

## Report on STUDENT SUCCESS Prepared for the CPE Strategic Agenda Work Group

### Introduction

Kentucky's educational, business, and political leadership has long recognized that future prosperity depends on a more responsive and productive system of postsecondary education. In 1997, the state initiated a landmark piece of higher education reform legislation (House Bill 1) to raise the educational level of Kentucky to the national average by the year 2020. Since that time, Kentucky's postsecondary education system has made significant improvements, but Kentucky must continue its tradition of proactive educational reform to ensure our postsecondary and workforce training systems can meet current and future workforce needs.

Increasing educational attainment is imperative for the economic recovery and future growth of Kentucky and the nation. The Obama administration's higher education agenda is focused on increasing college completion and returning America to its previous position of having the most educated population in the world by 2025. In the last few years, a number of national initiatives (e.g., the Lumina Foundation, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the National Governors' Association) have been launched to intensify America's focus on college completion. Dozens of states are involved in efforts to improve their postsecondary education and workforce development systems to adapt to new economic realities and achieve higher levels of performance in a globally competitive world.

The current economic downturn, though challenging, creates opportunities for innovation that will lead to transformational change in postsecondary and workforce development systems. These changes will result, not from higher levels of funding, but from a wellspring of wisdom and talent within the state and its institutions. Ultimately, success may require new structures, new delivery systems, new data, and new teaching methods that recognize the individual needs and learning styles of all students, as well as creative collaboration among educational and workforce partners. As the postsecondary education coordinating board, the CPE will lead the charge in establishing college completion as one of the state's top priorities.

### Problem Overview

Twenty years ago, the U.S. had the best-educated population in the world. In 2008, we were tenth. Now the U.S. is tied for twelfth in the world and declining. A major thrust of higher education policy nationally is to increase the number and quality of college graduates.

In order for Kentucky's postsecondary education system to graduate more students and meet the state's workforce and economic needs, more focused interaction between higher education institutions and employers is needed. It is critical that each institution in Kentucky improve student persistence and

success. This is particularly important for underrepresented and underprepared students, who complete college at much lower rates than their peers.

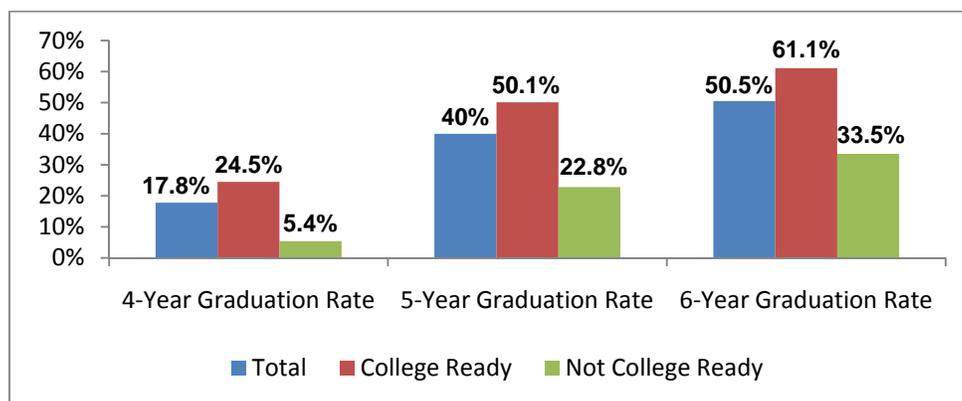
Although college completion is a childhood to adulthood endeavor, the key transition points for the purpose of this report are enrolling in college, remaining enrolled after the first year, completing a degree, and entering advanced training or employment. An examination of recent enrollment and completion data reported by the CPE highlights Kentucky's progress and underscores where improvement is needed.

**Enrollment:** In 2008, total undergraduate fall enrollment was 212,126, while graduate enrollment was 27,942. Since 2000, Kentucky has seen a 28.1 percent increase in undergraduate enrollment and a 22.5 percent increase in graduate enrollment. These totals include both public and independent colleges and universities in Kentucky.

