



KENTUCKY STUDENT SUCCESS SUMMIT

FUTURE FOCUSED: STUDENT CENTERED

MARCH 23-24, 2026

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE, SWAIN STUDENT ACTIVITIES CENTER



The Kentucky
Student Success
Collaborative



KENTUCKY STUDENT SUCCESS SUMMIT

Monday, March 23, 2026

1:00 - 2:15 P.M. - WELCOME AND OPENING KEYNOTES

Location: Room 215



WELCOME TO THE 2026 KENTUCKY STUDENT SUCCESS SUMMIT

University of Louisville President Gerry Bradley will open the 15th annual Student Success Summit with a call to align our boldest ideas with data-driven planning to keep students at the heart of our mission. During this welcome, he will share the university's latest student-centered initiatives designed to foster belonging and academic excellence across the UofL campus.



FUTURE FOCUSED, STUDENT CENTERED: ADVANCING SUCCESS TOGETHER

- *Dr. Aaron Thompson, President, Council on Postsecondary Education*

We were all students once, and we know the simple truth: it takes a village to thrive. Success doesn't happen because of a single office, a lone program, or one isolated institution. It happens when we work together - across departments, campuses, and communities - to meet students exactly where they are and help them get where they want to go. This opening session will explore how Kentucky's institutions can continue on a trajectory towards a "student-ready" system by shifting from a competitive mindset to one of radical collaboration - focusing on the essential strategies needed to align academic programs with shifting workforce demands.



STUDENT-CENTERED AND FUTURE FOCUSED: RECLAIMING THE VALUE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

- *Jacob Fraire, President, ECMC Foundation*

For many students, particularly those from underserved backgrounds, the promise of a degree is often weighed against the realities of rising costs and systemic barriers. In this compelling keynote, Jacob Fraire, President of the ECMC Foundation, will challenge us to move beyond traditional frameworks and embrace a bold, student-centered vision for the future. Drawing on his decades of leadership, Fraire will explore how we can "reclaim the value" of postsecondary education by aligning institutional success with the actual lived experiences and career aspirations of today's learners.

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2:30-3:30 P.M. - CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Location: Floyd Theater, 3rd floor

SCALING PRISON EDUCATION AS A HIGH-IMPACT STUDENT SUCCESS STRATEGY

Prison education is quickly becoming one of higher education's most promising, and transformative, student success strategies. In this engaging panel session, two experienced practitioners and four on-the-ground leaders will share what it really takes to build and sustain impactful prison education programs. Drawing on the experiences of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, Kentucky State University and the Department of Corrections, speakers will explore how partnerships with correctional facilities are developed, how credit-bearing courses are delivered in secure environments, and how institutions navigate operational and structural barriers. Participants will gain insight into program design, student support strategies, and the realities of teaching and learning inside correctional settings. Attendees will leave with practical lessons and scalable ideas for expanding access and advancing student success for high-barrier and nontraditional populations.

- Dr. Maggie Price, Director of Student Success, Maysville Community and Technical College
- Cathi Smith, Director of Adult and Experiential Learning, Kentucky State University
- Panelists:
 - Dr. Sara Adams Professor of Music and First Year Experience Coordinator, Madisonville Community College
 - Dr. Jeff Drury, Instructor, Maysville Community and Technical College
 - Christy Kissick, EKCC PEP Coordinator, Maysville Community and Technical College
 - Steve Meadows, Corrections Education Regional Administrator, Eastern Kentucky Correctional Complex and Branch Manager, Kentucky Department of Corrections

Location: Room 201CD

AIN'T NO HOLD'EM: HOW SKYCTC'S QEP TURNED GATEWAY ENGLISH AROUND

What does improving student success have in common with a game of Texas Hold'em? More than you might think. Using the five stages of the popular poker game as a framework, this session demonstrates how cross-campus collaboration and data-informed strategies produced measurable gains in ENG 101 success, retention, and performance. SKYCTC's award-winning Quality Enhancement Plan, Writing: Where Your Voice Begins, continues to strengthen outcomes in gateway English through intentional embedded support, strategic scheduling, aligned curriculum, and targeted onboarding. The initiative is accelerating completion and transforming outcomes for vulnerable students, offering a powerful model for student-centered innovation.

