

# STRONGER by DEGREES

Building a More Competitive  
Commonwealth Through  
Postsecondary Education

A Strategic Agenda for  
Kentucky Postsecondary  
and Adult Education

**2011-2015**



# **INSIDE FRONT COVER**

# FROM THE PRESIDENT

# INTRODUCTION

**This strategic agenda calls upon Kentucky’s postsecondary and adult education system to strengthen the Commonwealth by degrees.**

**We believe in the transformative power of postsecondary education.** Our belief rests on a simple, enduring premise—a higher level of education leads to a higher quality of life, both individually and collectively. In the world’s most enterprising and prosperous societies, postsecondary education is the engine of economic growth and the foundation of democracy.

In 1997, the *Postsecondary Education Improvement Act* (HB 1) established six goals for raising Kentucky’s standard of living and quality of life to at least the national average by the year 2020. These goals challenge the system to accelerate degree production, modernize workforce education and training, improve the health and well-being of communities, and produce world-class research that creates jobs and powers a knowledge-based economy.

These goals are more important today than ever before. Only 29 percent of Kentuckians (25-64) has obtained at least an associate degree, compared to the national average of nearly 38 percent. But while Kentucky is chasing the nation’s rate of educational attainment, the United States is losing ground to international competitors. Twenty years ago, America’s young adults were the best-educated among member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In 2008, we had fallen to tenth; now, we are tied for twelfth, behind such nations as Korea, Japan, and Canada.



***A 2010 study by Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce predicts that by the year 2018, 54 percent of all jobs in Kentucky—over 1 million jobs—will require some level of postsecondary education or training.***

If the next generation of Kentuckians is not better educated than the one before it, over half of our workforce will be consigned to low-skill, low-wage employment, unlikely to achieve even the same standard of living as their parents.

**For the Commonwealth to become an economic and education leader, we need higher investments and higher expectations.** It is time to expect more from our students and educational institutions, demand results at every level, and ensure accountability efforts are both rigorous and transparent. It is time to prepare every student, everywhere in Kentucky, not just to reach the national average, but to out-compete any worker anywhere in the world.

The challenge is enormous, but Kentucky can achieve its goals through steady, incremental progress. **This strategic agenda calls upon Kentucky’s postsecondary and adult education system to strengthen the Commonwealth by degrees.** In carrying out this agenda, Kentucky’s postsecondary and adult education system will focus on four urgent priorities—college readiness; student success; research, economic, and community competitiveness; and efficiency and innovation— guided by a shared purpose and common beliefs.

# VISION:

All Kentuckians will be prepared to succeed in a global society.

# MISSION:

To deliver a world-class education to students, create new knowledge, and grow the economy of the Commonwealth.

# VALUES:

- The highest standards of excellence in teaching, research, and public service.
- Access for all who are committed to the pursuit of higher learning.
- Cooperation, teamwork, and mutual respect for the differing missions of institutions.
- A culture of inclusion that provides equitable opportunities and celebrates diversity in people and thought.
- A postsecondary experience that prepares individuals to be informed, competent, knowledgeable, and engaged citizens.
- Prudent fiscal stewardship that employs resources effectively and efficiently.
- A commitment to continuous monitoring and improvement of performance.
- Creative and innovative approaches to meeting the needs of the Commonwealth.
- Engagement with business, industry, and other community partners to improve economic vitality and quality of life.
- The promotion of education as a public good and an investment in Kentucky's future.

# COLLEGE READINESS

## *More high school graduates and working-age adults will enter college prepared for credit-bearing work.*

In 2010, over half of the nation’s community college students (58%) and nearly a quarter of bachelor’s degree students (23%) needed at least one developmental education course when they entered college. In Kentucky, these percentages are even higher. Among

recent high school graduates, 63 percent of students entering community and technical colleges and 27 percent entering public universities required remediation in one or more subjects. Additionally, 90 percent of GED graduates were not ready for placement in credit-bearing courses.

