

21st Century Academy Scholarship+ Partnership

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Between

21st Century Academy of Gary

Ivy Tech Community College Lake County (Ivy Tech Lake County)

Indiana University Northwest (IUN)

Purdue University Northwest (PNW)

Effective Date: February 6, 2026

I. Purpose

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes the Scholarship+ Program to support students from 21st Century Academy in earning postsecondary degrees and credentials through coordinated pathways with Ivy Tech Community College Lake County (Ivy Tech Lake County), Indiana University Northwest (IUN), and Purdue University Northwest (PNW), collectively referred to as “the institutions.” The 21st Century Academy Scholarship + Program provides participating students with full scholarship funding for tuition, textbooks, and transportation, provided by 21st Century Academic, combined with comprehensive wraparound support services. This agreement formalizes a long-standing partnership that has enabled 21st Century Academy students to earn associate degrees—and, in exceptional cases, bachelor’s degrees—prior to high school graduation.

II. Background

Students from 21st Century Academy regularly earn full associate degrees, the Indiana College Core, and industry certificates from Ivy Tech Lake County, and four students became the first—and only—in the nation to earn full bachelor’s degrees before high school graduation (one from IUN and three from PNW). Since 2005, 21st Century Academy has served the Gary community. 21st Century Academy’s priority was to improve high school graduation rates. 21st Century Academy regularly posts high school graduation rates above the state average and this year’s rate was 97%. For the past 15 years, 21st Century Academy has moved beyond its focus on high school graduation rates and toward graduating students who have already earned a college and/or career credential. Today, 21st Century Academy regularly outperforms the state average in producing high school students who are deemed college and career ready. More than 80% of the Class of 2026 will earn a full credential, the Indiana College Core, and/or an associate degree. This extraordinary achievement serves as the foundation for this formal MOU among 21st Century Academy, Ivy Tech Lake County, IUN, and PNW.

III. Shared Goals

Each institution agrees to collaborate on a collective goal to increase the number of 21st Century Academy students earning career credentials, associate and bachelor's degrees by:

1. **Supporting Seamless Transfer Pathways** and recognizing the value of Indiana's Transfer Single Articulation Pathways (TSAPs) in providing clear, statewide, discipline-specific transfer frameworks, and committing to leverage these pathways to ensure students can seamlessly apply their dual-credit and early-college coursework toward aligned associate and bachelor's degree programs.
2. **Providing Early Engagement** with university systems, services, and academic advising.
3. **Enhancing Academic Planning** through supporting students and families in exploring potential majors and career pathways early in the student's academic journey, providing structured opportunities, guidance, and experiences that empower students to make decisions and achieve their postsecondary goals.
4. **Ensuring Comprehensive Student Support**, including financial and academic counseling resources.
5. **Increasing College Degree and Credential Completion** for students in Northwest Indiana.

IV. Partnership Commitments

A. 21st Century Academy

- Identify, prepare, and support students for participation in the Scholarship+ Program.
- Coordinate with Ivy Tech Lake County, IUN, and PNW to ensure student participants meet admissions requirements.
- Facilitate student submission of required forms, including FERPA releases and program applications. Parents/guardians of students under the age of 18 must sign a liability release for their student(s) to participate.
- Provide scholarship funding covering all direct college costs including tuition, any required fees (including, but not limited to, course fees and lab fees), textbooks, and transportation for participating students. 21st Century Academy will execute a third-party payor agreement for each student participant and will remit payment in accordance with those terms.

- Deliver wraparound support services including academic coaching, social-emotional support, and college navigation assistance to participating students.

B. Ivy Tech Community College Lake County

- Enroll participating students in Transfer Single Articulation Pathways (TSAPs), certificates, and technical certificates aligned with IUN and PNW bachelor's degree requirements.
- Provide transcripts and course registration information each term to IUN and PNW for monitoring and credit evaluation.
- Provide dual enrollment students access to all student activities and events, provided that students under the age of 18 have a liability release form on file with Ivy Tech Lake County that has been signed by at least one parent or legal guardian prior to participation.
- Support students through advising, academic resources, and degree planning.

C. Indiana University Northwest & Purdue University Northwest

Both Universities agree to:

- Provide early engagement and academic planning services to student participants who are enrolled at Ivy Tech. The student participant will be provided access to the University's academic planning tools and selected campus services, as determined by the University. Each University shall determine the mechanism for access to the academic planning tools. Before participating in certain campus services, students under the age of 18 may be required to have a release form on file with the University that has been signed by at least one parent or legal guardian.
- Participate in coordinated advising and provide verification to Ivy Tech Lake County that course selections align with intended bachelor's degree requirements.
- Identify and make available transfer scholarships and support services that enhance student readiness and belonging. The decision to offer scholarships and services will be solely in the discretion of Purdue University Northwest and Indiana University Northwest, as applicable.
- Evaluate Ivy Tech Lake County transcripts for each student participant at the end of each term of enrollment at Ivy Tech Lake County and apply applicable transfer credits toward degree pathways.
- Admit as transfer students into degree-seeking programs, qualified students formally admitted to the program who have earned an associate degree from Ivy Tech Lake County in accordance with the institution's established transfer admissions criteria.

V. Operational Mechanisms

The institutions agree to implement the following mechanisms to support student progress:

1. **Temporary University Admission:** Creates a university student record and grants early access to degree-audit systems and services.
2. **Streamlined Application Process:** Students complete a program-specific application to IUN and/or PNW.
3. **FERPA Authorization:** Students sign a release permitting secure sharing of academic information across partners.
4. **Transcript Submission & Credit Evaluation:** Ivy Tech Lake County submits transcripts each term; IUN and PNW evaluate credits for degree applicability.
5. **Coordinated Course Registration Oversight:** IUN and PNW advisors review Ivy Tech Lake County course selections for degree alignment.
6. **Access to Academic Supports:** Students receive library access, advising, student success center services, and workshop opportunities at the university.