- Dr. Stephanie Tolliver Hyman, Dean, Arts & Humanities, Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Coordinator, Southcentral Kentucky Community & Technical College



**SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS THE IMPACT EXCHANGE AND VIEW
SPEAKER BIOS & DIGITAL RESOURCES**

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Monday, March 23, 2026

2:30-3:30 P.M. - CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Location: Room 116/117

RAISING AWARENESS & REDUCING STIGMA: KCTCS MARKETING FOR MENTAL HEALTH

How do you market something as critical as mental health when you have \$0 and only seconds of a student's attention? This session explores how small, intentional strategies can make a big impact. Today's college students consume content in seconds, not minutes—and mental health messaging cannot afford to be overlooked. In this practical, strategy-focused session, participants will learn how short-form, authentic videos can normalize help-seeking, build trust, and meet students where they already are. Rather than simply promoting events, this approach focuses on creating meaningful connections, demonstrating care, and making support feel approachable and accessible—long before students reach a crisis point. Attendees will leave with simple, realistic strategies to start small, stay consistent, and strengthen campus mental health outreach.

- Erica Marye, System Director, Digital Marketing, Kentucky Community & Technical College System

Location: Room 201AB

ADVANCING TRANSFER COMPLETION THROUGH POLICY, PRACTICE, AND PARTNERSHIP

Transfer students are central to Kentucky's postsecondary attainment goals, yet they often encounter unique barriers when it comes to degree completion. This interactive session will bring together panelists from a range of higher education settings to highlight cutting-edge strategies and real-world innovations that improve transfer navigation, reduce credit loss, and accelerate progress toward degree completion. Through live polling and open dialogue, participants will help shape the conversation, reflect on shared challenges, and identify actionable steps for advancing transfer outcomes in their own work.

- Moderator: Dr. Stephanie Cheung, Associate Director, Kentucky Student Success Collaborative, Council on Postsecondary Education
- Panelists:
 - Michelle Barber, Director of Retention and Academic Advisor/Lecturer, Morehead State University
 - Korey Bruck, Director University Center of Southern Kentucky Transfer Center, Somerset Community College
 - Sara Conwell, Assistant Director of the Adult and Transfer Center, Northern Kentucky University
 - Lindsay Greenwell, Senior Director, Academic Affairs Advising Strategy, Eastern Kentucky University
 - Kristin Hornsby, Associate Director of Dual Credit and Transfer Pathways, Thomas More University
 - Sandra Kimberlain, Director of the Robbins University Center, Elizabethtown Community & Technical College
 - Jarrett Murphy, Associate Director, Transfer Center, Western Kentucky University



KENTUCKY STUDENT SUCCESS SUMMIT

Monday, March 23, 2026

3:45-4:45 P.M. - CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Location: Room 201AB

IS LOAN REALLY A 4-LETTER WORD? REFRAMING BORROWING FOR A STUDENT-CENTERED FUTURE

For years, the singular message to students has been: "Avoid loans at all costs." While well-intentioned, this message often conflicts with the financial realities of paying for college. When the time comes to commit, many discover that loans aren't just an option—they are a necessity—yet they have no roadmap to borrow wisely. As federal limits tighten and costs rise, avoiding the conversation doesn't protect students; it leaves them vulnerable to predatory lenders and overborrowing. This session tackles the student loan conversation head-on, reframing borrowing from a feared taboo into a strategic tool for success.

