2026 Progress Report

Progress Toward Kentucky's Statewide Strategic Agenda Goals

A Report of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

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About the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) is the state's higher education coordinating agency committed to strengthening the workforce, economy, and quality of life. We do this by guiding the continuous improvement and efficient operation of a high-quality, diverse, and accessible system of postsecondary education.

Key responsibilities include:

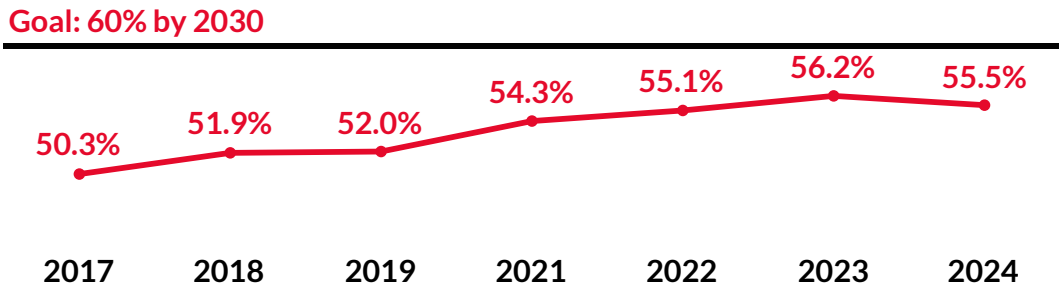
- **Developing and implementing a strategic agenda** for postsecondary education that includes measures of progress.
- **Producing and submitting a biennial budget** request for adequate public funding of higher education.
- **Determining tuition rates and admission criteria** at public postsecondary institutions.
- **Collecting and distributing data** about postsecondary performance.
- **Ensuring the coordination and connectivity of technology** among public institutions.
- **Licensing non-public postsecondary institutions** to operate in the Commonwealth.

Kentucky's Big Goal

Kentucky's 60x30 goal challenges the state to ensure that 60% of adults ages 25–64 have a high-quality postsecondary credential by 2030. This ambitious target aligns with the state's commitment to building a strong workforce, supporting economic growth, and improving the lives of Kentuckians through access to education.

As seen in the chart below, Kentucky is making strides toward its goal. Since 2017, postsecondary attainment has increased 5.2 percentage points. Annual levels fluctuate due to outward migration and older adults aging out of credentialed populations.

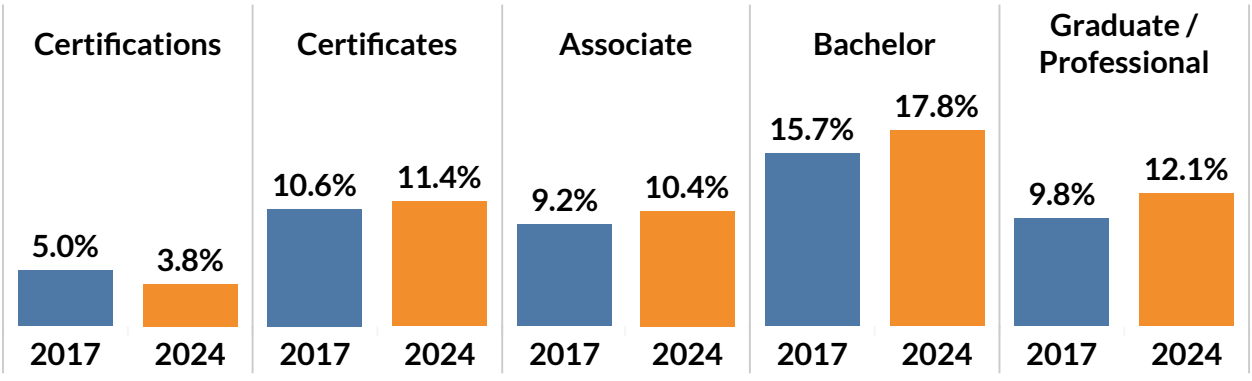
Statewide Educational Attainment



Note: 2020 omitted because of pandemic-era ACS data suppression

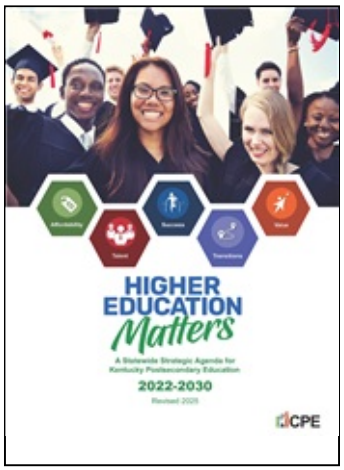
Since the establishment of the state's 60x30 goal, more Kentuckians are earning associate, bachelor's, and graduate degrees. Certificates and trade credentials have fluctuated, but continue to play an important role in the state's overall credential mix. It should be noted that as more Kentuckians pursue higher-level degrees and credentials, further shifts among lower-level credential types may occur, which could help explain these changes.

Educational Attainment of Kentucky Adults by Credential Type



These trends underscore Kentucky's continued advancement toward the 60x30 goal and a more highly educated workforce, while also demonstrating the significant work of the state's campuses in the Council's priority areas of student affordability, access, and success.

About the Strategic Agenda



The Council's primary responsibility is to develop and implement a statewide strategic agenda that aligns state and institutional goals and outlines the strategies and resources needed to achieve them. The agenda takes a comprehensive view of the factors that influence educational attainment in Kentucky and establishes clear priorities, objectives, and key performance indicators to measure progress.

The Council's current strategic agenda, *Higher Education Matters (2022–30)*, was shaped by input from stakeholders across the Commonwealth, including Council members, campus leaders, faculty, students, K–12 educators, legislators, employers, and community partners.

The agenda focuses on five priority areas:

Affordability

Ensuring postsecondary education is affordable for all Kentuckians.

Transitions

Increasing the number of students who transition to college prepared to succeed.

Success

Expanding the number of students who earn high-quality degrees and credentials.

Talent

Growing talent and innovation to support communities, employers, and the economy.

Value

Strengthening understanding of the value of postsecondary education for opportunity and growth.

Each year, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education publishes this Progress Report to track performance on key indicators tied to these priorities. The report also highlights actions the Council is taking to advance progress in affordability, transitions, success, talent, and value, and outlines results to date in each area.

From the President

Dear Friends and Partners,

At the Council, we believe higher education matters. It opens doors for students, strengthens families and communities, and builds the workforce Kentucky needs to compete and thrive. This 2026 Progress Report reflects the important work underway across our state to make postsecondary education more affordable, more accessible, more relevant, and more valuable for all Kentuckians.

Our work is guided by five priority areas in Kentucky's statewide strategic agenda: Affordability, Transitions, Success, Talent, and Value. Together, these priorities reflect a simple but powerful goal: ensuring more Kentuckians can enroll in postsecondary education, earn high-quality credentials, and use those credentials to build better futures for themselves and for the Commonwealth.

This year's progress shows encouraging momentum. More Kentucky students are graduating without debt, and average student loan balances continue to decline. Dual credit participation remains a strong driver of college-going rates, while advising initiatives are helping students better navigate the path from school to career. Through the Kentucky Student Success Collaborative and the Kentucky Graduate Profile, we are supporting institutions as they strengthen transfer, completion, academic quality, and the essential skills students need for lifelong success.

We are also seeing promising gains in areas tied directly to Kentucky's workforce needs. Enrollment in health-related majors has increased significantly, and new legislative investments in healthcare, aviation, and recovery support are helping align education with the state's economic future. At the same time, our college and career website, Futuriti.org, is a trailblazing national model for helping students of all ages better understand the opportunities, outcomes, and long-term value of postsecondary education.

These accomplishments are the result of strong partnerships. They reflect the commitment of our colleges and universities, lawmakers, educators, employers, community leaders, and many others who share our belief that postsecondary opportunity should be within reach for every Kentuckian.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support of Kentucky higher education.

Sincerely,

Dr. Aaron Thompson, President
Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

Affordability

Affordability refers to the ability of students to enroll, progress, and complete postsecondary degrees and credentials at Kentucky public colleges and universities without facing undue financial hardship.

It is achieved through a combination of adequate state support, moderated tuition and fees, expanded grants and scholarships, reduced unmet financial need, and manageable student debt.

Affordability Initiatives

Performance Funding Work Group

CPE supports the development and evolution of the performance funding model by operating and validating its components — including the square footage model, data inputs, and iterative updates — while developing funding scenarios and policy recommendations in coordination with executive leadership, postsecondary institutions, the General Assembly, and the Office of the State Budget Director.

Progress

In April 2026, CPE launched the latest iteration of the Performance Funding Work Group, beginning a cycle of analysis and stakeholder engagement that will extend into fall 2026, with final recommendations prepared for the 2027 legislative session. This work aims to reduce financial barriers to enrollment and completion; guide investments in research and scholarships; and build support for greater investment in postsecondary education.

13

state leaders representing the House, Senate, State Budget Office and Kentucky's campuses serve on the workgroup shaping Kentucky's performance funding model

Tuition Rate Management

Tuition rate management remains a key part of Kentucky's effort to keep postsecondary education affordable. CPE works to moderate tuition and mandatory fee increases so that rising college costs do not place unnecessary strain on students and families. In 2009-2010, CPE reinstated tuition ceilings for public institutions, marking an important step in slowing the pace of price increases and supporting a more predictable cost environment across the state.

Progress

Kentucky has made clear long-term progress in moderating tuition and fee increases at its public institutions. After annual increases peaked at 16.0% in 2004-2005 and exceeded 10% in several years during the early 2000s, the pace of growth slowed substantially following the reinstatement of tuition ceilings in 2009-2010.

Since that time, tuition and fee increases have remained far more stable and generally in the low single digits, not exceeding 4.0% since 2017-2018 and averaging just 2.2% over the past five years. Overall, this reflects sustained progress in managing college prices more predictably and keeping affordability at the center of Kentucky's public postsecondary strategy.

Over the last five years, the average annual tuition and fee increase at Kentucky public institutions was just

2.2%

At the Northern Kentucky Makerspace Expo, CPE's Trinity Walsh provides guidance to parents on how they can use the Futuriti website to learn about paying for college.

Futuriti

CPE, in partnership with the Commonwealth Education Continuum, launched Kentucky's first student-facing college recruitment and workforce development tool in 2025. In keeping with the Kentucky Students' Right to Know Act, the site lists cost of attendance and average debt at every Kentucky public and private institution to help students plan for the cost of college. The platform also helps students explore postsecondary and career options in a more informed and intentional way by bringing key information together in one place. By increasing cost transparency and connecting students to planning tools earlier in the decision-making process, Futuriti supports stronger transitions from high school to postsecondary education and the workforce.

"Futuriti will help us meet our attainment goal of 60% of the population with a postsecondary credential by 2030. There are no sites like Futuriti in other states, and I am thrilled that Kentuckians can begin finding their futures with this innovative tool."

Dr. Aaron Thompson, CPE President

Progress

Throughout 2025, CPE worked with KHEAA to digitize the *Affording Higher Education* publication into a searchable scholarship database. Launched in April 2026, the scholarship section of Futuriti enables students to search for scholarships connected to their careers of choice. This feature makes scholarship information easier to access, while helping students and their families connect financial planning to academic and career goals.

