

**KENTUCKY COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**



June 11, 2025 – 5:30 p.m. ET
Shaker Village, 3501 Lexington Rd, Harrodsburg, KY 40330 – West Family Dwelling, 2nd floor

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call**

- II. Action Items**
 - A. Approval of the Minutes 2
 - B. CPE Board meeting dates 4
 - 1. Revised meeting dates for November 2025
 - 2. Meeting dates for 2026 calendar year
 - C. 2025-26 CPE Agency Budget 6
 - D. Kentucky State University Management Improvement Plan – Redirection
of Incentive Funding 15

- III. Report from the President 17**

- IV. Other Business**

- V. Adjournment**
Next committee meeting: September 12, 2025

MEETING MINUTES

Draft for approval by the Executive Committee on June 11, 2025

Who: Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
Meeting Type: Executive Committee
Date: April 17, 2025
Time: 8:30 a.m. ET
Location: Northern Kentucky University, Vortuba Student Union Rm 105, Highland Heights, KY

CALL TO ORDER

The Executive Committee of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education met Thursday, April 17, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. ET. The meeting occurred at Northern Kentucky University in Highland Heights, Kentucky. Chair Madison Silvert presided.

ROLL CALL

All committee members attended: CB Akins, Jacob Brown, Kellie Ellis, Karyn Hoover, Madison Silvert, and Elaine Walker.

Heather Faesy, CPE's program manager, served as recorder of the meeting minutes.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The minutes of the January 30, 2025, committee meeting were approved as distributed.

2025 COUNCIL RETREAT PLANNING

Ms. Lee Nimocks, Sr. Vice President and Chief of Staff, presented the draft agenda for the 2025 board retreat that will take place at Shaker Village in Harrodsburg. The committee discussed priorities of topic discussion and potential speakers to invite.

KENTUCKY STATE UNIVERSITY (KSU) MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

A quarterly report from auditor, Moss Adams, was provided in the materials. Mr. Travis Powell, Sr. Vice President and General Counsel, also provided a general update on the various components that staff have been monitored in relation to the improvement plan. He stated that CPE's final report is due to the legislature on November 1, and it will include recommendations for repayment of the \$23 million loan.

CPE PRESIDENT UPDATE

President Thompson discussed his work to continue expanding legislative relations and how staff are already preparing for the 2026 session. He also talked about three awards he is receiving over the next few months.

ADJOURNMENT

The Executive Committee adjourned at 9:55 a.m., ET.

TITLE: CPE Board Meeting Dates

DESCRIPTION: Staff recommends the Committee endorse for Council approval the proposed meeting dates for 2026 and revised meeting dates for November 2025.

STAFF CONTACTS: Lee Nimocks, Sr. Vice President and Chief of Staff
Heather Faesy, Program Manager

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Per KRS 164.011(9), the Council is required to meet quarterly but may meet more often upon the call of the chair. In order to conduct its business efficiently, the Council typically meets five times per year, and standing committees meet prior to each Council meeting.

REVISED MEETING DATES FOR NOVEMBER 2025

A conflict has been identified with the previously approved November 2025 meeting dates. Instead of meeting the week of November 10-13, the following dates/time are proposed for approval:

- Academic and Strategic Initiatives Committee – November 3, 2025, 10am ET
- Finance Committee – November 3, 2025, 1pm ET
- Executive Committee – November 7, 2025, 8:30am ET
- Work session & campus spotlight – November 6, 2025, afternoon
- Business meeting – November 7, 2025, 10am ET

PROPOSED MEETING DATES FOR 2026

Staff proposes the Council approve the following meeting dates for calendar year 2026. The meetings of the Academic and Strategic Initiatives Committee and Finance Committee take place virtually by ZOOM teleconference. The meetings of the Executive Committee and full board will take place in person, locations to be determined.

Academic and Strategic Initiatives Committee

- Monday, January 26, 2026 – 10am-Noon ET
- Monday, March 30, 2026 – 10am-Noon ET
- Monday, June 8, 2026 – 10am-Noon ET
- Wednesday, September 9, 2026 – 10am-Noon ET
- Monday, November 9, 2026 – 10am-Noon ET

Finance Committee

- Monday, January 26, 2026 – 1-3pm ET
- Monday, March 30, 2026 – 1-3pm ET
- Monday, June 8, 2026 – 1-3pm ET
- Wednesday, September 9, 2026 – 1-3pm ET
- Monday, November 9, 2026 – 1-3pm ET

Executive Committee, time TBD

- Friday, January 30, 2026
- Thursday, April 2, 2026
- Friday, June 12, 2026
- Sunday, September 13, 2026
- Friday, November 13, 2026

Regular meetings of the full board, schedule TBD

- Thursday/Friday, January 29-30, 2026
- Thursday, April 2, 2026
- Thursday/Friday, June 11-12, 2026
- Monday, September 14, 2026
- Thursday/Friday, November 12-13, 2026

Special meetings/events of the full board

- Joint meeting of the Council, Presidents and Board of Student Body Presidents – January 29, 2026, time TBD
- Postsecondary Education Trusteeship Conference – September 13-14, 2026

TITLE: 2025-26 CPE Agency Budget

DESCRIPTION: Staff recommends that the Executive Committee approve the 2025-26 agency budget.

STAFF CONTACTS: Leslie Brown, Executive Director, Accounting, Budget, and Procurement Services
Travis Powell, Sr. Vice President and General Counsel

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Each year, the Council reviews and approves the agency’s revenue and expenditure budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Attached is CPE’s budget as proposed for fiscal year 2025-26. The enacted state budget for 2024-2026 (primarily HB 6, but also HB 1, and SB 91), along with CPE’s 2025-26 biennial budget request (submitted to the state budget office and Legislative Research Commission October 1, 2023) provide the framework for the proposed 2024-25 agency budget. Budgeted figures for the current year (i.e., 2024-25) are included for comparison.



Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

Agency Budget

FY2026 – Proposed (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026)

GENERAL FUND OPERATIONS

Overview

General funds are used to provide essential services and resources that support the board, president, and agency in carrying out CPE’s statutory duties and strategic agenda priorities. Units and initiatives funded through general funds are:

- **The Office of the President**, which is the state’s primary advocate for public postsecondary education and advises the Governor and General Assembly on higher education matters;
- **CPE Board**, whose responsibilities are set out in KRS 164.013. The CPE Board and its standing and advisory committees meet regularly throughout the year to review staff recommendations and approve major decisions of the Council;
- **Academic Excellence**, which oversees matters relating to the quality of degree programs and instruction;
- **Finance**, which oversees college affordability and deals with postsecondary budgetary matters;
- **Policy, Planning, Communications, Data and Research**, which develops and implements the strategic agenda and associated accountability system; collects, analyzes, and warehouses student data; and coordinates communications and events;
- **Workforce and Economic Development**, which aligns degree offerings with workforce needs and addresses critical shortages in the high-need occupational areas; and
- **Agency Operations**, which houses the office of general counsel and government relations, human resources, administrative services, and other functions supporting agency staff.

HB6 of the 2024 Regular Session appropriates funds to be used for strategic initiative efforts. These funds are used to support:

- **Student Access and Success**, which promotes smoother transitions to and through postsecondary education through policy, programs, and enhanced student support services; Graduate Profile grants to institutions and the Faculty Leadership Academy

HB6 of the 2024 Regular Session appropriated general funds for CPE oversight of Kentucky State University and to conduct a Postbaccalaureate Study, the unused FY2025 portion of the KSU funds carry forward into FY2026; the Postbaccalaureate Study was not funded in FY2026.

Financial Overview

Program	FY 2025 Budget	Proposed FY 2026 Budget
Postbaccalaureate Study	2,000,000	
Operations - SREB Dues	224,800	224,800
Kentucky State University Oversight	750,000	300,000
TOTAL GENERAL OPERATIONS	\$2,974,800	\$524,800

General Fund Base Operations	FY 2025 Budget	Proposed FY 2026 Budget
Salaries and Wages FY26 = 36 FTE; 4 Interns	\$2,994,581	\$3,487,400
Benefits	\$1,744,500	\$1,955,500
Employee Training	\$15,000	\$15,000
Professional Service Contracts	\$660,000	\$235,000
Building Rental	306,100	310,000
COT - Technology Support	417,000	417,000
Copiers and Printing	16,200	16,200
Office Supplies	10,000	9,000
Memberships and Dues	80,000	45,000
Travel and Meeting Expenses	60,000	42,000
Misc. Services	14,700	12,000
TOTAL GENERAL BASE OPERATIONS	\$6,318,081	\$6,544,100

General Fund Strategic Initiatives - Operations	FY 2025 Budget	Proposed FY 2026 Budget
Salaries and Wages FY26 = 6 FTE	\$500,000	\$650,000
Benefits	\$250,000	\$220,000
Professional Service Contracts	\$445,000	\$360,000
Futuriti- Technology Support	30,000	30,000
Office Supplies	11,400	9,000
Memberships, Dues, and Subscriptions	40,000	40,000
Travel and Meeting Expenses	31,000	25,000
Grants	150,000	100,000
TOTAL STRATEGIC INITIATIVES OPERATIONS	\$1,457,400	\$1,434,000

TECHNOLOGY TRUST FUND

Overview

KRS 164.7911 creates the Technology Initiative Trust Fund, and KRS 164.7921 clarifies that the fund supports ongoing technology investments and upgrades for CPE and postsecondary institutions. KRS 164.800 encourages shared program delivery among libraries, institutions, systems, agencies, and programs. These joint technology purchases and digital subscriptions result in considerable cost savings for the Commonwealth.