- Casi Benedict, Director of Outreach Services, Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA)

Location: Floyd Theater, 3rd floor

BUT IS IT WORTH IT? MEASURING SUCCESS FOR FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS

Since 2019, the University of Louisville has revolutionized its support for first-generation undergraduates by moving beyond simple participation counts to a sophisticated, data-driven strategy. This session pulls back the curtain on that evolution, tracing the path from basic population overviews to the development of a powerhouse in-house return-on-investment (ROI) model. Expert practitioners from UofL's Student Success Center and the Office of Enrollment Management will share a candid look at their hurdles and breakthroughs in proving the real-world impact of their initiatives. Participants will gain more than just a success story—they will engage in guided reflection to audit their own assessment processes.

- Dr. Katie Adamchik, Executive Director of Student Success, University of Louisville
- Neil Gibbs, Data Analyst, University of Louisville
- Christy Metzger, Associate Director of Student Success, University of Louisville
- Daniel Mogere Nyambati, Senior Associate of Data and Advanced Analytics, Council on Postsecondary Education

Location: Room 201CD

COLONEL CLAUS IS COMING TO FAMILY DINNER: IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING STUDENT BASIC NEEDS ON CAMPUS

Students can't achieve higher-order learning if their foundational needs aren't met. Eastern Kentucky University is leveraging existing processes to identify students facing food, housing, and financial insecurity - and scaling creative solutions to support them. This session will highlight practical, replicable strategies, including embedding resource referrals into emergency fund processes, offering housing and meals during academic breaks, sustaining year-round food access, and partnering with community organizations for wraparound support. Through a case study and guided discussion, participants will leave with actionable approaches to identify need and possible partnerships and initiatives on their own campus.

- Dr. Lara Vance, Dean of Students, Eastern Kentucky University

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3:45-4:45 P.M. - CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Location: Room 116/117

COMEBACK CARDS: RE-ENGAGING STOP-OUT ADULT LEARNERS THROUGH DEBT FORGIVENESS

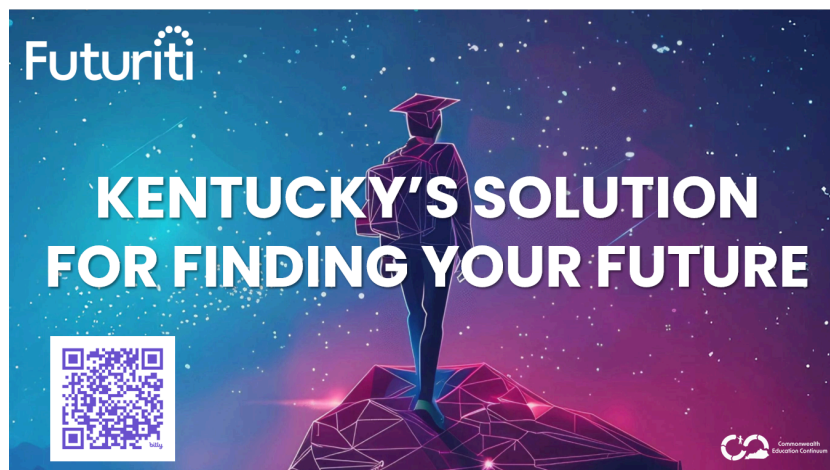
For students who have stepped away from their education, institutional debt is often the final, immovable roadblock to returning. Discover how the University of Louisville is shattering this barrier through Comeback Cards - a scalable, data-driven initiative that re-engages adult learners by pairing structured debt forgiveness with clear pathways to success. In this high-impact session, you'll dive into two years of proven results to see how debt forgiveness actually fuels institutional sustainability and tuition revenue. We'll move beyond the theory to give you the blueprint for designing a program tailored to your campus's unique needs and capacity.

- Hannah White, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Adult Services, University of Louisville

4:45-6:00 P.M. - NETWORKING RECEPTION

Location: Room 215

Unwind from the day's deep dives and join your colleagues from across the Commonwealth for an evening dedicated to building community and sparking new collaborations. Whether you're looking to trade strategies on student success, find a partner for a future initiative, or simply reconnect with peers, this reception provides the perfect backdrop for informal dialogue and high-impact networking. Heavy appetizers will be served, and a cash bar will be open.