VI. Program Outcomes

The Scholarship+ Program will:

- Provide clear, supported pathways from high school through associate and bachelor's degree completion.
- Reduce credit loss and improve efficiency in transfer and degree progression.
- Strengthen student confidence, belonging, and academic readiness by integrating supports across institutions.
- Increase the completion rates of college degrees and career certifications for students in Northwest Indiana.

VII. Liability and Insurance

- A. **Mutual Indemnification.** Each party agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the other parties, their officers, employees, and agents from and against any claims, damages, losses, or expenses (including reasonable attorneys' fees) arising out of or resulting from the party's negligent acts or omissions in performance of its obligations under this MOU,

except to the extent such claims arise from the negligence or willful misconduct of another party.

- B. **Limitation of Liability.** Except for liabilities arising from a party's gross negligence, willful misconduct, or breach of confidentiality obligations, no party shall be liable to any other party for any indirect, incidental, consequential, special, or punitive damages arising out of or related to this MOU, regardless of the theory of liability.

VIII. Term and Termination

- A. **Term.** This MOU shall commence on the date of final execution and shall continue for a period of five (5) years ("Term"), with renewal contingent upon written agreement of the parties.
- B. **Termination for Cause.** Any party may terminate its participation in this MOU for material breach by another party, provided that: (i) written notice of the breach is provided to the breaching party; (ii) the breaching party is given sixty (60) days to cure the breach; and (iii) if the breach remains uncured, the non-breaching party provides ninety (90) days' written notice of termination.
- C. **Non-Renewal; Early Termination.** Any party may elect not to renew this MOU for a subsequent term by providing written notice at least one (1) year prior to the end of the then-current term. Any party may terminate this MOU during the Term by providing notice to all parties ("Early Termination"). The Early Termination shall take effect one-year from the date of notice or at the end of the Term, whichever is sooner. Termination by one party will terminate the entire agreement.
- D. **Effect on Enrolled Students.** Notwithstanding any termination or non-renewal:
- a. Honor all commitments to students for the then-current academic term in which notice is provided.
 - b. Cooperate in good faith to minimize disruption to students and, where feasible, facilitate orderly transition or transfer arrangements.
 - c. Provide reasonable notice to affected students and families regarding program wind-down.

IX. Confidentiality and FERPA Compliance

Each party acknowledges its obligation to comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, and all applicable state and federal privacy laws regarding student information. Student information may only be shared among the parties to the extent authorized by valid FERPA releases or as otherwise permitted by law. Each party shall implement appropriate administrative, technical, and physical safeguards to protect the confidentiality and security of student information.

X. Governing Law and Dispute Resolution

A. **Governing Law.** This MOU shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Indiana, without regard to its conflict of laws principles.

B. **Dispute Resolution.** The parties agree to resolve any disputes arising under this MOU through good faith negotiation between authorized representatives.

XI. Royalty Free License.

The parties grant to each other party a revocable, non-exclusive, non-transferable license to use each other's trademarks, logos and other marks in furtherance of the articulation coordination detailed herein or in a manner solely for the purpose of identifying and communicating the existence of the relationship to prospective or current 21st Century Academy students. The license with respect to each party's marks shall be limited to the party's name and official, non-athletic logo. Use of the names and logos will be in accordance with any use guidelines provided by each party to the other parties.

Each party shall provide the other parties with examples of any materials using such other party's name or logo prior to releasing such other party's name, logo and other intellectual property of whatever form or format before it is distributed and will obtain written approval for such use. No party grants to any other party any interest in the party's trademarks or other marks. Each party agrees that of the mark(s) by another party must be approved by such party and used in accordance with the terms of this MOU, applicable law, and any trademark usage guidelines as may be provided by any party to another.

XII. Miscellaneous Terms

A. **Independent Parties.** The parties are independent entities, and nothing in this MOU creates a joint venture, partnership, agency, or employment relationship between them.

B. **Amendments.** This MOU may be amended only by written agreement signed by authorized representatives of all parties.

C. **Third Party Beneficiaries.** Except as expressly provided, the Agreement is entered into solely between, and may be enforced only by, both Parties. The Agreement will not be deemed to create any rights or causes of action in or on behalf of any third parties, including employees, vendors and customers of a Party, or to create any obligations of a Party to any such third parties, except as expressly provided otherwise.

D. Severability. If any provision of this MOU is found to be invalid or unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall continue in full force and effect, and the invalid provision shall be modified to the minimum extent necessary to make it valid and enforceable.

E. Force Majeure. No party shall be liable for failure to perform its obligations under this MOU due to causes beyond its reasonable control, including but not limited to acts of God, natural disasters, war, civil unrest, governmental action, pandemic, epidemic, or public health emergency. The affected party shall provide prompt notice to the other parties and shall use reasonable efforts to resume performance.

E. Entire Agreement. This MOU constitutes the entire agreement among the parties regarding the Scholarship+ Program and supersedes all prior discussions, understandings, or agreements, whether written or oral.

F. Counterparts. This MOU may be executed in counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original and all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument. Electronic signatures shall have the same force and effect as original signatures.

[Signature Page Follows]

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have executed this Memorandum of Understanding as of the dates set forth below.

21ST CENTURY ACADEMY OF GARY

Signature: _____

Name: Dana Teasley

Title: Superintendent

INDIANA UNIVERSITY NORTHWEST

Signature: _____

Name:

Title:

PURDUE UNIVERSITY NORTHWEST

Signature: _____

Name:

Title:

Ivy Tech Community College Lake County

Signature: _____

Name: John Gipson, PhD

Title: Chancellor