- The Kentucky Postsecondary Education Network (KPEN) provides internet access to public postsecondary campuses and other digital initiatives.
- Kentucky Virtual Library (KYVL) is a consortium of over 300 Kentucky libraries and institutions, including colleges and universities, public libraries, K12 schools, hospitals, the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives (KDLA), and more.

Program funding comes from the General Fund, fees from Kentucky postsecondary institutions, consortium member fees (KYVL only). Funds carry forward until expensed.

Financial Overview

KPEN and Technology Support	FY 2025 Budget	Proposed FY 2026 Budget
REVENUE		
Prior Year Carry Forward	\$1,468,823	\$1,386,200
General Fund	2,105,800	2,114,101
Member Fees	550,000	550,000
TOTAL REVENUES	\$4,124,623	\$4,050,301
EXPENDITURES		
Personnel	600,000	518,000
Operating	2,962,423	2,993,894
Grants		400,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$3,562,423	\$3,511,894
FUND BALANCE	\$562,200	\$538,407

Kentucky Virtual Library (KYVL)	FY 2025 Budget	Proposed FY 2026 Budget
REVENUE		
Prior Year Carry Forward	\$1,089,427	\$1,500,000
General Fund	1,547,400	1,553,499
Member Fees	3,150,000	2,600,000
TOTAL REVENUES	\$5,786,827	\$5,653,499
EXPENDITURES		
Personnel	\$410,311	\$415,000
Operating	3,991,554	4,100,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$4,401,865	\$4,515,000
FUND BALANCE	\$1,384,962	\$1,138,499

RESTRICTED and TRUST FUND PROGRAMS

Overview

Equine Trust Fund

Pursuant to KRS 138.510(5), the Equine Trust Fund directs one percent of all money wagered on live and historical races at the track to be deposited into a trust for the construction, expansion, or renovation of facilities or the purchase of equipment for equine programs at state universities. CPE serves as the administrative agent of these funds and develops procedures for administering the program and making disbursements in accordance with established guidelines. Funds carry forward until expensed.

Healthcare Workforce Investment Fund (HWIF)

In 2023, the General Assembly passed HB 200, establishing an innovative fund whereby employers pledge a dollar amount to a postsecondary healthcare program held in trust to be matched by general fund state dollars. Over half of the funds are dedicated to scholarships for students pursuing high-demand healthcare credentials; the remaining dollars recognize program excellence and support administration of the fund at CPE. Funds carry forward until expensed or until the program sunsets in 2030.

Licensure

As set forth in KRS 164.945-47, CPE is required to license all non-public, postsecondary institutions that operate in Kentucky offering bachelor’s degrees or higher, including out-of-state institutions offering programs through distance education. The licensure unit also manages Kentucky’s participation in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), which sets standards for interstate offerings of postsecondary distance education. The fund is funded through licensure fees. Funds carry forward until expensed.

Research Challenge and Comprehensive University Excellence Trust Fund “Bucks for Brains”

- The Research Challenge Trust Fund provides funding to the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville to recruit world-class research faculty through an endowment match program. It also supports scientific research leading to new discoveries and innovations for the good of the state (KRS 164.7917). Funds carry forward until expensed.
- The Comprehensive University Excellence Trust Fund (KRS 164.7919) are awarded to Eastern Kentucky University, Kentucky State University, Morehead State University, Murray State University, Northern Kentucky University, and Western Kentucky University to support their designated Programs of Distinction (PODs). Funds carry forward until expensed.

Program	FY 2025 Budget	Proposed FY 2026 Budget
Equine Trust Fund	\$751,991	\$750,000
Healthcare Workforce Investment Fund	13,720,000	19,200,000
Licensure	500,000	493,900
Research Challenge Trust Fund	13,373,487	12,373,500
Comprehensive University Excellence Trust Fund	8,650,000	2,882,400
TOTAL Restricted and Trust Funds	\$36,995,477	\$35,699,800

GRANTS

Overview

Grant funds are used to support non-general fund services and resources to further efforts in carrying out CPE's statutory duties and strategic agenda priorities. Most grant funds are awarded for periods that do not coincide with the state fiscal year; the chart below depicts total available funds as of the designated fiscal year.

Responsible Unit	Grant Name	Award Period	FY 2025 *TOTAL Available Funds	FY 2026 *TOTAL Available Funds
Academic Excellence	SHEEO	10/01/2023 - 02/28/2026	\$20,000	\$18,383
Licensure	NC SARA	07/01/2024 - 06/30/2025	7,500	0
Performance and Planning	KHEAA - Innovative Scholarship Fund	07/19/2022 - 04/30/2025	80,500	0
Student Access and Success	ARPA/ESSER - KAA	03/15/2022 - 09/30/2024	367,564	0
Student Access and Success	GEARUP	10/01/2018 - 09/30/2025	4,600,000	1,600,000
Student Access and Success	Save The Children	08/01/2022-09/30/2025	297,097	297,097
Student Access and Success	LAUNCH Grant New Venture Fund	01/01/2023 - 03/31/2025	91,540	0
Student Access and Success	NASH - Commonwealth Education Continuum	12/01/2024 - 12/31/2027	13,333	13,333
Student Access and Success	NASH - Futuriti	12/01/2024 - 12/31/2027	13,333	12,628
Student Access and Success	NASH - P-20 Partnership Dual Credit	12/01/2024 - 12/31/2027	13,333	11,450
Student Access and Success	GOEC - Preschool Development	07/01/2024 - 06/30/2026	200,000	130,000
Student Access and Success	ECMC - Scaling Student Basic Needs	01/01/2024 - 12/31/2026	1,551,356	1,350,000
Student Access and Success	NASH - Refugee Resettlement Initiative	12/20/2022 - 12/31/2024	1,500	0
Student Access and Success	NASH - Catalyst Fund - Transfer	12/05/2022 - 12/31/2025	7,400	5,750
Student Access and Success	Lumina - Admissions Redesign	02/20/2024 - 02/21/2025	100,000	0
Student Access and Success	James Graham Brown Kentucky Student Success Center	07/01/2024 - 06/30/2030	3,250,000	2,950,000
Student Access and Success	KOAE - Adult Learner	07/01/2024 - 06/30/2024	575,000	200,000
Student Access and Success	NASH - Transfer - NIC	Stipend - No end date	10,725	14,285
Student Access and Success	SHEEO Student Basic Needs	04/07/2025-12/31/2027	60,000	60,000
Workforce and Economic Development	Healthcare Workforce		4,481,065	2,450,000
Workforce and Economic Development	CHFS - Career Ladders in Mental and Behavioral Health (CLIMB)	09/15/2023 - 06/30/2026	1,174,500	830,000
Workforce and Economic Development	CHFS - Career Ladders in Mental and Behavioral Health (CLIMB #2)	TBD - In Process		1,500,000
Workforce and Economic Development	DCBS Training Grant	04/25/2025 - 06/30/2025	1,687,623	1,447,719
Workforce and Economic Development	KBIRT - Nuclear Medicine	08/01/2024 - 06/30/2025	100,000	0
Workforce and Economic Development	SHEEO - Justice Impacted Students	TBD - In Process		
Workforce and Economic Development	Opioid Abatement	07/01/2025 - 06/30/2026		488,676
Agency Operations - Restricted Fund	Indirect Revenue from Grants		600,000	403,200
TOTAL Grant Expenditures			\$19,303,369	\$13,782,521

FIDUCIARY FUNDS

Overview

Fiduciary (or pass-through) funds are appropriated by the General Assembly to CPE and held for the benefit of individuals or units outside of the agency. CPE is the trustee or fiduciary responsible for these assets, which can be used only for trust beneficiaries. CPE ensures assets reported in these funds are used for their intended purposes.

