



The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education Request for Proposals

Why Don't Students Who have Completed an Associate's Degree Transfer?

Deadline: May 31, 2025

The Kentucky Student Success Collaborative (KYSSC) is soliciting proposals from Kentucky's public universities, the 16 Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) campuses and the member institutions of the Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities (AIKCU) for a grant of up to \$25,000 to conduct research on why students who have completed an Associate's Degree do not go on to transfer towards Bachelor degree attainment.

I. 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 our 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.¹

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 postsecondary education.
- Determining tuition rates and admission criteria at public postsecondary institutions.
- Collecting and distributing data about postsecondary education performance.
- Ensuring the coordination and connectivity of technology among public institutions.
- Licensing non-public postsecondary institutions to operate in the Commonwealth.

II. ABOUT THE KENTUCKY STUDENT SUCCESS COLLABORATIVE (KYSSC)

To accelerate meaningful transformation for student success priorities and challenges, the CPE launched the Kentucky Student Success Collaborative (KYSSC), a first-of-its-kind statewide program, supporting holistic student success and greater degree completion. The KYSSC works with diverse campus and community stakeholders to develop and lead collaborative work around critical strategy areas, such as Transfer Success, Gateway Course Success, Student Basic Needs, Mental Health, and Adult Attainment all leading to and advancing the state's strategic agenda and [60x30 goal](#).

The Kentucky Student Success Collaborative (KYSSC) is made possible through a partnership and financial investment from the James Graham Brown Foundation.²The KYSSC has funding

through support from the James Graham Brown Foundation to deepen understanding of the transfer student journey and policies and practices impacting transfer student success. KYSSC has funding through support from the James Graham Brown Foundation to deepen understanding of the transfer student journey and policies and practices impacting transfer student success.

III. BACKGROUND

According to KCTCS, there were [9,690 KCTCS students enrolled](#) in the 2023-2024 academic year (AA, AS, AFA, AAS).³ Additionally, according to CPE, there were 3,812 [KCTCS-to-public-university transfers](#) in the 2023-2024 academic year.⁴

According to the Community College Research Center, roughly 80% of community college students aim to obtain a bachelor's degree.⁵ However, National Student Clearinghouse found that less than a third (31.2%) of students who started at a community college in fall 2016 transferred to a four-year institution within six years, and of those who transferred, less than half (49.1%) earned a bachelor's degree.⁶ In Kentucky, 33% of students who started at a KCTCS college in fall 2018 transferred to a university within six years, and 13% of the beginning cohort completed a bachelor's degree within that 6-year window ([CPE Transfer Infographic](#)).¹ Approximately 10% of the fall 2018 cohort completed an Associate degree and did not transfer to a university.

While many students aspire to transfer from community college to university, a relatively small percentage are able to successfully make the transition and reach the finish line. The KYSSC is seeking a faculty researcher to design and lead a 12-month qualitative research project investigating the experiences of students who complete an associate degree and do not transfer on to a baccalaureate program. The project will identify barriers to transfer as well as possible solutions to improve transfer rates from the community college to a Kentucky college or university.

IV. RESEARCH PROJECT GOALS

This project seeks to amplify the voices of transfer-intending, recent graduates of KCTCS to improve transfer outcomes. Through this research project, the KYSSC seeks to gain a representative understanding of barriers and potential solutions to improve the transfer process and guide the transfer strategy/implementation priorities at the state level. Based on conversations with transfer stakeholders across Kentucky's public colleges and universities, the following research question was identified as a priority for this project:

What factors impact KCTCS students who complete an associate degree and do not transfer within one year of graduation?

Target Population: Students who finished their associate degree at a KCTCS college but did not transfer to a bachelor's degree program within one year of graduation. (e.g., 2021-2022 academic year, 2022-2023 academic year, 2023-2024 academic year) .

Through IRB-approved qualitative research, we hope to explore how the following factors may have impacted a student's decision or ability to transfer within one year of completing their associate degree:

1. Pre-graduation educational and career goals and intentions related to transfer (e.g., career aspirations)
2. Institutional practices and requirements for transfer (at both KCTCS and universities)
3. Transfer services support such as advising and academic pathway planning
4. Other life experiences/circumstances that impact decision-making

V. PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Draft report of findings for review by the CPE/KYSSC team to ensure the recommendations align with key strategies, considers the broader postsecondary context, and are actionable.
- Final report of findings and recommendations to improve transfer outcomes for transfer-intending students at KCTCS.
- Prepare and present research findings and recommendations at a statewide webinar for campus stakeholders.

VI. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Faculty Researcher:

- Lead the research project ensuring all deadlines and deliverables are met, including IRB approval, instrument development, interview protocol development, conducting interviews, conducting focus groups, notetaking, data analysis, writing reports, and presenting findings to key stakeholder groups.
- Select a part-time graduate fellow to support the overall project (If a graduate fellow is selected, an additional \$5,000 will be awarded to the base \$20,000 contract).
- Delegate responsibilities to the graduate fellow and provide direct supervision throughout the project.
- Participate, alongside selected graduate fellow, in monthly meetings with KYSSC Associate Director and transfer strategy lead, Stephanie Cheung.

Faculty Researcher Qualifications:

- Doctoral degree in a social science discipline or related field.
- Substantive experience in qualitative research projects.
- Deep understanding of student-centered program evaluation.

Graduate Fellow:

- Support the project as directed by the faculty researcher.
- Possible activities include scan of transfer webpages at both KCTCS and universities, instrument development, interview protocol development, conducting interviews, conducting focus groups, notetaking, data analysis, writing reports, presenting findings to key stakeholder groups.

