

MEETING MINUTES

Approved by the Committee on March 30, 2026

Who: Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
Meeting Type: Academic and Strategic Initiatives Committee
Date: January 26, 2026
Time: 10:00 a.m. ET
Location: Virtual Meeting via ZOOM Webinar

CALL TO ORDER

The Academic & Strategic Initiatives Committee met Monday, January 26, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., ET. The meeting occurred virtually via ZOOM webinar. Committee Chair Karyn Hoover presided.

ROLL CALL

There was a quorum of 9 voting Council members in attendance.

- Jai Bokey - attended
- Dr. Kellie Ellis – attended
- Dr. Meredith Figg – attended
- Sean Garber – attended
- Karyn Hoover – attended
- Dennis Repenning – attended
- LaDonna Rogers - attended
- Kevin Weaver – attended
- Michael Wheeler – attended

CPE President Aaron Thompson served as secretary of the board, per the CPE bylaws. Heather Faesy, CPE program manager, served as recorder of the meeting minutes.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The minutes of the November 3, 2025, committee meeting were approved as presented.

CPE PRESIDENT UPDATE

Dr. Aaron Thompson, CPE President, provided a brief update to the Committee that focused on the legislative open house held earlier in the month and his recent budget development discussions with legislators.

PROPOSED NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Ms. Sheila Brothers, CPE's Senior Director of Academic Excellence, introduced four new academic programs for review and approval. KRS 164.020 (15) empowers the Council on Postsecondary Education to define and approve the offering of all postsecondary education

technical, associate, baccalaureate, graduate and professional degrees, certificates or diploma programs in the public postsecondary education institutions.

Council staff reviewed the proposed programs and recommended approval.

1. University of Kentucky – Bachelor of Arts, Film and Sonic Art (CIP 50.0602)

Presented by: Matt Brock, Senior Lecturer

- The 120-credit hour program will allow students to create a custom educational pathway tailored to their individual creative interests and career goals in film and sound production. Exposure to different types of filmmaking, animation, visual effects, sound design and audio production is designed as part of the curriculum.

MOTION: Mr. Weaver moved the Committee endorse for final Council approval the proposed program from the University of Kentucky. Ms. Rogers seconded the motion.

VOTE: The motion passed. Dr. Figg abstained.

2. Kentucky State University – Bachelor of Arts, Public Policy (CIP 44.0501)

Presented by: Dr. Frederick Williams, Chair of the School of Criminal Justice and Dr. Eslam Omar, Assistant Professor of Political Science and Public Policy

- The 120-credit hour program was designed with a focus on critical thinking, analytical skills, and ethical decision-making. It will prepare students for careers in public affairs, advocacy, non-profit leadership, consultancy, administration and other roles that contribute to the effective formulation and implementation of public policy.

MOTION: Mr. Repenning moved the Committee endorse for final Council approval the proposed program from Kentucky State University. Mr. Bokey seconded the motion.

VOTE: The motion passed.

3. Kentucky State University – Bachelor of Science, Aquatic Science (CIP 26.1304)

Presented by: Dr. Andrew Ray, Chair of the School of Aquaculture and Aquatic Sciences

- The 120-credit hour program focuses on the study of freshwater and other environments, integrating biology, chemistry, physics, and environmental science to address complex challenges in the areas of water quality, water treatment, habitat conservation, climate change, and sustainable resource management. It will also prepare students for master-level programs in the study of marine science.

MOTION: Dr. Figg moved the Committee endorse for final Council approval the proposed program from Kentucky State University. Mr. Weaver seconded the motion.

VOTE: The motion passed.

4. Kentucky State University – Master of Public Health in Nutrition (CIP 51.2207)
Presented by: Patrese Nesbit, Assistant Professor & Faculty Senate President
- The 46-credit hour program incorporates a nutrition component and allows students to learn to address issues that are particularly relevant to vulnerable populations, such as chronic disease prevention, food insecurity, and dietary health disparities.

MOTION: Dr. Ellis moved the Committee endorse for final Council approval the proposed program from Kentucky State University. Mr. Bokey seconded the motion.

VOTE: The motion passed.

