to college programs based on their interests and career goals before being connected to dedicated “You Can. Go Back.” campus ambassadors at well-matched colleges.

Indiana state leaders have called upon businesses and local communities as essential partners in the “You Can. Go Back.” campaign. Columbus Mayor Jim Lienhoop took part in today’s official campaign launch, highlighting the importance of postsecondary education to the economic vitality of cities and towns.

“Approximately 20 percent of adults—about 35,000 people ages 25-64 in our southeast Indiana workforce region—have some college but no degree. Employers in our community are in desperate need of highly skilled people to fill jobs, especially in the advanced manufacturing and health care sectors, which makes up nearly 50 percent of our workforce,” Lienhoop said. “The City of Columbus strongly supports “You Can. Go Back.” because of its potential to help meet this workforce need.”

As part of the “You Can. Go Back.” roll-out, CHE gathered input from Indiana businesses on what types of education benefits they currently offer employees and what challenges they face in providing or expanding those benefits. Comcast was the partnering business for the “You Can. Go Back.” announcement. The company already offers employees \$5,750 in annual tuition reimbursement support, but Comcast is also working to expand education benefits.

“The state is stepping up to make sure this opportunity exists for Hoosiers, but it is incumbent upon the businesses in Indiana to make sure that we provide a path that leads directly to a better educated workforce,” said Mike Wilson, Comcast Indiana Public Relations Director.

As one of the largest employers in our state, Governor Pence has directed the State Personnel Department to share information about “You Can. Go Back.” with state employees. State agencies such as the Department of Workforce Development and the Family and Social Services Administration are helping publicize the effort across the state in local WorkOne and Division of Family Resources offices.