



# **Better Together: Advancing KY Higher Education**

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

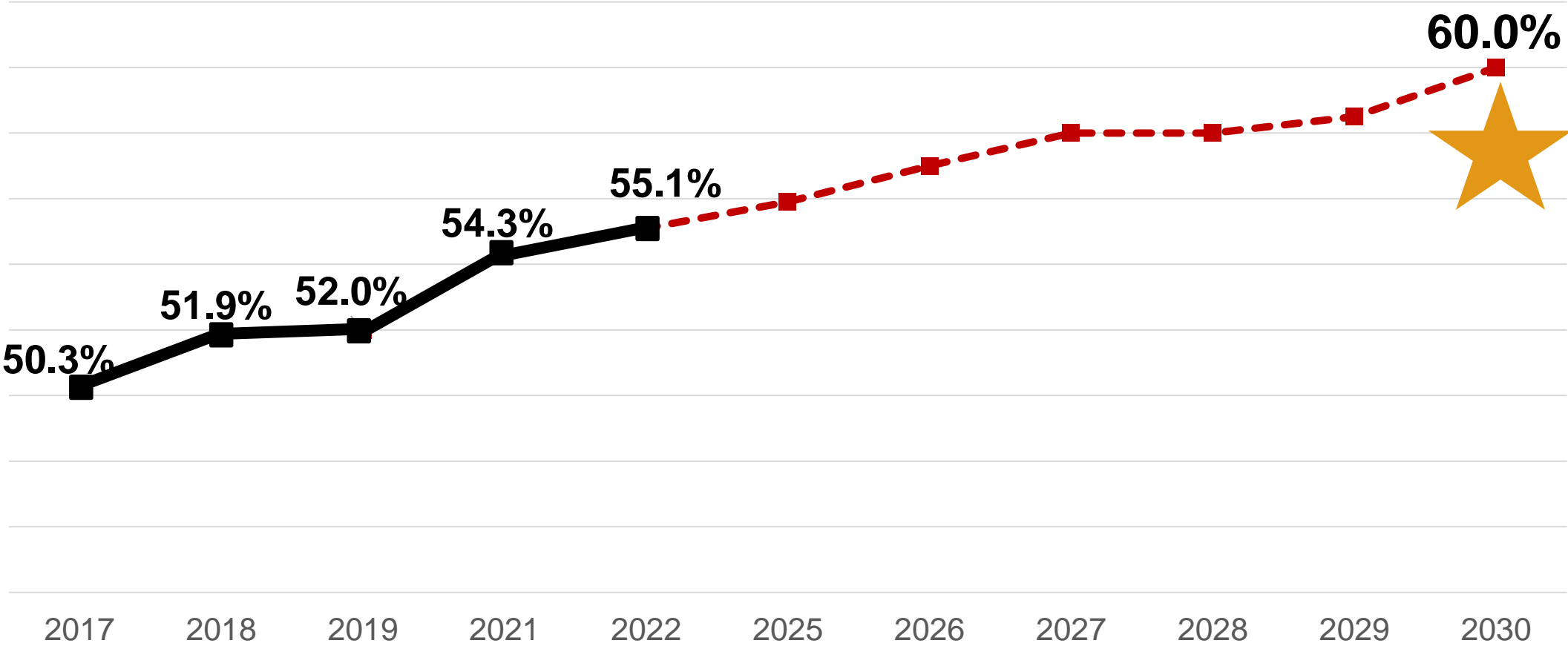


# KY Higher Education Successes



# 60x30 Educational Attainment Goal

Kentucky is on track to meet its goal by 2030.