700+

careers have information available on the Futuriti website

Learn more about Futuriti:

52K

unique visitors since launch in 2025

Affordability Metrics

CPE monitors unmet financial need, time to degree, and debt at graduation to understand how affordability is affecting students across the public postsecondary system. Taken together, these measures show both the immediate financial pressure students face and the longer-term costs associated with completing a credential.

Unmet Financial Need for First-Time Students (KPI)

First-time student unmet financial need measures the out-of-pocket cost burden facing first-time, in-state students after all available financial aid, including the Student Aid Index, has been applied. It captures the gap between total cost of attendance and the resources available to cover it, making it one of the clearest measures of the financial pressure students face when entering college. High unmet need can make it harder for students to enroll, stay enrolled, and progress toward a credential — particularly for those with limited means.

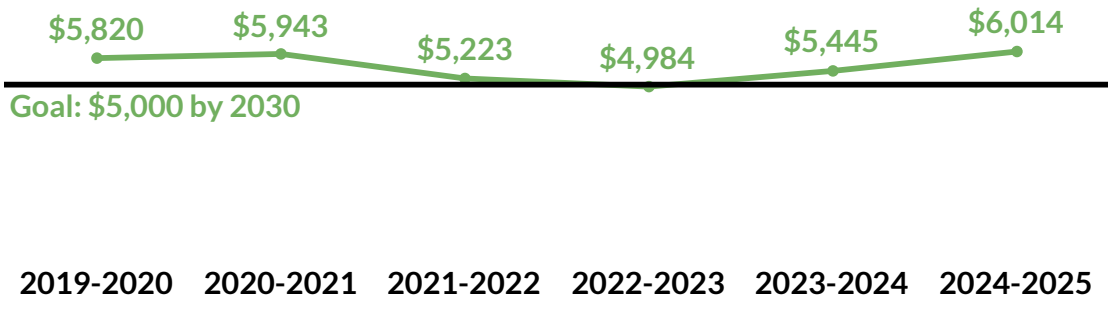
Progress

After improving from $5,820 in 2019-2020 to $4,984 in 2022-2023 (moving below the statewide target of $5,000), unmet financial need rose again to $5,445 in 2023-2024 and $6,014 in 2024-2025. The $1,030 increase from 2022-2023 to 2024-2025 is driven primarily by rising costs of attendance — not a reduction in aid. This underscores the urgency of CPE's affordability strategy, including performance funding, tuition moderation, and expanded scholarship access through Futuriti.

$1K

increase in unmet financial need is due to rising cost of attendance

Unmet Need for First-Time Students (All Public Institutions)



Note: Institution- and sector-level breakouts for these data are reported in Appendix A.

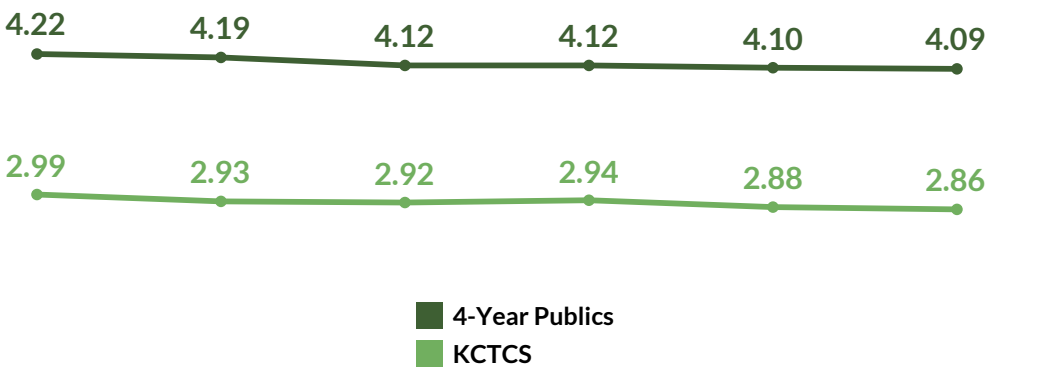
Time-to-Degree (Contextual Metric)

Time-to-degree measures the average number of fall and spring semesters first-time students enrolled at the graduating institution take to complete a baccalaureate (universities) or associate (KCTCS) degree (including only those whose first-time enrollment occurred within the previous ten years). While not a direct cost measure, each additional semester adds tuition, fees, and living expenses — making time-to-degree an important indicator of overall affordability.

Progress

Across four-year public institutions, time-to-degree improved from 4.22 years in 2019-2020 to 4.09 years in 2024-2025. At KCTCS, time-to-degree moved from 2.99 years in 2019-2020 to 2.86 years in 2024-2025, with some variation in the middle of the period. The gradual declines in both sectors indicate that students are completing more efficiently, which reduces their expenses related to tuition, fees, living costs, and borrowing over time.

Average Time-to-Degree (All Public Institutions)



Note: Institution- and sector-level breakouts for these data are reported in Appendix B.

3.1%

reduction in average time-to-degree at four-year public institutions since 2019-2020

2.3%

reduction in average time-to-degree at KCTCS institutions since 2019-2020

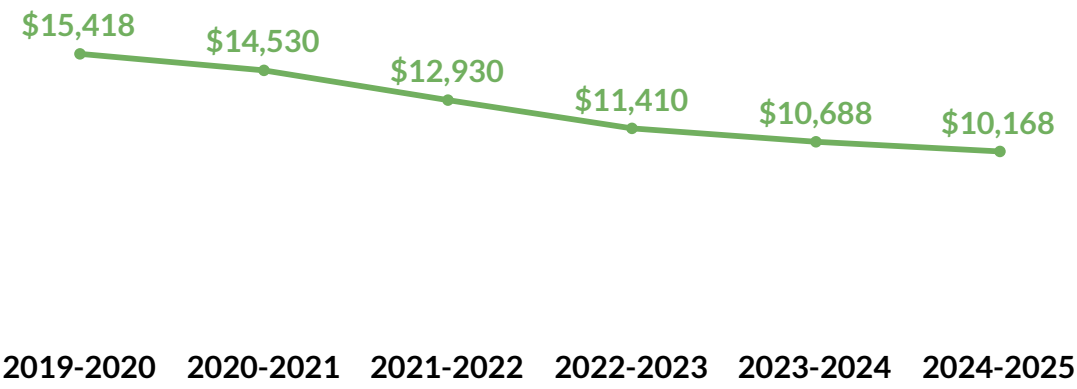
Student Debt Burden at Graduation (Contextual Metric)

Each year, CPE's Data and Advanced Analytics Unit releases a student debt report to track trends affecting undergraduate students at KCTCS colleges and Kentucky public universities. The report provides data to inform policy, institutional decision-making, and student guidance aimed at reducing financial barriers to higher education. Debt at graduation measures the cumulative sum of all loans borrowed from first enrollment through completion of the highest undergraduate credential. It reflects total financial exposure — not a single-year cost — and is a key indicator of long-term financial burden.

Progress

The 2026 report showed that six out of 10 Kentucky undergraduate students are now graduating debt-free, and average loan balances are decreasing. Statewide average debt burden at graduation fell from $15,418 in 2019-2020 to $10,168 in 2024-2025. These reductions are an encouraging sign that students are making progress toward completion with lower borrowing than in prior years.

Student Debt Burden at Graduation (All Public Institutions)



Note: Institution- and sector-level breakouts for these data are reported in Appendix C.

61%
of completers in 2024-2025 graduated debt-free

34%
decrease in average debt burden at graduation over the past five years

$5K+
drop in average debt burden at graduation over the past five years

Affordability Summary

Overall, Kentucky's affordability picture is strong. Student debt and time-to-degree are both improving significantly. However, recent growth in unmet financial need shows that cost pressures remain significant for first-time students. CPE's affordability work — through funding analysis, public-facing tools, and debt monitoring — supports decisions that reduce financial barriers to enrollment and completion over time.

Transitions

Transitions refers to ensuring Kentuckians have the opportunity to successfully explore and enter postsecondary education.

This includes providing early postsecondary opportunities for high schoolers, and postsecondary access supports for high school students and adults entering or returning to postsecondary education.

CPE's Amanda Ellis walks Continuum members through KYSTATS data showing where K-12 to college to career pathways need attention

Transitions Initiatives

Commonwealth Education Continuum

The Commonwealth Education Continuum (CEC) is a P-20 initiative facilitated by CPE to promote statewide collaboration among education, community and workforce leaders and strengthen Kentucky's education pipeline. Current workgroups focus on four areas: postsecondary affordability, K-12 educator workforce, P-20 competency framework and advising and transitional support. The initiative's work aims to support middle and high school career exploration and increase family and community engagement from early childhood through workforce entry.

Progress:

The work of the CEC in 2026 will explore Individual Learning Plan regulation for grades 6-12, to expand Futuriti's reach within schools and address other public policy needs.

"The Commonwealth Education Continuum is an opportunity for deep, meaningful collaboration that will improve academic and career outcomes for all our students."

Dr. Aaron Thompson, CPE President and CEC Co-Chair

28

state experts on the Continuum, spanning early childhood education through the workforce

Students from 12 school districts were recognized by GEAR UP Kentucky during its Annual GEAR UP Kentucky Institute for a College-Going Culture. Pictured - Front row: Devin Warmouth, Bourbon Co. HS; Alexandria Easton, Bath Co. HS; Natalie Basford, Augusta Independent School. Back row: Bryjuan Dyer, Mason Co. HS; Jared Ishmael, Fleming Co. HS; Gavin Profitt, Frankfort HS; Kaden Frederick, Paris HS. Not pictured: Kylee Butrick, Holmes HS; Joshua Heseman, Marion Co. HS; Alyssa Pittman, Mercer Co. Senior HS; Luke Gregg, Pendleton Co. HS; Hadleigh Linville, Robertson Co. HS.

GEAR UP Kentucky (GUK)

In 2025, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) was one of eight states awarded a highly competitive seven-year, $35 million GEAR UP grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The grant strengthens support for students transitioning from high school to postsecondary education by focusing on advising, career exploration, and early postsecondary opportunities.

This award marks the fifth GEAR UP Kentucky grant, underscoring the Council's longstanding leadership in expanding educational opportunity for the state's students, as well as fostering community and state partnerships that contribute to overall positive education outcomes.

Progress:

Through this grant, GEAR UP Kentucky will serve more than 10,000 additional students in eight Kentucky districts that serve a high percentage of students from low-income households. Participating school districts include: Anderson County, Augusta Independent, Bath County, Mason County, Mercer County, Newport Independent, Pendleton County, and Washington County.

66K

students benefited from Kentucky's GEAR UP programs over the last 25 years

91

Kentucky school districts were served by GEAR UP across the program's history

Kentucky Advising Academy

The Kentucky Advising Academy (KAA), housed within CPE, supports statewide best practices in postsecondary advising. In partnership with Education Strategy Group, it developed a framework to help districts strengthen advising systems, improve student outcomes, and align efforts in college access, career planning, financial aid, and postsecondary decision-making.

Progress:

Through a grant from the Lumina Foundation, KAA is partnering with OneGoal in 10 Kentucky K-12 districts to implement the advising framework and its new scope, which will be available in June 2026.

KAA also continues to support advisors through online professional development focused on career exploration, postsecondary opportunities, financial aid and literacy, and essential employability skills.

85

Kentucky counties have been represented by staff attending Kentucky Advising Academy events

Student Access Summit

CPE's first Student Access Summit in 2025 brought together educators, leaders, and changemakers from across Kentucky's education sectors to expand postsecondary access for all students. Attendees gained practical strategies, tools, and resources to support students through the transition to and through college, while learning about promising approaches and progress in closing access gaps.

