

2026 STUDENT ACCESS SUMMIT

Opening Remarks

Dr. Aaron Thompson

President,
Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

WHO WE ARE

COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

1997

House Bill 1, the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act

CPE is the coordinating board for Kentucky's public colleges and universities and sets the strategic priorities for higher education in the Commonwealth.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Affordability
- Transitions
- Success
- Talent
- Value

ENROLLMENT

Our enrollment is above pre-pandemic levels

Public 2-Years

+7.3%

Kentucky enrollment growth, 2019–2024

SREB **+1.2%** · U.S. **−1.4%**

Public 4-Years

+0.7%

Kentucky enrollment growth, 2019–2024

SREB **+2.4%** · U.S. **−0.6%**

PERSISTENCE

More Kentucky students are staying in college

Public 2-Years

+6.2

point gain in Kentucky retention, 61.4% to 67.6%

SREB **+2.3** · U.S. **+1.7**

Public 4-Years

+2.0

point gain in Kentucky retention, 78.2% to 80.2%

SREB **+2.6** · U.S. **+2.0**

GRADUATION RATES

More Kentucky students are graduating

Public 2-Years

+13.3

point gain in Kentucky graduation, 33.9% to 47.2%

SREB **+6.3** · U.S. **+6.6**

Public 4-Years

+6.1

point gain in Kentucky graduation, 55.1% to 61.2%

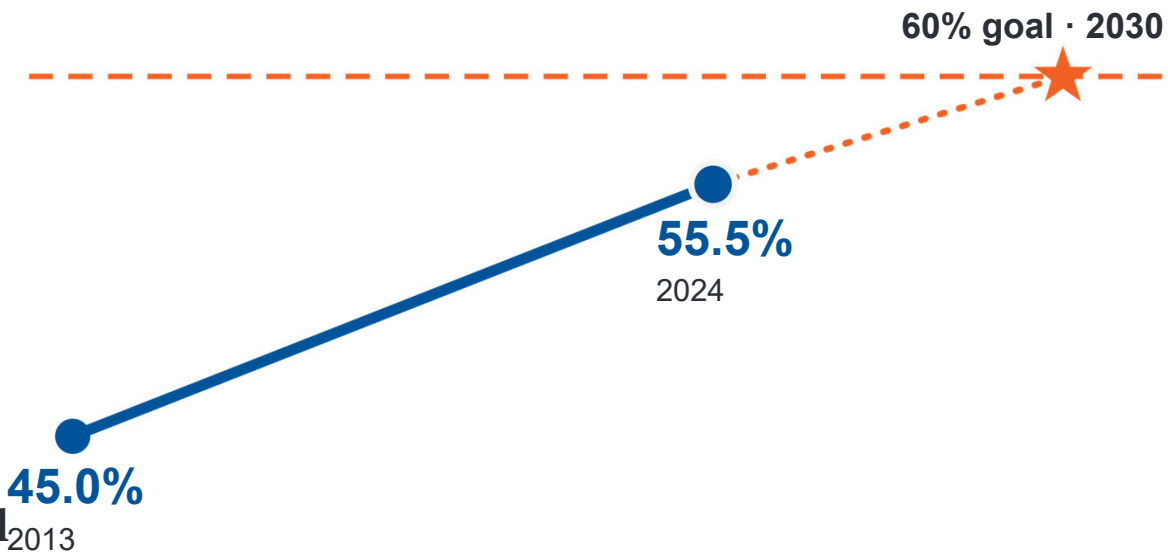
SREB **+3.0** · U.S. **+1.8**

HIGHER EDUCATION MATTERS

Our goal: 60x30

55.5%

of working-age Kentuckians hold a credential (2024)



4.5 points to our 60x30 goal

KENTUCKY'S CHALLENGE

Fewer graduates. Greater workforce need.

−10.5%

projected drop in Kentucky high school graduates, 2024 to 2040

> **We can't rely on volume anymore.**



Source: KDE enrollment records; NCHS birth records; CPE analysis. 2024 actual; 2025–2040 projected.