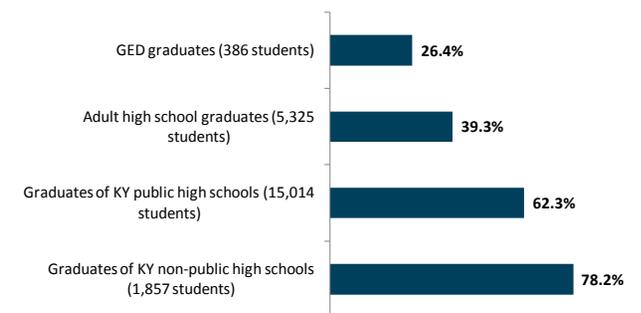
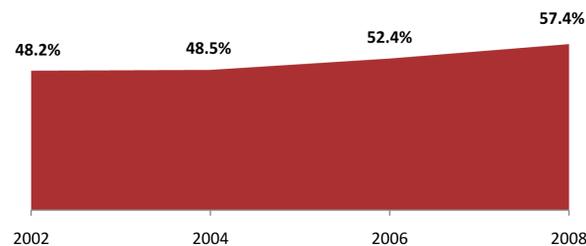
Kentucky must balance the need for postsecondary access with a stronger emphasis on student success. Students who are not academically or financially prepared for college face greater obstacles to degree completion. Developmental education lengthens a student’s time-to-degree, increases costs, and consumes more institutional resources. Stronger academic and social supports are needed at every step along the way.

Therefore, Kentucky’s postsecondary system must work hand-in-hand with K-12 and adult education providers to ensure students understand what they need to know and be able to do to succeed at the next level. Postsecondary institutions most directly affect K-12 student performance through the quality and effectiveness of the teachers they produce. Kentucky must improve the quality of educator preparation programs and provide continuous growth and professional development opportunities for classroom teachers and leaders.

### Legislative Mandates

- **HB 1 (1997)** states that “contributions to the quality of elementary and secondary education shall be a central responsibility of Kentucky’s postsecondary institutions.” Goal 1 envisions a “seamless, integrated” educational system where students advance smoothly from one level to the next.
- **SB 1 (2009)** directs the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary systems to align revised K-12 academic standards with college readiness requirements and expectations. The Act declares that “schools shall expect a high level of achievement of all students.”
- **The Adult Education Act (2000)** calls on the postsecondary and adult education system to “significantly elevate the level of education of the adults of the Commonwealth.” This language is now part of Goal 6 of HB 1.

### Just Over Half of Entering College Students are Ready for Credit-Bearing Work



# COLLEGE READINESS

## Objective 1: Increase the number of college-ready Kentuckians entering postsecondary education.

### Strategies:

- 1.1. Align K-12, adult education, and postsecondary education standards, curriculum, and assessment processes as directed by Senate Bill 1 (2009).
- 1.2. Partner with K-12 providers to provide effective intervention strategies for underprepared students prior to postsecondary admission.

- 1.3. Ensure Kentucky Adult Education is used effectively as a key access point for preparing adult learners for college.
- 1.4. Improve data and information reporting systems to better inform state policy decisions.
- 1.5. Strengthen the college-going and completion culture in Kentucky through improved student outreach, higher expectations for student performance, and a statewide public awareness campaign to communicate the importance of educational attainment.

## Objective 2: Increase the effectiveness of Kentucky's K-12 educators.

### Strategies:

- 2.1. With the Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), redesign the K-12 educator preparation curriculum to help attract, retain, and prepare highly effective educators.
- 2.2. With EPSB and KDE, redesign professional development programs for teachers, school leaders, adult education instructors, and faculty members to reflect college and career readiness standards, provide clinical experiences, and offer opportunities for continued growth and improvement.



