

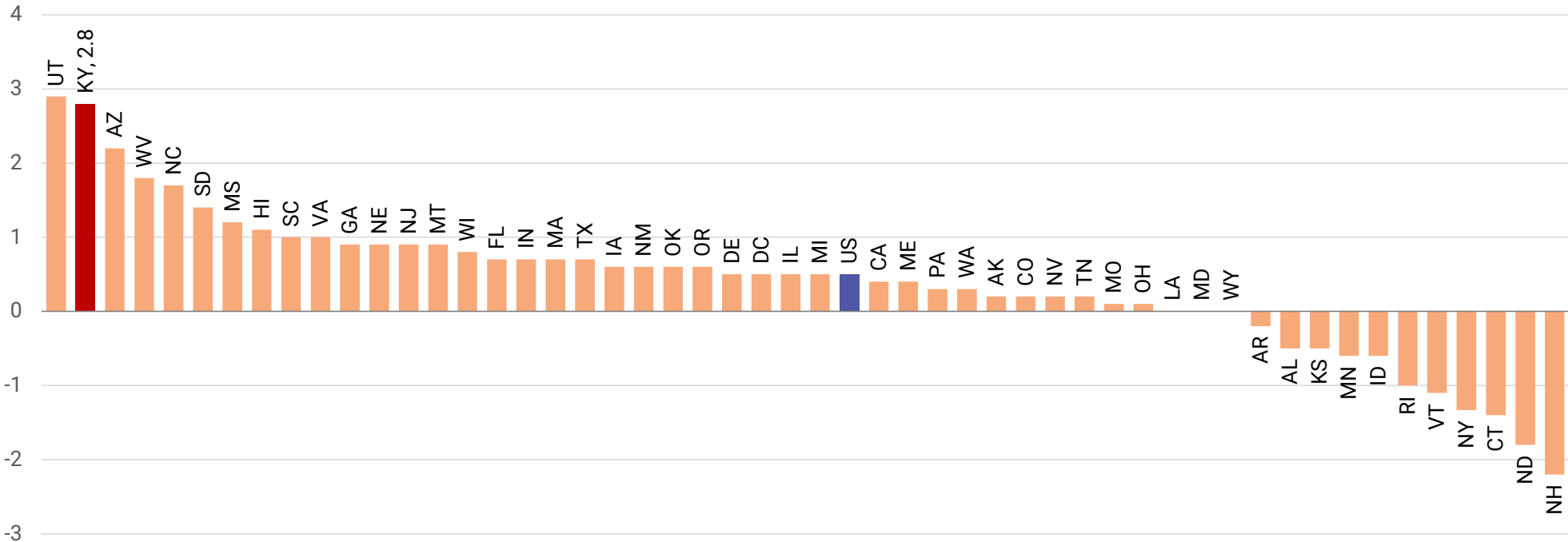
Why You Are Important to Kentucky's Student Success

Dr. Aaron Thompson
President
Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education



We should celebrate: Our improvement with completions last year is the second highest in the nation.

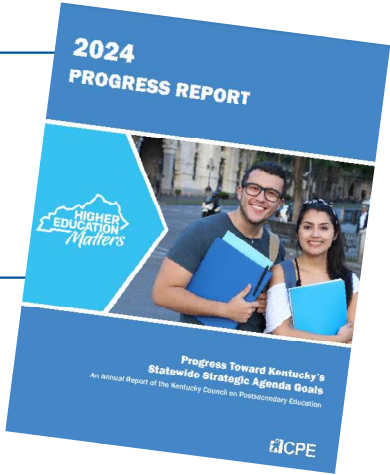
Percentage Point Year-to-Year Improvement in Six-Year Completion Rates, 2023-2024



Source: National Student Clearinghouse. 2025.

What we're doing is making a difference, but we can do more

Five-Year Progress		
	KCTCS	Public Universities
Retention Rates	6.4pp	2pp
URM	7.5pp	4.7pp
Low-Income	5.6pp	2.8pp
Graduation Rates	13.3pp	6.3pp
URM	17.3pp	5pp
Low-Income	12.2pp	7.7pp
Undergraduate Credentials	15.6%	(-4.9%)
URM	57.3%	17.2%
Low-Income	7.2%	(-7.2%)



Some of our students are seeing more financial assistance and less debt at graduation