Progress:

CPE is planning the second Student Access Summit for fall 2026.

Students were the focus at CPE's first Student Access Summit. Participants heard directly from students about how institutions can make college transitions easier. From left: Dr. Josh Sparks, 2025 GEAR UP Alum Leader of the Year; Katie Black, college student; Sammy Bragg, high school senior; and Allison Castro-Garcia, college student.

Transitions Metrics

These initiatives help set the conditions for stronger transitions into postsecondary education. The measures below track whether more students are enrolling, moving directly into college after high school, participating in early postsecondary opportunities, and completing the FAFSA. Together, they help show how effectively Kentucky is supporting students at key transition points and whether more learners are gaining momentum toward postsecondary education and training.

Undergraduate Enrollment (KPI)

Undergraduate enrollment is the total unduplicated number of students who enroll in an undergraduate program during an academic year, either full-time or part-time. As a broad access measure, it reflects the overall reach of Kentucky's postsecondary system and provides an important indicator of whether students are entering higher education in growing numbers. Changes in enrollment can be influenced by many factors, particularly the strength of transition supports.

Progress

After declining from 197,264 in fall 2020 to 194,021 in fall 2021, statewide undergraduate enrollment increased each year to 227,582 in fall 2025. That represents an increase of 17.3%, from fall 2021 to fall 2025, reflecting sustained growth in undergraduate participation across Kentucky's postsecondary system. The upward trend suggests that recent efforts to strengthen college access, affordability, advising, and re-engagement are helping more students enter or return to postsecondary education.

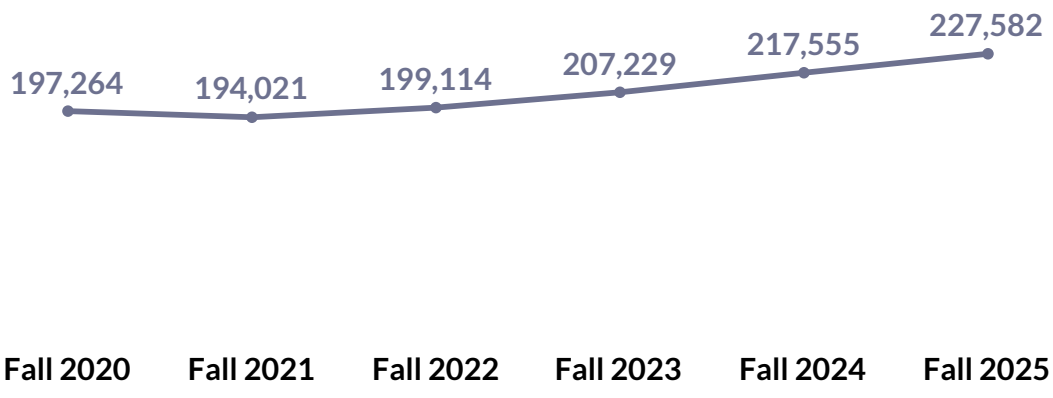
34K

increase in undergraduate enrollment since fall 2021

17.3%

increase in undergraduate enrollment since the pandemic low in fall 2021

Total Undergraduate Enrollment (All Sectors)



Note: Institution- and sector-level breakouts for these data are reported in Appendix D.

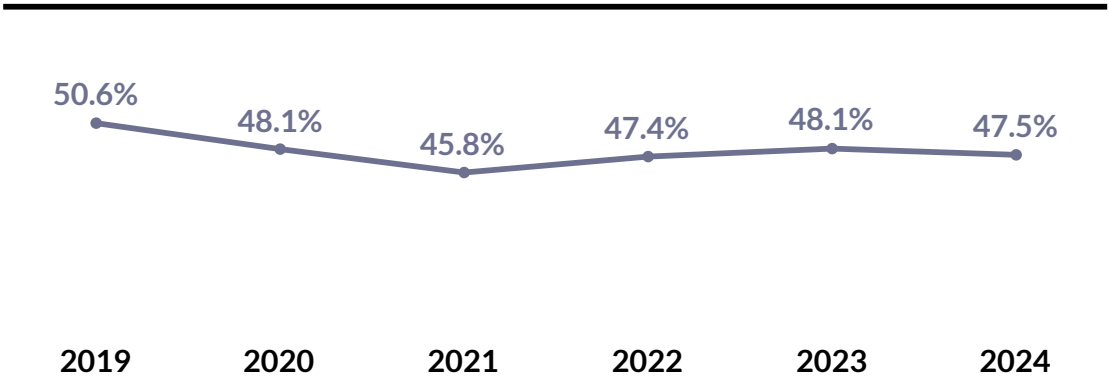
Immediate College-Going Rate (KPI)

The immediate college-going rate measures the share of recent Kentucky public high school graduates who enroll in any in-state postsecondary institution during the summer, fall, or spring semester following graduation. This measure reflects how effectively students are transitioning from high school into college and is shaped by academic preparation, advising, affordability, family support, and access to clear information about postsecondary options.

Progress

The statewide rate declined from 50.6% for the class of 2019 to 45.8% for the class of 2021, reflecting the disruption the pandemic created for students' college plans and transitions. The rate then improved to 48.1% for the class of 2023 before settling at 47.5% for the class of 2024. While Kentucky regained some of the ground lost during the pandemic, the most recent rate remains below earlier levels and underscores the importance of continued work to strengthen students' transition from high school into college.

In-State College-Going Rate (Public High School Graduates Only)



47.5%

in-state college-going rate for Kentucky public high school class of 2024

Dual Credit Completion (Contextual Metric)

CPE supports dual credit opportunities by administering Kentucky's statewide Dual Credit Policy, facilitating the Dual Credit Advisory Council, and monitoring progress toward the state goal of having 50% of high school students graduate with a C or better in at least one dual credit course by 2030. These efforts are designed to expand access to early postsecondary opportunities, reduce cost barriers for students and families, and strengthen alignment between high school and college expectations. CPE will continue providing training and guidance for counselors and school districts, in partnership with postsecondary institutions, to support program quality and promote equitable access to dual credit opportunities across the state.

A recently published CPE study finds that students who took at least one dual credit course are 19 percentage points more likely to immediately enroll in college. The findings also suggest that students increase their likelihood of postsecondary enrollment with each successive dual credit course.

19pp

increase in likelihood of immediate college enrollment among high school students who took dual credit courses

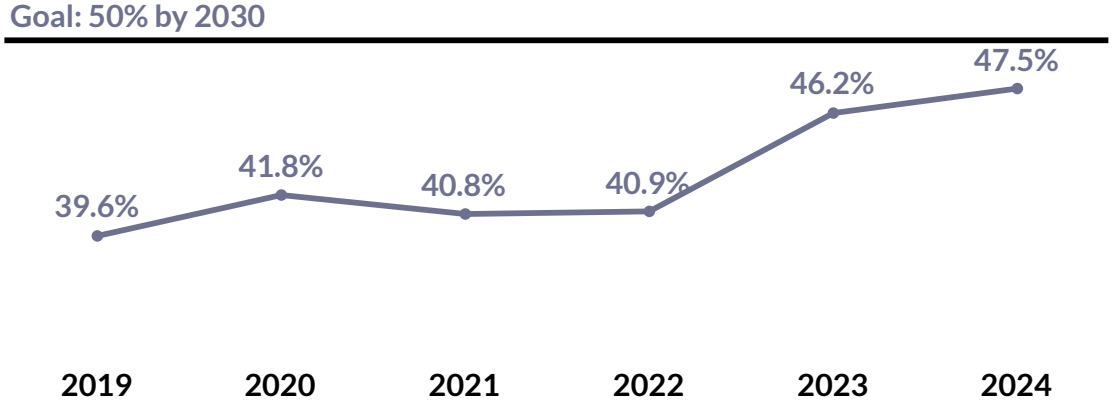
Progress

The statewide dual credit completion rate — measuring the share of public high school graduates who completed at least one dual credit course with a grade of C or better — increased from 39.6% for the class of 2019 to 47.5% for the class of 2024, a gain of 7.9 percentage points. This steady growth brings Kentucky within 2.5 percentage points of its 2030 statewide target of 50%, indicating substantial momentum in expanding student participation and successful course completion. The trend suggests that statewide policy leadership, tuition support, and continued collaboration among K-12 districts, colleges, and universities are helping more students leave high school with early college experience already in hand.

8pp

increase in successful dual credit course completion among public high school graduates since 2019

Dual Credit Attainment of Public High School Graduates



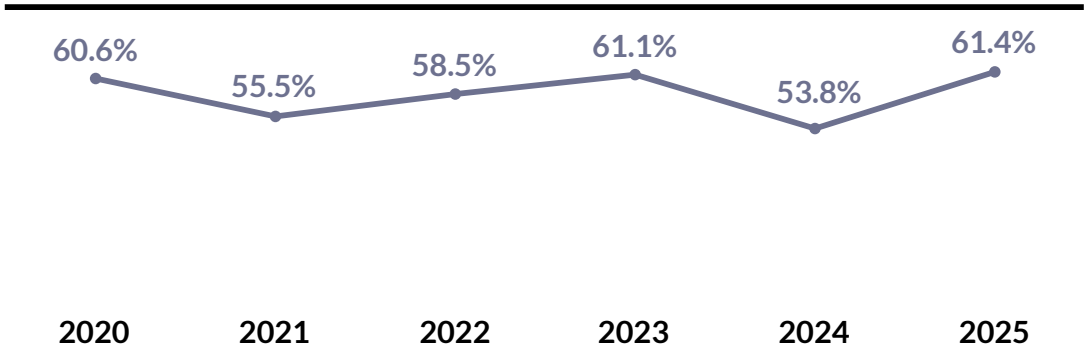
FAFSA Completion (Contextual Metric)

FAFSA completion is measured as the proportion of high school graduates who have completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid by October 1. FAFSA completion data are provided by the National College Attainment Network (NCAN) and sourced from the Federal Student Aid Office. Because submitting the FAFSA is a key step in connecting students to grants, scholarships, work-study, and loans, this measure serves as an important indicator of college access and readiness to enroll.

Progress

Rates were rising until complications arose with the new FAFSA rollout in 2024. In 2025, the rate rebounded and reached a five-year high, rising from 53.8% to 61.4% — an increase of 7.6 percentage points toward the 2030 target of 70%. Encouragingly, completion rates for the class of 2026 are outpacing 2025 as of March 2026.

