



Postsecondary Degrees & Credentials in Kentucky 2020-21 Academic Year

This brief describes the state of postsecondary education degree and credential production in Kentucky, focusing on the 2020-21 academic year. Using data from the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Data System (KPEDS), the report details the number and types of credentials earned at Kentucky's public universities, the campuses of the Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities (AIKCU), and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS).

Degree production is the metric most directly tied to the Council's goal of raising the percentage of Kentuckians with a high-quality postsecondary credential to 60% by the year 2030. Although degree and credential production has increased 23.5% over the last six years, the most recent year showed the first decline since 2014-15. It is worth noting that the recent coronavirus pandemic had a considerable negative impact on enrollment and degree production at postsecondary institutions around the country, and Kentucky was not exempt from this trend. The Council will monitor this trend closely as it measures progress toward the 60% attainment goal.

The data presented in this brief can be accessed on the data section of CPE's website (<http://cpe.ky.gov>).

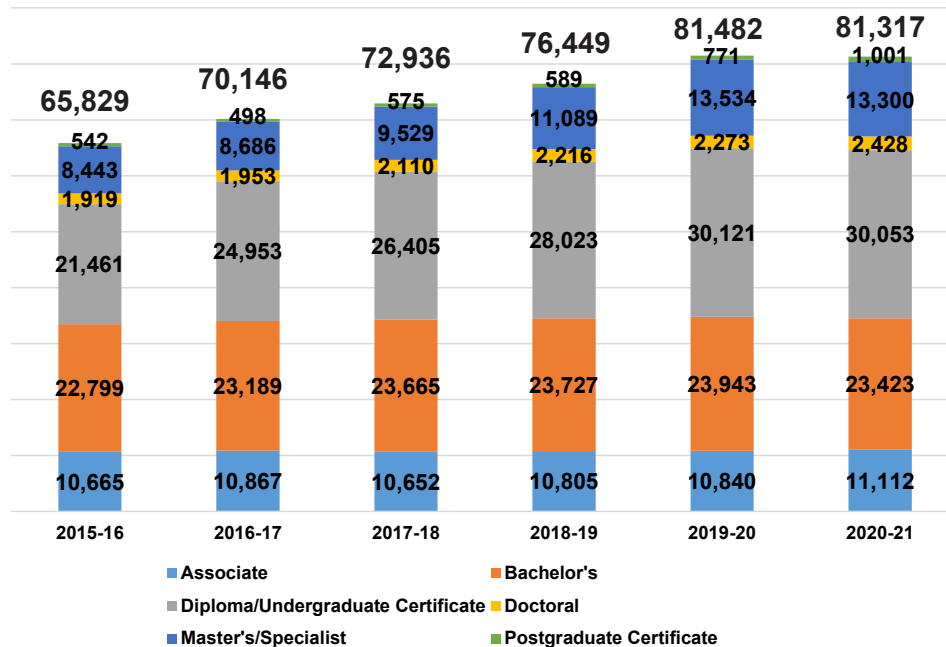
Key Findings

- Overall, total degree and credential production decreased slightly (0.2%) in 2020-21, the first decline since 2014-15. However, since 2015-16, credential production is up 23.5%.
- Total bachelor's degrees were down 2.2% in 2020-21. Bachelor's degree production fell 3.9% at public universities but was up 4.8% at AIKCU institutions.
- KCTCS increased credential production by 0.4% in 2020-21, with a 3.8% increase in associate degrees. Certificates were down 0.8%.
- Total graduate degrees were down by 0.5% in 2020-21. While graduate degree production at AIKCU institutions decreased 7.3%, public universities increased graduate degree production by 7.1%
- Unduplicated, undergraduate URM credentials were up 2.3% in 2020-21, led by a 10.0% increase at AIKCU institutions
- Unduplicated, undergraduate low-income credentials were up 4.4% at public institutions in 2019-20, the most recent year available.
- Unduplicated, undergraduate credentials awarded to working-age adults fell by 2.5% in 2020-21.
- Credentials awarded to in-state students were up 1.2% in 2020-21.