Graduate Fellow Qualifications:

- Current student in doctoral program in social sciences or related field.
- Qualitative research coursework and experience required.

VII. COMPENSATION

- Faculty researcher compensation: Up to \$17,500 in compensation *subject to institution rates and pay practices
- Graduate fellow compensation: Up to a \$5,000 pay stipend * subject to institution pay practices
- Other funding available to cover travel to on-site meetings, food/snacks for on-site focus groups/interviews, incentives for participants (e.g., swag, books, etc.): Up to \$2,500
- Indirect costs are capped at 8% of the total grant (\$25,000)

VIII. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

- A KYSSC staff will host a half-hour virtual session on Monday, March 24 at 9:30 AM ET to discuss this opportunity and address any questions about submitting a proposal. Please register for the virtual event at:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/bA2P554HRpSbm8yM0DtDZg>
- The session will be recorded and archived, and an FAQ document will be posted following the session.
- Applicants must submit one complete electronic version of the proposal.
- Proposals should be no more than three pages in length, excluding any appendices. The proposal should be written in single spaced, 12-point font, and with 1" margins and address the following elements:

The following elements should be included:

1. Overview of Research Design

- Provide a detailed description of the research design that will address the research question: *What factors impact KCTCS students who complete an associate degree and do not transfer within one year of graduation?*
- The design should describe:
 - Methodology: Describe the qualitative approach (e.g., interviews, focus groups, surveys) and why it is suitable for answering the research question.
 - Data Collection: Describe how data will be collected (e.g., semi-structured interviews, focus groups) and provide a rationale for the chosen methods.
 - Data Analysis: Outline how data will be analyzed (e.g., thematic analysis, coding process).
 - Ethical Considerations: Discuss how the project will obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and ensure the confidentiality and protection of participant data.

2. Outreach and Recruitment Plan for the Target Population

- Describe the strategies for reaching out to and recruiting participants from the target population as well as any partnerships, collaborations, and/or approvals that may need to be sought through KCTCS.

- Address any specific challenges or barriers to recruitment and how those will be overcome.

3. Project Timeline

- Present an overview of the project’s timeline, broken down by key milestones and deliverables. Ensure that the timeline aligns with the one-year project period outlined in the RFP.

4. Proposed Budget for the Project (appendix)

- Provide a detailed budget for the project outlining how ancillary costs will be spent. Be specific about costs related to personnel, materials and supplies, transportation, facility use, and student incentives.
- If additional funds from other sources will be used, these should also be outlined, along with how they complement the use of grant funds.

5. Information about Project Team Members (appendix)

- Provide the names, titles, organizational affiliation, and resumes/CVs of all individuals involved in the project.
 - Ensure that each team member’s role in the project is clearly defined.
- Proposals must be received by 4:30 p.m. ET on Friday, May 30, by the following designee:

Stephanie Cheung
Associate Director of Transfer
stephanie.cheung@ky.gov
Kentucky Student Success Collaborative
Council on Postsecondary Education

Identify your submission with “KYSSC RFP: Why Don’t Students Transfer?” on the subject line of the email.

IX. EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

KYSSC staff will evaluate proposals based on alignment to project goals and submission requirements. Following receipt of each proposal, KYSSC staff will evaluate and approve the proposal or reach out to program staff via email regarding any revisions that may be necessary. KYSSC reserves the right, once an initial selection has been made, to negotiate the final terms of the agreement.

X. AWARD NOTIFICATION

Applicants will be notified via email by June 13, 2025 regarding the status of their proposal. KYSSC reserves the right to accept or reject any and all proposals in whole or in part and to negotiate any or all aspects of a proposal. The Council bears no responsibility for any costs incurred while preparing any proposal.

XI. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

All recipients of this funding will be required to identify the following:

- At least one financial point of contact who will ensure that reports and reimbursement invoices are submitted according to CPE policy and timelines.
- At least one programmatic point of contact who will oversee the implementation of the grant and ensure that project deliverables are satisfactorily completed and submitted on time.

XII. OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Any unexpended funds remaining after the expiration of the agreement will be forfeited by the institution. Reimbursement invoice requirements will be disseminated upon award.

The anticipated effective timeframe for contracts resulting from this RFP is from August 2025 to August 2026.

REFERENCES

¹ Council on Postsecondary Education. (2022, February). *About us: Who we are*. https://cpe.ky.gov/aboutus/who_we_are.html

² Kentucky Student Success Collaborative. (n.d.). *Purpose*. <https://kystudentsuccess.org/purpose/>

³ Kentucky Community and Technical College System Office of Research & Policy Analysis. (2024, October). *Enrollment* [Interactive data visualization]. Tableau Public. https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/orpa/viz/Enrollment_15754054083000/Home

⁴ Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. (n.d.). *Kentucky postsecondary education interactive data dashboard: Transfer* [Interactive data visualization]. Tableau Public. https://reports.ky.gov/t/CPE/views/KentuckyPostsecondaryEducationInteractiveDataDashboard/Transfer?%3AshowAppBanner=false&%3Adisplay_count=n&%3AshowVizHome=n&%3Aorigin=viz_share_link&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aembed=y

⁵ Community College Research Center (n.d.). *Tracking transfer: Community college and four-year institutional effectiveness in broadening bachelor's degree attainment*. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/tracking-transfer-community-college-and-four-year-institutional-effectiveness-in-broadening-bachelors-degree-attainment.html>

⁶ National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (n.d.). *Tracking transfer: An examination of student pathways* [Report]. National Student Clearinghouse. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/tracking-transfer/>