Statewide FAFSA Completion Rate by October 1

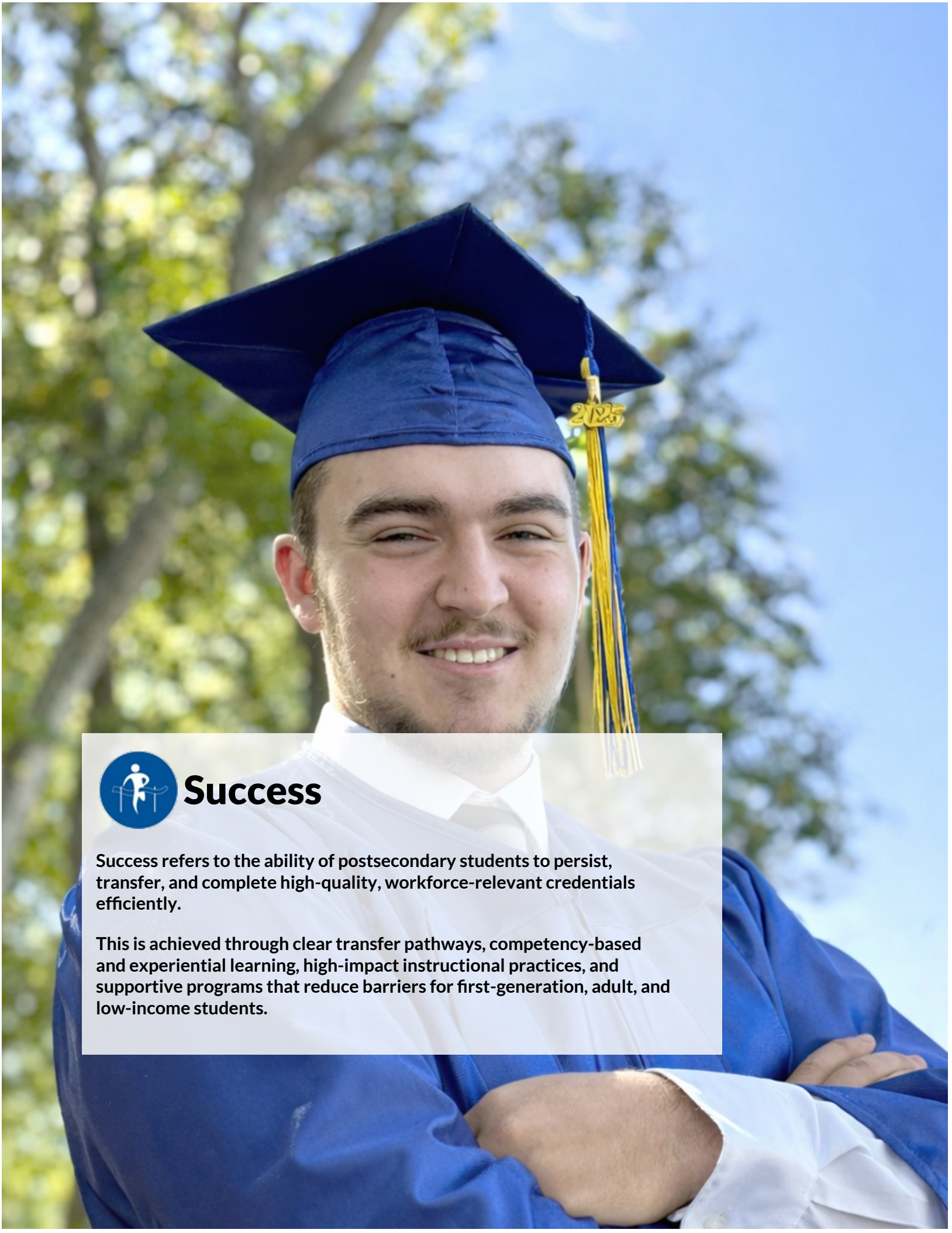


7.6pp

increase in FAFSA completion rate in 2025 after form-rollout complications in 2024

Transitions Summary

Together, these efforts show how CPE is working to strengthen the transition from high school into postsecondary education through statewide collaboration, advising, career exploration, financial aid support, and early postsecondary opportunities. The trend lines in undergraduate enrollment, college-going, dual credit completion, and FAFSA completion reflect both the challenges in this work and the progress Kentucky is making toward a stronger and more connected education pipeline.



Success

Success refers to the ability of postsecondary students to persist, transfer, and complete high-quality, workforce-relevant credentials efficiently.

This is achieved through clear transfer pathways, competency-based and experiential learning, high-impact instructional practices, and supportive programs that reduce barriers for first-generation, adult, and low-income students.

CPE President Aaron Thompson (left) and the Kentucky Student Success Collaborative's Lilly Massa-McKinley (right) pose with mental health expert Dr. Zainab Okolo of The Jed Foundation. Okolo was a featured speaker, sharing strategies and resources to help campus faculty and staff address the growing number of Kentucky students experiencing mental health challenges, which directly affect student retention and graduation rates.

Success Initiatives

Kentucky Student Success Collaborative (KYSSC)

Funded by the James Graham Brown Foundation, KYSSC leads statewide efforts to improve transfer outcomes, gateway course success, basic needs support, mental health, and adult attainment. It convenes faculty and staff through communities of practice and builds institutional capacity via the Leadership exChange.

A $5.35 million investment from the foundation has leveraged approximately $7 million in additional financial support for Kentucky students.

Progress

Six Guiding Teams advise KYSSC Strategy Leads and 20 Senior Fellows on strategy prioritization, problem-solving, and promotions across 25 institutions and partners. Guiding Teams meet monthly and ensure strategy implementation is meeting campus needs and challenges.

Through its Leadership exChange, KYSSC will launch pilot projects in 2026 to build capacity, strengthen leadership, and scale high-impact, cost-effective change initiatives. Projects will focus on transfer partnerships, credit for prior learning, and process improvements for emergency aid, adult learners, and prison education programs.

1,600

faculty and educators participated in KYSSC Communities of Practice

$7M

in financial supports for students has been generated by the KYSSC

65

faculty and staff have participated in the Leadership exChange Program

The Learning exChange, housed on the KYSSC website, includes strategy data dashboards with KPIs for success, student voice research, strategy research briefs, and initiative KPIs to inform strategy implementation and high-impact interventions. In 2026, KYSSC will launch the Student Voice Internship Program, which will engage 10-12 current undergraduate students in KYSSC meetings and convenings and share student perspectives in real time.

More than 30 campus leaders from public, private, and KCTCS institutions were selected for the 2025-26 cohort of the Kentucky Student Success Collaborative's Leadership exChange. The goal of the program is to build the capacity of participants to make impactful and sustainable change on their campuses. The year-long training includes workshops, a Community of Practice, and a capstone project.

Kentucky Graduate Profile

The Kentucky Graduate Profile is the state's postsecondary learning framework, defining 10 Essential Skills that research shows are critical for success in the workforce, in communities, and in civic life. It serves as a foundation for Kentucky's efforts to strengthen academic quality, improve workforce alignment, and ensure that degrees remain relevant in a changing economy. Together with the knowledge and abilities developed through general education and academic programs, these transferable skills help define what every Kentucky graduate should know, articulate, and demonstrate upon completion.

Progress

CPE is working with campuses statewide to embed the Kentucky Graduate Profile across academic programs and general education, with a focus on building the 10 Essential Skills throughout the student experience — from first-year through capstone. In May, the Graduate Profile Institute will bring faculty together to strengthen how civic engagement is reflected in curricula, assessments, and learning.

115

faculty and staff have been or are currently involved in aligning Kentucky's curriculum to include essential skills

10

essential skills needed for employability:

1. Adaptability & Leadership
2. Civic Engagement
3. Collaboration & Teamwork
4. Communication
5. Critical & Creative Thinking
6. Information Literacy
7. Interpersonal Relations
8. Knowledge Application
9. Professionalism
10. Quantitative Reasoning

KYSSC Associate Vice President Lilly Massa-McKinley welcomes attendees at CPE's annual Kentucky Student Success Summit. The event, which informs higher education professionals of the latest trends and best practices, draws several hundred attendees each year.

Student Success Summit

CPE's annual Student Success Summit is a key statewide convening focused on improving student outcomes. Now in its 15th year, the event brings together hundreds of campus leaders, faculty, staff, policymakers, and national partners to share evidence-based strategies for increasing degree completion, strengthening the student experience, and supporting successful transitions into the workforce. The Summit reflects Kentucky's shared commitment to student success and CPE's leadership in aligning institutions around common goals and effective practice.

As the 2026 Summit concluded, Dr. Lilly Massa-McKinley and Dr. Aaron Thompson challenged attendees to think beyond the event itself and consider how to carry this momentum back to their campuses and communities. Their message underscored that continued progress in student success will require strong partnerships, new ideas, and a shared commitment to helping Kentucky students persist, succeed, and thrive. The summit highlighted both the energy behind this work and the opportunities ahead for deeper collaboration across the state.

400+

higher education leaders attended the 2026 Summit

Success Metrics

The measures below track whether students are persisting, completing credentials, and moving efficiently through postsecondary education. Together, they show how well Kentucky institutions are supporting students from enrollment through graduation and transfer.

Undergraduate Degrees and Credentials (KPI)

Undergraduate degrees and credentials capture bachelor's degrees awarded by all four-year institutions, as well as associate degrees, certificates, and diplomas awarded by KCTCS. These measures provide an important indication of statewide completion volume and institutional capacity to help students reach completion.

Progress

Bachelor's degree production at Kentucky's public and private four-year institutions declined during the pandemic before increasing to 23,419 in 2024-2025. Although still below the 2030 target of 26,300, the recent improvement suggests stabilization after several years of decline.

At KCTCS institutions, undergraduate degree and credential production followed a stronger upward trajectory. After dipping to 38,090 awards in 2021-2022, KCTCS rebounded sharply, reaching 44,713 awards in 2024-2025 — a gain of 6,623.

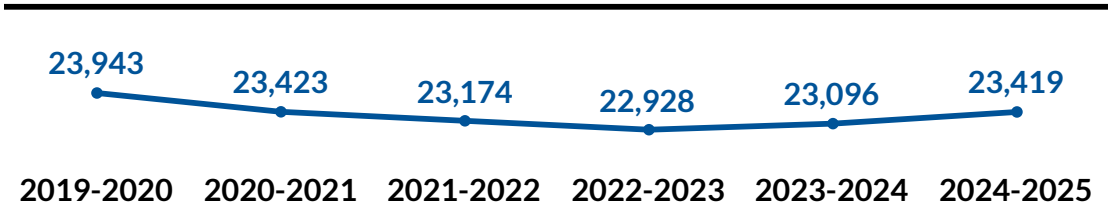
23K+

bachelor's degrees awarded statewide in 2024-2025

6,623

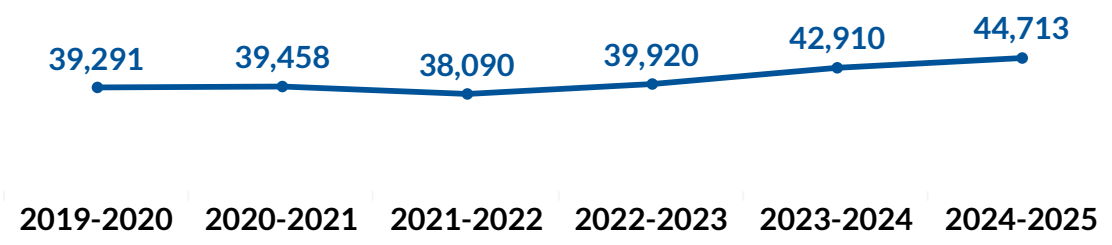
increase in KCTCS awards from the pandemic-era low

Bachelor's Degrees Awarded (All Sectors, Duplicated)



Note: Institution- and sector-level breakouts for these data are reported in Appendix E.

KCTCS Degrees and Credentials Awarded (Duplicated)



150% Graduation Rates (KPI)

Graduation rates measure the share of first-time, full-time students who complete on time or within an extended timeframe. The 150% graduation rate reflects the percentage of students who earn their degree within six years (four-year universities) or three years (KCTCS). These metrics help show whether institutions are supporting students not only to remain enrolled, but to finish efficiently and successfully.