KENTUCKY STUDENT SUCCESS SUMMIT

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

8:00-9:00 A.M. - NETWORKING BREAKFAST

Location: Room 215



Start your morning with a side of inspiration and a fresh cup of coffee. This informal gathering is the perfect opportunity to fuel up for the day while connecting with fellow student success advocates from across the Commonwealth. No formal agenda – just good food and even better conversation. Buffet closes five minutes before the first session.

9:00-10:15 A.M. - STUDENT PANEL

Location: Room 215

STUDENT PANEL: STORIES OF RESILIENCE AND SUPPORT

What does it truly mean to navigate the modern higher education landscape? Step away from the data points and into the lived experiences of those at the heart of our mission. In this powerful and candid session, a diverse panel of students from across the Commonwealth will share their personal journeys, shedding light on the real-world obstacles that nearly derailed their dreams and the specific supports that kept them moving forward. From navigating "financial fog" and food insecurity to finding a sense of belonging as a first-generation or adult learner, these students offer an unfiltered look at the systemic hurdles that still exist. This is more than just a storytelling session -- it is a masterclass in empathy and a call to action for every practitioner, faculty member, and administrator.

- Moderator: Jenny Sawyer, Executive Director of Admissions, University of Louisville
- Panelists
 - Makayla Akemon, Sophomore, University of Louisville
 - Kyra Mills, Senior, Eastern Kentucky University
 - Kahlilah Mitchell, Graduate Student, Eastern Kentucky University
 - Maren Snider, Transfer Student, Northern Kentucky University
 - Tyler Suits, Student, University of Kentucky



KENTUCKY STUDENT SUCCESS SUMMIT

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

10:30-11:30 A.M. - CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Location: Room 116/117

FORMALIZING & SUPPORTING INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH ACADEMIC AGREEMENTS

What if workforce learning counted – clearly, consistently, and at scale? Through Academic Agreements, Eastern Kentucky University converts validated professional learning -- certifications, military training, Career and Technical Education and employer-based programs -- into transcribed college credit through faculty-vetted alignments to course outcomes. Each agreement maps competencies to Student Learning Outcomes (SLO), credit hours, and documentation standards, ensuring rigor while removing duplication, cost, and time barriers for learners. The result: faster degree completion for students, streamlined processes for institutions, and a transparent, verifiable bridge between workplace learning and higher education for employers. In this session, you'll learn when to use Academic Agreements (vs. portfolio review), how to build defensible SLO-to-competency crosswalks, set documentation standards, and stand up an approval workflow that scales.

- Cassie Bradley, Credit for Prior Learning Coordinator, Eastern Kentucky University

Location: Room 201AB

BRIDGES, NOT BARRIERS: PROACTIVE STRATEGIES FOR FINANCIAL AID LITERACY AND FAFSA COMPLETION

Financial barriers remain the primary driver of student attrition, yet the disconnect between financial aid data and student success outreach often leaves students navigating a "financial fog" alone. This session pulls back the curtain on a high-impact collaboration designed to dismantle those silos, reduce non-payment drops, and build lasting financial confidence. Drawing on cutting-edge research and successful pilot models, presenters will demonstrate how institutions can leverage real-time student data to target two critical populations. From high-touch "nudge" campaigns for continuing students to integrating financial triggers directly into academic advising for incoming cohorts, this session provides a masterclass in proactive intervention.