# Enrollment Pressures

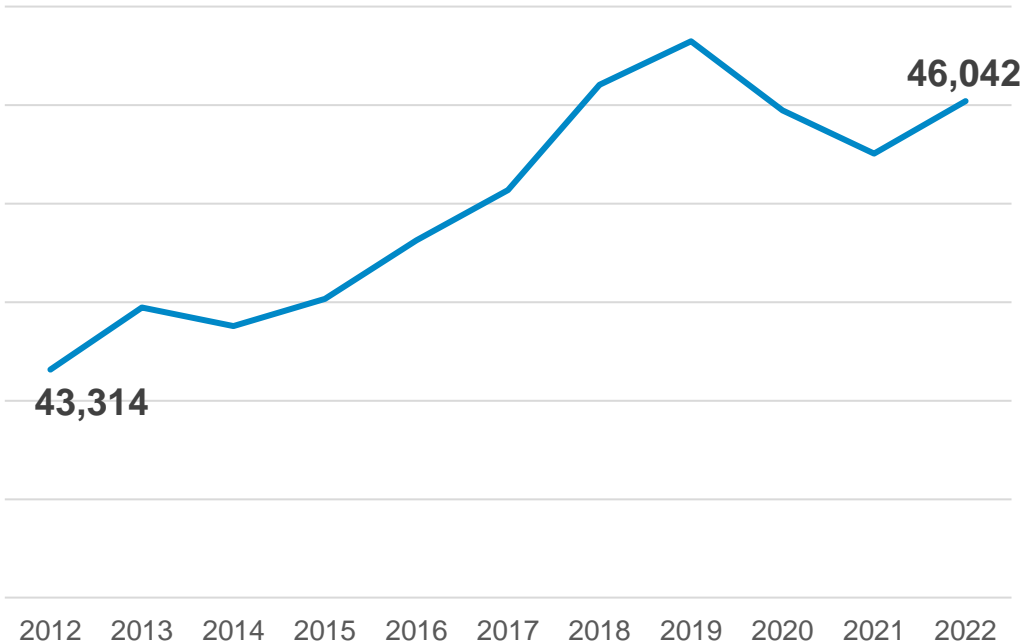
The number of American high school graduates is expected to fall from 3.9M in 2025 to 3.5M in 2037, an 11% decrease.

- Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education

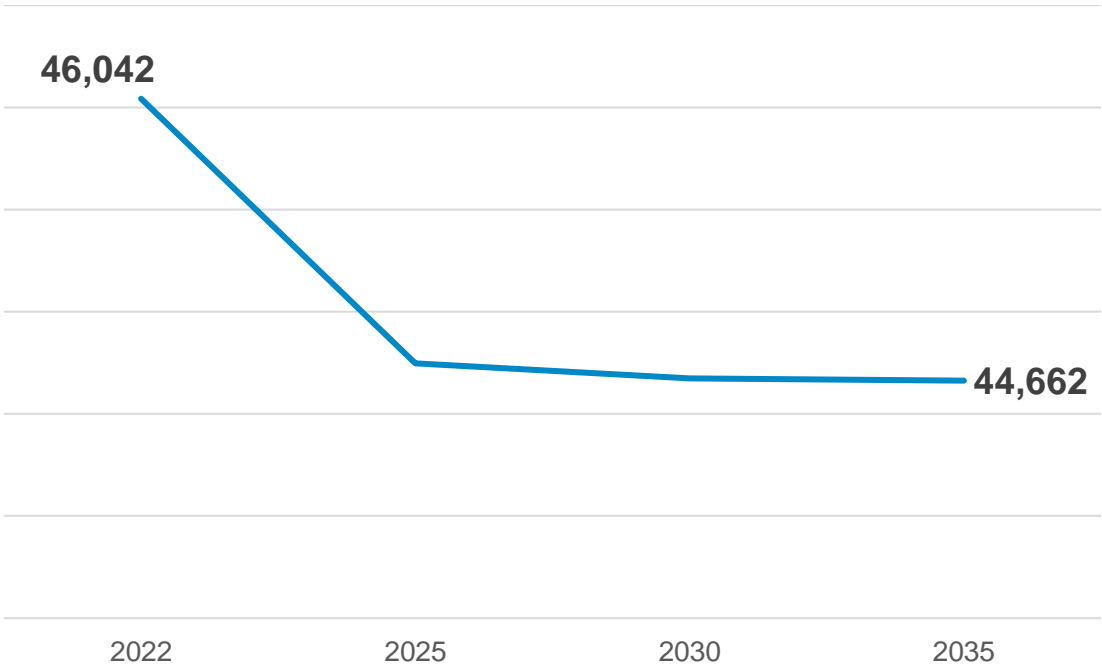


# Kentucky's Looming Enrollment Cliff

Between 2012-22, KY's high school graduate cohort size increased about 6%.



Between 2022-35, KY's high school graduate cohort size is projected to decline about 3%.