Progress

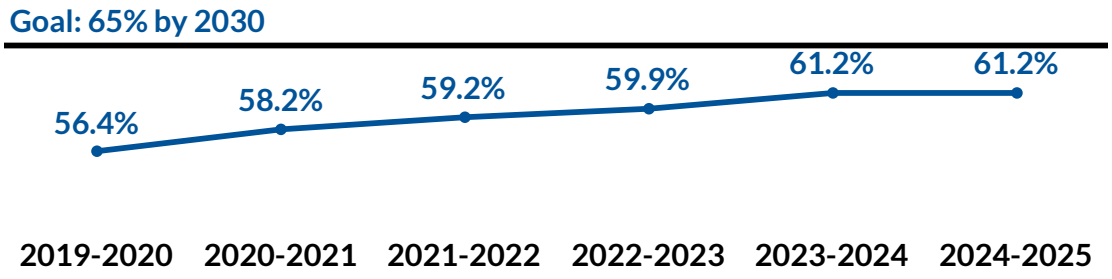
At four-year public institutions, the 150% graduation rate increased from 56.4% in 2019-2020 to 61.2% in 2024-2025, a gain of 4.8 percentage points. The 150% rate held at 61.2% from 2023-2024 to 2024-2025. This reflects steady progress toward the state goal of 65% by 2030, the current rate among national four-year public institutions in the same Carnegie Classifications as Kentucky's universities.

At KCTCS, the 150% graduation rate increased from 36.3% in 2019-2020 to 51.1% in 2024-2025, a gain of 14.8 percentage points. This is one of the strongest improvement trends among the success metrics shown and indicates substantial progress in helping more two-year students complete within three years.

4.8pp
gain in 150% (six-year) graduation rates at public universities

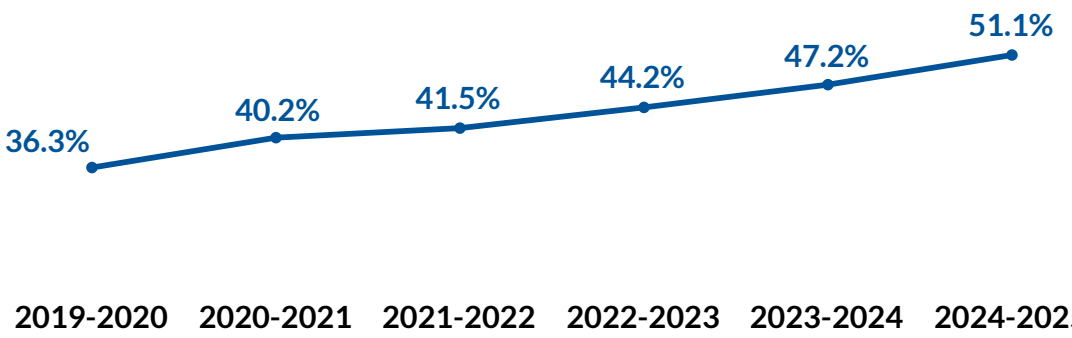
14.8pp
gain in 150% (three-year) graduation rates at KCTCS colleges

Four-Year Public Institution 150% Graduation Rates



Note: Institution- and sector-level breakouts for these data are reported in Appendix F.

KCTCS 150% Graduation Rates



100% Graduation Rates (Contextual Metric)

Graduation rates measure the share of first-time, full-time students who complete on time. The 100% graduation rate reflects the percentage of students who earn their degree within four years (four-year universities) or two years (KCTCS). These metrics help show whether institutions are supporting students not only to remain enrolled, but to finish efficiently and successfully.

Progress

The 100% graduation rate — reflecting students who complete within the standard timeframe of four years at universities — rose from 40.6% at four-year publics in 2019-2020 to 47.2% in 2024-2025, a gain of 6.6 percentage points. This outpaces the 150% rate improvement over the same period, suggesting not only that more students are finishing, but that more are finishing on time.

At KCTCS, the 100% graduation rate —reflecting students who complete within the standard timeframe of two years — rose from 32.0% during the pandemic low in 2021-2022 to 38.4% in 2024-2025. This rapid 6.6 percentage point improvement over the last three years has nearly returned on-time completion rates to pre-pandemic levels.

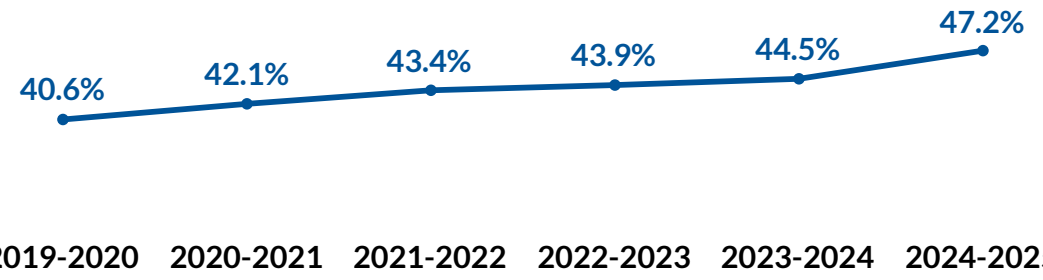
6.6pp

increase in 100% (four-year) graudation rates at public universities

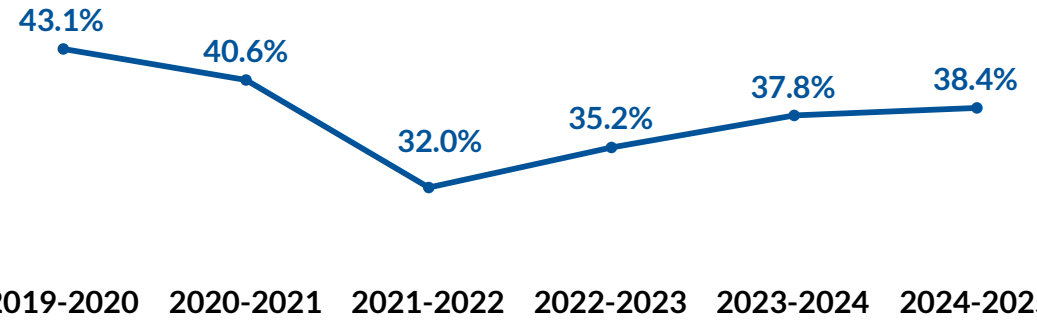
6.4pp

increase in 100% (two-year) graduation rates at KCTCS since pandemic low

Four-Year Public Institution 100% Graduation Rates



KCTCS 100% Graduation Rates



Retention Rates (KPI)

Retention rates measure whether first-time students remain enrolled or earn a credential by the following fall. Because retention is closely tied to completion, it is one of the clearest early indicators of student success.

Progress

At four-year public institutions, the retention rate declined from 80.7% in 2019-2020 to 76.9% in 2020-2021, then recovered to 80.8% in 2024-2025. The rebound suggests that institutions have regained much of the ground lost earlier in the period and are making progress toward the goal of 84% retention by 2030, the current rate among national public universities in the same Carnegie Classifications as Kentucky public universities.

At KCTCS, retention increased from 57.1% in 2019-2020 to 62.2% in 2024-2025, a gain of 5.1 percentage points. The strongest gains occurred after 2021-2022, indicating improving momentum in keeping first-year students enrolled and on track.

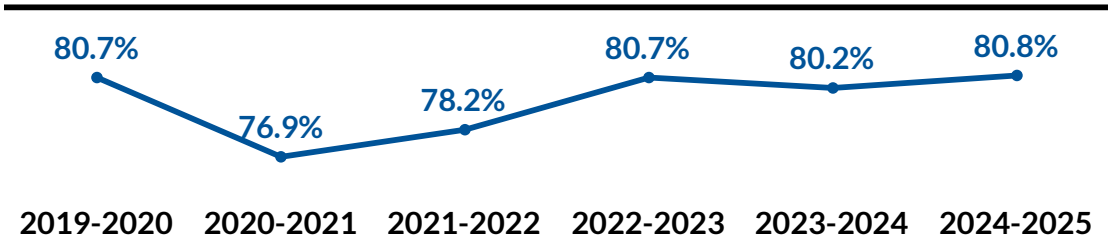
80.8%

is the highest four-year public retention rate on record, approaching the 2030 target of 84%

5.1pp

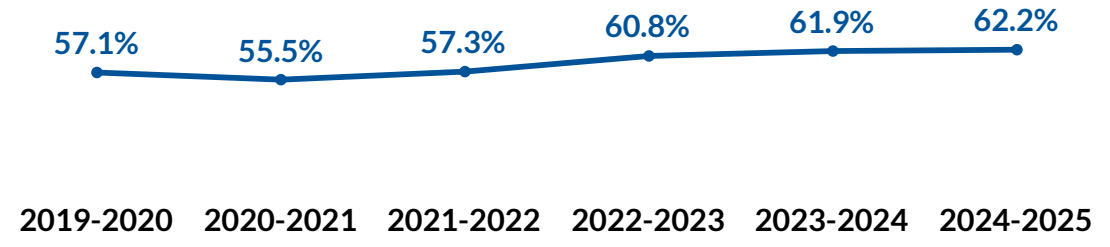
gain in KCTCS retention since 2019-2020

Four-Year Public First-to-Second Year Retention Rates



Note: Institution- and sector-level breakouts for these data are reported in Appendix G.

KCTCS First-to-Second Year Retention Rates



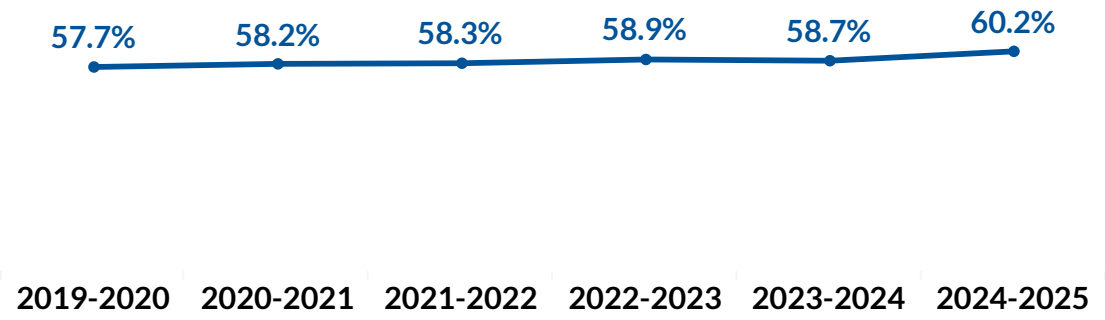
Two-to-Four-Year Transfer Rates (KPI)

This metric reflects the strength of transfer pathways between KCTCS and Kentucky's four-year institutions, measuring the share of AA/AS graduates who successfully transition within a year of completing their associate degree.

Progress

The transfer rate rose from 57.7% in 2019-2020 to 60.2% in 2024-2025. While year-to-year growth was modest for much of the period, the latest increase pushed the rate above 60%, suggesting continued progress in strengthening transfer pathways between KCTCS and four-year institutions.

Two-to-Four-Year Transfer Rates



60.2%

is the most recent two-to four-year transfer rate, exceeding 60% for the first time

Success Summary

Taken together, these measures point to meaningful statewide progress in student success. Completion is rising at both two-year and four-year institutions, graduation rates are improving, transfer outcomes remain strong, and retention has recovered or strengthened across sectors. While some metrics remain below long-term targets, the overall pattern suggests that Kentucky's institutions are making important gains in helping more students persist, complete, and move successfully toward high-value credentials.