**Retention:** For all Kentucky public institutions, 71.1 percent of first-time students in fall 2008 (two-year and four-year) were still enrolled in fall 2009. The percent of students retained after one year by level is as follows: 61.1 percent of diploma seekers, 44.8 percent of certificate seekers, 61.8 percent of associate seekers, 81.6 percent of baccalaureate students, and 59.1 percent of undeclared students.

**Graduation:** The national average time-to-degree is six years, although graduating in four years is still considered to be "on time." On average, 46 percent of first-time, full-time undergraduate students seeking a bachelor's degree at a Kentucky public university graduate within six years, compared to the national average of 56 percent and the SREB average of 53 percent. Despite the sizable gap between Kentucky's average rate and the nation's, Kentucky's has improved 10 percentage-points on this measure since 1997.

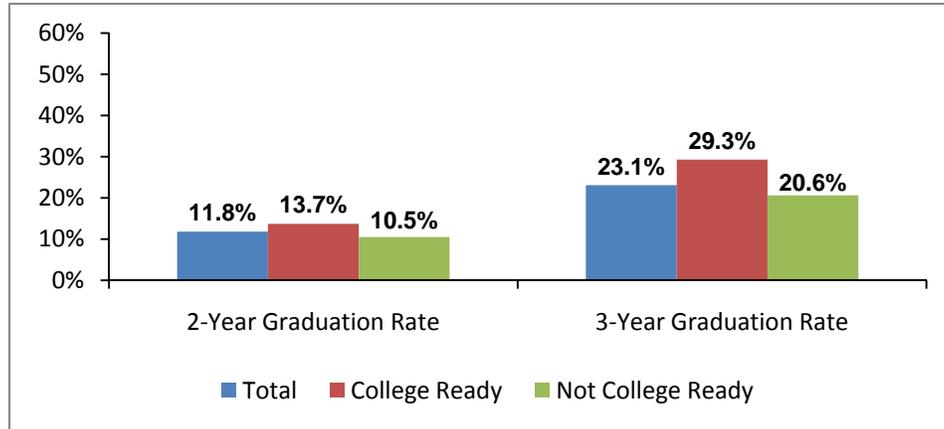
The following chart shows the four-year, five-year, and six-year graduation rates of undergraduate students who entered a Kentucky public university in 2003. Unlike IPEDS data, these percentages include students who started at one Kentucky four-year institution and finished at another. Clearly, academic preparation plays a large role in student persistence and completion.



Source: CPE Comprehensive Database

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The same can be said of persistence and completion rates of associate degree seekers, though the open enrollment policies of many community colleges minimize these differences. The following chart shows the two-year and three-year graduation rates of full-time associate students who entered the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) in 2006, by college readiness at entry.



Source: CPE Comprehensive Database

**Degrees:** Since 2000, total degrees and credentials awarded by Kentucky institutions (public and independent) increased 98.2 percent, with the biggest increase at the certificate and diploma levels. Total degrees and credentials awarded at the associate level and above increased 38.6 percent.

Degrees and Credentials Awarded Statewide by Level												
	AY00	AY01	AY02	AY03	AY04	AY05	AY06	AY07	AY08	AY09	1-Yr. Change	9-Yr. Change
Certificate	165	1,977	3,843	4,055	5,915	7,915	11,831	12,317	14,159	13,922	-1.7%	8338%
Diploma	-	1,609	1,608	1,705	2,226	2,310	2,130	2,301	2,246	2,070	-7.8%	NA*
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>3,586</b>	<b>5,451</b>	<b>5,760</b>	<b>8,141</b>	<b>10,225</b>	<b>13,961</b>	<b>14,618</b>	<b>16,405</b>	<b>15,992</b>	<b>-2.5%</b>	<b>9592%</b>
Associate	4,933	5,078	5,567	6,205	6,841	7,139	7,508	7,834	7,785	8,074	3.7%	63.7%
Bachelor's	15,415	15,208	16,058	16,021	16,902	17,457	18,224	18,623	19,227	19,403	0.9%	26.7%
Post-Bac. Cert.	17	12	45	35	40	24	100	145	171	175	2.3%	929.4%
Master's/Specialist	4,748	4,888	5,035	5,473	6,202	6,570	6,828	7,005	6,928	7,242	4.5%	52.5%
Post-Master's Cert.	0	0	0	0	10	18	20	47	14	17	21.4%	NA*
Doctoral	355	284	336	347	387	423	476	513	535	526	-1.7%	48.2%
Professional	791	824	820	840	863	917	896	913	970	954	-1.6%	20.6%
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>26,259</b>	<b>26,294</b>	<b>27,861</b>	<b>28,921</b>	<b>31,245</b>	<b>32,548</b>	<b>34,052</b>	<b>35,080</b>	<b>35,630</b>	<b>36,391</b>	<b>2.1%</b>	<b>38.6%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26,424</b>	<b>29,880</b>	<b>33,312</b>	<b>34,681</b>	<b>39,386</b>	<b>42,773</b>	<b>48,013</b>	<b>49,698</b>	<b>52,031</b>	<b>52,383</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>98.2%</b>

