

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Questa Foundation announces educational partnership and initiatives focused on regional economic development**

FORT WAYNE – Questa Foundation for Education will formally announce several new initiatives aimed at helping Allen county students graduate from college with less debt and to encourage their retention in northeast Indiana after graduation. The announcements will be made today, May 20, at a reception for local business, civic and educational leaders at the Northeast Indiana Innovation Center. The reception begins at 5:00 PM with a presentation at 5:30 PM and a question and answer session following at 6:00 PM.

Questa Foundation sponsors the Questa Scholars 1/2 Back Loan Program that offers qualified Allen County high school students forgiveness of up to 50 percent of their Questa Scholars loan if they graduate from college with a 2.75 GPA and choose to reside and work in northeast Indiana for at least five years after graduation. Questa Scholars may attend any US Department of Education accredited school.

Questa and Huntington University officials will announce the Huntington University Questa Scholars Payback Program which will forgive an additional 25 percent of a Questa Scholar's loan balance if the student participates in the 1/2 Back Loan Program and graduates from Huntington University.

“With this partnership, Questa Scholars attending Huntington University may have up to 75% of their principal loan balance forgiven,” said Christina Smith, Executive Director of Questa Foundation.

“Huntington University is pleased to partner with Questa Foundation in an effort to make higher education more affordable and accessible for students in northeast Indiana,” said

Dr. Ann McPherren, Huntington University's Vice President of University Planning and Strategy. "Local higher education is a key component of helping retain young college graduates in northeast Indiana. More than 75% of Huntington students are from Indiana with over 40% from our northeast Indiana region."

Questa is reaching out to other organizations within the community to foster economic development and expand educational opportunities for area students. During today's presentation, Questa will announce its relocation to the Northeast Indiana Innovation Center and its desire to collaborate with the Innovation Center to help aspiring high school entrepreneurs afford college and encourage their return to northeast Indiana after graduation.

"We believe Questa's presence and engagement on this campus will not only provide the foundation greater visibility, accessibility and opportunities for program growth, but that we will be best positioned to contribute to the conversation about how to spur regional economic development," said Smith.

The foundation also will recognize nearly two decades of partnership with Indiana University – Purdue University Fort Wayne by presenting a \$2,500 donation for IPFW's Brown Ink Society, which provides support for IPFW students who are faced with financial emergencies that may significantly disrupt their studies. For nearly twenty years, IPFW has provided office space without charge to Questa.

Today also serves as a formal welcome for Questa's new Executive Director, Christina Smith. A native of Fort Wayne, Smith's broad professional profile includes extensive governmental and humanitarian service in the Middle East and Central Asia as well as leadership in higher education and public policy. She served as a U.S. foreign policy advisor to three U.S. presidents and Muslim leaders in Iraq, Kuwait, the Palestinian territories, Bosnia, Albania and most recently Afghanistan, where she spent nearly seven years helping Afghans rebuild their nation after the Taliban's ouster in November 2001.

She has raised tens of millions of dollars in private resources to build hospitals, schools and literacy programs across Afghanistan.

Reporters: For additional information on Huntington University, contact Heather Barkley, Assistant Director of Public Relations, Huntington University at (260) 359-4171.

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Questa Foundation for Education is an Allen County-based foundation for education. Its mission is to expand educational opportunity and encourage greater financial freedom for Allen County students with financial need by providing affordable college loans and generous scholarships that reward academic success and retain graduates in northeast Indiana.

Originally established more than 70 years ago by R. Nelson Snider, principal of South Side High School, and later incorporated as the Fort Wayne Educational Foundation, Questa Foundation sponsors the Questa Scholars 1/2 Back Loan Program that offers qualified students forgiveness of up to 50 percent of their Questa Scholars loan if they graduate from college with a 2.75 GPA and choose to reside and work in northeast Indiana for at least five years after graduation. For more information, visit [www.questafoundation.org](http://www.questafoundation.org).