Talent

Talent refers to Kentucky's students gaining the skills, credentials, and experiences needed to succeed in a changing workforce, contribute to the state's economy, and meet current and emerging labor market needs.

This is demonstrated by the production of credentials and competencies aligned with high-demand, high-growth, and high-wage industries; the engagement of adult learners; essential skills; and the fostering of applied research, innovation, and community partnerships.

Talent Initiatives

Healthcare Workforce

Kentucky's Healthcare Workforce Collaborative, established by the legislature in 2022 and facilitated by CPE, focuses on solving Kentucky's healthcare workforce challenges. Key projects include addressing nursing shortages, strengthening licensure processes, and improving training capacity. To assist the group's work, the legislature also created the Healthcare Workforce Investment Fund, which provides monies for public-private partnerships, scholarships, clinical expansions, and targeted support to recruit more Kentuckians into high-demand healthcare fields.

Progress

Since its establishment, the Healthcare Workforce Collaborative has facilitated 12 summer bridge programs, funded $18.8 million in student scholarships, and awarded $8.5 million in institutional grants.

Through this work, enrollment in health-related majors across all public and private colleges and universities has increased by 22.8%, or by 6,953 students. Enrollment has also increased among key populations: Appalachian students, up 32%; students age 25 and older, up 17%; low-income undergraduate students, up 30%; and first-generation undergraduate students, up 31%.

Staff from CPE's Workforce and Economic Development met recently with Campbellsville University leadership to learn more about what the school can do to boost the number of graduates trained in Kentucky's high-need areas, such as nursing, other health professions, and communications.

$18.9M

awarded to postsecondary and workforce healthcare partnerships

22.8%

increase in healthcare-related enrollments since the establishment of the state's Healthcare Workforce Collaborative

Collegiate Recovery Resource Centers

The Collegiate Recovery Resource Center (CRRC) Grant Program, a statewide initiative led by CPE and supported by funding from the Kentucky Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission, provides one-year implementation grants to selected public colleges and universities across the Commonwealth to establish campus-based recovery centers.

These centers work to reduce relapse and dropout risks for students in recovery; support academic persistence and workforce entry; and build sustainable recovery ecosystems across campus communities. Services offered include trauma-informed peer recovery counseling, academic support, and workforce-readiness programming in collaboration with community recovery and behavioral health providers.

$489K

in grants has been awarded to Kentucky's campuses to fund recovery efforts

Progress

CPE is working with the CRRCs at five participating public and private universities to convene staff around best practices for these grants to support adult learners in recovery from substance use disorder and those managing co-occurring mental health challenges.

CLIMB 2.0

CLIMB 2.0 is a joint partnership initiative of CPE, Kentucky's Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), and CHFS's Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID) to provide career pathways to high school students who are interested in behavioral health careers.

Progress

Aligned with this goal, CPE has recruited eight Eastern Kentucky high schools to participate in a pilot program in partnership with Hazard Community and Technical College, Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College, and Big Sandy Community and Technical College. This program will allow students to earn certifications that enable them to work in the behavioral health field upon high school graduation or have coursework that contributes to earning a postsecondary credential. Training components for CLIMB 2.0 will be administered by the University of Kentucky Center of Excellence in Rural Health.

8

Kentucky high schools are piloting a program that will allow students to earn behavioral health certifications that lead to postsecondary pathways

CPE's Miles Feroli and Michaela Steverson visited FEAM Aero and Epic Flight Academy in Northern Kentucky to discuss how the AERO Act can reduce financial barriers for aviation students. Kentucky industries face critical shortages in high-demand fields like aviation.

Aerospace, Aviation, and Defense Investment Fund

Passed by the legislature in 2024 and administered by CPE, the Kentucky Aerospace, Aviation, and Defense Investment Fund (AERO Act) encourages partnerships between Kentucky's postsecondary aviation programs and employers to strengthen student recruitment into the aerospace, aviation, and defense industries. The fund supports student scholarships (65%) and equipment (35%) for programs to meet emerging workforce demands.

Recipients must agree to work in Kentucky's aviation industry for a contract period of one year for each academic year funded by the scholarship, up to a maximum of two years, or repay the scholarship. This requirement helps retain graduates in the state, addressing the competitive nature of this industry sector.

Progress

To support this work, CPE has established the Kentucky AERO Advisory Committee. This group will guide implementation of the initiative and awards of any future monies allocated that support the effort.

Talent Metrics

Kentucky's talent agenda is also reflected in statewide indicators that measure both the production of advanced credentials and broader educational attainment among working-age adults.

Graduate and Professional Degrees (KPI)

Graduate and professional degrees capture master's, doctoral, and professional degrees awarded by Kentucky's public and private universities. These measures provide an important indication of advanced educational attainment across the state and institutional capacity to develop highly skilled professionals in critical fields.

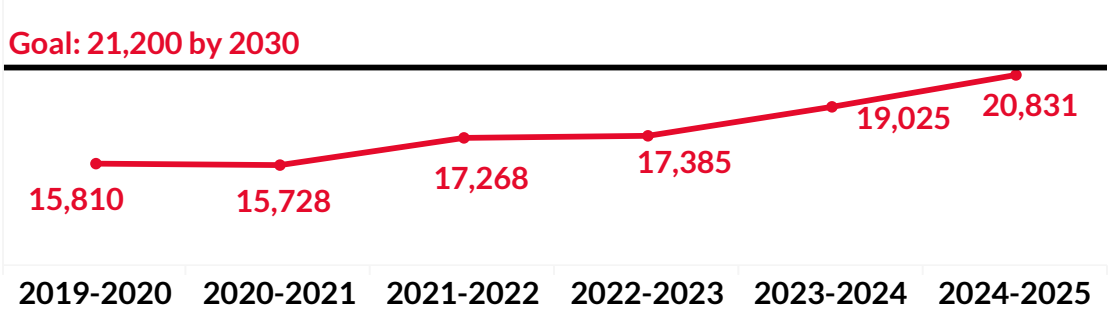
Progress

Graduate and professional degree production at four-year institutions has increased steadily in recent years, rising from 15,810 in 2019-2020 to 20,831 in 2024-2025. This growth places Kentucky close to its 2030 target of 21,200 and reflects continued progress in preparing highly skilled talent for leadership roles in the workforce and in key sectors of the economy.

32%

increase in the number of graduate and professional degrees awarded

Graduate and Professional Degrees (All Sectors, Duplicated)



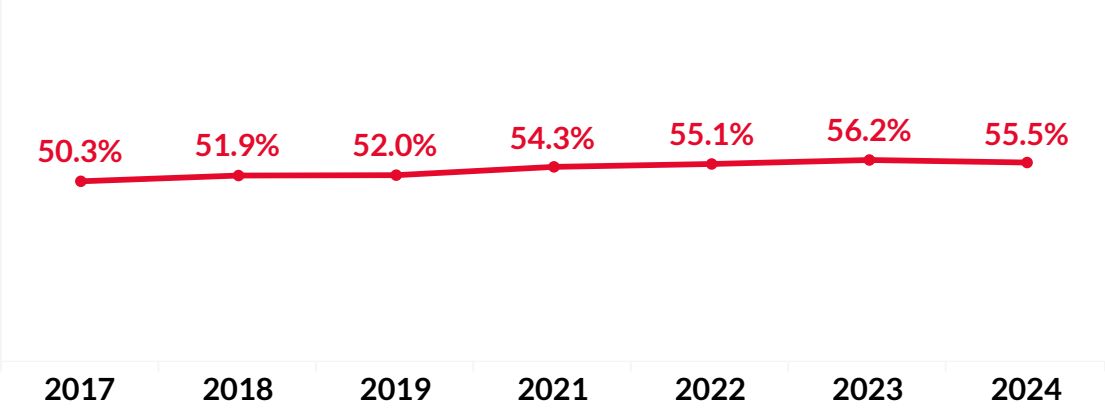
Note: Institution- and sector-level breakouts for these data are reported in Appendix H.

Statewide Educational Attainment (KPI)

Statewide educational attainment measures the percentage of working-age (25 to 64) Kentucky adults who hold a postsecondary credential, ranging from short-term certificates to advanced degrees. Unlike degree production measures that capture annual completions at Kentucky institutions, attainment reflects the cumulative education level of the broader adult population, including credentials earned in other states and years prior. Tracking attainment is essential to understanding Kentucky's long-term workforce readiness and economic competitiveness, as employers increasingly require postsecondary credentials for middle- and high-skill jobs. Gains in attainment signal not only institutional progress but also the state's ability to retain and attract talent.

Statewide educational attainment has improved steadily over time. The share of working-age Kentuckians ages 25 to 64 with a postsecondary credential increased from 50.3% in 2017 to 55.5% in 2024. The slight dip from 56.2% in 2023 to 55.5% in 2024 reflects population shifts and outward migration; however, long-term momentum remains positive.

Statewide Educational Attainment



Note: 2020 omitted because of pandemic-era ACS data suppression

5.2pp

growth in postsecondary attainment among working-age Kentuckians (25-64) since 2017

Talent Summary

Together, these indicators show that Kentucky is making progress both in producing advanced degrees and in raising overall attainment statewide. CPE's talent-focused initiatives support this work by aligning postsecondary opportunity with workforce demand, strengthening high-need talent pipelines and helping more Kentuckians earn credentials of value.

Value

Value refers to the extent to which postsecondary education is recognized as transformative and beneficial to individuals and the Commonwealth.

Value is measured by public confidence in higher education, awareness of the full range of credential options, attainment of essential skills, and understanding of higher education's economic and social benefits. It is also reflected in engagement with communications about its impact, support for increased public and private investment, and recognition that graduates achieve higher lifetime earnings and long-term economic mobility.

CPE's student member, Michael Wheeler, joined Executive VP Travis Powell to testify to the House Budget Review Subcommittee on Postsecondary Ed, chaired by Rep. Steve Riley. Wheeler volunteered to appear because of his deep belief in the power of higher education, and part of that is affordability. "My goal is to represent students and help them whenever and wherever I can... part of that is increasing the percentage graduating with zero debt. Starting at zero, rather than a negative (debt) number, is a powerful influencer on our financial trajectory."

Value Initiatives

Communicating the Value of Higher Education

CPE communicates the value of higher education by meeting students, families, and communities where they are with clear, practical, and student-focused messaging through the "Higher Education Matters" campaign. Across its social media platforms, the Futuriti website, staff presentations and other publications, messaging shares success stories, data, resources, and timely information that show how higher education can lead to meaningful careers and a stronger future for Kentuckians.

These efforts also help reinforce the connection between public investment and postsecondary outcomes by showing how higher education benefits students, communities, and the Commonwealth.

Progress

Futuriti celebrated its one-year anniversary in February 2026 and has reached nearly 52,000 visitors to the site. Through grant funding from the Lumina Foundation, CPE is partnering with OneGoal to pilot Futuriti and the Postsecondary Advising Framework in 10 K-12 school districts. CPE is also expanding its Higher Education Matters campaign to reach different audiences via social media and other digital platforms across the state.