### KEY METRICS

- READINESS OF COLLEGE ENTRANTS
- COLLEGE-GOING RATE OF HIGH SCHOOL AND GED GRADUATES
- LICENSURE EXAM PASS RATE OF FUTURE EDUCATORS

# STUDENT SUCCESS

## *More Kentuckians will complete college prepared for the next level of education or a career with the skills to be productive, engaged citizens.*

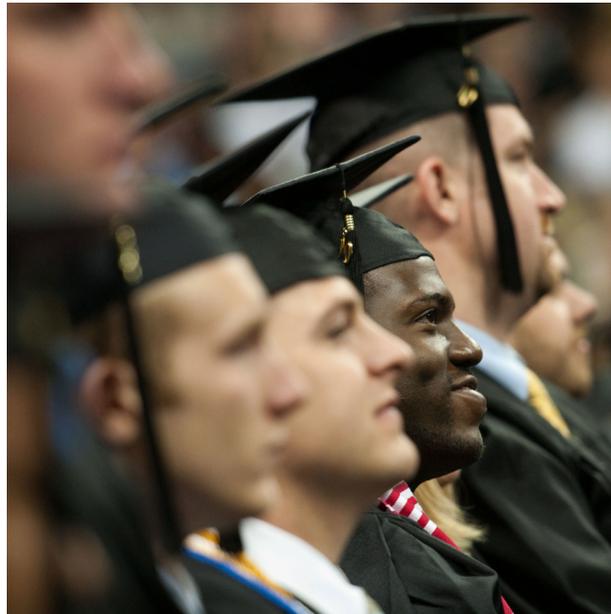
While Kentucky has made dramatic improvements in postsecondary enrollment and degree production, completion rates at our colleges and universities are far too low. Only half of first-year college students (50.5 percent) graduate from a public university within six years. The four-year graduation rate is only 18 percent.

### Legislative Mandates

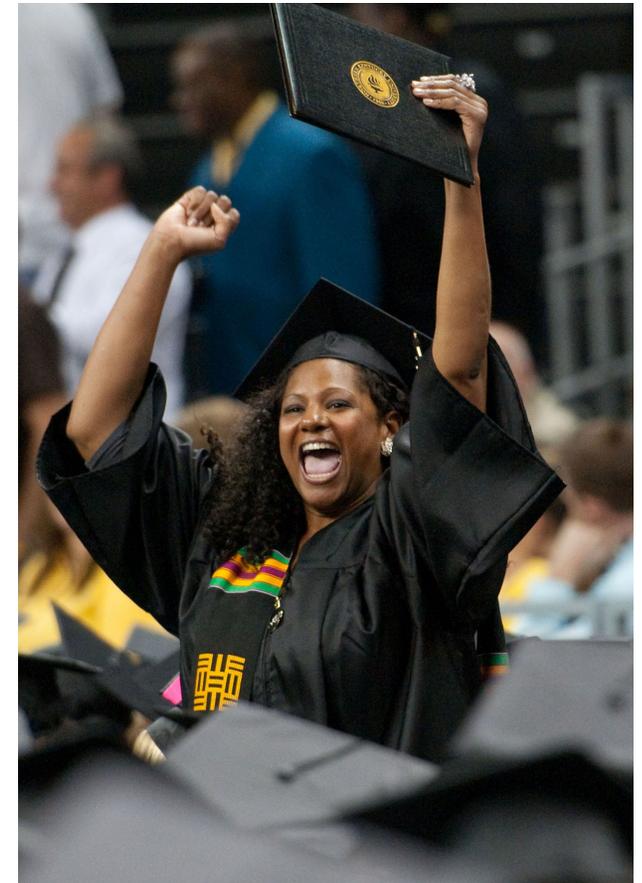
- *Goal 6 of HB 1 deals directly with educational attainment, challenging Kentucky to “deliver educational services to citizens in quantities and of a quality comparable to the national average.”*
- *Goal 4 of HB 1 requires regional universities to assure “statewide access to baccalaureate and master’s degrees of a quality at or above the national average.”*
- *Goal 5 of HB 1 directs the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) to provide a pathway to bachelor’s degree attainment through “a two-year course of general studies designed for transfer.”*
- *HB 160 (2010) calls for associate-level coursework at KCTCS to be accepted and credited to related bachelor’s degree programs at public universities.*

Less than a quarter of associate degree-seeking students (23 percent) graduate from community or technical college within three years.