Financial Overview

Program	FY 2025 Budget	Proposed FY 2026 Budget
App Reg Healthcare - Psychiatric Residency	\$8,000,000	\$8,000,000
Cancer Research Matching Program	3,807,400	3,923,000
Cancer Research - Tobacco Settlement Funds	5,843,200	6,250,000
National Stem Cell Foundation	300,000	0
Ovarian Cancer Screening	1,000,000	1,000,000
Spinal Cord and Head Injury Research	2,000,000	2,000,000
SREB Doctorial Scholars Program	50,000	50,000
Simmons College	3,239,565	2,200,000
TOTAL FIDICARY FUNDS	\$24,240,165	\$23,423,000

Program Descriptions

- **Appalachian Regional Healthcare Psychiatric Residency:** HB1 of the 2024 Regular Session appropriates funding to be distributed to Appalachian Regional Healthcare to establish a psychiatric residency program to serve Kentucky.
- **Cancer Research Matching Funds**
KRS 164.043 creates the cancer research institutions' matching fund. For tax periods beginning on or after June 1, 2005, the one cent (\$.01) surtax collected under KRS 138.140(1)(c) shall be deposited into the fund. One-half of the monies is distributed to the University of Kentucky and one-half to the University of Louisville. The two universities must provide a dollar-for-dollar match to receive funds.
- **Cancer Research**
HB6 of the 2024 Regular Session appropriates Tobacco Settlement Funds to be used for cancer research and screening to be shared equally between the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville.
- **National Stem Cell Foundation**
SB91 of the 2024 Regular Session appropriates funding to be distributed to the National Stem Cell Foundation to support grant match. No Funds were appropriated for FY2026.

- **Ovarian Cancer Screening**

HB6 of the 2024 Regular Session appropriates funding to the ovarian cancer screening outreach program at the University of Kentucky.

- **Spinal Cord and Head Injury Research**

HB6 of the 2024 Regular Session appropriates funding to support spinal cord and head injury research. In accordance with KRS 211.500, KRS 211.502, KRS 211.504, the appropriation in each fiscal year shall be shared between the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville.

- **SREB Doctoral Scholars**

HB6 of the 2024 Regular Session appropriates funding for annual dues to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB).

- **Simmons College**

HB 1 of the 2022 Regular Session appropriates funds for the Teacher Education Initiative at Simmons College. The funds shall also be used to expand academic offerings in psychology to produce more licensed mental health practitioners, quality control technology workers, and logistics and supply chain managers. Additionally, HB 1 of the 2024 Regular Session appropriates dollars from the State Fiscal Recovery Funds to support infrastructure planning and facility acquisition for student residential housing, an onsite tutoring/study facility, and the development and design of capital improvements to support academic program expansion.

TITLE: Kentucky State University Management Improvement Plan –
Redirection of Incentive Funding

DESCRIPTION: Council staff recommend the Executive Committee approve the
Redirection of Incentive Funding for Kentucky State University

STAFF CONTACTS: Travis Powell, Sr. Vice President and General Counsel
Greg Rush, Assistant Vice President for Finance Policy and Programs

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

House Bill 250, enacted during the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly, appropriated \$15 million to the Council on Postsecondary Education to support the achievement of goals and benchmarks outlined in the university’s Management Improvement Plan.

These funds were distributed to Kentucky State University in accordance with the approved plan by June 30, 2024. These funds supported a range of initiatives, including the development of online programs, facilities planning and support, auditing and accounting services, and enhancements to engineering and global programs.

As the university continues to implement the objectives of the Management Improvement Plan, certain areas have experienced delays, resulting in increased resource demands. In response, President Akakpo has requested the reallocation of some previously designated funds to better address these needs.

REQUESTED REVISIONS AND RATIONALE

As of the end of the current fiscal year, Kentucky State University has approximately \$2.8 million in reserved and unspent funds. Dr. Akakpo has proposed reallocating \$2 million originally designated for the development of an engineering program—redirecting \$1 million to the university’s online program and \$1 million to support accounting and auditing functions. He has also requested that \$750,000 in other incentive funding distributions be temporarily frozen until December 1, 2025, to ensure flexibility should additional resources be needed for these two priority areas.

The university’s online program launched in Fall 2024, offering eight bachelor’s degrees, two master’s degrees, and one practice doctorate. The program has generated strong student interest, with enrollment per term averaging between 200 and 300 students. However, due to administrative challenges and delays in hiring, the program is currently about one year behind

schedule. Several key positions have since been filled, and the university has committed additional resources to accelerate growth, with the goal of reaching 1,000 enrolled students by the end of the calendar year. The proposed reallocation of funds is critical to supporting this effort.

In terms of financial oversight, the university completed its FY 2023 audit in May 2025 but is still working to finalize the FY 2024 audit. Timely completion is essential to return to a regular audit cycle for FY 2025. However, many internal control procedures outlined in the Management Improvement Plan remain unimplemented, significantly increasing the time and effort required to complete audits. The additional funding for accounting and auditing support is expected to substantially reduce the time needed to complete the FY 2024 audit and support improved financial oversight moving forward.

The Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) staff has reviewed this request and supports the proposed reallocations. These adjustments will allow the university to better address immediate institutional priorities and more effectively advance the objectives of the Management Improvement Plan.



Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

2024-25 Agency Review

The 2022-30 Strategic Agenda for Postsecondary Education sets an overarching goal that 60% of Kentucky’s working-age population will have earned a postsecondary degree or credential by 2030. The 60x30 KY goal is the foundation for the priorities, objectives, and strategies of the agenda, and it guides the work of the agency.

The following report provides a look at the high-level actions and outcomes of the agency’s work from March 2024 through June 2025. It is organized by the five priority areas of the agenda (Affordability, Transitions, Success, Talent, and Value), with Equity as a cross-cutting priority. A final section, State Leadership, was added to include the agency’s work in key areas that are not immediately reflected in the agenda.



AFFORDABILITY

Kentucky will ensure postsecondary education is affordable for all Kentuckians.

- 1. Reduce financial barriers to college enrollment and completion.**
- 2. Improve the public's understanding of the true cost of college and how to pay for it.**

KEY INITIATIVES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2024-25

CPE is working on efforts to increase college access and affordability for all Kentuckians. Key strategies include limiting tuition and fee increases; recommending operational efficiencies; educating students and families about college savings programs, grants, scholarships and responsible borrowing; and advocating for additional state General Fund appropriations.

Tuition and Fee Ceilings for Academic Years 2025-26 and 2026-27: CPE staff worked with Kentucky's public four-year institutions and KCTCS to determine new tuition and fee ceilings, which were approved at the April 2025 Council meeting. Due to historic levels of inflation, as well as a range of state and national factors increasing the resource needs of Kentucky public institutions, CPE staff proposed a common dollar increase approach (as opposed to an across-the-board percentage increase used in prior years) to address growing disparities in tuition and fee rates across universities within each sector. The final Council-approved tuition and fee ceilings allow for a \$675 increase at the two research institutions, a \$630 increase at Kentucky's public comprehensive institutions and a \$9.00 per credit hour increase for KCTCS in total for the two-year cycle. The new rates reflect CPE's continued dedication to balancing college affordability for students and their families with the resource needs of the institutions.

Monitoring Student Debt Levels: CPE's Data and Advanced Analytics Unit (DAA) released the second iteration of the "Student Debt Report" examining trends affecting undergraduate students attending a KCTCS college or Kentucky public university. The report reveals that the proportion of students graduating with loan debt fell nearly 14 percentage points over the last five years, from 54.8% in 2018-19 to 40.9% in 2023-24. The decline was even more pronounced over the decade, falling 24 percentage points. Additionally, among completers who graduated with debt, average loan balances fell from \$29,072 to \$26,115, a decline of \$2,957 or 10.2% since 2018-19.

Financial monitoring: CPE staff continues to fine-tune a process for assessing the financial health of institutions. The analysis evaluates fiscal stability and sustainability, as well as gauging institutional susceptibility to market risk factors. As part of the analysis, staff identified methods, metrics and data sources for assessing institutional viability in their respective markets and determined whether institutions are making efficient and effective use of state resources. CPE has worked with several institutions on a voluntary basis and is looking to expand this work as staff capacity allows.