52K

unique visitors to the Futuriti website in its first year

10

K-12 school districts will participate in a grant-funded pilot program around Futuriti and Postsecondary Advising Framework implementation

Kentucky's Efforts on a National Stage

CPE highlights Kentucky's postsecondary progress on a national stage by sharing its work in student retention and persistence, state-of-the-art data systems, and efforts across the education-to-workforce continuum. President Thompson and senior leadership regularly present at conferences to elevate these efforts and share best practices.

Progress

In the first quarter of 2026, President Thompson spoke at events sponsored by the Education Commission on the States, the Lumina Foundation, Global Silicon Valley, and Arizona State University. Staff have appeared on national panels sponsored by the State Higher Education Executive Officers and the National Association of Higher Education Systems.

Statewide Media Presence

CPE supports public understanding of higher education by publishing news releases and digital features, as well as engaging with the media. These efforts ensure Kentuckians are aware of the value of higher education and the importance of public investment in the postsecondary system.

Progress

In the first quarter of the year, the Council was mentioned or quoted in more than 20 news stories. CPE has responded to 10 media requests and published seven news releases. President Thompson was also featured on an episode of Kentucky Newsmakers and interviewed by WKYT about public funding for postsecondary education.

8K

subscribe to CPE's news releases

Newsletters Keep Constituents Informed

From college faculty to high school counselors, CPE keeps stakeholders informed through targeted email communications that reach thousands of subscribers, both in Kentucky and nationally. These communications provide timely updates on postsecondary policy, programs, and initiatives.

Progress

Monthly newsletter distribution, on behalf of the President's Office and CPE's units, was launched in January. These publications keep constituents informed of CPE's work within its Academic Excellence, Student Access and Success, and Workforce and Economic Development units.

1.1K

CPE newsletter subscribers are reading our monthly Higher Education Matters newsletter

Subscribe to our newsletters:

Value Metrics

Value outcomes measure the return on investment that Kentucky's postsecondary system delivers to students, families, and the state. While access and completion are critical markers of progress, they must be considered alongside the cost and economic benefit of attaining a credential. A high-performing system is one that not only moves students through to completion, but does so efficiently and in ways that meaningfully improve graduates' economic circumstances.

Net General Fund Appropriations Per Full-Time Equivalent (KPI)

Net General Fund appropriations per FTE measure the level of public investment Kentucky directs toward each student enrolled in its postsecondary institutions. This figure reflects the state's financial commitment to higher education and serves as an important indicator of whether public funding keeps pace with enrollment demands and institutional costs. Adequate per-student investment supports institutional capacity to deliver quality instruction, student services, and the resources necessary to drive completion and workforce outcomes.

15.5%

increase in net General Fund appropriations per FTE over the past five year, reflecting Kentucky's growing commitment to public higher education

Progress

Net General Fund appropriations per FTE increased from $5,997 in 2020-2021 to $6,925 in 2025-2026, even with a slight decline after the 2022-2023 peak. This growth indicates stronger state investment in public postsecondary institutions over time and reflects Kentucky's commitment to supporting college affordability, institutional capacity, and long-term student success.

Net General Fund Appropriations Per FTE

2020-2021 2021-2022 2022-2023 2023-2024 2024-2025 2025-2026

Return on Investment of Earning a Postsecondary Credential (KPI)

The economic benefit of earning a credential measures the degree to which postsecondary education translates into improved financial outcomes for Kentucky graduates. These measures examine earnings gains associated with completing a degree or certificate, providing insight into whether credentials lead to meaningful wage growth and long-term economic mobility. Tracking economic benefit ensures that Kentucky's institutions are preparing graduates not just for completion, but for careers that reward their investment of time and resources.

Progress

Kentucky's wage data make a compelling case for postsecondary investment. In state fiscal year 2024–2025, the median annual wage for a Kentucky worker with only a high school diploma or GED was $27,035. Workers with a postsecondary certificate earned nearly 47% more ($39,635), and those with an associate degree earned nearly double ($53,250). Bachelor's degree holders earned $58,022, master's degree holders earned $68,860, and those with doctoral or professional degrees earned a median of $106,926 — nearly four times the earnings of their peers without a postsecondary credential. These data reinforce the core argument of Kentucky's higher education agenda: Credentials create opportunity and investment in postsecondary education delivers measurable economic returns for graduates and for the Commonwealth.

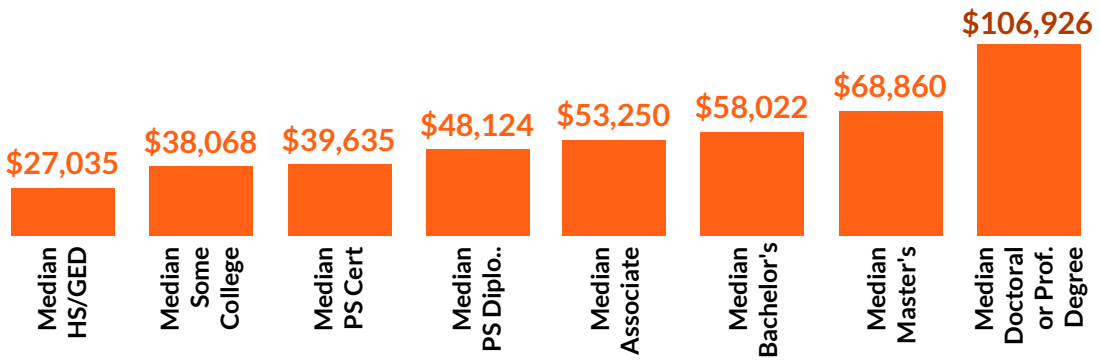
$58K

in wages were earned by bachelor's degree holders in fiscal year 2024-2025, over double the wages of workers with a high school diploma

$107K

in wages were earned by professional degree holders, nearly four times the wages of peers with a high school diploma

Kentucky Median Wages by Attainment Level, SFY 2024-2025



Value Summary

Taken together, these efforts and outcomes tell a clear and compelling story: Postsecondary education delivers measurable value for Kentuckians, employers, and the Commonwealth. On an individual level, the economic case is strong. Kentucky workers with postsecondary credentials out-earn their peers without credentials at every level — from certificates to doctoral degrees. These are not abstract projections; they are real wages earned by real Kentuckians who invested in their education.

On a systemic level, state investment in higher education is also growing. Net General Fund appropriations per FTE student increased from $5,981 in 2019-2020 to $7,143 in 2024-2025 — a 19.4% increase over five years — reflecting the legislature's recognition that public higher education is a driver of economic growth and workforce development.

And at the communications level, CPE is meeting Kentuckians where they are. The Futuriti website — a first-of-its-kind tool nationally — has attracted more than 52,000 unique visitors in its first year. The Higher Education Matters campaign is expanding its digital reach. President Thompson and CPE staff are sharing Kentucky's story on national stages. And more than 8,000 subscribers are reading CPE's newsletters each month. Public confidence in higher education matters — and it is built through consistent, honest communication about outcomes. CPE remains committed to telling that story clearly, equipping students with the information they need to make informed decisions, and ensuring that Kentucky's continued investment in postsecondary education is understood and valued.

Conclusion: Looking Ahead

The 2026 Progress Report reflects both the progress Kentucky has made and the work that remains. Since the launch of the Higher Education Matters strategic agenda in 2022, the Commonwealth has made meaningful strides across all five priority areas — expanding access, strengthening student support, moderating costs, building the workforce, and communicating the value of postsecondary credentials.

The numbers tell an encouraging story. Undergraduate enrollment has grown by 17.3% since the pandemic low in fall 2021, reaching 227,582 students. Graduation rates at both two-year and four-year institutions are improving. Student debt burden at graduation has fallen by 34% over five years. Healthcare enrollment is up 22.8%. And 61% of Kentucky undergraduates are now completing their degrees without taking on any debt at all.

But progress is not uniform, and challenges remain. Unmet financial need rose modestly in 2024-2025, driven by rising costs of attendance. The immediate college-going rate has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. And Kentucky's 60x30 attainment goal — 60% of working-age adults with a postsecondary credential by 2030 — remains within reach but will require continued, coordinated effort across all sectors.

In the years ahead, CPE will continue to focus on the strategies that evidence shows move the needle: expanding advising and early postsecondary opportunities, supporting institutions in strengthening completion, aligning credentials with workforce demand, and making transparent the cost and value of every postsecondary pathway. Through tools like Futuriti, initiatives like the Kentucky Student Success Collaborative, and partnerships forged through the Commonwealth Education Continuum, the Council is working to ensure that postsecondary education remains within reach — and worth reaching for — for every Kentuckian.

Higher education matters. This report is evidence of that. And it is a commitment CPE will continue to keep.

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Appendix A | Unmet Financial Need for First-Time Students by Institution

Institution	Subcategories	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Eastern Kentucky University	Total	$7,177	$7,392	$5,561	$4,865	$6,831	$7,497
	Low Income	$10,643	$11,073	$8,745	$7,191	$9,771	$10,125
Kentucky State University	Total	$9,723	$10,551	$10,832	$8,229	$11,552	$16,574
	Low Income	$9,723	$11,008	$11,705	$9,860	$11,802	$18,113
Morehead State University	Total	$6,403	$6,804	$5,212	$4,673	$4,584	$5,373
	Low Income	$8,960	$9,308	$7,733	$7,062	$6,270	$7,336
Murray State University	Total	$6,581	$6,605	$6,254	$4,846	$6,221	$4,912
	Low Income	$11,111	$10,723	$11,279	$8,005	$9,884	$7,691
Northern Kentucky University	Total	$5,752	$4,552	$3,864	$4,360	$5,689	$6,210
	Low Income	$9,905	$8,362	$6,288	$7,857	$9,006	$9,985
University of Kentucky	Total	$6,847	$6,146	$5,102	$5,150	$6,851	$7,637
	Low Income	$12,795	$12,436	$10,193	$9,897	$12,072	$13,249
University of Louisville	Total	$7,855	$8,651	$8,095	$8,102	$8,231	$7,856
	Low Income	$12,972	$13,568	$13,492	$11,734		$11,519
Western Kentucky University	Total	$6,688	$6,168	$6,033	$5,176	$6,240	$7,865
	Low Income	$11,330	$10,627	$10,468	$8,655	$9,828	$11,645
4-Year Publics	Total	$6,913	$6,757	$5,877	$5,461	$6,428	$7,278
	Low Income	$11,270	$11,217	$10,078	$8,903	$9,927	$10,918
KCTCS	Total	$4,168	$4,479	$4,019	$4,135	$3,957	$5,663
	Low Income	$5,553	$5,962	$5,901	$5,981	$5,379	$7,245
All Publics	Total	$5,820	$5,943	$5,223	$4,984	$5,445	$6,014
	Low Income	$8,451	$8,856	$8,229	$7,575	$7,723	$7,588