PROPOSED NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMS – DOCTORATE LEVEL

KRS 164.295(2)(b) permits comprehensive universities to offer doctoral programs, including but not limited to Doctor of Philosophy degree programs, advanced practice doctoral degree programs, and doctoral degree programs for professional practice and licensure. Additionally, KRS 164.295(3)(a)–(c) provides the standards a comprehensive university must maintain to be eligible to submit a proposal for a new doctoral program.

Ms. Brothers introduced Murray State University's request for approval of a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and discussed the review process it underwent at the Council before coming before the board. Mr. Travis Powell, Executive Vice President and General Counsel, provided a summary analysis of the criteria required for eligibility to submit the proposal. He stated that Murray State met the requirements set forth for first-to-second year retention rates and six-year graduation rates, and they had the required unrestricted cash reserves to operate the program.

Dr. Laura Ken Hoffman, Murray State's Department Head of Animal Health Technology and Pre-Vet Medicine, presented the program's components. The proposed program will be the first Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program in Kentucky. As opposed to a traditional education model where students complete clinical rotations at an institutionally owned and operated site, the program will use a distributed education model. Fourth-year students will engage in clinical rotations through various individual veterinary clinics and practices, including Murray State's Breathitt Veterinary Center. This is the same model that was used by the last six schools of veterinary medicine to be accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA).

Mr. Powell stated that while the Committee is providing the preliminary review at the meeting, the program will be presented to the Council in full at its January 30, 2026, meeting.

Council members asked questions of clarification including the human and physical resources in place to support the additional program as well as the accreditation process that will follow if the program is approved.

MOTION: Mr. Weaver moved the Committee endorse for Council approval the proposed Doctor of Veterinary Medicine at Murray State University. Dr. Ellis seconded the motion.

VOTE: The motion passed.

KCTCS PROGRAMS APPROVED BETWEEN NOV. 2025-JAN. 2026

KRS 164.020 (15) mandates that the Council expedite the approval of requests from KCTCS for new programs of a vocational/technical and occupational nature. Ms. Brothers presented the one new program reviewed and approved by the Council between November 2025 and January 2026. No action was required from the Committee.

- Bluegrass Community and Technical College - Associate of Applied Science, Water Resource Technology (CIP 15.0506)

FALL 2025 FINAL ENROLLMENT

Dr. Chris Ledford, Director of Data and Advanced Analytics, provided final enrollment statistics for the fall 2025 semester at Kentucky's public and private colleges and universities. Total enrollment across all sectors increased by 3.3%, growing from 271,968 in fall 2024 to 281,050 in fall 2025. Total undergraduate enrollment grew by 4.6%, largely driven by undergraduate adults (+6.8%), first-time undergraduate adults (+12.9%), and first-time undergraduates (+3.7%). Graduate enrollment declined by 1.8%, decreasing from 52,310 to 51,395. Dual enrollment increased by 6.2% across all sectors, reflecting growth in early postsecondary participation.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN FILM INDUSTRY

Dr. Leslie Sizemore, Vice President of Workforce & Economic Development, discussed how the Council staff has supported Kentucky's efforts to expand the state's footprint in the film and TV industry. Much of her unit's work has focused on career awareness, identifying current postsecondary programs offered, and identifying known workforce gaps. Current efforts are focused on expanding course sharing, strengthening transfer pathways from 2-year to 4-year programs, and supporting alignment with the Kentucky Film Office leadership.

KENTUCKY STUDENT SUCCESS COLLABORATIVE (KYSSC) UPDATE

Dr. Lilly Massa-McKinley, Assistant Vice President, shared updates on the implementation and strategic vision for the KYSSC to support campuses in their efforts to improve student outcomes. The KYSSC focuses on three core objectives: cultivate a culture of collaboration,

build capacity for leading change, and measure gains in student success. In summary, in less than five years, KYSSC has led 24 strategic initiatives engaging all public institutions and several private institutions in Kentucky 146 times, and its work is continuing to expand to ensure every student in Kentucky succeeds in their educational path.

ADJOURNMENT

The Academic & Strategic Initiatives Committee adjourned at 11:45 a.m., ET.