- Dr. John Hall, Analyst of University Connect, Northern Kentucky University
- Rebecca Hamm, Assistant Vice President for Student Success, Northern Kentucky University
- Peter Rinto, Director, Institutional Planning & Performance, Northern Kentucky University
- Leah Stewart, Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Management, Northern Kentucky University



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Location: Room 201 CD

FROM SILOS TO SYSTEMS: IMPLEMENTING AN ECO-SYSTEM MODEL FOR HOLISTIC STUDENT SUCCESS

What does it take to move from reactive fixes to systemic, proactive change? This session will detail the transformation of Bellarmine University's Student Success Task Force (SSTF) into a high-capacity, cross-functional partnership. By adopting an innovative "eco-system model" inspired by the Civic Lab (2024 CPE Student Success Summit), the SSTF has shifted its focus from addressing nuanced, isolated problems to optimizing the structural and organizational systems that impact holistic student success. In this interactive session, learn how Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Enrollment Management aligned priorities, streamlined decision-making, and built broad institutional buy-in. Presenters will share data-informed outcomes, new retention initiatives, and the capacity gains that followed, along with candid lessons about barriers and how to overcome them.

- Kim Kerns, Assistant Dean of Academic Enrichment, Bellarmine University
- Dr. Leslie Maxie, Residence Life Coordinator, Bellarmine University
- Dr. Kristen Wallitsch, Dean of Student Success and International Programs, Bellarmine University

Location: Floyd Theater, 3rd floor

LEARNING TO WORK AND WORKING TO LEARN: INNOVATIVE POSTSECONDARY WORK-BASED LEARNING MODELS IN KENTUCKY

The traditional classroom is no longer the only place where career-defining learning happens. This session spotlights three trailblazing Work-Based Learning (WBL) models in Kentucky that are blurring the lines between education and the workforce to supercharge student skill-building. Representatives from Bluegrass Community and Technical College's FAME KY program, Eastern Kentucky University's Career Development in English course, and the University of Kentucky's CLIMB 2.0 initiative pull back the curtain on their diverse approaches. From technical manufacturing to the humanities, these presenters will share the "lessons learned and unlearned" while navigating the complexities of modern WBL.

- Dr. Miles Feroli, Senior Associate, Workforce and Economic Development, Council on Postsecondary Education
- Panelists:
 - Joshua Adams, Rural Project Manager, UK Center of Excellence in Rural Health
 - Michaela Amburgey, UK Center of Excellence in Rural Health, Rural Project Manager
 - John Jors, Program Coordinator, Advanced Manufacturing Technology, Bluegrass Community and Technical College
 - Charlotte Rich, Chair of Department of English, Eastern Kentucky University



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11:45-12:15 P.M. - AFTERNOON KEYNOTE

Location: Room 215



TURNING PAIN INTO PURPOSE

- Ariana Rodriguez, Miss Kentucky 2025

What happens when life's greatest challenges become the catalyst for a lifelong mission? Join Ariana Rodriguez, Miss Kentucky 2025, for a powerful and deeply personal exploration of resilience, advocacy, and the transformative power of perspective. In this session, Ariana shares her journey of navigating adversity and explains how she channeled those experiences into a platform for meaningful change across the Commonwealth. This session goes beyond the crown to discuss the universal struggle of overcoming setbacks and the importance of finding one's "why" in the face of hardship.

12:15-1:30 P.M. - NETWORKING LUNCH & AWARDS CEREMONY

Location: Room 215

Enjoy a delicious lunch while engaging in informal discussions with peers from across the state, sharing the "aha!" moments from the morning sessions. We will then transition into our Awards Ceremony, where we honor the programs, leaders, and institutions that have demonstrated exceptional commitment to student success during the last year.

1:30-2:00 P.M. - FINAL SESSION

Location: Room 215



FUTURE FOCUSED: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

As the 2026 Kentucky Student Success Summit draws to a close, this high-energy closing session will shift our gaze from the lessons of the past to the untapped potential of the future. Now, we address the critical question: how do we sustain this momentum once we return to our respective campuses? And what else is on the horizon for collaborative student success opportunities in Kentucky?

- Dr. Lilly Massa-McKinley, Assistant Vice President, Kentucky Student Success Collaborative, Council on Postsecondary Education
- Dr. Aaron Thompson, President, Council on Postsecondary Education



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Printed with state funds
March 2026

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