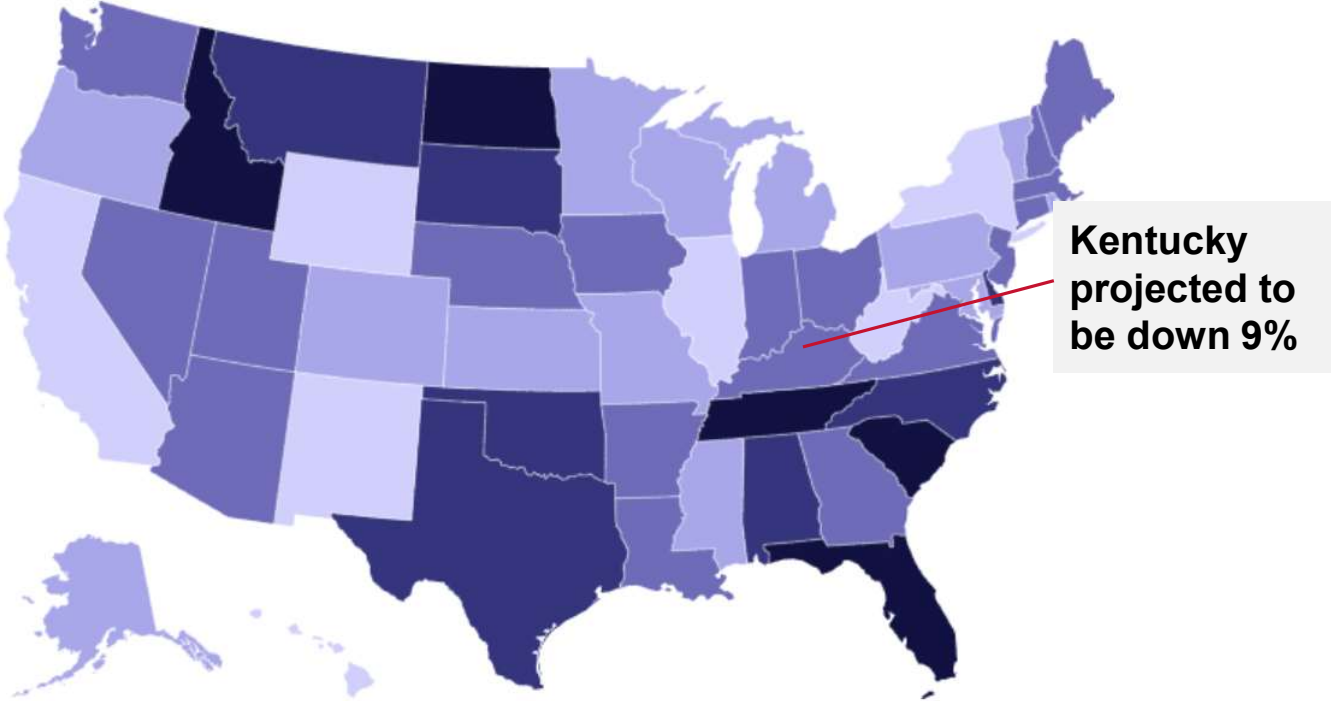
Five-Year Progress		
	KCTCS	Public Universities
Unmet Financial Need	(-9.7%)	0.2%
URM	(-15.4%)	2.1%
Low-Income	(-7.2%)	0.4%

Proportion of (All) Students with Debt at Graduation

- **Overall: 41% - down 14pp**
 - In-State: 39% - down 16pp
 - URM: 46% - down 16pp
 - Low-Income: 52% - down 20pp