Source: CPE Comprehensive Database

The Council currently does not track how many college graduates enter graduate school or employment upon completion, but should consider doing so in the 2011-15 strategic agenda.

## Underprepared and Underrepresented Students

Kentucky must examine the success rates of underrepresented and underprepared students to narrow gaps in performance and determine effective practices for improving persistence and completion. An examination of recent minority enrollment and completion data reported by the CPE highlights Kentucky's progress and underscores where improvement is needed.

**Enrollment:** At the undergraduate level, minority enrollment is growing at a slower pace than total enrollment. In fall 2008, 12,816 undergraduate minority students were enrolled in Kentucky public institutions, up from 10,863 in fall 2000 (an 18 percent increase, compared to an overall increase of 28.1 percent). The largest proportion of this enrollment was black (8,539), followed by Asian (1,453) and Hispanic (1,228). However, minority enrollment growth in graduate and professional programs outpaced overall growth at that level. In 2008, 4,194 minority students were enrolled in graduate or first-professional programs, up from 3,341 in 2000 (a 25.5 percent increase, compared to an overall increase of 22.5 percent).

**Retention:** First-year retention rates at Kentucky public universities are typically lower for minority students. Statewide, 61.6 percent of black students and 69.3 percent of Hispanic students entering college in 2008 were retained in 2009, compared to 72.7 percent of white students. However, these gaps diminish for bachelor's degree seekers: 73.5 percent of black students, 83 percent of Hispanic students, and 82.8 percent of white students entering in 2008 were retained in 2009.

**Graduation:** Of the 2003 entering freshman cohort at Kentucky public universities, only 9.4 percent of black students and 16.3 percent of Hispanic students graduated in four years, compared to 18.4 percent of white students (the overall four-year graduation rate was 17.8 percent). After six years, 34.7 percent of black students and 43.5 percent of Hispanic students had graduated, compared to 52 percent of white students (the overall six-year graduation rate for the 2003 cohort was 50.5 percent).

**Degrees:** Since 2000, degrees and credentials awarded to minority students by Kentucky institutions (public and independent) increased 126.2 percent, a larger increase than for total degrees and credentials overall (98.2 percent). The largest increase (5,150%) is at the certificate and diploma levels. Total degrees and credentials awarded at the associate level and above increased 59.4 percent.