FAFSA public awareness campaign: In light of substantial changes to the 2024-25 FAFSA form, GEAR UP Kentucky and KHEAA conducted a public awareness campaign to prepare students for the new application process. The promotion included statewide TV and radio commercials



AFFORDABILITY

Kentucky will ensure postsecondary education is affordable for all Kentuckians.

via the Kentucky Broadcasters' Association Public Education Partnership program, a social media campaign, an [online resource hub for students](#) and a series of summer FASFA office hours to offer hands-on assistance at more than 70 locations across the state.

Affordable Learning KY: This [Kentucky Virtual Library \(KYVL\) initiative](#) supports affordability and student success by working with institutional partners to coordinate collaborative projects, share best practices and support and celebrate institutional efforts to expand open education and affordable learning initiatives in the Commonwealth. Affordable Learning's Open Education Week symposium in March 2025 brought together over 50 state and national educators to discuss topics such as Open Educational Resource (OER) publishing platforms, adoption and adaptation of existing OER and how to find the best free resources for student learning. In the spring of 2025, ALKY surveyed Kentucky students regarding their perceptions of the impacts of textbook costs on their lives and academic achievement. This second annual survey was completed by more than 1,700 undergraduate and graduate students from 18 Kentucky postsecondary institutions.

Innovative Scholarship Pilot Program:

CPE continued its work with KHEAA to help guide a program supported with General Fund appropriations. The scholarship provides college access and promotes undergraduate student success for displaced students (foreign nationals displaced by war, natural disaster or political upheaval). CPE has worked with the National Association of System Heads (NASH) to provide assistance and resources for faculty and other campus practitioners serving displaced student populations.

Improving Advising on How to Pay for

College: CPE's Kentucky Advising Academy (KAA), launched in 2022, provides practitioners in advising roles with resources and professional learning opportunities to help students make informed decisions about college and career. A postsecondary advising framework with implementation guidance was developed to identify advising milestones in the areas of career exploration, postsecondary opportunities, financial aid/literacy and essential skills. In addition to the framework, the [Postsecondary Advising Toolkit](#) allows practitioners to access information on college affordability, grants, scholarships and FAFSA completion, among other topics. In 2024, KAA began adapting this content for student use on the Futuriti platform.



TRANSITIONS

Kentucky will ensure more students transition to college prepared to succeed.

- 3. Increase students' readiness to enter postsecondary education.**
- 4. Increase college-going rates and enrollment in postsecondary education.**

KEY INITIATIVES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2024-25

Over the decade, Kentucky has experienced a sharp decline in its immediate college-going rate. CPE is helping high school students successfully navigate postsecondary transitions by removing tripwires that cause individuals to stumble on their path to college, particularly if they are first-generation or historically underserved by postsecondary institutions. CPE is working with campuses to simplify bureaucratic and onerous admission processes and demystify financial aid and borrowing.

Commonwealth Education Continuum:

CPE continued to facilitate and manage the [Commonwealth Education Continuum \(CEC\)](#), a P-20 initiative that promotes statewide conversations and actions among P-12, postsecondary, community, family and workforce leaders aimed at strengthening Kentucky's education pipeline. The workgroups were focused on four areas in 2024: postsecondary affordability, K-12 educator workforce, P-20 competency framework and advising and transitional support.

Dual Credit and Early Postsecondary

Opportunities: CPE recently overhauled its [Dual Credit Policy](#), which now includes a statewide goal for 50% of Kentucky high school graduates to complete a dual credit course by the year 2030 with a grade of C or higher. Dual credit courses are aligned to KDE's career and technical pathways or CPE's general education core requirements. Additional changes emphasize the importance of increasing dual credit access for underserved populations and ensuring postsecondary institutions accept dual credit to

meet general education requirements. CPE staff held [monthly webinars](#) on dual credit and early postsecondary opportunities for high school and postsecondary advisors, created and continuously improved a [Dual Credit Toolkit](#) and provided numerous onsite workshops throughout the year. CPE also facilitated the Dual Credit Advisory Committee to increase communication, collaboration and alignment.

Research on Dual Credit: Between 2016 and 2022, the proportion of Kentucky public high school graduates who successfully completed a dual credit course increased 18.1 points, from 22.8% to 40.9%. The Data and Advanced Analytics unit currently is finishing work on an inferential study investigating how completing different types of courses (e.g., online/in-person, high school teacher/non-high school teacher, on/off campus) moderates the positive correlation between dual credit and postsecondary success. The study is expected to drive future planning and updates around the dual credit policy and strategic plan that will likely accelerate Kentucky's dual credit progress.

The Great Admissions Redesign: In early 2024, Lumina Foundation named CPE one of seven states participating in [The Great Admissions Redesign](#), an initiative to revolutionize the admissions process and increase higher education accessibility for all students. As part of this effort, CPE and the Kentucky Student Success Collaborative (KYSSC) received \$150,000 to facilitate a collaborative, student-centered, design-thinking continuous improvement approach to address



TRANSITIONS

Kentucky will ensure more students transition to college prepared to succeed.

long-standing barriers and untapped potential in admissions and financial aid processes. Since launching in February 2024, KYSSC has partnered with public universities, KCTCS, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), and the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) to reimagine the college admissions experience in Kentucky. This work culminated in five strategic priorities aimed at alleviating student stresses and elevating student joy along the college admissions journey: improving transcript accessibility, expanding dual credit, bringing transparency to financial aid, strengthening proactive 9-12 communications and supporting seamless transfer.

Equitable and Accelerated Pathways: In 2023, CPE joined a national initiative called “[Launch: Equitable and Accelerated Pathways for All](#).” CPE, the lead agency, is working with ten state partners to expand access to high-quality college and career pathways for all learners. During Phase 1 of implementation, staff conducted needs assessments; participated in cross-state curated academies for each focus area (policy, data, partnerships and funding); convened stakeholder focus groups; and created a strategic action plan to increase access in the areas of credentials of value, seamless transitions, advising and student supports and work-based learning. In Phase 2, Kentucky will participate in a national community of practice and continue efforts to move the work forward.

Summer Bridge Programs: CPE awarded over \$325,000 in campus grants in 2024 for summer bridge programs. These programs bring rising first-year college students on campus before the beginning of the school year to improve their academic preparation, with a goal of increasing retention and graduation rates and narrowing gaps in educational outcomes for underrepresented students. Grants were awarded through a competitive RFP process based on specific

criteria, including an independent evaluation of effectiveness and impact. In 2024, 27 campuses received up to \$15,000 each.

Advising Outreach: The [Kentucky Advising Academy \(KAA\)](#) continues to expand its work across the state. Over the past year, KAA provided webinars and connected educators to relevant advising content through social media, email distribution and several in-person professional learning sessions across the state. KAA also had the opportunity share its work on the national stage by presenting at the National College Attainment Network and the Association of Career and Technical Education conferences. Over the last year, KAA has supported over 80% of K-12 public school districts with professional learning and resources, as well as numerous public two-year and four-year institutions. Additionally, through a partnership with the Education Strategy Group (ESG), KAA launched the Kentucky Postsecondary Advising Framework and implementation guidance to support districts in building robust postsecondary advising systems. The Postsecondary Advising Framework was developed by a workgroup consisting of district-level practitioners from middle school, high school and area technology centers, as well as postsecondary institutions. State agency partners (i.e., KDE, KHEAA, Kentucky School Counselors’ Association, the Education and Labor Cabinet) were given the opportunity to provide feedback.

Mini-Grants to Support Advising: In February 2024, [KAA awarded mini-grants](#) reimbursable up to \$5,000 to 17 Kentucky K-12 public schools and area technology centers to increase student access to postsecondary opportunities, assist in student readiness for college enrollment and build essential skills necessary for college and career success. Successful proposals supported college campus visits, family postsecondary awareness nights, activities to help students transition from high school to college and more. In March 2025,



TRANSITIONS

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KAA also awarded mini-grants reimbursable up to \$10,000 to six Kentucky K-12 public schools and area technology centers. The grants supported new and/or expanding efforts to increase student access to postsecondary opportunities leading to fulfilling career options.