These average completion rates mask substantial performance gaps among various groups of students, a greater challenge as Kentucky grows more racially and culturally diverse. Only xx percent of African-American students and xx percent of Hispanic students graduate within six years, compared to xx percent of white students. Low-income students succeed at much lower rates than middle and high-income students. Students from metropolitan areas outperform students from rural, underserved areas. To reach our educational attainment goals, these performance gaps must be narrowed.



Kentucky’s future in large part depends upon helping more students advance seamlessly through the educational system and graduate in less time—working-age adults as well as recent graduates. But increases in degree production and completion rates, while critical, cannot be achieved at the expense of quality. Kentucky’s colleges and universities must uphold high academic standards and empower all students to meet them.



# STUDENT SUCCESS

## Objective 3: Increase degree production and completion rates at all levels.

### Strategies:

- 3.1. Provide institutional and student incentives to increase degree production and completion rates.
- 3.2. Implement the Kentucky Transfer Action Plan.
- 3.3. Increase the use of technology to improve student learning and outcomes, particularly for adults.
- 3.4. Increase statewide capacity to analyze data and information related to student success.

## Objective 4: Close achievement gaps so all students succeed at high levels.

### Strategies:

- 4.1. Maintain high-quality postsecondary education opportunities that promote college access and success, especially for low-to-moderate income, part-time, minority, transfer, and adult students.
- 4.2. Redesign statewide professional development offerings for faculty and staff members around effective “closing the gap” strategies.
- 4.3. Implement the Kentucky Diversity Policy.
- 4.4. Research and disseminate the latest evidence-based, high-impact “closing the gap” practices.

## Objective 5: Increase the quality of the student experience.

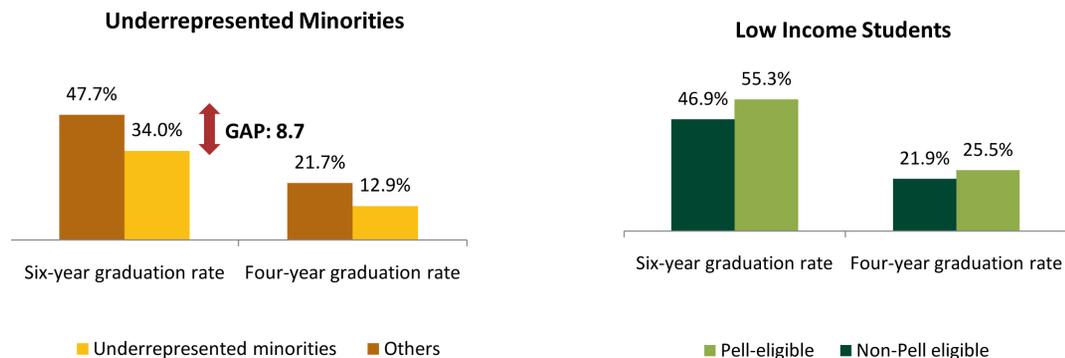
### Strategies:

- 5.1. Increase student engagement across the postsecondary and adult education system.
- 5.2. Advocate for adequate funding to support high-quality faculty and staff, effective student and academic support services, technology, and other resources to enhance student success.
- 5.3. Involve public and private stakeholders in the creation of a new statewide college-to-career initiative.

### KEY METRICS

- DEGREES & CREDENTIALS CONFERRED
- TRANSFERS FROM KCTCS TO 4-YEAR INSTITUTIONS
- GRADUATION RATE
- ACHIEVEMENT GAPS
- ENTRY INTO WORK OR FURTHER EDUCATION

### Underrepresented Minorities and Low-Income Students Graduate at Substantially Lower Rates



Source: CPE KPEDS. Fall 2003 IPEDS graduation rate cohort.