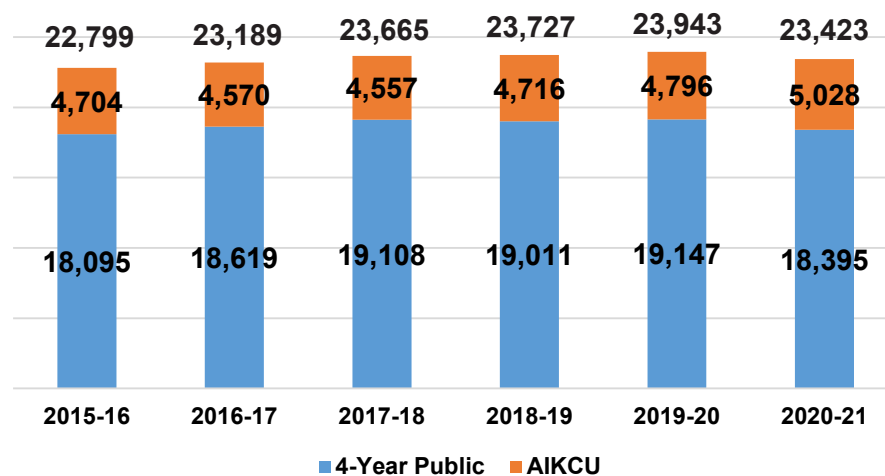
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Figure 1. Total Degrees & Credentials Awarded, by Degree Level



Over the last six years, total degree production at Kentucky public, AIKCU and KCTCS institutions has increased by 23.5%. However, for the first time since 2014-15, total degrees decreased slightly in 2020-21, falling from 81,482 in 2019-20 to 81,317, a 0.2% dip. Total degrees and credentials awarded include diplomas, undergraduate certificates, associate degrees, bachelor’s degrees, master’s degrees, specialist, degrees, doctoral degrees and postgraduate certificates.

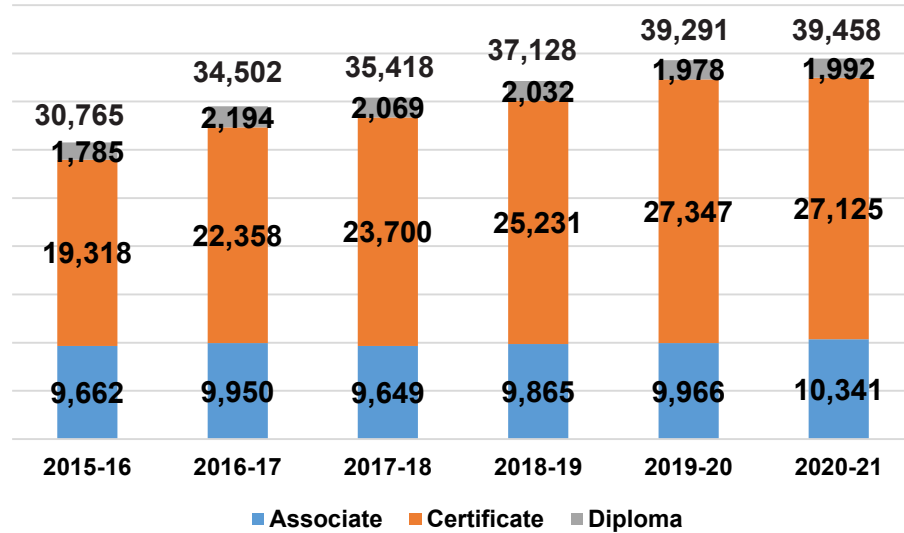
Figure 2. Total Bachelor Degrees Awarded, Public & AIKCU



In 2020-21, public universities experienced a 3.9% decrease in bachelor’s degrees awarded. AIKCU institutions, on the other hand, increased bachelor’s degree production by 4.8% over the previous year. Since 2015-16, bachelor’s degrees have increased 1.7% at public universities and 6.9% at AIKCU institutions. Of all total bachelor’s degrees conferred, 33.5% were in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), and 14.4% were awarded to underrepresented minority students.



Figure 3. Total KCTCS Credentials Awarded



As a system, KCTCS awards associate degrees, undergraduate certificates and diplomas. Total degrees and credentials awarded by KCTCS institutions were up slightly in 2020-21 (0.4%) but have increased by 28.3% since 2015-16 (duplicated degree counts). Although certificates decreased 0.8% over last year, gains in short-term certificates have driven much of Kentucky’s overall credential growth, increasing 40.4% since 2015-16. Associate degrees were up 3.8% over last year and have increased 7.0% since 2015-16. STEM credentials comprised 35.5% of all KCTCS credentials awarded in 2020-21, increasing by 1.5% over the previous year. URM credentials at KCTCS grew faster than the overall total, increasing 4.3% over the previous year and by 46.1% since 2015-16.