Degrees and Credentials Awarded to Minority Students Statewide by Level												
	AY00	AY01	AY02	AY03	AY04	AY05	AY06	AY07	AY08	AY09	1-Yr. Change	9-Yr. Change
Certificate	26	191	420	367	499	621	1,244	1,304	1,508	1,223	-18.9%	4604%
Diploma	0	84	96	124	149	197	188	147	195	142	-27.2%	NA*
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>818</b>	<b>1,432</b>	<b>1,451</b>	<b>1,703</b>	<b>1,365</b>	<b>-19.8%</b>	<b>5150%</b>
Associate	356	341	418	501	536	515	597	607	606	668	10.2%	87.6%
Bachelor's	1,160	1,125	1,369	1,291	1,451	1,507	1,556	1,676	1,660	1,697	2.2%	46.3%
Post-Bac. Cert.	3	1	4	9	8	1	9	16	24	24	0.0%	700%
Master's/Specialist	340	326	388	436	544	592	532	534	542	577	6.5%	69.7%
Post-Master's Cert.	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	3	2	-33.3%	NA*
Doctoral	23	17	26	23	62	49	44	61	52	45	-13.5%	95.7%
Professional	72	79	73	75	78	86	83	79	80	101	26.3%	40.3%
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>1,954</b>	<b>1,889</b>	<b>2,278</b>	<b>2,335</b>	<b>2,679</b>	<b>2,751</b>	<b>2,822</b>	<b>2,976</b>	<b>2,967</b>	<b>3,114</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>59.4%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,980</b>	<b>2,164</b>	<b>2,794</b>	<b>2,826</b>	<b>3,327</b>	<b>3,569</b>	<b>4,254</b>	<b>4,427</b>	<b>4,670</b>	<b>4,479</b>	<b>-4.1%</b>	<b>126.2%</b>

Source: CPE Comprehensive Database

## Recent Statewide Strategies and Initiatives

Much work has been done in Kentucky to strengthen high school academic preparation and improve college readiness. Kentucky currently participates in a number of national initiatives focused on college access, quality, and success. Kentucky is one of nearly two dozen public postsecondary systems participating in the National Association of System Heads' (NASH) *Access to Success Initiative (A2S)*. With support from The Education Trust, the system leaders are pursuing two 2015 goals: to increase the number of college-educated adults in their respective states and to ensure that graduates are more broadly representative of their states' demographic population, which includes increasing the number of college graduates from low-income families. *Access to Success* advocates national best practices and strategies to help all students, and strongly suggests that institutions consider targeting some programs to underrepresented and underprepared students.

As part of Access to Success, Kentucky is participating in the *Closing the Gap* initiative, which advocates the following strategies:

- An early assessment program between postsecondary institutions and local area high schools to improve students' college-readiness. As part of the program, postsecondary institutions administer a college placement test to high school juniors and then provide assignments and other support in the senior year to prepare students for college-level coursework.
- Focusing resources on the first year of college, when half of all dropouts leave, by implementing programs aimed at easing students' transition to academic life. Programs such as "summer bridge," freshmen orientation, and learning communities help students acquire the skills they need to succeed in college.
- Improving teaching in "gate keeping" remedial and introductory courses. Hundreds of colleges and universities nationwide have redesigned these courses, using the proven technology-driven approach developed by the National Center for Academic Transformation. Others have added peer-led supplemental instruction.
- Closely monitoring student progress through "intrusive" advising programs and early warning systems that connect students with the support services they need—tutoring, study skills, and

counseling—to get back on track. This continued academic support should follow students throughout their college years.

- Targeting institutional grant aid to meet the full financial need of low-income students first and foremost, rather than using scarce resources for merit aid to attract students who would most likely attend college anyway.
- Reviewing institutional academic policies to see if they contribute to student attrition. For example, lax policies about how many times students can repeat courses, when students can declare and change majors, and when students must take remedial courses can create frustration among students and slow their progress.

Kentucky is also a member of the American Diploma Project's (ADP) *Achieve* initiative and has joined several other states in an effort to align K-12 standards, assessments, and requirements with the expectations of colleges and employers. This partnership prompted the state-led Common Core State Standards Initiative, through which states are developing K–12 content standards in English and mathematics that are rigorous, focused, and internationally benchmarked. Kentucky was the first state to adopt the Common Core Standards, making college readiness and student success a high priority for the state.

The Kentucky General Assembly has also showed its commitment to access and success by enacting several key pieces of legislation related to college readiness and student transfer.

#### **Senate Bill 1 of 2009**

Senate Bill 1 of 2009 calls for a revision of academic content standards based on national and international benchmarks to increase the rigor and focus of K-12 education. SB1 mandates that Kentucky reduce college remediation rates by at least 50 percent by 2014 in comparison to the 2010 rate, as well as increase the college completion rates of students enrolled in one or more remedial classes by 3 percent annually from 2009 to 2014. Accordingly, Kentucky has developed a set of unified strategies to increase the number of students graduating from high school who are college ready.