# RESEARCH, ECONOMIC, & COMMUNITY COMPETITIVENESS

*Kentucky will attract new research investments, produce degrees that grow the economy, and improve the educational attainment of its workforce.*

Over the last decade, Kentucky's universities have attracted world-renowned researchers, more than doubled their collective federal research funding, and made large investments in public service. Even so, our economy has been slow to transform. Kentucky ranks:

- 45th on the New Economy Index, which measures knowledge jobs, globalization, economic dynamism, the digital economy, and innovation capacity.

- 45th in the number of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) degrees awarded as a share of all degrees.
- 41st on annual per capita postsecondary research and development expenditures.

Nevertheless, Kentucky has strengths upon which to build. The universities' research and development efforts generate knowledge and discoveries that can be commercialized to create new businesses and jobs. Postsecondary faculty and staff educate future professionals, entrepreneurs, and citizens and upgrade the skills of current workers. An educated workforce will attract more educated people to the state, which in turn will lure prospective employers.

Kentucky must ramp up its efforts to compete effectively in the global economy. Degree production should be aligned with the current and projected workforce needs of the state, and more students should be engaged in undergraduate research and encouraged to pursue STEM and other high-demand fields. At the same time, Kentucky's postsecondary institutions must continue to advance social, artistic, cultural, and environmental progress through regional stewardship and embrace the value of the liberal arts.

## Legislative Mandates

- *The Kentucky Innovation Act (2000) finds that Kentucky's well-being depends on "a strong, entrepreneurial economy, characterized by knowledge, innovation, and speed" that can be promoted through research and high-technology enterprises.*
- *Goal 2 of HB 1 directs UK to become "a major, comprehensive research university ranked nationally in the top 20 public universities."*
- *Goal 3 of HB 1 directs UofL to become "a premier, nationally recognized metropolitan research university."*
- *Goal 5 of HB 1 directs KCTCS to "develop a workforce with the skills to meet the needs of new and existing industries" and "improve the employability of citizens."*



# RESEARCH, ECONOMIC, & COMMUNITY COMPETITIVENESS

## Objective 6: Increase research and development to create new knowledge, stimulate job growth, and strengthen communities.

### Strategies:

- 6.1. Create a statewide research collaborative anchored by the two research universities and operated in partnership with the comprehensive institutions to leverage university expertise and pursue research investments in high-growth or emerging areas where Kentucky has the best chance of developing global prominence.
- 6.2. Develop and implement a strategic communications plan that highlights the impact of campus-based research and development initiatives on Kentucky's competitiveness.
- 6.3. Secure additional funding for research matching programs, such as the Endowment Match Program and EPSCoR, and explore new funding approaches to maximize research investments.
- 6.4. Support applied research that improves the lives of Kentuckians and the communities in which they live.

## Objective 7: Increase the number of degrees and credentials in STEM+H (science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and health) and other high-demand fields.

### Strategies:

- 7.1. Create a partnership of state agencies, schools, colleges and universities, businesses and industries, and other organizations to provide ongoing leadership, advocacy, and collaborative strategies to support Kentucky's STEM+H agenda and increase the number of K-12 educators in STEM+H disciplines.
- 7.2. Build an innovative, entrepreneurial culture within the postsecondary education community and across the Commonwealth to stimulate economic and job growth.
- 7.3. Develop a statewide report on the impact of postsecondary education on Kentucky's healthcare industry and the health of Kentucky's citizens.

- 7.4. Assess and communicate to policy makers, students, institutions, and employers whether current and projected degree production levels match workforce needs, especially in high-demand fields or other areas linked to economic growth.

## Objective 8: Increase the competitiveness of Kentucky's communities and workforce.

- 8.1. Support regional stewardship and community engagement efforts.
- 8.2. Work with partners within the service region to develop plans for raising the educational attainment level of every region of the state.
- 8.3. Create a statewide forum to strengthen the connection between postsecondary and adult education and workforce competitiveness.