Figure 4. Total Graduate Degrees Awarded, Public & AIKCU

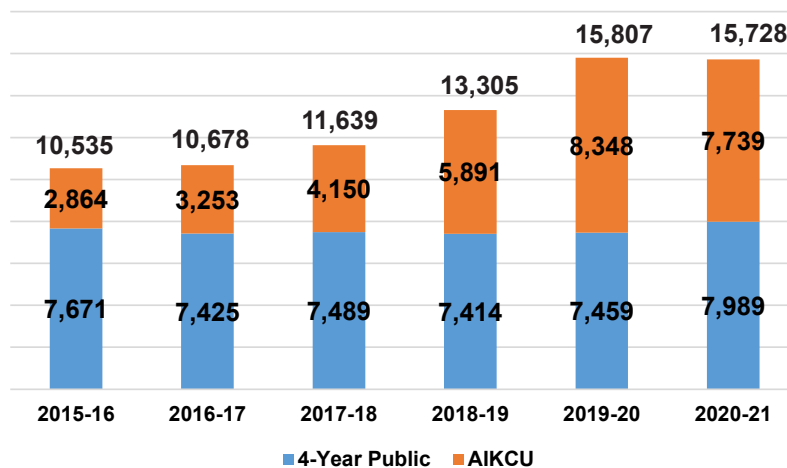


Figure 4 reflects all graduate degrees awarded by Kentucky’s public and AIKCU institutions, including master’s, doctoral and specialist degrees. While total graduate degrees have increased 49.3% since 2015-16, that number fell by 0.5% in 2020-21, from 15,807 in 2019-20 to 15,728. In 2020-21, graduate degrees increased 7.1% at public universities and decreased 7.3% at AIKCU institutions. Master’s degrees are the biggest portion of total graduate degrees. They decreased by 2.3% in 2020-21, but have increased 57.5% since 2015-16.



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Figure 5. Undergraduate Degrees & Credentials Awarded to URM Populations, by Sector

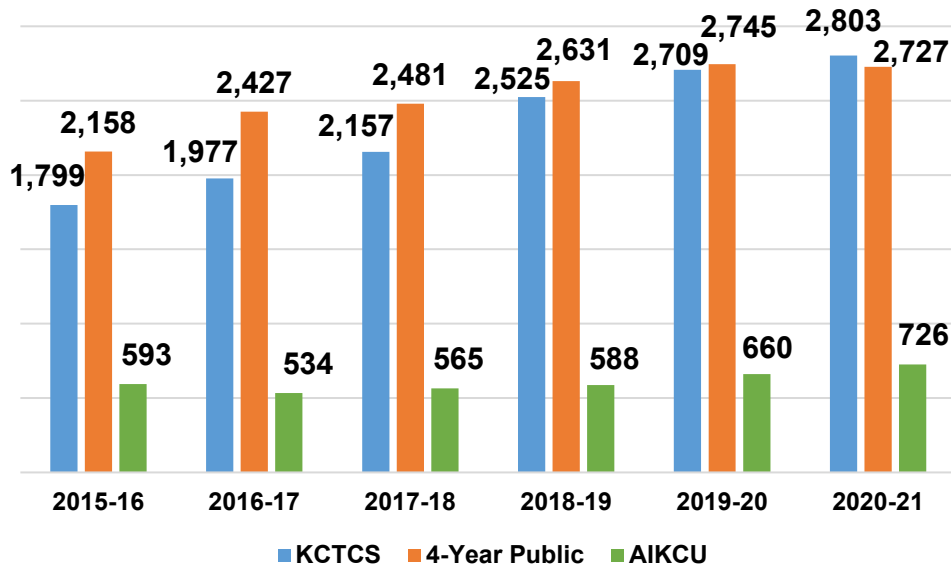
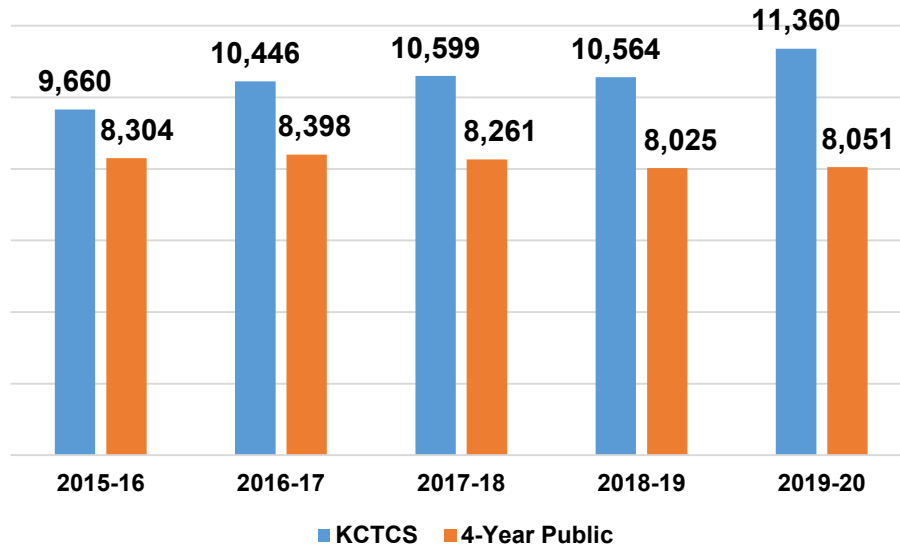