Kentucky has made great strides in aligning K-12 content standards and college readiness standards; statewide committees are working to adopt common course placement tests and align college developmental course competencies and lower-level general education competencies. Further improvements in developmental education courses should focus on increasing their efficiency and effectiveness, reducing seat time, and enhancing academic supports. These efforts are described at greater length in the report on college readiness prepared by that subgroup.

**House Bill 160 of 2009**

House Bill 160 was passed to provide assurance that students who earn an associate degree from the Kentucky Community and Technical College System and transfer to a baccalaureate program at a four-year institution will:

- meet all general education requirements.
- not be required to repeat or take additional lower-level courses to fulfill BA/BS degree requirements in same major.
- be admitted based on the same criteria as those students earning lower-division credits at the same university.
- receive priority admission to a public university over out-of-state students if they meet the same admission criteria.
- have access to an appeals process for denial of transfer credit.

The purpose of the legislation is to increase the number of students who successfully transfer and complete a baccalaureate degree and minimize duplication of credit. Kentucky has proactively worked to address transfer issues with the chief academic officers of the public universities and KCTCS, who participated in the development of a statewide transfer action plan. The plan facilitates student mobility across Kentucky's postsecondary system by aligning general education and major pre-requisite learning outcomes and establishing a common course numbering system in the community and technical college system. The plan also expands the definition of transfer to reflect more of the transfer activity taking place within the system (e.g., KCTCS students who transfer to out-of-state or proprietary institutions, KCTCS visiting students). The plan calls for implementation of a statewide transfer technology system to aid students in transfer planning and clearly articulate program pathway frameworks.

**The Double the Numbers Plan**

Although not a legislative mandate, the Council on Postsecondary Education developed a plan in 2007 to double the number of working-age adults with a bachelor's degree or higher, from 402,000 in 2000 to nearly 800,000 in 2020. This initiative grew out of House Bill 1, which states Kentucky shall increase its educational attainment in order to raise the standard of living and quality of life to the national average by the year 2020.

With consultation from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems and Kentucky's public colleges and universities, five essential strategies were advanced to help close the gap:

1. *Raise high school graduation rates*—targets included raising the number of high school graduates from 40,000 to 48,000 and the percent of high school freshmen who graduate four years later from 72 to 81 percent.

2. *Increase the number of GED graduates and transition more of them to college*—targets included raising the annual number of GED graduates from 9,000 to 15,000 and their college-going rate from 19 to 36 percent.
3. *Enroll more first-time students in KCTCS and transfer them to four-year programs*—targets included increasing KCTCS enrollment from 86,500 to 115,900 and transfers from 4,500 to 11,300.
4. *Increase the number of Kentuckians going to and completing college*—targets included raising the annual number of bachelor's degrees awarded from 18,200 to 33,700 and the six-year graduation rate from 45 to 56 percent.
5. *Attract college-educated workers to the state and create new jobs for them*—targets included attracting 80,000 college-educated adults to Kentucky through increased job creation and economic development opportunities.

Although the Double the Numbers initiative is unlikely to continue as originally conceived, this work could help inform any future objectives and strategies related to student success over the next five years.

## Proposed Statewide Objectives and Strategies

Improving student success is arguably the most critical priority of Kentucky's postsecondary education system and a major focus of the 2011-15 strategic agenda planning process. The Council's Strategic Agenda Work Group formed the Student Success subgroup—with representation from Kentucky's education, business, community, and government sectors—to examine national best practices in student persistence and completion and recommend objectives, strategies, and metrics to advance Kentucky's progress.

