



NEWS RELEASE

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USI receives funding to improve college retention, foster student success



Lumina Foundation awards \$100,000 to aid campus program

University of Southern Indiana will use a \$100,000 grant from Lumina Foundation for Education to improve student retention and degree attainment on campus. The grant is one of nine awarded to public college campuses across the state.

The USI grant will support a program designed to ensure student success during the first years of college. According to ACT, Inc. research, 60 percent of students at public institutions fail to complete degrees within five years; half of these students leave college during or just after their freshman year.

University of Southern Indiana as well as regional campuses of Indiana University and Purdue University will each get a share of \$866,500 as part of a Lumina Foundation program called the President's Fund for Student Success in the First and Second Years of College program.

USI will use its grant to support Project e-AGLE (electronic advice for a great learning experience, a Web-based initiative targeting increased freshman retention and timely graduation.

Project e-AGLE engages first-year students and their parents with an e-mail messaging system that provides information on a variety of topics, including high school-to-college transitioning, academic skills development, working effectively with faculty, risk behavior and social norms, campus involvement, and pre-career advising and mentoring.

It is designed to increase freshman retention by delivering reinforcement of critical information to students and their parents in the privacy of their own dorms/homes/computers.

The project's Web-based information resources also offer additional alternative methods to find needed assistance, be it financial aid, academic advising or help understanding the University's billing procedures.

"Project e-AGLE is putting the University of Southern Indiana at the cutting edge of combining 'high tech' with 'high touch' in meeting the many, varied and unique needs of entering students," said Dr. Charles Harrington, assistant vice president for USI Academic Affairs.

"We anticipate the effect of this project will be increased student engagement, increased student retention and increased student satisfaction with their early University experience."

Grants were awarded to IU East, IU Kokomo, IU Northwest, Indiana-Purdue Fort Wayne, IU South Bend, IU Southeast, Purdue Calumet, Purdue North Central and USI. The objectives of the President's Fund grants are to increase the number of students in special population groups who enter college, improve retention rates for historically underserved students and create a learning network among institutions facing similar challenges.

"Many students hit a variety of academic, financial and social roadblocks on their way to graduation," said Martha D. Lamkin, president and CEO of Lumina Foundation. "We aim to help these nine campuses provide innovative programs that allow students to navigate the sometimes bumpy road of the freshman and sophomore years."

Lumina Foundation invited the state's public baccalaureate and master's-level institutions to apply for grants to support programs that address the needs of students who face the greatest obstacles to degree attainment. These students may be low-income, first-generation college students, students of color or adult learners.

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About Lumina Foundation

Lumina Foundation for Education, an Indianapolis-based, private, independent foundation, strives to help people achieve their potential by expanding access and success in education beyond high school. Through research, grants for innovative programs and communication initiatives, Lumina Foundation addresses issues surrounding financial access and educational retention, and degree or certificate attainment — particularly among underserved student groups, including adult learners. The Foundation bases its mission on the belief that postsecondary education remains one of the most beneficial investments that individuals can make in themselves and that society can make in its people. For more details on the Foundation, visit its Web site at www.luminafoundation.org.