

OPPORTUNITY

Kentucky will ensure that postsecondary education is broadly accessible to all residents, students have the support and resources they need to pursue postsecondary opportunities, and all students enter postsecondary education prepared for credit-bearing work.

Kentucky is a land of higher education opportunity. There are over 40 licensed public and independent colleges and universities across the state with distinct identities and strengths. There are nationally-ranked graduate programs producing new knowledge and cutting-edge research; community and technical colleges serving students of every age, ability and income level; and adult education programs offering underprepared adults a pathway to postsecondary education and career training. There are online programs that enable students to balance school, work and family life and move at their own pace, as well as industry-recognized certificates that allow individuals to move quickly into jobs and advance in their careers.

Unfortunately, ample opportunity to postsecondary education has not produced equal participation or outcomes. Low-income students do not go to college at the same rate as more advantaged students—neither do underrepresented minority students, students from rural regions of the state, non-traditional adult students, or male students. These participation and achievement gaps are chronic, persistent obstacles to a better life and stronger economy for Kentucky's people.

How can we help more Kentuckians access all of the higher education opportunities our state has to offer?

First, increasing college-going rates and, more urgently, closing participation gaps will require **broad outreach strategies that start earlier and occur more often.** For the past decade, Kentucky's postsecondary system has intensified partnerships with the P-12 sector to improve academic preparation and intervention strategies for high school students who fall short of college readiness standards. These collaborations will grow even stronger as we reach back into middle and elementary schools with more coordinated early college awareness activities and messages. We also will create more higher education opportunities for working-age adults to help them advance in their current careers or transition to new ones.

Kentucky's postsecondary system will work with key partners to **ramp up advising and counseling services**, so students and families understand what it takes to get into college and can plan accordingly. Supplementing school guidance counselors with near-peer college and career advisors is a research-based strategy with proven results. Partnering with community-based, civic, and religious organizations will help mobilize a larger, grassroots network of informal college mentors. And because a growing body of research suggests that non-cognitive factors—like grit, financial literacy, and organizational and study skills—may be just as important to college-going as grades and test scores, the Council will work with P-12 education

to develop and assess the behaviors, skills, attitudes, and strategies that most influence college aspirations.

As the primary providers of teacher education and training in the state, Kentucky's colleges and universities will continue to improve the quality and diversity of educator preparation programs and provide ongoing, high-quality professional development. **Recruiting a more diverse teaching force will make higher education more inviting to the full range of potential undergraduate students.** Colleges and universities also will continue work to streamline developmental education, so students can move into credit-bearing courses sooner and increase their rates of degree completion.

Finally, **maintaining college affordability is absolutely critical to increasing college access.** Significant cuts to public higher education over the last decade have shifted the majority of college costs to students and their families. Unfortunately, state financial aid resources are not keeping up with higher costs and increased demand. Kentucky must advocate for sufficient operating support for our colleges and universities, as well as for more state financial aid resources. In return, higher education will moderate tuition increases and monitor student loan debt to ensure a college credential is within the reach of any Kentuckian with the drive and desire to pursue it. If we make the right policy decisions as a state, we can help thousands of additional Kentuckians take advantage of postsecondary opportunities and unlock the benefits of a college credential.

Objective 1. Improve the diversity and inclusiveness of Kentucky's campuses through the statewide diversity planning process and related initiatives.

- 1.1. Increase cultural competence among students, staff and other postsecondary professionals so that all students, staff and faculty are welcomed, valued, supported, and accommodated.
- 1.2. Promote inclusive excellence, the process of integrating diversity efforts into the core elements of an institution, including academic priorities, campus leadership, day-to-day operations, decision making and organizational culture.
- 1.3. Implement the Kentucky Public Postsecondary Education Diversity Policy and degree eligibility process.
- 1.4. Increase the recruitment and retention of underrepresented minority students, faculty and staff.

Objective 2. Partner with Kentucky's P-12 system to increase the number of students ready to enter a postsecondary degree or certification program.

- 2.1. Secure another round of federal funding to support Kentucky's GEAR UP program.
- 2.2. Work with KDE, KHEAA, GEAR UP, the Kentucky College Coaches program, and other partners to expand and improve advising resources for high school students and families. Encourage higher education representatives to provide advising services to Kentucky high schools.