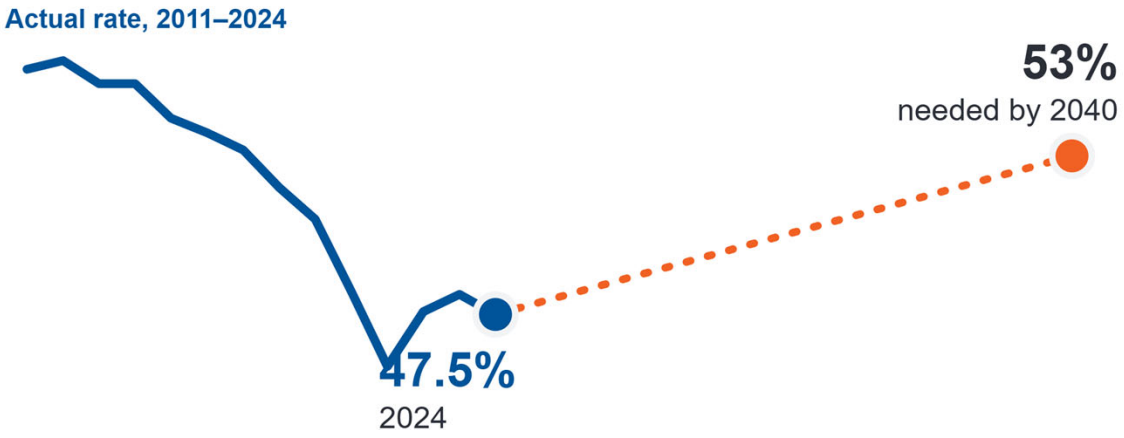
COLLEGE-GOING

To hold steady, more graduates must go to college

53%

in-state college-going rate needed by 2040 just to hold enrollment steady

> **That's 5.5 points above today's 47.5%.**



Source: KYSTATS college-going data; projections from KDE enrollment and NCHS birth records.

EDUCATION CONTINUUM

Students don’t experience two sectors. They experience one journey.

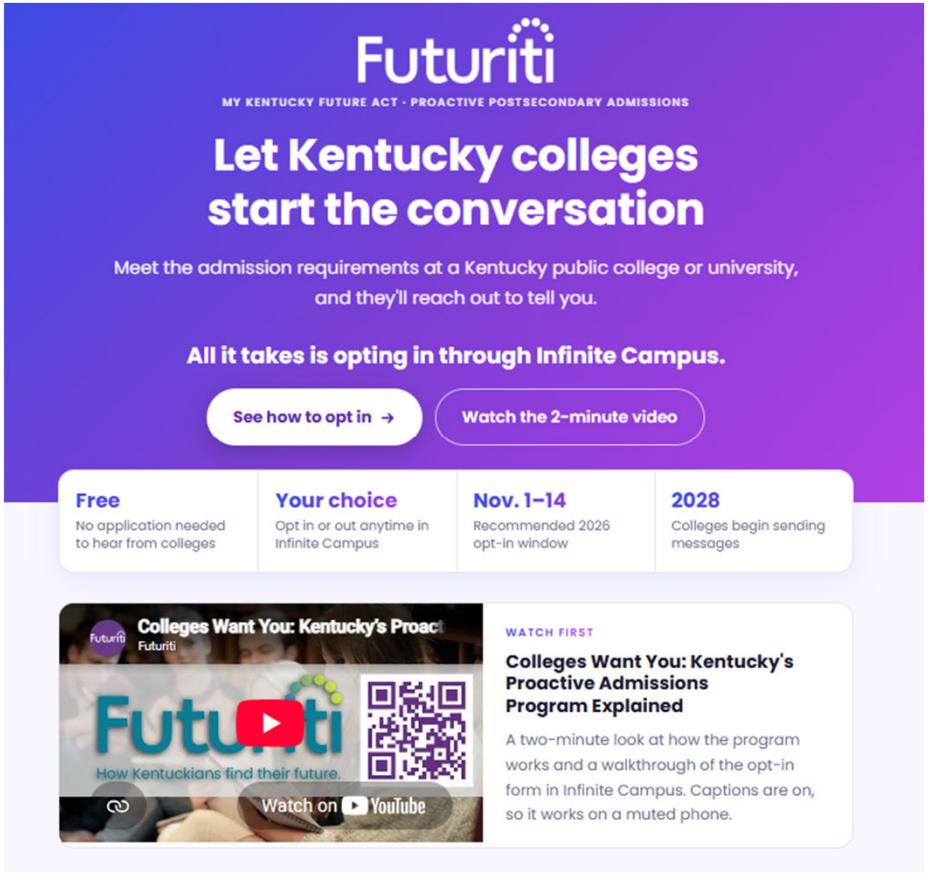


When we plan together, share data, and align expectations, students transition smoothly and finish what they start.

MY KENTUCKY FUTURE ACT

High school students to receive eligibility notifications from public colleges and universities.

House Bill 307 · Proactive Postsecondary Admissions Program



LEARN MORE
futuriti.org/page/my-kentucky-future

CPE

ELIGIBLE AND INFORMED

Open the door. Choose the right one.

Proactive Admissions

Eligible seniors learn they’re eligible for admissions before they apply.

+

Futuriti

Students explore careers, regional jobs and wages, and the programs that lead there.

CommonApp

Students can use CommonApp, accessed independently or via Futuriti, to apply for admission.



OPENING KEYNOTE

Dr. Taylor Odle

Assistant Professor of Educational Policy Studies,
University of Wisconsin–Madison

Studies college access and success, including direct admissions

Former fiscal policy and research lead,
Tennessee Higher Education Commission

2026 early career awards from AEFP and SREE