



# Commissioner's Column

## My View: The Scholar Success Program

Since 1990, Indiana's 21st Century Scholars program has helped thousands of low-income Hoosier students aspire to and afford a college education. Nearly 110,000 21st Century Scholars are enrolled across the state from 7<sup>th</sup> grade through college, and more than 30,000 students have earned a degree using the 21st Century Scholarship.

Over the last several years, the program has evolved with a single goal: to ensure more Scholars are prepared to successfully complete college. Scholars are now required to earn a 2.5 high school GPA, and perhaps the most significant change has been the addition of the Scholar Success Program (SSP). The Scholar Success Program, approved by the General Assembly in 2012, is made up of 12 college and career readiness activities—three per year—Scholars must complete during high school to earn their Scholarship.

The activities, created by a diverse group of educators and community partners, are steps all college-bound students should take, such as visiting a college campus, researching college costs, exploring career paths and filing the FAFSA. Nearly all activities can be completed independently, and Scholars have flexibility in completion. For example, they can visit a college campus virtually if they are unable to visit in person.

In the past, too many of Indiana's 21st Century Scholars started college but didn't finish. It's imperative we provide Scholars with the ability to succeed in college, and that means arming students with the knowledge of how to thrive on a college campus—including not only an academic and career plan, but things as simple as providing an avenue for tutoring and guidance. Across the state, we're hearing from educators and partners that these supports are crucial to Scholars' success.

The clock is ticking for Indiana's class of 2017 21st Century Scholars. Current high school seniors are the first group of Scholars required to complete the Scholar Success Program. To date, 84% of senior Scholars have ScholarTrack accounts to track their activity progress, and 27% have completed all 12 activities, up 3 percentage points from December 2016. Scholars who do not complete all required activities by June 30 of their senior year will not receive their scholarship. While current Scholars are on track to surpass the historic average of students who receive the Scholarship, we must persist in efforts to improve this number.

The Commission for Higher Education continues to partner with community organizations, businesses and schools across the state to ensure Scholars have every opportunity to complete the required activities. Thousands of emails, phone calls and text messages are being sent, and events are being held throughout Indiana to assist Scholars in completing their activities.

We know that the path to success for Hoosiers and our state comes through completing education beyond high school, and we believe the Scholar Success Program is an essential way to keep Scholars on track. As more jobs in Indiana—and the nation—require a quality credential, we must double down on efforts that ensure more Hoosiers are prepared for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century career.