Figure 5 shows unduplicated, undergraduate degrees and credentials awarded to URM students at public, AIKCU and KCTCS institutions. Between 2019-20 and 2020-21, total URM degree production increased by 2.3%. The following data points were calculated using unduplicated degree and credential counts:

- At public universities, URM degrees decreased 0.7% from the previous year but have increased 26.4% since 2015-16.
- At AIKCU institutions, URM degrees increased 10.0% from the previous year and were up 22.4% since 2015-16.
- At KCTCS institutions, URM credentials increased 3.5% from the previous year and were up 55.8% since 2015-16.
- Total credentials awarded to Hispanic students increased 4.1% over last year and were up 77.5% since 2015-16.
- Total credentials awarded to Black students increased 3.0% over last year and were up 13.7% since 2015-16.



Figure 6. Undergraduate Degrees & Credentials Awarded to Low-Income Students, Public

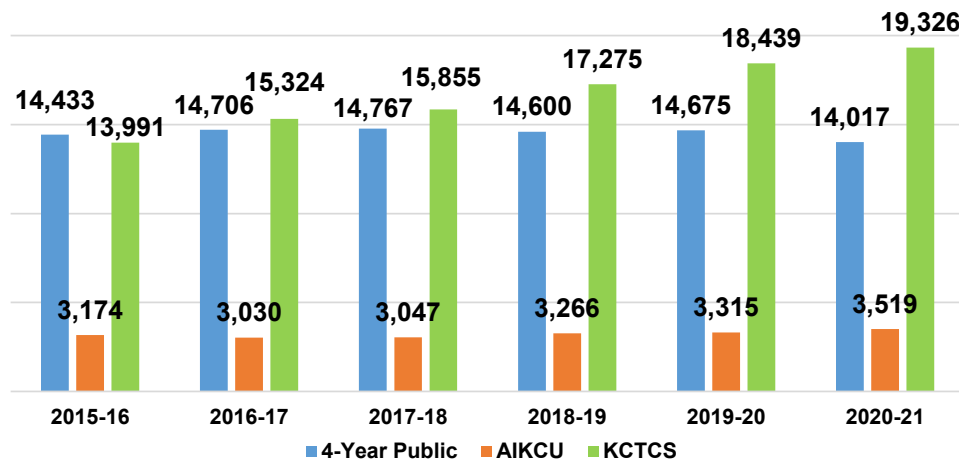


CPE collects undergraduate degrees awarded to low-income students at public institutions only, so Figure 6 does not include AIKCU institutions. Due to the way data is collected, low-income degree counts for 2020-21 are not yet available. Overall, unduplicated, undergraduate degrees awarded to low-income students increased 4.4% from the previous year and were up 8.1% since 2015-16. Public universities increased low-income degrees by 0.3% over last year, but that number has decreased by 3.1% since 2015-16. KCTCS increased low-income degrees by 7.5% in 2019-20 and by 17.6% since 2015-16.



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Figure 7. Undergraduate Degrees & Credentials Awarded to In-State Students, by Sector



This graph represents the unduplicated number of undergraduate credentials awarded to in-state students at public, KCTCS and AIKCU* institutions. Credentials awarded to Kentucky students increased 1.2% in 2020-21 and were up 16.7% since 2015-16.

- At public universities, degrees awarded to in-state students decreased 4.5% in 2020-21 and by 2.9% over the last six years.
- At AIKCU institutions, degrees awarded to in-state students increased 6.2% in 2020-21 and by 10.9% over the last six years.
- At KCTCS institutions, credentials awarded to in-state students increased 4.8% in 2020-21 and by 38.1% over the last six years.
- In 2019-20, in-state, low-income credential earners comprised 52.9% of all Kentucky credential earners at public and KCTCS institutions.
- In 2020-21, in-state, URM credential earners comprised 13.5% of all Kentucky credential earners at public, AIKCU and KCTCS institutions.
- In 2020-21, in-state, STEM credential earners comprised 39.5% of all Kentucky credential earners at public, AIKCU and KCTCS institutions.

*AIKCU does not report degrees awarded to in-state students. To obtain this count, CPE applied the state/country of origin filter to total degrees awarded.