### KEY METRICS

- EXTRAMURAL R&D FUNDING
- DEGREES CONFERRED IN STEM+H FIELDS
- EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF YOUNG ADULTS

# EFFICIENCY & INNOVATION

*Kentucky's colleges and universities will serve more students at a high quality in an environment of constrained resources.*

In the current economic recession, there is mounting pressure on colleges and universities to demonstrate they are good stewards of public funds. As state revenues shrink and support for public services declines, institutions must find ways to increase capacity and maintain quality while moderating tuition increases and containing costs. Meeting these challenges will demand greater creativity and flexibility than ever before.

The current fiscal environment, however difficult, does present a powerful incentive for change. Kentucky's postsecondary system must maintain an unwavering focus on its core mission, work smarter, and equip itself with the tools needed to survive and thrive in the future.

We must discover new approaches and revenue streams that improve postsecondary productivity and quality. Technology is transforming teaching and learning in powerful ways. Offering programs in multiple formats that accommodate different learning styles can make education work for more of our students and increase capacity. Additionally, the system must continue to streamline administrative operations, improve space utilization, and maximize opportunities for joint purchases and contracts.

Colleges and universities that rise to the challenge deserve incentives and rewards. Kentucky must re-examine higher education funding mechanisms to ensure state investments are producing the desired results. Finally, the postsecondary system must continuously monitor progress and use data to make effective, informed decisions.

## Legislative Mandates

- *HB 1 (1997) envisions a postsecondary system with a single point of accountability to "ensure coordination of programs and efficient use of resources."*
- *The Governor's Higher Education Work Group (2009) recommended several measures to increase the postsecondary system's efficiency, productivity, and financial transparency.*

# EFFICIENCY & INNOVATION

## Objective 9: Increase academic productivity through program innovations.

### Strategies:

9.1. Support course redesign and alternative methods of program delivery (e.g., greater use of technology, distance education, accelerated degree pathways) to increase efficiency and maximize student success for both traditional and nontraditional students.

9.2. Promote new approaches to faculty and staff development to enhance productivity.

9.3. Build upon the success of the Kentucky Virtual Campus and Virtual Library to utilize technology to enhance academic innovation and student success.

### KEY METRICS

- AVERAGE CREDITS TO DEGREE
- STATE APPROPRIATIONS PER DEGREE OR TOTAL PUBLIC FUNDS PER DEGREE

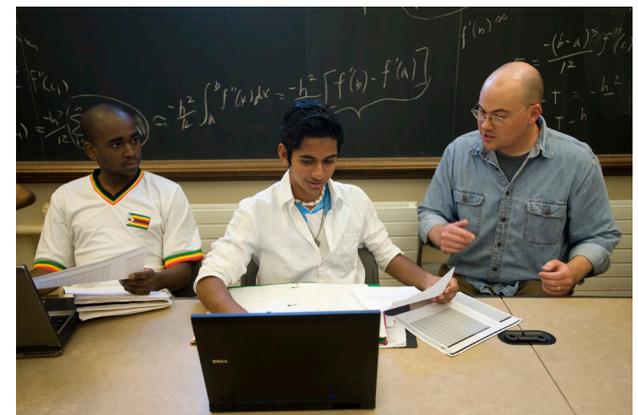
## Objective 10: Increase the effective use of college and university resources.

### Strategies:

10.1. Optimize administrative and business operations by exploring options for consolidating or outsourcing pertinent operations, as well as facilitating joint purchasing and contracts.

10.2. Develop statewide policies that promote the effective and efficient use of capital facilities and infrastructure.

10.3. Promote partnerships with independent colleges and universities to achieve economies of scale, eliminate duplication of programs and services, and contain costs.



# **PAGE ON KEY INDICATORS**

# INSIDE BACK COVER

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