We can't lose momentum on progress: Challenges are ahead

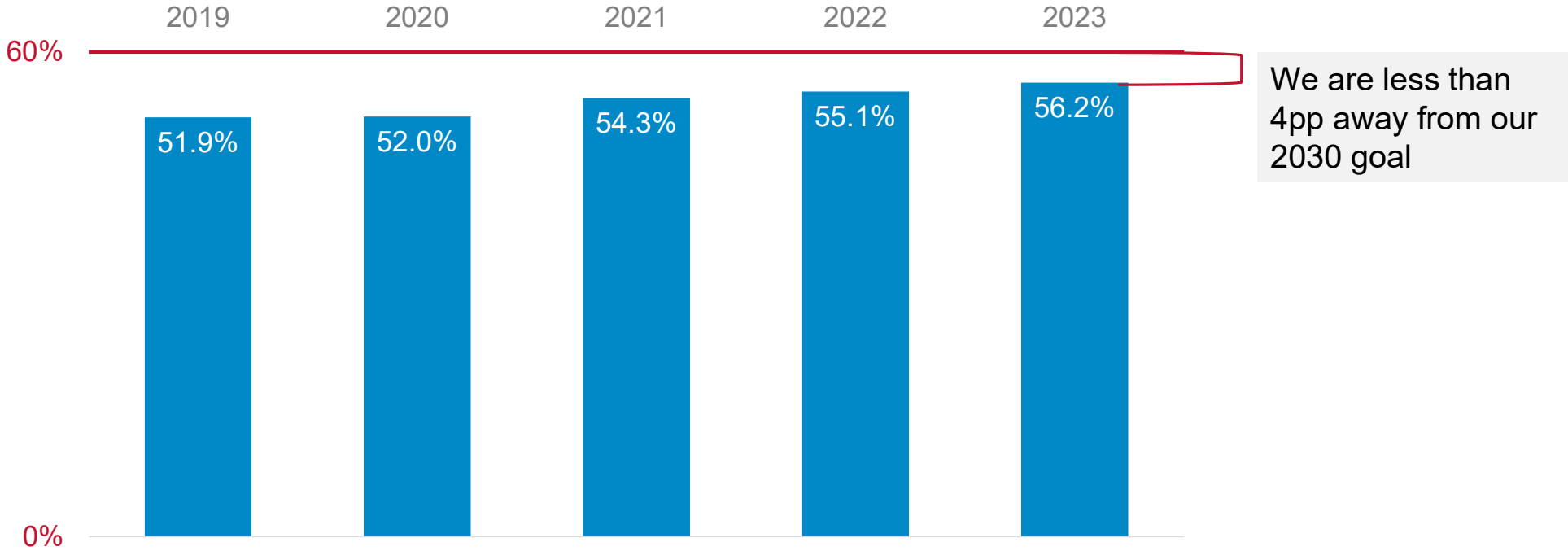
Projected Changes in the High School Graduate Population, 2023 to 2041



Source: WICHE. 2025.

In the coming years, it will be even more important to retain and graduate students

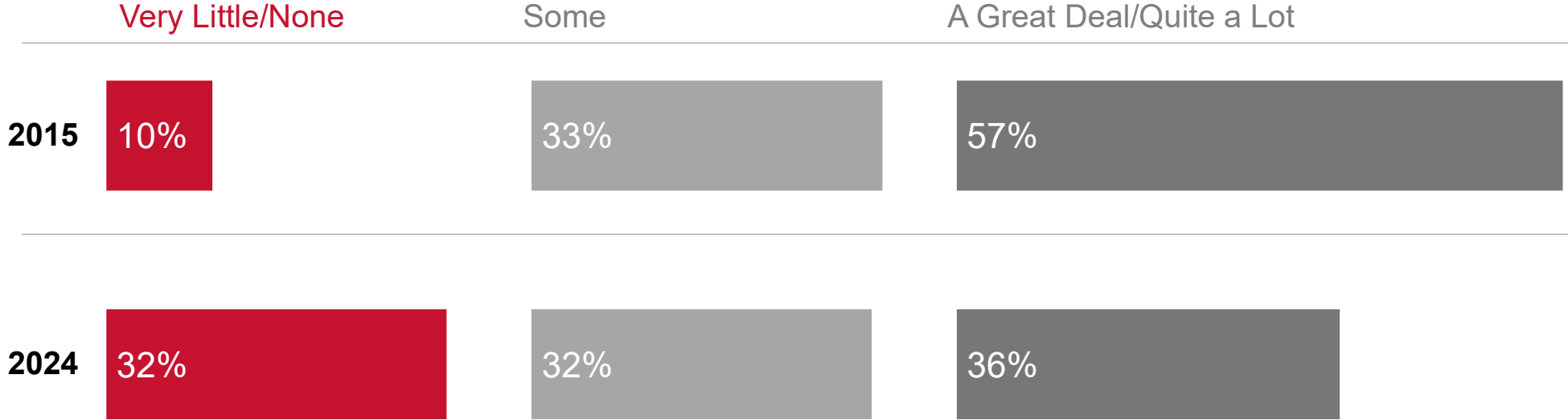
Kentucky's Educational Attainment Progress



Source: CPE Data and Advanced Analytics calculation utilizing the American Community Survey.

Our work is under scrutiny by the public, and we must keep up the momentum to reflect the value message

How much confidence you, yourself, have in higher education?



Source: U.S. Confidence in Higher Education Now Closely Divided. Gallup. 2024.

We must be leaders, creating higher education trends, rather than letting needs get ahead of us

1. **Strengthening academic quality** and credentials of value.
2. **Aligning curriculum to employability** and workforce needs.
3. **Broadening our support systems:** academic, social, emotional.
4. **Not being afraid to lead and collaborate** to enact change.