GEAR UP Kentucky (GUK): [GUK served nearly 6,000 students in 12 school districts](#) and 9 partner postsecondary institutions in 2023-24, with a central goal of improving successful transitions between secondary and postsecondary education. Program staff provided 18,000 hours of student advising (an 18% increase from the previous year), 18,600 hours of college and career readiness curricula and 1,488 hours of student leadership development programs. To provide early exposure to postsecondary campuses, 737 high school students participated in 91 college visits during the school year, and 27 students participated in a three-week residential GUK Summer Academy at Northern Kentucky University, where they earned three hours of free college credit. As a result, GUK saw significant gains in key outcomes over the previous year. For the sixth year in a row, GUK's high school graduation rate (95%) exceeded the state's overall graduation rate (92%), and the percentage of high school seniors completing a college application increased an additional 14 percentage points (61% to 75%). Educational expectations of GUK students improved, with 58% of 11th graders and 84% of 12th graders (+) reporting an expectation to go to college; this represents a 5 percentage-point increase since 9th grade for high school juniors and a 7 percentage-point increase from the beginning to end of the senior year for the GUK Class of 2024. GUK also continued to increase participation in advising in both high school and college with 42% of high school juniors (+3 percentage-point increase) and 72% of high school sophomores (+9 percentage-point increase) receiving at least four advising sessions. GUK saw a significant 22 percentage-

point jump in advising participation in the first year of postsecondary education, with 31% of GUK college freshman participating in at least three advising sessions during their freshman year.

Futuriti Launched: Following the recommendation of the Commonwealth Education Continuum and the college and career data requirements of the 2020 Students Right to Know Act (HB 419), [a web-based platform was launched in 2025](#) to provide prospective students (high school students, adults, military veterans and active-duty personnel) with opportunities to explore career interests and related postsecondary programs and services. The platform includes essential information about college affordability, enrollment requirements at public postsecondary institutions and occupational outlook data for the state. The site was developed by incorporating feedback from more than 1,200 stakeholders from across the Commonwealth representing all target audiences. From February to May 2025, Futuriti has received more than 18,000 individual visitors.



SUCCESS

Kentucky will ensure more students earn high-quality degrees and credentials.

5. Increase persistence in and timely completion of postsecondary programs.
6. Maximize transfer of academic and experiential credit.
7. Ensure academic offerings are high-quality, relevant and inclusive.

KEY INITIATIVES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2024-25

CPE has doubled down on its promotion of high-impact practices that research has proven to be effective in increasing student persistence and completion. Staff works with campuses to implement both academic and non-academic policies and services to support holistic student development and workforce readiness.

Kentucky Student Success Collaborative (KYSSC): The [KYSSC](#) continued its work with both two-year and four-year institutions through a grant funded by the James Graham Brown Foundation. The KYSSC team leads strategy development and implementation for priorities that advance CPE's strategic agenda including admissions redesign, transfer partnerships, gateway course success, student basic needs, student mental health and adult attainment. For each student success priority, the KYSSC facilitated communities of practice to promote research-based practices, provided professional development, fostered cross-institutional and community collaboration and drove continuous improvement of promising and best-practice implementation. In September 2024, KYSSC launched the Kentucky Leadership exChange, a professional development program to train campus partners to lead student-centered change. The KYSSC also promotes resource sharing through the Impact exChange, an online platform for faculty and practitioners.

Student Basic Needs: Since January 2024, CPE has advanced statewide basic needs efforts through key partnerships and grant-funded initiatives aimed at improving student well-being

and academic persistence. In partnership with the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), Kynectors have now been placed at all KCTCS campuses and are actively helping students meet their needs through benefit eligibility screenings, application assistance and referrals to community resources. Planning is underway to extend Kynector coverage to Kentucky's public universities, with targeted onboarding and technical assistance provided to institutional partners throughout summer and fall of 2025. Through a three-year grant awarded by the ECMC Foundation, CPE and KYSSC have launched several foundational efforts to build basic needs infrastructure across the state, including statewide toolkits on childcare, communications, housing and food. Most recently, KYSSC was selected to represent Kentucky in the inaugural SHEEO Basic Needs Academy, a national initiative that supports state systems in advancing student basic needs policy and infrastructure.

Improving Transfer: CPE was selected by the National Association of System Heads (NASH) to participate in a Transfer NASH Improvement Community in 2022. Since that time, Kentucky has used their improvement science model to enhance transfer mapping processes. Findings are being compiled into a change playbook that will ultimately create a resource of proven Kentucky practices for future institutional use. In 2024, the KYSSC hired a transfer strategy lead, brought on five part-time transfer senior fellows, and established the transfer guiding team to advise on strategy implementation. Key initiatives include the development of a transfer data dashboard, a student voice research project



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to explore barriers to transfer, the launch of a transfer community of practice and expansion of the transfer improvement communities to facilitate transfer partnerships.

Gateways to Opportunity: CPE and KYSSC [released a report in 2024](#) on actions taken to improve the corequisite developmental education model and ensure it works equally well for all students. Specific focus was placed on three main objectives in mathematics and English: (1) center students' needs in the pursuit of scalable improvements in gateway courses; (2) strengthen communication and collaboration within and across institutions; and (3) remove barriers to equitable access and success in gateway courses across modalities. Current strategy priorities include the development of a dashboard to track disaggregated data on student enrollment and success in gateway courses and the formation of a related community of practice to identify best practices for the design and delivery of gateway and corequisite support courses.

2025 Student Success Summit: The 14th annual Kentucky Student Success Summit was held February 10-11, 2025, at the University of Kentucky's Gatton Student Center in Lexington. The theme was "Transformational Leadership," and sessions focused on how individuals and campuses can foster collaboration and innovation with each other and other sectors. While inclement weather derailed programming on day two, those sessions were provided at a later date by webinar to all registrants. Over 470 faculty, staff and administrators from Kentucky's public and private colleges attended the convening.

Mental Health & Suicide Prevention: In early 2024, The Jed Foundation, a national nonprofit that works to protect emotional health and prevent suicide among teens and young adults, announced a [four-year collaboration with CPE, KCTCS, and KYSSC](#) to pilot a program to evaluate, develop and deploy mental health, suicide prevention and substance misuse

resources. The program will reach nearly 200,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students across Kentucky and will serve as a collaborative and community-oriented approach to mental health promotion and suicide prevention. In February 2025, KYSSC released the Statewide Mental Health Strategy, marking a significant milestone in Kentucky's commitment to supporting student mental wellness across postsecondary institutions. Building on this momentum, KYSSC hosted its second statewide Mental Health Convening in May 2025, bringing together a diverse group of practitioners, educators, and decision-makers from across the Commonwealth. Over 70 campus partners engaged in collaborative planning, shared promising practices and began shaping institution-specific and system-level approaches to advance mental health outcomes for all students.

Focus on Adult Learners: In 2022, CPE released Kentucky's Adult Learner Action Plan detailing strategies to address barriers adult college students face while trying to obtain a degree or credential. In December 2024, the KYSSC expanded capacity to lead adult attainment work in Kentucky by hiring an adult attainment strategy lead, bringing on two part-time adult attainment senior fellows and establishing a guiding team of 11 stakeholders to ensure the strategy work is meeting the needs of partners across the state. In October 2024, the KYSSC hosted an Adult Attainment Convening welcoming 200+ state partners to discuss common priorities and challenges in adult learner degree completion. Additionally, [CPE teamed up with Ithaka S+R](#), a non-profit educational research and consulting organization, to identify and reduce barriers that prevent adults from completing a postsecondary credential

Academic Leadership Development Institute (ALDI): CPE selected 17 participants from public two-year and four-year institutions for the sixth cohort of the [Academic Leadership Development Institute \(ALDI\)](#), which prepares underrepresented faculty and staff for leadership roles in Kentucky



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higher education. Participants are nominated based on their leadership ability, interest in professional advancement and dedication to higher education. The goal is to create a learning community of early career, underrepresented faculty and staff who are on track for professional advancement.

Kentucky Faculty Leadership Academy: The inaugural cohort of 25 participants from both community and technical colleges and universities met from October 2024 through May 2025. These full-time, mid-career faculty worked with campus mentors and CPE staff to gain a deeper understanding of what leadership entails and their institutions' place within state and national postsecondary landscapes.

Kentucky Graduate Profile: The [Graduate Profile Academy](#), which consists of teams from all universities and community and technical colleges, continues to facilitate implementation of the Graduate Profile on postsecondary campuses. In 2024, teams of faculty, staff and employers identified the knowledge associated with each of the ten essential skills, as well as behaviors that measure each skill. K-12 partners were invited to provide the secondary school context for this work. CPE partnered with the Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN) to facilitate this process. CPE provided grants to all public institutions to create plans to fully implement all Graduate Profile-related work by the end of academic year 2027-28. CPE staff is working with campus representatives to create a statewide plan by fall 2025.

Performance Funding: Senate Bill 191, adopted during the 2024 regular session, removed all references to underrepresented minority students from Kentucky's performance funding model (hereafter, the model), and replaced the associated metrics with metrics for "underrepresented" students. The General Assembly directed CPE staff to convene the Postsecondary Education Working Group (PEWG) during 2024 for the sole purpose of defining the new underrepresented student metric. In November 2024, staff submitted the PEWG's final recommendation to the Governor, which defined "underrepresented" students as first-generation students. The relevant administrative regulations for the model were revised to reflect this new definition. The revised funding model, including the newly defined underrepresented student metric, was used to determine the distribution to institutions of \$115.0 million that had been appropriated to the Performance Fund in fiscal year 2025-26.