Figure 8. Degrees & Credentials Awarded to Working-Age Adults, by Sector

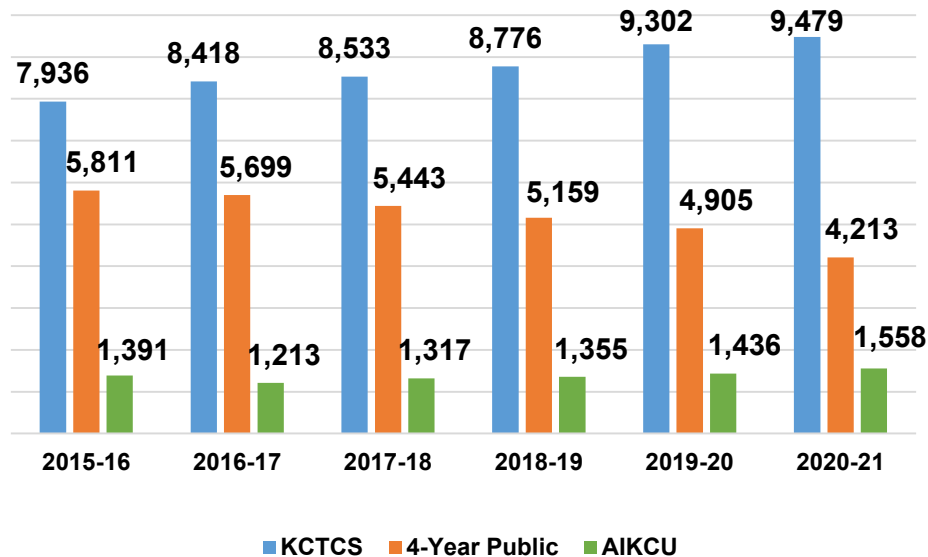


Figure 8 represents the total unduplicated number of undergraduate credentials awarded to working-age adults at public, KCTCS and AIKCU institutions. “Working-age” is defined as between the ages of 25-64. Since the number of traditional-age high school graduates is declining, enrolling more undereducated adults is necessary to reaching the 60% statewide attainment goal. Degrees awarded to working-age adults declined by 2.5% in 2020-21, but were up slightly (0.7%) since 2015-16.

- At public universities, degrees awarded to working-age adults decreased 14.1% over last year and by 27.5% over the last six years.
- At AIKCU institutions, degrees awarded to working-age adults degree increased 8.5% over last year and by 12.0% over the last six years.
- At KCTCS institutions, credentials awarded to working-age adults increased 1.9% over last year and by 19.4% over the last six years.
- In 2019-20, working-age, low-income credential earners comprised 65.5% of all in-state degree earners at public and KCTCS institutions.
- In 2020-21, working-age, URM credential earners comprised 15.5% of all in-state credential earners at public, AIKCU and KCTCS institutions.
- In 2020-21, working-age, STEM credential earners comprised 43.9% of all in-state credential earners at public, AIKCU and KCTCS institutions.



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Definitions

Duplicated Counts: A duplicate count, also referred to as “total” in this brief, reflects all credentials awarded, not the number of students earning credentials. If one student earns three certificates in one year, for example, the duplicated count is three.

Unduplicated Counts: An unduplicated count reflects all students who earned a credential in a given year, not a total count of credentials awarded.

Low-Income: A student who is a Pell recipient at any point during enrollment.

Underrepresented Minority (URM): A student whose race or ethnicity is Black; American Indian or Alaskan Native; Hispanic or Latino; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; or two or more races.

Working-Age: A student between the ages of 25-64.

Short-term Certificates: Undergraduate credentials that include diploma and certificate programs lasting one semester to four years.

Associate Degree: An award that normally requires at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent.

Bachelor’s Degree: An award that normally requires at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent. This includes all bachelor’s degrees conferred in a five-year cooperative (work-study) program, as well as degrees in which the normal four years of work are completed in three years.

Master’s Degree: An award that requires the successful completion of an academic program of at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate or professional level.

Specialist: An award that normally requires 60 semester hours of concentrated and approved graduate coursework beyond the bachelor’s degree. It is generally offered in the field of education to acknowledge completion of advanced graduate study designed to help individuals meet licensure requirements or develop additional knowledge and skills beyond the master’s degree but not at the doctoral level.

Doctorate Degree: A doctor’s degree requires advanced work beyond the master’s level. CPE recognizes four classifications for doctoral degrees (Doctor’s Degree, completed all coursework and dissertation; Doctor’s Degree, completed all coursework but working on dissertation; Doctor’s Degree, Professional Practice; and all other Doctor’s Degrees that are not research/scholarship or professional practice degrees).

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