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FORT WAYNE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

MEDIA RELEASE

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FWCS Partners with 7 Local Colleges & Universities to Increase Access to Higher Education

Fort Wayne Community Schools and seven local colleges and universities announced today the formation of the Higher Education Coalition, a groundbreaking partnership designed to open doors to higher education for FWCS students.

The coalition includes Indiana Tech, Indiana University Fort Wayne, Ivy Tech Community College, Manchester University, Purdue University Fort Wayne, Trine University and Vincennes University.

The partnership includes:

- **Guaranteed admission:** FWCS students with a grade point average of 2.5 or higher will receive direct admission to all seven coalition schools. Students with GPAs between 2.0 and 2.5 will be reviewed considering factors, such as academic improvement, leadership activities and personal circumstances.
- **Free dual credit courses:** Coalition institutions are waiving tuition for FWCS students taking identified dual credit courses through FWCS. Students can earn college credits while still in high school at no cost to families, giving them a head start on their college degree and potentially saving thousands of dollars.
- **Early college experience:** Dual credit students will receive student ID cards, access to college libraries and tutoring services, campus visits and exposure to college life through summer programs and guest speakers. Teachers will receive professional development from university faculty to ensure students get a true college-level experience.

“Fort Wayne Community Schools has long partnered with local colleges and universities to provide college credit to our students, but this agreement takes these partnerships to a new level, enhancing the FWCS Schools of Success and ensuring all students have access to college courses before graduating from high school,” FWCS Superintendent Dr. Mark Daniel said.

“The Higher Ed Coalition strengthens our shared commitment to empowering every Fort Wayne Community Schools student with a clear, achievable path to higher education. By working together, we’re removing barriers and ensuring students can seamlessly continue their education,” said Dr. Kim Barnett-Johnson, Chancellor of Ivy Tech Community College Fort Wayne and Kosciusko County.

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Indiana Tech Senior Vice President for Strategic Enrollment Management Dr. Steve Herendeen applauded the vision to bring this coalition together. “Indiana Tech is grateful for the opportunity to work with Fort Wayne Community Schools and our higher education colleagues on this exciting initiative,” he said. “Indiana Tech is committed to increasing affordability and access for students and help improve the college-going rate in our city and state.”

The partnership focuses on helping students feel connected to college before they graduate. Coalition schools will work directly with FWCS counselors to guide students and families through the college application process, financial aid opportunities and scholarship options.

“At Trine, we believe access to higher education must be paired with strong guidance, mentorship and real-world opportunity. Through this agreement, we’re providing FWCS students not only with seamless admission but with the academic resources, personal support and sense of belonging that help them succeed long after enrollment,” said Kim Bennett, Vice President for Enrollment Management for Trine University.

“A college degree opens doors to prosperity, well-being and opportunity that influence generations to come,” said Dr. Deborah R. Garrison, IU Fort Wayne Inaugural Vice Chancellor and Dean. “For students who may not have had family role models in higher education, an open invitation to college says: We see you. You belong here. You can succeed. This seamless admissions agreement reflects that promise, welcoming every student from every background to imagine and shape their future.”

The three-year agreement represents a shared commitment among Fort Wayne's educational institutions to invest in the community's future by ensuring local students have clear, affordable pathways to college degrees and career success.

“Typically, those of us in higher education are competitors,” said Dr. Stacy Young, President of Manchester University. “That’s what makes this partnership so meaningful. We’re all working together to support Fort Wayne Community Schools students and ensure they have opportunities beyond high school.”

“Purdue Fort Wayne is thrilled to be partnering with FWCS to provide outstanding learning experiences for students while enrolled in high school and a seamless transition to their pursuit of a globally recognized degree as members of our dynamic campus community,” said Dr. Carl Drummond, provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs, Purdue University Fort Wayne. “This regional collaboration will drive increased educational attainment and ultimately power increased wages and associated economic growth in Fort Wayne.”

Dr. Lori Pence, Associate Provost of K-12 Programs and Partnerships for Vincennes University, echoed that sentiment. “The partnership between K12 and higher education institutions exemplifies a powerful commitment to community enhancement through education,” she said. “Vincennes’ Dual Credit Program and the seamless admission opportunity is dedicated to equipping FWCS students with the knowledge and skills they need to make impactful contributions in their chosen professions. Our goal is to empower students to excel in their educational and career aspirations and emerge as leaders in their community and region.”

Students and families interested in learning more about the opportunities available should contact their school counselor.