TALENT

Kentucky will increase talent and innovation to support our communities, employers and economy.

8. Improve postsecondary education's responsiveness to and alignment with current and projected workforce demands.

9. Guide investments in research, training and scholarships to support innovation and growth.

KEY INITIATIVES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2024-25

A primary purpose of postsecondary education is to produce adaptive, highly skilled workers to fuel the economy. CPE collaborates with government, education and workforce partners to ensure Kentucky's graduates earn high-value degrees that lead to professional employment opportunities.

Healthcare Workforce Collaborative (HWC):

The [Kentucky HWC](#) was launched in 2022 to grow the pipeline of healthcare workers in Kentucky. The Collaborative is made up of healthcare professionals, institutional representatives and government and community partners. Over the last year, it met quarterly to address critical issues including faculty shortages, program capacity, the Healthcare Workforce Investment Fund (HWIF) and the CLIMB (Career Ladders in Mental and Behavioral) Health initiative. These discussions laid the groundwork for the successful 2024 Healthcare Workforce Collaboratory, held on October 30, which brought together 180 participants from across Kentucky's healthcare and education sectors, including providers, educators, policymakers and industry leaders. The Collaboratory focused on tackling workforce shortages, strengthening public-private partnerships and exchanging best practices in healthcare training and retention. Key outcomes included the development of actionable strategies to improve workforce alignment, expand apprenticeship opportunities and enhance collaboration between educational institutions and healthcare employers.

Healthcare Workforce Investment Fund

(HWIF): Established by HB 200 in 2023, the HWIF is a public-private partnership to provide healthcare training scholarships for Kentucky resident students, as well as incentives to reward high-performing healthcare professional programs. The fund accepts pledges from private industry, which are matched dollar-for-dollar by state appropriations. During the first year of implementation, 46 healthcare partnerships were awarded funding, totaling a public/private investment of \$13,290,000 for future healthcare practitioner scholarships. A total of 27 healthcare partners invested in a HWIF partnership, and 35 healthcare training programs across 21 institutions/training sites were awarded funds. The funds will provide full-tuition scholarships for one or two years to an estimated 794 Kentucky students. Additionally, through HWIF, CPE was able to award a \$150,000 incentive award to ECU's School of Nursing. The private portion of this award (\$75,000) was donated by Humana. This award recognizes the strength of ECU's program and their dedication to student success. The funds can be used to invest in the continued excellence of the program by funding the (a) education, recruitment, and training of the healthcare program's faculty and staff; or (b) maintenance and acquisition of medical equipment utilized by the healthcare program.

Healthcare Career Summer Bridge Program

Grants: CPE awarded a total of \$473,501 in seed grants to public and private universities to support healthcare career summer bridge programs.



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These grants, up to \$56,300 each, were designed to help institutions develop or expand 2025 summer programs that introduce high school students to healthcare careers and related postsecondary education opportunities. Key goals included increasing student awareness and interest in healthcare careers, building confidence in pursuing postsecondary education, highlighting educational pathways, engaging diverse and underserved populations and strengthening partnerships with local healthcare providers and community organizations.

Aerospace, Aviation and Defense Investment Fund (AERO Act): The AERO Act is a legislative statute that facilitates public-private partnerships to address workforce development challenges in Kentucky's aerospace, aviation and defense sectors. It incentivizes collaboration between aviation programs, aviation industry partners and the Commonwealth to grow and strengthen the education and training pipeline of aviation professionals. Through targeted investments in scholarships and aviation-related equipment, the AERO Act ensures Kentucky has a robust pipeline of skilled professionals ready to meet the growing demands of the aerospace, aviation and defense industries. Administered by CPE, the fund aligns with the broader state and federal objectives of enhancing STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education, improving workforce readiness and increasing economic competitiveness. It raises awareness of a wide variety of aviation occupations. Similarly, it improves pathways between high school career and technical programs and aviation programs. The fund accepts donations, with all monies gifted or donated to the fund to be matched, dollar for dollar, by General Fund disbursements for scholarships and/or equipment. And critically, it allows grantors to design scholarship criteria, including but not limited to criteria restricting employment to the aviation industry partner for the contract period.

Prison Education Programs: With support from Ascendium Education Group and in partnership with the Vera Institute for Justice, SHEEO convened a one-year, multi-state learning community that accepted Arizona, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota and Virginia into its competitive program. Through this initiative, states will work to evaluate relevant policies, remove barriers to access and promote high-quality, workforce-aligned educational experiences for justice-impacted students. The effort also will work to strengthen collaboration among higher education agencies, corrections departments and other key partners to build equitable pathways for incarcerated learners. Through the Advancing Postsecondary Success for Justice-Impacted Students learning community, CPE's Workforce and Economic Initiative Unit and the Student Success Adult Attainment team will assess current prison education program (PEP) policies to identify gaps and opportunities, streamline access to postsecondary education for incarcerated learners, align educational offerings with workforce needs to ensure credentials earned in carceral settings have labor market value, and foster stronger partnerships across sectors to sustain and scale these efforts. Kentucky currently has 12 postsecondary institutions participating in the PEPs; because of this, we are confident this initiative will move us closer to our 60x30 goal.

CLIMB-Health Initiative: This initiative established Career Ladders In Mental and Behavioral (CLIMB) Health for individuals with lived experience in addiction recovery. It provides participants with an initial peer support specialist certification, with the goal of encouraging them to obtain a series of stackable certifications culminating in an associate of applied science in human services through KCTCS, and/or a bachelor's degree in social work at a participating four-year university. Nine KCTCS colleges have committed to the initiative thus far, and the first



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year of implementation has been strong with almost 1,000 students enrolled in the program. Each CLIMB college is collaborating with regional partners to develop expanded employer, agency and provider participation. The CLIMB program currently is developing a CLIMB learning collaborative related to CPE's student success initiatives. This initiative extends until June 30th, 2026.

CLIMB-Health 2.0: This initiative is an extension of its predecessor that addresses critical shortages in Kentucky's behavioral health workforce by establishing high school-to-career pathways for non-licensed professionals [e.g., community health workers (CHWs), behavioral health technicians (BHTs) and registered behavior technicians (RBTs)]. Through dual-credit coursework, stackable certifications, immersive AR/VR career exploration and summer bridge programs, CLIMB 2.0 prepares students in rural and underserved areas for immediate employment and long-term advancement in healthcare fields. The initiative integrates with KDE's CTE pathways, UK's ELEVATE CHW program, and clinical experiences, mentorships and industry-aligned training offered by regional providers. CLIMB 2.0 empowers high school students to earn credentials before graduation, facilitating seamless transitions to postsecondary education and employment. This innovative model builds Kentucky's talent pipeline while promoting equitable access to healthcare careers and supporting the state's economic development goals. Lastly, CLIMB 2.0 will develop a career pathway for students at the Kentucky National Guard's Challenge Academy with regional healthcare employers. CLIMB 2.0 is led by a partnership of CPE, CHFS, KCTCS and KDE employees. Funding in the amount of \$1.5 million has been approved.

Heroes to Healers: The Heroes to Healers initiative (H2H), authorized by Kentucky House Bill 303, transitions military-trained healthcare personnel into Kentucky's civilian healthcare workforce. The program leverages KCTCS to develop academic career pathways and bridge programs that recognize and credit military medical experience toward licensure and certification in civilian healthcare roles. By aligning with the U.S. Department of Defense SkillBridge program, H2H supports active-duty service members and veterans in accessing education, training and employment opportunities across Kentucky's healthcare sector. The initiative emphasizes reduced time-to-credential outcomes, allowing participants to enter the workforce efficiently. KCTCS collaborates with state agencies, professional licensure boards and healthcare employers to ensure military medical training is fully integrated into Kentucky's credentialing framework. Additionally, the program promotes recruitment through partnerships with military transition offices and veteran-serving organizations. H2H addresses Kentucky's healthcare workforce shortages while positioning the Commonwealth as a national leader in veteran workforce integration.