### Objective 1: To increase degree production and improve graduation rates at all levels.

#### Potential Strategies

- Provide institutional incentives or rewards to increase degree production.
- Create outcomes-based financial incentives for students to encourage credit milestones and timely program completion.
- Ensure that successful, research-based advising and student intervention services are replicated and expanded to all public institutions in the Commonwealth.
- Serve students more effectively through course redesign and alternative methods of program delivery, such as greater opportunities for distance education.
- Increase the capacity of KCTCS institutions to deliver a high-quality general education degree component and expand successful partnerships between two- and four-year institutions to improve KCTCS students' preparation for bachelor's degree programs and increase the number of student transfers.
- Engage faculty in establishing common student learning outcomes across the state for general education and pre-major requirements at the 100 and 200 levels and in high-enrollment majors to enhance student mobility.
- Design clear statewide degree frameworks to facilitate transfer and mobility between degree levels and institutions, specifying the levels of knowledge and skills necessary at each degree level for successful participation in the workplace and/or the next level of higher education.
- Expand statewide infrastructures to support student transitions (e.g., advising, transfer orientation, technology, transfer centers, first-year transition courses), using locally and nationally recognized best practices and institutional expertise.

#### Potential Metrics

- Persistence and graduation rates
- Numbers of degrees and credentials
- Transfer from KCTCS to four-year institutions
- Graduation rate of KCTCS transfers from four-year institutions
- Postsecondary attainment of young adults (24-35) in Kentucky
- Postsecondary attainment of working-age population (24-65) in Kentucky

- Percent of graduates employed in jobs using the knowledge and skills appropriate for their degrees

**Objective 2: To increase educational opportunity, access, and success for students from low-income families, rural/underserved regions of the state, and underrepresented minorities.**

#### **Potential Strategies**

- Maintain low to moderate tuition, particularly at Kentucky's community and technical colleges.
- Increase funding for the College Access Grant and Kentucky Tuition Grant programs to meet the financial needs of Kentucky's lower income students.
- Review and possibly restructure state and institutional financial aid programs to simplify the process, reward student achievement, and ensure greater access to funding for lower-income, part-time, transfer, and adult students.
- Increase college outreach communications and improve the college-completion culture through targeted, unified messages supporting the value of increased educational attainment. Build on the successes of proven regional strategies and take them to scale across the state as resources allow.
- Develop and implement diversity/culturally relevant coursework.
- Increase enrollment of underrepresented and underprepared students into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) related majors and teacher preparation programs.
- Increase pathways and methods for adult learners' entrance, persistence, and completion of college.

#### **Potential Metrics**

- Persistence rate and graduation rate gaps
- Percent of funding need addressed by state need-based aid programs
- Rate of tuition increases by institution and statewide
- Educational attainment levels by ADD district
- Student success of Pell eligible students and GED graduates

**Objective 3: To provide high-quality, competitive undergraduate and graduate programs that support academic achievement and program completion, a capacity and desire for life-long learning, and skills and behaviors promoting civic engagement, global awareness, and career readiness.**

#### **Potential Strategies**

- Create/strengthen academic programs of excellence on every campus to build more distinctive campus cultures and bring greater prominence to individual institutions.

- Enhance opportunities for undergraduate research to increase student engagement in the learning process, and provide hands-on preparation for careers or graduate education.
- Increase student appreciation for diversity, cultural literacy, and international understanding through appropriate learning opportunities, including more opportunities for Kentuckians to study abroad and increased enrollment of international students.
- Shape the enrollment profile of undergraduate and graduate populations at Kentucky's public universities to reflect those of their benchmark institutions.
- Use technology and alternative delivery mechanisms to increase higher education opportunities for working adults, including career/workforce development, and promote lifelong learning.
- Increase service learning opportunities that encourage the development of engaged citizens.

### **Potential Metrics**

- Average ACT scores of entering students
- Measures of quality and student learning (e.g., pass rates or scores on licensure exams, employer and alumni surveys, college learning assessments, faculty assessments, and student awards like Truman scholars, Rhodes scholars, Fulbright scholars)
- Percent increase in international student enrollment (consider using other states in the region as benchmarks for comparison)
- Student engagement

**Appendix A**  
**Members of the Student Success Subgroup**

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**Dale Billingsley**, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, University of Louisville

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**Gail Wells**, Vice President and Provost Academic Affairs, Northern Kentucky University

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