- 2.3. Work with Kentucky Rising partners and teacher preparation programs to increase the diversity and effectiveness of K-12 educators and school leaders and to provide high-quality professional development opportunities.
- 2.4. Create more high quality Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and early college experiences, and ensure more students have access to them.
- 2.5. Fully implement the Dual Credit Policy for Public and Participating Postsecondary Institutions and Secondary Schools to provide all eligible high school students with at least three college-level courses in general education and three career and technical education courses in a career pathway.
- 2.6. Increase access to transitional courses, summer bridge programming, and other intervention strategies for students who are not on track to graduate from high school ready for college.
- 2.7. Redesign the delivery of developmental education to reduce its duration and cost. This may include shortening the sequence of required courses, increasing access to co-requisite models of developmental education, or implementing other practices that have been shown to increase student success.
- 2.8. Encourage the development of career pathways in high schools and the use of the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) by postsecondary advisors to encourage and assess students' career interests and academic strengths.
- 2.9. Partner with Advance KY, Project Lead the Way, and other similar programs to improve academic instruction and interest in STEM disciplines in high school.

Objective 3. Increase participation in postsecondary education, particularly among traditionally underserved populations (i.e. low-income, underrepresented minority and adult students).

- 3.1. Work with GEAR UP KY, K-12, KHEAA, community-based organizations and other statewide partners to improve early college awareness and readiness in middle and high school. This includes not only academic readiness, but social maturity, career readiness, and financial literacy.
- 3.2. Expand the availability of flexible, affordable, competency-based postsecondary programs, Project Graduate, and other innovative strategies that expand access to postsecondary education for adults.
- 3.3. Support Kentucky's SOAR initiative and similar efforts to improve postsecondary access, workforce readiness, and the technology infrastructure of rural Kentucky.
- 3.4. Coordinate a statewide awareness campaign that communicates the value and affordability of a postsecondary degree, particularly in underserved urban centers and rural areas of the state.
- 3.5. Expand the Kentucky College and Career Connection (Ky3C) coalition, a statewide network of college and career outreach professionals working collaboratively to enhance college access and outreach.
- 3.6. Expand collaborative models like the University Center of the Mountains to help provide postsecondary programs and academic support in rural, underserved areas of the state.

Objective 4. Improve the education and skill levels of Kentucky Adult Education students to prepare them for careers and/or postsecondary education.

- 4.1. Attract, retain and prepare highly effective adult educators.
- 4.2. Strengthen partnerships with business and industry, workforce partner agencies, institutions of higher education, and other organizations that lead to increased student enrollment and engagement in adult education programs.
- 4.3. Increase the number of Kentucky Adult Education students advancing to postsecondary education and the workforce through strategies including Accelerating Opportunity, workforce preparation, integrated education and training, GED® Express, and integrated English literacy and civics.

Objective 5. Expand financial access to postsecondary education.

- 5.1. Advocate for sufficient state operating and financial aid support to reduce pressure on tuition and keep college affordable.
- 5.2. Increase efforts to simplify the FAFSA completion process and increase completion rates.
- 5.3. Improve the financial literacy of students and families and provide effective advising regarding the cost of college, student debt, and loan repayment options.
- 5.4. Simplify college cost calculators and provide more standard language and definitions across the state to make the true cost of college more transparent.
- 5.5. Work with the General Assembly, KHEAA and other partners to achieve compliance with existing statutes regarding the amount of lottery money that should go to state financial aid programs.
- 5.6. Evaluate all of the current state-mandated tuition waivers and associated costs and assess whether they should continue.

SUCCESS

Kentucky will ensure more people complete college with the skills and abilities to be productive, engaged citizens.

Kentucky's future prosperity in large part depends on more people advancing through our postsecondary education system and graduating in less time. It is not enough to simply increase the number of students going to college; we have to graduate a much larger percentage of them, faster, and increase their employment outcomes.

Research proves that for college students, time is the enemy to success. Students working long hours to offset the cost of their education may drop to part-time status, which increases their risk of not graduating. Transferring schools can delay graduation if students have to repeat courses or take additional requirements. Many students are overwhelmed by too many choices and take courses they don't really need along the way, especially if they wait too long to

declare a major. Taking only 12 hours a semester, considered a full-time load at most institutions and for financial aid eligibility, automatically extends college beyond four years, especially if the degree program exceeds 120 hours.

On average, only **49 percent of bachelor's degree seekers enrolled in Kentucky public universities graduate within six years, and 23% percent of certificate and associate degree seekers graduate within three years.** Part of the problem is the way we measure graduation rates. The federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) only tracks students who enroll for the first-time, going full-time. This fails to account for part-time, returning, and transfer students, an increasing share of total postsecondary enrollments. For the first time, this strategic agenda will incorporate an alternate state-level measure of postsecondary completion that reflects outcomes for all of Kentucky's undergraduate students.