Kentucky Opioid Abatement Grant: The Collegiate Recovery Resource Center (CRRRC) program, led by CPE and funded by the Kentucky Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission, is a statewide initiative to expand recovery support services on college campuses. Beginning July 1, 2025, the program will award a total of \$500,000 to five public colleges or universities to establish campus-based CRRCs serving students in recovery from substance-use disorders. Each CRRC will provide trauma-informed peer recovery support, academic navigation and workforce readiness services through a dedicated physical space and



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campus coordinator. Rooted in evidence-based practices outlined by the Association of Recovery in Higher Education, the program is designed to reach both traditional and nontraditional students, including adult learners, justice-involved individuals and students balancing academic and personal recovery challenges. Institutions will collaborate with local mental health and recovery organizations to ensure wrap-around support. Quarterly data reporting, a semi-annual review and alignment with long-term institutional planning are required. The CRRP program aims to foster student retention, reduce relapse risk and promote long-term recovery by building sustainable, campus-based recovery ecosystems tailored to Kentucky's diverse student populations.

National Science Foundation, Artificial Intelligence (AI) Grant: CPE, in partnership with the University of Kentucky, is leading a statewide initiative to expand artificial intelligence (AI) research capacity among new and emerging researchers, particularly in rural-serving and minority-serving institutions. Supported by the National Science Foundation, this effort focuses on increasing access to the National Artificial Intelligence Research Resource Pilot, building institutional readiness and fostering a sustainable AI ecosystem in Kentucky. CPE's role includes coordinating faculty engagement, hosting regional AI training workshops and establishing a research coordination network to support cross-institutional collaboration. Faculty from across Kentucky's postsecondary institutions will receive training in AI research tools and curriculum integration, helping build long-term capacity and support ethical AI development. This initiative will connect researchers, educators and industry partners to align AI education with workforce development needs, creating a foundation for Kentucky to become a national leader in AI innovation. The program serves as a springboard

for a broader statewide AI ecosystem, ensuring equitable access to AI resources and positioning Kentucky's higher education system at the forefront of technological advancement. Because of federal funding pauses, this program has been delayed.

Kentucky Community Learning Network: This program transfers DCBS training oversight from Eastern Kentucky University to a consortium of regional institutions -- Morehead State University, Northern Kentucky University, and Brescia University -- ensuring more localized, accessible and standardized training delivery across all 120 Kentucky counties. CPE will provide governance, financial oversight, curriculum modernization and institutional coordination, supporting over 5,000 DCBS employees and affiliated partners like foster parents and kinship caregivers. The program delivers training across virtual, hybrid and in-person formats, emphasizing regulatory compliance, adult learning best practices and workforce readiness. Training content includes over 400 specialized courses tailored to family support and protection services. By establishing a regionally distributed model and modern performance monitoring, the program will promote sustainability, efficiency and alignment with Kentucky's labor and education priorities. Ultimately, it reinforces DCBS's mission to protect and serve vulnerable populations through a well-trained, highly capable workforce.

Career Development Officers: CPE launched the Career Development Officers (CDO) affinity group in the fall of 2022, which is comprised of workforce and career services professionals from the state's public and private postsecondary institutions. The group's purpose is to operate as a resource; to share innovative ideas, policies and strategies; and to assist those on Kentucky campuses who oversee and work within career



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services or career development departments. Meetings occur bi-monthly, and staff is planning a second annual one-day convening for late July 2025.

CPE as a Liaison and Partner: CPE continues to act as a liaison with state workforce and economic development agencies to ensure higher education is part of the state's overall economic development strategy. Staff participates in SWATT (Statewide Workforce and Talent Team), which ensures employees have the skills and credentials existing and prospective employers need. This group is comprised of leadership from the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce and KCTCS, as well as Economic Development Secretary Jeff Noel and Education Secretary Jamie Link. CPE also partners with the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) and its subcommittees to identify high-demand occupations and prepare more Kentuckians for these openings.

Endowment Match Program: The Endowment Match Program (EMP) matches public dollars with private donations on at least a dollar-for-dollar basis to encourage research at the University of Kentucky (UK) and the University of Louisville (UofL) and to strengthen key programs at Kentucky's comprehensive universities. All funds, both public and private, must be endowed, with investment proceeds used to provide a perpetual source of funding for research-related activities. Funds appropriated for the 2022-2024 biennium can be used to support endowed chairs, professorships, research scholars, mission support and student scholarships and fellowships in STEM+H fields. Over the past year, CPE staff worked with campus officials to revise the EMP Guidelines in accordance with recent legislative actions and continued to process requests for program funds from a \$40.0 million appropriation for the 2022-24 biennium. To date, \$23.7 million of program funds have been distributed, \$9.8 million is under review and \$6.5 million has yet to be requested by the institutions.



VALUE

Kentucky will improve public understanding that postsecondary education is key to greater opportunity and economic growth.

10. Increase public belief in the transformative power of postsecondary education.

11. Build support for greater investment in postsecondary education.

KEY INITIATIVES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2024-25

People increasingly are questioning the value of a college, but this skepticism is based more on feeling than fact. Research clearly shows that higher education benefits individuals and society in countless ways. College graduates earn higher salaries, are less likely to be unemployed and have better health outcomes than individuals without a postsecondary credential. Through research, opinion pieces and other products, CPE is determined to show just how much higher education matters.

Legislative Outreach: President Thompson and his leadership staff engaged in numerous conversations with the Governor, executive branch staff, legislators, legislative staff and members of state and federal education organizations on issues affecting higher education in Kentucky. Additionally, throughout the 2025 legislative session, CPE served as a key resource to legislators and LRC staff on several bills, including Senate Bill 77, which gives comprehensive universities an opportunity to offer certain doctoral degrees, provided they meet established criteria and financial benchmarks outlined in the law. After the 2025 session, CPE staff worked with campus presidents and chief budget officers to identify funding priorities and request amounts for the upcoming biennium, including additional appropriations for campus operations, the Postsecondary Education Performance Fund (PEPF) and capital investment (e.g., capital construction projects and asset preservation). The list of budget priorities was developed at the request of leadership in the General Assembly.

Community Outreach: President Thompson and CPE leadership have conducted extensive outreach across the state, engaging in numerous meetings and events to champion the value of higher education and gain firsthand insights into evolving workforce needs. These efforts are significantly expanding the agency's visibility and impact, while strengthening strategic partnerships with workforce leaders, community organizations, philanthropic groups and local governments to advance shared goals and drive meaningful collaboration.

Social Media and Email Outreach: CPE's expanding digital presence, driven by the social media accounts of both the agency and President Thompson, continues to elevate the Higher Education Matters message and strategically promote the work of the Council, its leadership and its units. Engagement rates across platforms consistently outperform industry benchmarks for both government and higher education, reflecting a highly effective outreach strategy. A cornerstone of this effort is the weekly #KYHigherEdMatters Infographic, which delivers timely, data-driven insights on state and national higher education trends. This content reaches nearly 6,000 email subscribers and 7,000 social media followers through CPE channels, with additional amplification to over 10,000 users via President Thompson's widely followed accounts, positioning the agency as a leading voice in the public higher education conversation.

Direct Media & Outreach: President Thompson and senior leadership have been prominently featured in high-profile interviews across both state and national media platforms. Additionally,



VALUE

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agency staff have served as featured speakers and expert panelists at major state and national conferences and events, further elevating the agency's visibility and influence. National, state and regional presentations include, but not limited to:

- 2024 SHEEO Annual Convening – (1) The Power of Longitudinal Data Systems and Collaboration in Improving Postsecondary Affordability.
- 2024 Complete College America Annual Convening - Intersecting Identities Matter: Toppling Barriers for Student Parents is Key to Growing Non-Traditional Enrollment.
- 2025 NACEP Summit for Dual Credit Programs - Empowering Kentucky's Future: Strategies for Achieving Postsecondary Dual Credit Attainment Goals Through Collaboration and Support.
- Association of Career and Technical Education Vision National Conference – Building a Postsecondary Advising System: Partnerships, Data, and Resources
- National College Attainment Network(NCAN) – presented with ESG to share Kentucky's Postsecondary Advising Framework

Research and Publications: CPE released several key research reports this year, including a study on undergraduate student debt, a report on DEI best practices, reports on gateway courses and improving transfer and the annual progress report on strategic agenda key indicators. These publications continue to solidify CPE's reputation as a trusted and reliable provider of higher education content. In partnership with the University of Kentucky's Center for Business and Economic Report, CPE released a comprehensive return on investment report that focused on the ROI of investment in postsecondary education for both students and the state. The report showed that the financial return for the state from tax revenue is around four-and-a-half times greater than the initial investment, and Kentuckians that

graduate with a bachelor's degree earn twice as much on average over a lifetime than high school graduates.