# **Policy Responses**

- **Early postsecondary opportunities and admission redesign**
- **Post-traditional & underserved students**
- **Mission differentiation**



# Mission Differentiation

“The way college leaders have long defined differentiation is simply by tweaking the same product offered by thousands of other institutions for the same type of student...Rather, they need to understand that learners of all ages have vastly different needs and then design very different programs that appeal to them.”

– Jeffrey Selingo



# Budgetary Pressures

**“SUNY Warns of Future \$1B Deficit Without Higher Tuition or More Aid” – *The Times Union*, Jan. 2**

**“As Covid-19 Relief Funding Runs Out, UConn Expects \$70M Deficit in FY 25” – *The Connecticut Mirror*, Jan. 23**

**“Penn State Plans Nearly \$100M in Cuts for FY26 Budget” – *Higher Ed Dive*, Jan. 24**

**“As U. of Arizona Confronts Budget Cuts, Workers and Students Brace for the Worst” – *The New York Times*, Feb. 21**





# **Policy Responses**

A graduation cap with a red tassel is positioned on top of a stack of books. A \$100 bill is placed on the top book, symbolizing education and financial investment.

- **Administrative & academic restructuring**
- **Diversifying revenue streams**
- **Optimizing operational efficiencies**

# Workforce Pressures

## Alternate Credentials:

- Badges
- Micro-credentials
- Nanodegrees
- Bootcamps

## Alternate Providers:

- Coursera
- LinkedIn Learning
- Microsoft
- Google
- EdX
- Udemy



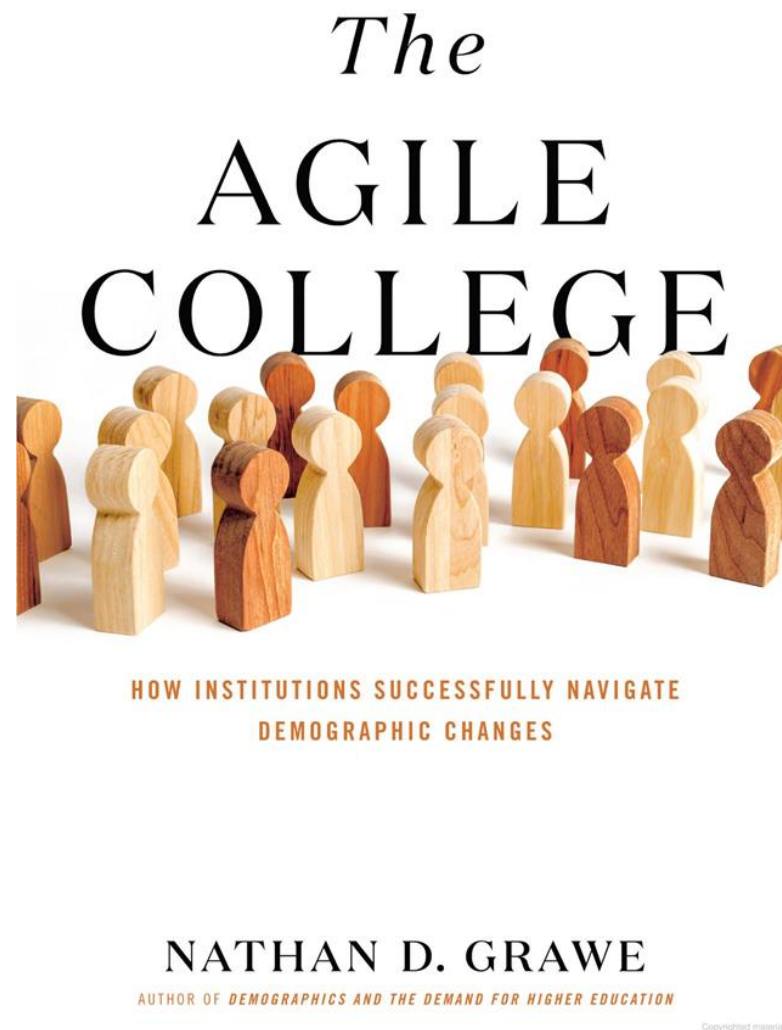
# Policy Responses



- **Employer & industry partnerships**
- **Stackable credentials & degree pathways**
- **Compressed degree programs**

# Turning Challenges into Opportunities

“...as disruptive as recent demographic shifts can be, schools that constructively engage the changing environment can emerge stronger as a result. Armed with projections of the future and proactive examples, higher education can prepare to meet the needs of the next generation of students.”





# Stay Connected



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