INDIANAPOLIS – Mayor Greg Ballard and Central Indiana Community Foundation (CICF) President Brian Payne today announced that more than 1,300 additional Marion County eighth-grade students joined the Twenty-first Century Scholars Program as the result of CICF’s Twenty-first Century Scholars Enrollment Challenge. Designed to bolster enrollment efforts made by school representatives, the “challenge” was a $6,000 incentive program made possible by CICF as part of its College Readiness Initiative and was funded by The Indianapolis Foundation (a CICF affiliate) and Lumina Foundation for Education.

“As a community, we must never let lack of financial resources be the reason a talented student isn’t able to pursue his or her dreams of obtaining a college education and pursuing a better life,” said Mayor Ballard. “We applaud the leadership of the Indiana Commission on Higher Education, the State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana, and the General Assembly for working creatively and thoughtfully to ensure the Twenty-first Century Scholars Program is sustainable and robust, and emphasizes both college access and success.”

The Twenty-first Century Scholars Enrollment Challenge is a partnership between CICF, the Twenty-first Century Scholars Regional Support Site, the Mayor’s Office of Education Innovation (OEI), the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee (GIPC), The Indianapolis Foundation, and the Lumina Foundation for Education. The Twenty-first Century Scholars Program aims to raise the educational aspirations of low-income families and ensure that all Indiana families can afford a college education for their children.

The additional 1,300 students increased eighth-grade student participation in Marion County from 39 percent to 60 percent – a net increase of 55 percent. Every middle school in Marion County was invited to participate in the challenge. CICF provided more than $6,000 in incentives to reward 33 school counselors, representing 28 schools that successfully achieved individual enrollment targets.

In addition to the work done by school representatives, other community activities aided the challenge including workshops, attendance at community events, and presentations on local radio shows. “Afternoons with Amos” talk show host Amos Brown hosted representatives from CICF and the Twenty-first Century
Scholars Program on his WTLC-1310 AM show, and the radio station ran multiple free public service announcements about the program during the challenge.

“The Twenty-first Century Scholars program is a very valuable program, one that has successfully encouraged low-income students to prepare for and seek post-secondary opportunities,” said Payne, also president of The Indianapolis Foundation. “As part of our College Readiness Initiative, the enrollment challenge was meant to further that success, and we’re extremely pleased with these results, and also with this great partnership between CICF, the Mayor’s Office of Education Innovation and the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee. CICF will continue to leverage community partnerships and work with local school districts to launch additional performance-based incentive programs that will ultimately raise the bar in preparing our young people to succeed in post-secondary opportunities.”

To be eligible for the 21st Century Scholars program, students must fulfill a pledge that includes earning a high school diploma, achieving at least a 2.0 grade-point-average (out of 4.0), agree to not use alcohol or drugs or commit crimes, apply for admission to an eligible Indiana college or university or proprietary school, and apply for state and financial aid on time. They also must meet other requirements, including participation in the federal free/reduced lunch program, placement in foster care, or have a family income at or below the program maximums. In recent years, between 50 percent and 60 percent of all Marion County public school eighth-graders have been eligible to enroll in the program. Of the students who enrolled in the 21st Century Scholars Program and graduated in 2009, 92 percent graduated from high school and 68 percent enrolled in some form of post-secondary opportunity.

“Students who enrolled in the Twenty-first Century Scholars program, and those who participate in college readiness activities, are much more likely to take rigorous college preparatory courses in high school and enroll in a post-secondary education,” said Seana Murphy, state director of the Twenty-first Century Scholars program. “We are delighted by the results of CICF’s Twenty-first Century Scholars Enrollment Challenge and believe it will make a difference in the lives of the children who enrolled, as well as their families and communities.”

The Enrollment Challenge Partnership also today announced its 2010-2011 incentive program as a part of College Go Week! at the Wayne Township Chapel Hill 7th & 8th Grade Center. CICF has set a county-wide goal of enrolling at least 75 percent of all eligible seventh-graders and 90 percent of all eligible eighth-graders by Dec. 31, 2010. For more information about the Mayor’s Office of Education Innovation, call (317) 327-3601.

About Central Indiana Community Foundation (CICF)
Central Indiana Community Foundation (CICF) is a $550 million public foundation transforming the lives of Central Indiana residents in three ways: consulting donors, family foundations and their professional advisors on charitable giving; awarding grants to effective not-for-profit organizations; and providing leadership to address community needs and seize opportunities. CICF was established in 1997 as a partnership between The Indianapolis Foundation, serving Marion County since 1916, and Legacy Fund, serving Hamilton County since 1991. For more information about CICF, call 317.634.2423 or visit www.cicf.org.

About the 21st Century Scholars Program
The 21st Century Scholars program, established in 1990 by the State of Indiana, encourages low-income middle school students to prepare for post-secondary opportunities. In exchange for academic and civic accomplishments during high school, enrolled students receive post-secondary tuition assistance to attend any public college or university in the State of Indiana. For more information about the 21st Century Scholars Enrollment Challenge, contact Jonika Hudson at (317) 274-1592 or jvhudson@iupui.edu, or visit http://www.in.gov/ssaci/2345.htm.

###