

Council on Postsecondary Education
July 16, 2007

2006–08 College Access Outreach Initiative

Background and Introduction

In 2001-03, an initial “Go Higher Kentucky” outreach initiative disseminated television, print, and radio advertisements targeting adults without a high school degree and low-income middle and high school students. The outreach played a significant role in a 57 percent increase in adults earning a GED, the sixth largest increase in the nation. Enrollments in workplace education and postsecondary programs also increased. Because of the success of this initiative, the 2006 General Assembly awarded \$800,000 to continue college access efforts. The 2006-08 outreach initiative seeks to provide streamlined and relevant college-going information to traditionally underserved Kentuckians.

Outreach Goals and Target Audiences

Campus recruitment efforts traditionally target recent high school graduates. However, for Kentucky to be successful in meeting the education goals set forth by the legislature, the Council must be responsive to the unique needs of those Kentuckians traditionally outside of the education pipeline. Such audiences require substantially more infrastructure, planning, and research to be influenced by communication messages. In alignment with the Council’s Double the Numbers intervention plan to bridge the gap of 211,000 additional bachelor’s degrees that will be needed to meet 2020 goals, the current outreach effort will initially target four key audiences with the following goals:

- *Returning adults* - Increase the number of returning adults enrolling in college and completing a bachelor’s degree. Returning adults are defined as Kentucky residents aged 25-50 not currently enrolled with some college but no bachelor’s degree.
- *At-risk middle and high school students* - Increase the number of GEAR UP students enrolling in algebra by the ninth grade and taking a rigorous curriculum and graduating from high school.
- *Potential transfer students* - Increase the number of Kentucky Community and Technical College System students transferring to a four-year postsecondary institution to complete a bachelor’s degree.
- *Potential GED students and GED graduates* - Increase the number of adults completing a GED and the number of GED graduates enrolling in college.

Proposed Outreach Activities

Returning adults – Outreach efforts for this audience will be coordinated in two phases. The Council has identified approximately 233,000 potential returning adults in Kentucky that attended a Kentucky public institution and still reside in the state. The first phase will focus on more than 11,000 of these adults who have 90 or more credit hours but have not earned a bachelor's degree. In partnership with the institutions, the Council will coordinate a direct mail effort and media events to reach this audience. Participating institutions will have response teams prepared to help these students complete their degree. Outreach efforts for the second phase will be determined by a research project currently underway. The Council is working with Stamats, a higher education research firm, to conduct a telephone survey of potential returning adults to identify market segments of adults who could be motivated or would be receptive to incentives to reenroll in college and earn a bachelor's degree. A parallel effort to identify programs and incentives that the institutions will offer is presently taking place. The second phase will launch when the programs and services are identified to market to these adults. Preliminary survey findings are expected by mid-July with a final report by early August.

At-risk middle and high school students – In partnership with GEAR UP Kentucky and the American Council on Education, this outreach component will focus on encouraging 14,000 low-income, at-risk middle and high school GEAR UP students to enroll in algebra as a freshman and take a rigorous curriculum throughout high school. Outreach efforts also will encourage parents to stay involved in their child's academic life and help them plan early for college. Using creative resources from the national ACE college-going campaign "Know How 2 Go," outreach efforts will include direct mail, print, and statewide TV and radio ads. The outreach initiative will pilot a "College 101" event in one county for students and parents, with plans to extend this program statewide in the future. Outreach events, messages, and materials will be distributed through a coordinated grassroots network, the Kentucky College Access Network, to be coordinated in partnership with the Prichard Committee.

Potential transfer students – In partnership with KCTCS and the Kentucky Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (KACRAO), the outreach initiative will target approximately 47,000 potential transfer students to encourage them to transfer to a bachelor's degree program at a four-year institution. Planned outreach efforts for this audience include radio ads encouraging transfer, support of annual transfer fairs at KCTCS institutions, and development and distribution of printed and online transfer student toolkits and transfer brochures to KCTCS students.

Adults with no GED and GED graduates – In partnership with Kentucky Adult Education, the initiative will target approximately 800,000 Kentucky adults without a high school diploma or GED for recruitment purposes and 9,500 Kentucky adults with a GED who are not currently enrolled in college. Building upon the results of a survey of 3,200 GED graduates conducted by KYAE in spring 2007, outreach funds will be used to develop and distribute toolkits for 900 adult educators to aid in the development of recruiting adults to complete their GED and transitioning GED graduates to college.

Research

The Council staff is currently engaged in the research and planning phase of the initiative. In addition to the returning adult survey, a comprehensive usability study and vendor audit of the www.GoHigherKY.org Web site is completed. Funded by the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, GoHigherKY.org launched in 2004 and is designed to be a one-stop shop for Kentuckians to plan, choose, apply, and pay for college.

This study will benefit the Council's work with all targeted audiences, as all outreach activities will drive traffic to the Web site. The purpose of the usability study is to understand how the site meets each audience's unique needs and expectations. The study will identify the opportunities to improve content, navigation, interface design, and information architecture. Preliminary findings were presented in mid-June and the GoHigherKY.org operations team, with representation from all partners, is presently reviewing the results to decide a course of action.

Additional Funding

In addition to the \$800,000 funded by the Kentucky General Assembly for this effort, the Council has obtained over \$1 million in additional funding through grants and partnerships to date. GEAR UP will contribute \$450,000 over the biennium to fund outreach to at-risk middle and high school students. The Council is receiving \$100,000 from the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative to implement the findings of the GoHigherKy.org study. Kentucky was one of three states chosen by NPEC to develop a consumer Web site. The Council has also requested \$500,000 from the Lumina Foundation to extend the reach of the outreach effort to individual counties through the support of The Kentucky College Access Network (KYCAN).

Outreach Committees

The Council has established an outreach committee for each target audience to engage partners in this initiative. Council staff will meet periodically with outreach committees to solicit guidance, communicate progress, and build support for outreach efforts. While this list will grow as the outreach expands, initial representation on these committees includes:

- Postsecondary institutions, public and independent
- Kentucky Virtual Campus
- Kentucky Adult Education
- GEAR UP Kentucky
- Kentucky Department of Education
- Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority
- Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
- Kentucky League of Cities

- Greater Louisville Inc.
- STRIVE
- Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
- Kentucky Cabinet for Workforce Development

Evaluation

The success of the outreach initiative will be measured by numerous indicators including:

- Web metrics on the GoHigherKY.org Web site
- Call center inquiries
- Community participation
- Institutional involvement
- Free media placements and news stories
- Enrollments, transfers, and completions

Timeline

A comprehensive timeline will be available at the July 16 Council meeting. A tentative timeline follows.

Spring 2007

Begin target audience research

- Begin GoHigherKy.org study
- Begin returning adult learner survey
- Develop partnerships
 - Identify and secure additional funding sources
 - Develop key strategic partnerships

June – September 2007

- Begin message and materials development, Web review
- Convene target audience outreach committees

July 2007

- Complete research phase

Fall 2007

- Launch GEAR UP outreach
- Launch returning adult outreach – Phase I
- Launch GED outreach
- Revamp GoHigherKy.org Web site
- Test outreach messages
- Begin network development

January 2008

- Launch improved GoHigherKy.org site
- Launch returning adult outreach - Phase II

June – July 2008

- Evaluate outreach initiative