



## GREETINGS FROM IUPUI

February 2013

I was recently invited to give a presentation at the University CXO Summit, an invitation-only event, held for higher education leaders. My topic was "The College Completion Agenda: Will It Renew or Undermine the American Dream?" Not to keep you in suspense, the answer is: It will renew the American Dream.

Beginning in 2003, IUPUI launched a goal of doubling the number of baccalaureate degrees we awarded. That goal exemplifies what is now known as the "college completion agenda"—a plan being championed not only by universities but also by a cross-sector combination of state and federal government, nonprofit foundations, business and industry, higher education associations, and the media.

It goes by various monikers, the Lumina Foundation for Education Goal 2025, President Barack Obama's Meeting the Nation's 2020 Goal, and the Association of American State Colleges and Universities/Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (AASCU/APLU) Project Degree Completion: A Public University Initiative, among others. We are all calling for a national push to boost the number of people who have postsecondary education in the U.S.

Lumina's goal is 62 million more degree-holders by 2025.

To achieve that goal, colleges and universities must support a highly differentiated population to succeed as individual students during their multiyear pursuit to earn "high-quality degrees, certificates, or other credentials."

But, it is imperative that we do it.

The American dream is about opportunity.

- Opportunity for jobs: The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce predicts that at least 62% of jobs will require education beyond high school through 2018.
- Opportunity for better income and job resilience: As noted in my November letter, the latest U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics table ("Education Pays") shows that, during the latest recession, people with a college education fared better and will continue to do so throughout their lifetimes.
- Opportunity to compete globally: At 42%, the U.S. ranks below Korea, Canada, the Russian Federation, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Ireland, and Denmark in the percentage of adults age 25-34 with postsecondary education.

The opportunity is ours, as institutions of higher education, to face down the challenges and find the way to increase students' success in completing college by offering programs with quality, substance, focus, and breadth; by doing so efficiently; and by ensuring graduates can also transition successfully to their next step—whether it is work, graduate school, or professional education—ensuring that all have the skills to develop a financially viable life.

At the current college completion rate, we will reach only 39 million of the 62 million Lumina Foundation goal. If we are to close the gap of 23 million more degree-holders by 2025, we must pay

attention to a variety of students with varying needs.

- We must support the students we have and make sure they graduate by using high-impact practices that research shows will help them succeed.
- We must be aware of changing demographics and ensure that all students are encouraged to pursue higher education and are successful.
- We must increase the college success of those from low-income families. According to Public Policy Analyst Tom Mortenson ( Postsecondary Education OPPORTUNITY), a student born into the top income quartile of family income—those earning more than \$110,000—is 10 times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree by age 24 than a student born into the bottom quartile, those with an income of less than \$40,000.
- We need to educate more “post-traditional learners” (age 25-64) already in the workforce, returning after parenthood, or trying to rebound from a job loss or low-paying work.
- Of every 10 public college students, 4 attend part time—and no more than a quarter of part-time students ever graduate. Yet, federal education statistics generally focus on first-time full-time students. So, we must study part-time students thoroughly and craft strategies to help them succeed.
- Students are “swirling” among institutions with only 34% attending only one college before graduating. The majority of college students are transferring, with as many as 20% attending three or more colleges. We need to make transfer smoother and faster.

There is a great deal to do—involving research, resources, and hard work. Improving student success, whether the student is 18 or 58, is vital to students, families, and our community. It requires innovation, using technology, being more effective, and reducing costs.

We cannot do it alone. We need to mobilize across sectors: to create new models of student financial support and ways to do business, to control costs but preserve quality, and to advance state and federal policies that support college attainment. We must mobilize families, fellow citizens, employers, educators, and community leaders in a collective movement that embraces and reinforces the importance of higher education opportunity for all.

Will you join us in renewing the American dream for the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

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