Appendix B | Time-to-Degree by Institution

Institution	Subcategories	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Eastern Kentucky University	Total	4.25	4.17	4.12	4.12	4.04	4.06
	Low Income	4.37	4.27	4.24	4.27	4.17	4.21
Kentucky State University	Total	4.60	4.38	4.42	4.55	4.48	4.48
	Low Income	4.71	4.59	4.72	4.90	5.30	4.57
Morehead State University	Total	4.20	4.14	4.09	4.16	4.09	4.07
	Low Income	4.36	4.20	4.17	4.31	4.19	4.23
Murray State University	Total	4.17	4.13	4.05	4.05	4.01	3.99
	Low Income	4.35	4.22	4.19	4.12	4.12	4.16
Northern Kentucky University	Total	4.36	4.36	4.24	4.24	4.23	4.22
	Low Income	4.38	4.44	4.34	4.41	4.38	4.48
University of Kentucky	Total	4.14	4.13	4.08	4.06	4.05	4.04
	Low Income	4.21	4.18	5.25	5.40	4.16	4.12
University of Louisville	Total	4.30	4.30	4.24	4.21	4.22	4.19
	Low Income	4.37	4.35	4.45	4.36	4.29	4.31
Western Kentucky University	Total	4.18	4.14	4.08	4.06	4.03	4.02
	Low Income	4.29	4.30	4.19	4.10	4.17	4.12
4-Year Publics	Total	4.22	4.19	4.12	4.12	4.10	4.09
	Low Income	4.32	4.28	4.29	4.27	4.21	4.22
KCTCS	Total	2.99	2.93	2.92	2.94	2.88	2.86
	Low Income	3.03	3.01	3.01	3.10	3.06	2.98

Appendix C | Debt Burden at Graduation by Institution

Institution	Subcategories	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Eastern Kentucky University	Total	$20,886	$20,810	$19,614	$17,779	$16,768	$16,667
	Low Income	$25,182	$24,362	$23,434	$22,463	$20,358	$19,387
Kentucky State University	Total	$26,198	$27,409	$23,582	$26,601	$27,258	$27,700
	Low Income	$31,393	$30,022	$26,970	$31,531	$29,929	$30,855
Morehead State University	Total	$21,018	$20,745	$18,451	$16,874	$16,251	$14,238
	Low Income	$24,333	$23,503	$21,156	$19,114	$17,509	$16,187
Murray State University	Total	$19,177	$18,781	$17,324	$16,484	$15,817	$15,999
	Low Income	$22,847	$21,098	$20,152	$19,500	$18,945	$19,216
Northern Kentucky University	Total	$22,634	$21,135	$19,433	$16,890	$15,677	$14,281
	Low Income	$28,558	$27,466	$23,942	$22,792	$21,009	$19,836
University of Kentucky	Total	$24,876	$24,361	$22,181	$21,975	$22,744	$21,933
	Low Income	$34,610	$34,019	$31,303	$30,469	$29,809	$28,750
University of Louisville	Total	$18,917	$18,849	$17,345	$16,670	$15,668	$16,085
	Low Income	$22,454	$22,097	$21,653	$20,708	$18,325	$19,019
Western Kentucky University	Total	$21,489	$20,749	$18,797	$18,250	$16,205	$16,522
	Low Income	$26,289	$26,186	$23,464	$21,934	$19,309	$18,604
4-Year Publics	Total	$21,810	$21,329	$19,564	$18,673	$18,102	$17,636
	Low Income	$26,842	$26,140	$24,251	$23,197	$21,618	$20,970
KCTCS	Total	$5,595	$5,276	$4,685	$4,139	$3,818	$3,645
	Low Income	$7,297	$6,987	$6,259	$5,796	$5,492	$5,219
All Publics	Total	$15,418	$14,530	$12,930	$11,410	$10,688	$10,168
	Low Income	$17,439	$16,507	$14,869	$13,282	$12,204	$11,614

Appendix D | Undergraduate Enrollment by Institution

Note: Low income enrollment data lag total enrollment data by one fall term due to financial aid being an academic year collection. CPE does not collect financial aid data from four-year private (AIKCU) institutions.

Institution	Subcategories	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023	Fall 2024	Fall 2025
Eastern Kentucky University	Total	12,070	11,684	12,072	12,726	13,448	13,767
	Low Income	4,533	4,412	4,587	5,163	6,197	
Kentucky State University	Total	2,148	2,135	1,610	1,546	1,932	2,504
	Low Income	990	1,011	907	871	976	
Morehead State University	Total	8,621	8,314	8,218	8,059	8,258	7,941
	Low Income	2,802	2,554	2,358	2,370	2,444	
Murray State University	Total	7,939	7,735	7,756	8,111	8,281	8,217
	Low Income	2,435	2,380	2,380	2,589	2,880	
Northern Kentucky University	Total	11,672	10,988	10,940	10,069	10,327	10,295
	Low Income	2,907	2,796	2,516	2,478	3,163	
University of Kentucky	Total	22,246	21,928	22,767	23,971	25,586	27,500
	Low Income	4,750	4,642	4,929	5,391	6,394	
University of Louisville	Total	16,118	15,830	16,121	16,397	17,248	18,053
	Low Income	4,426	4,565	4,595	4,963	5,786	
Western Kentucky University	Total	15,287	14,729	14,442	14,593	14,153	13,735
	Low Income	4,524	4,267	4,147	4,441	5,086	
4-Year Publics	Total	96,101	93,343	93,926	95,472	99,233	102,012
	Low Income	27,367	26,627	26,419	28,266	32,926	
KCTCS	Total	70,233	69,978	73,956	78,771	84,122	89,361
	Low Income	26,532	25,463	25,254	27,141	31,642	
4-Year Private	Total	30,930	30,700	31,232	32,986	34,200	36,209

Appendix E | Undergraduate Degrees and Credentials by Institution

Note: CPE does not collect financial aid data from four-year private (AIKCU) institutions.

Institution	Subcategories	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Eastern Kentucky University	Total	2,634	2,406	2,426	2,264	2,199	2,346
	Low Income	1,360	1,249	1,220	1,171	1,123	1,303
Kentucky State University	Total	137	154	150	153	291	226
	Low Income	103	111	115	115	223	178
Morehead State University	Total	1,139	1,153	1,102	992	940	936
	Low Income	634	669	620	584	532	534
Murray State University	Total	1,659	1,614	1,480	1,603	1,561	1,559
	Low Income	753	737	669	703	659	699
Northern Kentucky University	Total	2,222	2,223	2,076	1,962	1,931	2,025
	Low Income	947	986	892	800	764	848
University of Kentucky	Total	5,202	5,011	5,062	5,238	5,055	4,966
	Low Income	1,499	1,452	1,507	1,441	1,427	1,499
University of Louisville	Total	3,112	2,991	2,923	2,938	2,787	2,856
	Low Income	1,232	1,204	1,217	1,242	1,156	1,240
Western Kentucky University	Total	3,042	2,843	2,794	2,526	2,735	2,808
	Low Income	1,339	1,270	1,211	1,074	1,228	1,299
4-Year Publics	Total	19,147	18,395	18,013	17,676	17,499	17,722
KCTCS	Total	39,291	39,458	38,090	39,920	42,910	44,713
	Low Income	23,982	23,784	22,641	23,053	24,369	26,737
4-Year Private	Total	4,796	5,028	5,161	5,252	5,597	5,697

Appendix F | 150% Graduation Rates by Institution

Institution	Subcategories	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Eastern Kentucky University	Total	52.3%	52.3%	53.5%	55.0%	54.7%	56.7%
	Low Income	43.4%	44.0%	44.4%	45.3%	46.4%	48.3%
Kentucky State University	Total	30.3%	38.2%	33.3%	28.4%	34.8%	26.2%
	Low Income	29.2%	37.3%	34.2%	26.4%	31.1%	22.1%
Morehead State University	Total	42.6%	44.7%	49.0%	49.3%	52.4%	48.9%
	Low Income	32.9%	35.6%	39.0%	41.9%	45.9%	39.4%
Murray State University	Total	53.1%	56.0%	61.7%	62.8%	64.0%	62.2%
	Low Income	40.3%	41.3%	53.7%	50.9%	53.3%	47.5%
Northern Kentucky University	Total	48.2%	49.7%	51.7%	49.5%	54.1%	55.2%
	Low Income	36.5%	36.9%	38.3%	38.4%	45.6%	43.4%
University of Kentucky	Total	66.0%	67.9%	68.5%	69.7%	71.2%	71.5%
	Low Income	52.9%	55.2%	54.3%	54.3%	56.9%	58.4%
University of Louisville	Total	60.4%	61.6%	62.2%	60.6%	60.5%	59.6%
	Low Income	50.3%	50.7%	52.6%	48.9%	51.6%	50.6%
Western Kentucky University	Total	55.1%	57.4%	54.0%	56.1%	57.9%	59.1%
	Low Income	41.5%	43.2%	40.4%	42.3%	45.1%	47.4%
4-Year Publics	Total	56.4%	58.2%	59.2%	59.9%	61.2%	61.2%
	Low Income	43.1%	44.9%	46.1%	46.6%	49.2%	47.9%
KCTCS	Total	36.3%	40.2%	41.5%	44.2%	47.2%	51.1%
	Low Income	32.7%	37.9%	38.0%	41.4%	43.7%	46.3%

Appendix G | First-to-Second Year Retention Rates by Institution

Institution	Subcategories	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Eastern Kentucky University	Total	79.5%	73.9%	77.0%	79.6%	76.9%	77.2%
	Low Income	76.7%	69.9%	72.6%	75.3%	72.8%	73.4%
Kentucky State University	Total	78.5%	70.5%	52.9%	60.8%	63.2%	56.3%
	Low Income	81.0%	73.5%	51.1%	60.6%	62.9%	53.7%
Morehead State University	Total	75.8%	69.8%	68.3%	69.5%	65.0%	69.3%
	Low Income	73.1%	67.3%	63.4%	66.1%	62.5%	65.8%
Murray State University	Total	81.1%	74.7%	77.4%	76.1%	75.7%	77.9%
	Low Income	72.1%	67.1%	68.9%	71.6%	67.8%	73.1%
Northern Kentucky University	Total	74.5%	70.0%	77.5%	77.8%	75.4%	77.2%
	Low Income	69.1%	61.6%	69.0%	74.6%	69.9%	73.3%
University of Kentucky	Total	85.9%	85.7%	84.5%	86.7%	86.8%	85.3%
	Low Income	81.2%	78.3%	77.8%	80.3%	81.2%	80.5%
University of Louisville	Total	80.9%	76.6%	78.2%	80.5%	81.5%	84.1%
	Low Income	78.0%	71.6%	72.2%	78.7%	77.9%	82.2%
Western Kentucky University	Total	76.8%	72.8%	76.6%	78.0%	78.3%	79.4%
	Low Income	69.9%	65.8%	71.3%	69.8%	73.4%	74.2%
4-Year Publics	Total	80.7%	76.9%	78.2%	80.7%	80.2%	80.8%
	Low Income	75.5%	69.9%	70.7%	74.7%	73.9%	75.5%
KCTCS	Total	57.1%	55.5%	57.3%	60.8%	61.9%	62.2%
	Low Income	55.8%	55.3%	55.7%	58.4%	60.2%	61.8%

Appendix H | Graduate and Professional Degrees Awarded by Institution

Institution	Subcategories	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Eastern Kentucky University	Total	862	827	825	818	814	782
Kentucky State University	Total	30	29	37	49	30	52
Morehead State University	Total	293	237	247	203	174	190
Murray State University	Total	500	623	610	672	718	711
Northern Kentucky University	Total	717	1,218	1,485	1,659	1,808	1,823
University of Kentucky	Total	2,244	2,182	2,509	2,961	3,042	3,080
University of Louisville	Total	1,945	2,077	2,269	2,336	2,237	2,225
Western Kentucky University	Total	868	796	791	762	767	849
4-Year Publics	Total	7,462	7,989	8,773	9,460	9,590	9,712
4-Year Private	Total	8,348	7,739	8,495	7,925	9,435	11,119