But there are other systemic changes that must occur to help more students achieve successful outcomes. How can we help Kentuckians finish the certificates and degrees they started and enter the career of their choice?

First, we must find a way to close completion gaps for low-income and underrepresented minority students. Doing so is both a moral and social imperative. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, by the year 2020, over half of the nation's children are expected to be part of a minority race or ethnic group. By 2060, the U.S. minority population will overtake the majority population, comprising 56 percent of all Americans. To ensure our future workforce is more educated than previous one, we will redouble our efforts to improve diversity and inclusiveness on college campuses, and provide academic supports that produce successful outcomes for all students.

Second, colleges and universities must **make instruction more relevant, rigorous, and engaging.** Institutions need to accommodate diverse learning styles and involve all students in undergraduate research, hands-on learning, study abroad programs and other practices that increase quality and engagement. Moving forward, career development, internships, and work study will be a more sustained, integral part of the undergraduate experience. And faculty members will receive ongoing training and development to ensure they are effectively incorporating new technological innovations and the most effective pedagogical practices.

Finally, we need to **improve college advising and steer students into degree programs sooner.** Some states are experimenting with models where freshmen enroll in academic programs instead of individual courses, and receive degree maps that specify which courses to take and when to take them. Kentucky will continue implementing transfer initiatives that increase degree pathways from two-year to four-year programs without loss or duplication of credit. And campuses will work harder to reach out to students who are struggling, and use tools like intrusive advising and early warning systems to identify those who are missing too much class or not making satisfactory progress.

Objective 6. Increase persistence and timely completion for all students at all levels, particularly for low-income, underprepared, and underrepresented minority students.

- 6.1. Improve student advising by faculty and professional advisors by focusing on effective practices and the role of advising in retention and graduation.
- 6.2. Share, implement, and evaluate high-impact educational practices to accelerate persistence and completion, particularly for low-income, underprepared, and underrepresented minority students.
- 6.3. Promote greater collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs professionals to facilitate student success and share effective practices.
- 6.4. Expand strategies like “15 to Finish” that encourage students to finish on time and at a lower cost.
- 6.5. Implement a new funding model with a performance-based component to reward institutions for increases in student persistence, progression and completion.

Objective 7. Increase the number of KCTCS students who successfully transfer to four-year institutions.

- 7.1. Increase two-year to four-year transfer by providing more degree pathways, complete (2+2) programs, and transfer advising that incorporates KnowHowToTransfer.org.
- 7.2. Implement reverse transfer programs where academic credits for coursework completed at a four-year college or university are transferred back to a community college to satisfy associate degree requirements.
- 7.3. Support KCTCS’s role as a high-quality, low-cost provider of postsecondary education, technical training, and transfer opportunities, and a key point of access for students with multiple developmental education needs.
- 7.4. Encourage concurrent enrollment, advising, and completion programs between KCTCS campuses and universities to streamline transfer opportunities and ensure more timely degree completion.

Objective 8. Promote academic excellence through improvements in teaching and learning.

- 8.1. Promote the use of authentic assessments, such as those being developed by the Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment, to evaluate student learning and provide data to inform pedagogy, assignment design, and curriculum review.
- 8.2. Provide more pedagogical training and professional development opportunities for faculty members to strengthen learning and improve student success.
- 8.3. Promote academic quality and continuous improvement of programs and instruction through the implementation of the statewide “Review of Existing Programs” policy, rigorous models of faculty evaluation, and other measures.
- 8.4. Build on the established strengths of institutions to encourage a differentiated postsecondary system in which institutions operate together as complementary parts of a whole.

IMPACT

Kentucky will strengthen our competitive advantage through innovation and research, community engagement, and a well-educated, highly-skilled citizenry prepared for life and work.

This agenda advances a long-term, ambitious goal for the state of Kentucky: **by the year 2025, we want xx percent of Kentucky adults to have a postsecondary certificate or degree.**

Currently, only 44 percent of Kentuckians have attained this level of education, substantially lower than the current national average of 52 percent.