External Funding: CPE's reputation as an organization that creates value is corroborated by the increase in external funding in recent years. Grants from the James Graham Brown Foundation, ECMC Foundation, Lumina Foundation, Save the Children, Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Education and Labor Cabinet and NASH enhance CPE's ability to affect change in Kentucky higher education. In total, CPE has been entrusted with several multi-year grants from national, state and community organizations totaling over \$36 million.

Awards and Recognitions: President Thompson and CPE have been recognized several times over the past year:

- March 2024 - President Thompson received the Betty and David Jones, Sr. Legacy Award from Simmons College of Kentucky
- April 2024 - CPE received the National Association of Higher Education Systems (NASH) Scaling for Change Award
- May 2024 - President Thompson received the Wendell Thomas Award from the Kentucky Association of Blacks in Higher Education (KABHE)
- July 2024 - President Thompson was awarded the 2024 Exceptional Leader Award from the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO)
- April 2025 - President Thompson won a leadership award from the East Kentucky Leadership Foundation (EKLf).
- May 2025 - President Thompson was inducted into the Junior Achievement Bluegrass Business Fall of Fame.



STATE LEADERSHIP

Strengthen CPE's role as an effective and respected postsecondary education coordinating agency.

In addition to strategic priorities, CPE has many administrative and statutory duties to fulfill. Key accomplishments in agency operations are highlighted below.

SJR 170 Study: CPE contracted with Deloitte Consulting between August and November 2024 to conduct the requested studies outlined in Senate Joint Resolution 170. Specifically, the study required CPE to evaluate the feasibility of launching the following four new postbaccalaureate programs: (1) a doctoral program for professional practice and licensure in osteopathic medicine (DO) at Eastern Kentucky University; (2) a doctoral program for professional practice and licensure in veterinary medicine (DVM) at Murray State University; (3) One or more PhD programs leading to an R2 "High Research Activity" designation from the Carnegie Classification at Western Kentucky University; and (4) A Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Integrated Agroecology and Sustainable Agriculture at Kentucky State University. The study also reviewed and provided recommendations to CPE and policy leaders regarding the evaluation and approval of future program proposals. The report findings were presented to the legislature by the December 1, 2024, deadline.

SJR 132 Study: CPE engaged Ernst & Young LLP (EY) to perform advisory services in connection with the feasibility study directed by the state legislature in Senate Joint Resolution 132. The study was focused on assessing the feasibility and potential financial impacts of transforming Hazard Community and Technical College (HCTC) into a four-year, residential university that offers limited technical and baccalaureate programs. Specifically, the resolution directed the study to include nine elements, including a potential annual budget for the transition and initial establishment of the university's operation, a draft governance plan for the proposed institution, analysis of how

current satellite campuses can best be utilized, and recommended adjustments to the state's postsecondary education budget and performance funding structure. The report findings were presented to the legislature by the December 1, 2024, deadline.

SJR 179 Study: Senate Joint Resolution 179 (2024) directed the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS), in collaboration with CPE, to analyze the findings of the two reports completed last year (SJR 98 and Huron Group studies) and present specific action steps on several topics, including academic programing, a statewide workforce plan and governance reform. CPE collaborated with KCTCS leadership on the report findings, which were presented to the legislature by the December 10, 2024, deadline.

Kentucky State University Management Improvement Plan: CPE continued its deep engagement with Kentucky State University (KSU) through the implementation of HB 250 (2022). Over the last year, CPE and KSU staff focused on working with President Akakpo and several new staff members, particularly in areas related to the online finance program, to complete management improvement plan objectives. All management improvement plan objectives must be completed the end of FY 2025. Then, CPE staff and its KSU external evaluator, Moss Adams, will begin its final assessment and recommendations for a final report due November 1, 2025.

Collaboration and Learning Opportunities: CPE has increased its outreach to institutions and community partners by hosting numerous workshops and events. With topics ranging from advising to credit for prior learning to workforce development, CPE provided collaborative opportunities for thousands of higher education constituents. This past year, CPE has engaged with well over 2,500 faculty, staff and campus



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leadership from every four- and two-year public campus in the state, as well as a number of AIKCU private institutions. In the past year, CPE has hosted over 60 community of practice meetings, 10 half- or full-day strategy convenings, nearly 30 webinars and 5 large scale/multi-day events.

Statewide Board Training Opportunities:

CPE held the biennial Postsecondary Education Trusteeship conference in September 2024. This conference brought together regents and trustees from all public institutions (as well as some from private institutions) with the ultimate goal of forging progress through partnerships. The keynote address was provided by Dr. Nancy Zimpher and focused on leading through collaboration. Breakout sessions explored student basic needs, essential workforce skills and state tools to enhance college affordability. Staff also updated the online board training and orientation courses required for all appointed and elected board regents and trustees.

Coordination of Statewide Issues: Throughout the past year, CPE facilitated numerous meetings with the campus presidents and legislative liaisons to discuss legislative strategies and provide a coordinated approach to statewide issues. CPE's systemic approach has improved higher education's efficiency and effectiveness.

Interactive Data Center Redesign: To provide more narrative-driven data to stakeholders, staff has completed a comprehensive redesign of the CPE data portal. The new website is framed around the agency's statewide strategic agenda priority areas and provides an easily navigable design for users to access CPE data products, including dashboards and research studies.

Data Collections & Analysis:

- **KPEDS DS Reporting:** To enrich its extensive data collection process, CPE made many changes to the reporting guidelines and back-end infrastructure of the KPED DS web application. For the first time, the reporting guidelines for institutions are fully web-based, allowing for easy navigation and access. Also, CPE performed a full audit of the error handling process, culminating in a comprehensive operational document that enables institutions to quickly identify and correct reporting errors.
- **KyRON:** Leveraging the Kentucky Regional Optical Network (KyRON), CPE worked with its partners at the University of Kentucky to acquire hardware to train local AI models. Once complete, CPE and academic institutions will gain access to a powerful AI infrastructure, preparing Kentucky for emerging digital technologies.
- **Licensure Application:** Working with the vendor Salesforce, CPE developed and released a new application to facilitate the licensing process for non-public institutions in the state. The new application allows CPE to easily and quickly access and review applications and ensure that requirements are met.

Academic Common Market: When an academic program is not available in Kentucky, students are able to participate in the Academic Common Market. This program, managed by CPE staff, allowed approximately 435 students in the 2024-25 academic year to attend approved out-of-state institutions at in-state tuition rates.



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Kentucky Virtual Library (KYVL): One of CPE's key duties is managing the KYVL, a consortium of over 350 libraries and institutions providing resources and facilitating resource sharing across the Commonwealth. The consortium provides broad access to a foundation of research and skills, which saves millions of dollars annually for the Commonwealth and participating Kentucky's libraries. In 2024-25, members searched KYVL databases over 57 million times and downloaded or viewed more than 4.3 million full-text articles, images or videos. CPE's Futuriti.org website features links to a selection of KYVL's test prep, career exploration and skills building resources. KYVL's courier transports thousands of items per month to facilitate resource sharing among public and academic libraries. Additionally, 20 partner institutions have published over 50 local archival collections in the Kentucky Digital Library, making this unique content available online for scholarship, research and lifelong learning.

Licensure of Institutions: CPE led Kentucky's licensure functions for non-public institutions operating within the state and managed the state's participation in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) and NC-SARA requirements. Staff renewed 72 licenses and approved 8 new licenses; approved 144 new program applications and 105 program modifications; audited faculty in 47 new programs; and issued 8 new conditional licenses in 2024, with one of those satisfying conditions. In 2024, through the licensed institutions, 2,103 degree programs were offered (both undergraduate and graduate), and enrollment totaled 80,142 (for both in-state and out-of-state institutions).

Agency Operations: Thanks to several grants and other non-state funds, CPE has been able to retain its full-time and part-time staff of 106 employees (24 with GUK and 25 part-time), an 8% increase in staff over the prior year. Staff also operated and managed a FY 24 budget of \$7,205,700 for operations and strategic initiatives. We are pleased to report that the results of the FY24 agency audit showed no deficiencies or material weaknesses and a fair presentation of financial data.

SB 91 Report on Agency Budget: CPE staff undertook a comprehensive overhaul of the agency's budget practices to develop a more focused and transparent budgeting framework. The revised budget structure more clearly reflects the costs associated with each individual unit and its corresponding programs and activities. This new framework aligns with the methodology used in the expenditure report mandated by Section 76 of Senate Bill 91 (2024 Regular Session). That legislation required CPE to submit a detailed report to the Interim Joint Committee on Appropriations and Revenue, outlining all CPE programs, the statutes authorizing these programs and the associated expenditures and fund sources. The SB91 report showcased the breadth of activities and initiatives carried out by CPE as the state's coordinating body for public, postsecondary education.



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