We established this goal because higher education pays, both individually and collectively. People with a postsecondary credential earn higher salaries than high school graduates, which generates greater tax revenues and enriches the state coffers. The Council on Postsecondary Education commissioned the University of Kentucky's Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) to study the positive effects that would accrue with increased levels of educational attainment. **CBER found that if Kentucky were as well-educated as the average state, we would generate between 10 to 14 percent more in state income tax revenues, which translates into an additional \$370 million to \$534 million annually.**

But there are so many other ways that education pays, many of which are not immediately obvious. **Increasing the state's educational attainment would move 4,600 individuals off unemployment, save \$200 million in Medicaid expenditures, reduce the costs of chronic disease by \$200 million, and save \$3 million in costs associated with crime.** Furthermore, 5,000 families would move off of food stamps, and over 20,000 adults would move off of Supplemental Security Income (SSI). It has been well documented that postsecondary graduates have higher rates of civic participation—they volunteer and vote more often—as well as better health outcomes, more involvement in their children's education, and higher rates of charitable giving. These economic and social benefits would not just boost the "golden triangle" of Louisville, Lexington and Northern Kentucky; CBER's research shows that these benefits would enrich every region of the state, even the most rural parts of Eastern and Western Kentucky.

In addition to increasing the state's educational attainment, Kentucky's postsecondary providers will continue to partner with economic development and workforce providers to strengthen the skills and abilities of our workforce. Through a partnership with the Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics, we will track employment outcomes of graduates and ensure our academic programs are producing the kinds of graduates needed to fill workforce shortages and attract high-wage employers to the state. We also will strengthen entrepreneurship training to give more Kentuckians the knowledge and confidence to start their own businesses and become job creators themselves.

Led by our research universities, the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville, Kentucky will continue to compete for federal and state research dollars, create new

knowledge and scientific discoveries, and commercialize this research to create new products and solutions for the good of the Commonwealth. Kentucky's universities will provide applied research and professional consulting and evaluation services to solve practical problems and improve public and private sector endeavors. All universities will increase undergraduates' involvement in research to improve students' analytical and critical thinking skills, increase student engagement, and train future researchers and academicians.

Finally, our postsecondary system will advance social, artistic, cultural, and environmental progress through regional stewardship activities and public service. This important work strengthens Kentucky's communities through support and outreach to schools, local government, hospitals, and other social and cultural organizations that contribute to the health, well-being, and quality of life of all of our citizens.

Objective 9. Raise the level of educational attainment in the Commonwealth by awarding more postsecondary degrees and credentials.

- 9.1. Promote an overarching state educational attainment goal to drive improvement.
- 9.2. Create a common understanding of the value of postsecondary education to state, regional and local economies. Enlist business and community champions to help carry and promote the message.
- 9.3. Work with KCTCS to develop a mechanism for capturing certificate holders in the state's educational attainment statistics.

Objective 10. Improve the career readiness of postsecondary education graduates.

- 10.1. Make career development a state and institutional priority and a key strategy for student success. Improve career development through earlier advising efforts, clearly-articulated career pathways, degree maps, tools that match skills to jobs and students with employers, and entrepreneurship training.
- 10.2. Survey higher education alumni and Kentucky employers to assess the career readiness of Kentucky graduates, and identify needed skills and competencies for current and future employment opportunities.
- 10.3. Prepare Kentucky postsecondary students for 21st century challenges by strengthening essential learning outcomes as articulated in the Association of American Colleges and Universities' LEAP initiative (Liberal Education and America's Promise).
- 10.4. Work with the employer community, foundations, and state agencies to provide "work and learn" opportunities, including experiential or project-based learning, co-ops, internships, externships, and clinical experiences.
- 10.5. Promote regular, meaningful employer involvement in the development and evaluation of postsecondary programs that are relevant to their business or industry.
- 10.6. Identify current and emerging workforce demands, entrepreneurial business opportunities, and stackable credentials that can lead to additional education and training.
- 10.7. Advance Kentucky's STEM and health agendas through ongoing leadership, advocacy, and collaboration.

Objective 11. Increase basic, applied, and translational research to create new knowledge, accelerate innovation, and promote economic growth.

- 11.1. Develop and implement a public awareness campaign to articulate the value of basic and applied research and the impact of this work on Kentucky's economic and community competitiveness.
- 11.2. Expand commercialization and technology transfer and promote collaborative research efforts among universities to leverage faculty expertise.
- 11.3. Advocate for additional funding for research and innovation through the Endowment Match Trust Fund (Bucks for Brains) or other funding approaches.
- 11.4. Increase opportunities for undergraduate students to participate in research.
- 11.5. Foster a more innovative, creative, and entrepreneurial culture within the postsecondary community.

Objective 12. Expand regional partnerships, outreach and public service that improve the health and quality of life of Kentucky communities.

- 12.1. Support postsecondary education's efforts to enhance the health of Kentucky citizens through regional outreach activities, extension services, and academic and professional healthcare programs.
- 12.2. Strengthen communication and planning between higher education and regional and community leaders to identify priorities and challenges and align resources and programs to address them.