

## MEETING MINUTES

Approved by the Council on April 2, 2026

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Who: Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education  
Meeting Type: Business Meeting  
Date: January 30, 2026  
Time: 10:00 a.m. ET  
Location: Virtual meeting via ZOOM webinar

### WELCOME REMARKS

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The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education held a business meeting on Friday, January 30, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. ET. The meeting occurred virtually by ZOOM webinar. Vice Chair Elaine Walker presided.

### ATTENDANCE

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There was a quorum of 11 voting Council members in attendance.

- Rev. CB Akins – attended
- Jai Bokey – attended
- Jacob Brown – did not attend
- Lindsey Case – attended
- Jennifer Collins – did not attend
- Dr. Kellie Ellis – did not attend
- Dr. Meredith Figg – attended
- Sean Garber – attended
- Karyn Hoover – attended
- Dennis Repenning – attended
- LaDonna Rogers – attended
- Madison Silvert – did not attend
- Elaine Walker – attended
- Kevin Weaver – attended (joined at 10:40)
- Michael Wheeler – attended
- Comm. Robbie Fletcher – 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

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The minutes of the November 6-7, 2025, meetings were approved as presented.

### REPORT FROM CPE PRESIDENT

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President Aaron Thompson's written report was included in the board materials. He provided additional comments focusing on the latest happenings during the 2026 legislative session as well as the Council's efforts to monitor student debt levels and how this affects

college affordability, one of CPE's focus areas. He also discussed the evolving nature of Workforce Pell at the federal level.

Ms. Regan Satterwhite, CPE's Legislative Liaison, provided a comprehensive overview of bills the Council is tracking during the 2026 legislative session. This review covered many bills, including House Bill (HB) 94, known as the "transfer pathways" bill; HB 96, relating to the Postsecondary Education Working Group; HB 307, regarding proactive postsecondary admissions; and Senate Bill 22, related to the dual credit scholarship program.

## **REPORT FROM KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (KDE)**

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KDE Commissioner Robbie Fletcher discussed the bills the Kentucky Department of Education is tracking during the 2026 legislative session. He also discussed revisions to the state's K-12 accountability system.

## **REPORT FROM STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBER**

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Mr. Wheeler's report to the Council focused on the Board of Student Body Presidents' priority areas for the 2025-26 academic year, which include affordability, quality student success, and college-going. He also invited the Council to attend the annual Rally for Higher Education taking place at the Capital Annex on February 26.

## **STRATEGIC DISCUSSION WITH KENTUCKY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM**

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President Ryan Quarles provided the Council with an institutional update on the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS). The update focused on KCTCS' key strategies for each of the strategic priorities of the statewide agenda, as well as the baseline data and progress on statewide key performance indicators. His annual update also highlighted several points of pride, including enrollment increases and gains in the three-year graduation rate.

## **STRATEGIC DISCUSSION WITH MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY**

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President Ron Patterson provided the Council with an institutional update on Murray State University (MuSU). The update focused on MuSU's key strategies for each of the strategic priorities of the statewide agenda, as well as the baseline data and progress on key performance indicators. His annual update also highlighted recent and upcoming campus expansion projects and the proposed Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program.

Following this presentation, the Council took a 15-minute break.

## **ACADEMIC AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES COMMITTEE – REPORT & ACTION ITEMS**

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Prior to giving the report and recommendations of the Academic and Strategic Initiatives (ASI) Committee, and on Committee Chair Hoover's behalf, Ms. Rogers requested that agenda item 7.A.5 be removed from the consent agenda. Vice Chair Walker made note of that request and stated it would be moved to an individual vote.

Ms. Rogers stated that the ASI Committee met on January 26, 2026, and members received updates on:

- The Kentucky Student Success Collaborative, which discussed the outcomes of their work with campuses to implement meaningful improvement strategies.
- CPE's expanding blueprint in the film and TV industry. Much of the work so far has focused on career awareness, identifying current postsecondary programs offered, and identifying known workforce gaps.
- The final enrollment numbers for the fall of 2025.
- The approval of one new program that does not require additional Council review and approval – an Associate of Applied Science in Water Resource Technology at Bluegrass Community and Technical College.

The Committee also reviewed and endorsed for Council approval the following proposed new programs:

- University of Kentucky – B.A., Film and Sonic Art (CIP 50.0602)
- Kentucky State University – B.S., Aquatic Science (CIP 26.1304)
- Kentucky State University – B.A., Public Policy (CIP 44.0501)
- Kentucky State University – M.P.H., Master of Public Health in Nutrition (CIP 51.2207)

MOTION: The ASI Committee's recommendation to approve the endorsed action items served as the motion. A second was not needed.

VOTE: The motion passed.

## **PROPOSED NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM – MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY**

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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.

Dr. Melissa Bell, Vice President for Academic Excellence, and Mr. Travis Powell, Executive Vice President and General Counsel, presented MuSU's request for the proposed Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program. Mr. Powell provided a summary analysis of the eligibility criteria for comprehensive universities wishing to offer doctoral degrees and stated that

MuSU met the requirements set forth for first-to-second year retention rates and six-year graduation rates. Additionally, MuSU met the benchmark for unrestricted cash reserves necessary to demonstrate financial stability. Dr. Bell gave an overview of the program review process up to this point.

MuSU President Ron Patterson and Dr. Laura Ken Hoffman, MuSU'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 MuSU's Breathitt Veterinary Center. This is the same model used by the last six schools of veterinary medicine to be accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

MOTION: Mr. Repenning moved the Council approve the proposed Doctor of Veterinary Medicine program at Murray State University. Ms. Rogers seconded the motion.

VOTE: The motion passed.

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE – REPORT & ACTION ITEMS**

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On Committee Chair Brown's behalf, Ms. Case presented the Finance Committee report and recommendations of action to the Council. Ms. Case stated that the Finance Committee met on January 26, 2026, and members received updates on:

- The development of the 2026-2028 biennial budget during the 2026 legislative session.
- The usage of funds allocated for the Asset Preservation Pool and Endowment Match Programs.
- The upcoming review of the performance funding model and how the makeup of that working group may change based on pending legislation.

The Committee also reviewed and endorsed for Council approval the following proposed action items:

- Tuition and Mandatory Fee Policy for academic years 2025-26 and 2026-27, in which the only notable change from the previous year was the name of the policy.
- Proposed tuition and fees for Kentucky State University for academic year 2026-27, which included an increase to its annual base-rate charge for both resident and non-resident undergraduate students of 1.6 percent. KSU proposed no change to the current per-credit-hour rates for graduate students.

- An interim capital project from Murray State University, which would replace the HVAC unit and building automation systems controls at the Susan E. Bauernfeind Wellness Center Pool at a total project scope of \$2,200,000.
- Revisions to the Area Technology Center Employee Waiver Policy, which better align with statute, clarify the requirement that it is only available to regular-full-time employees, and states participants must complete a FAFSA in order to qualify for the waiver.
- Revisions to the Equine Trust Fund Program Guidelines, which clarified eligibility for participation, the criteria for the awarding of funds, and reporting guidelines.

MOTION: The Finance Committee's recommendation to approve the endorsed action items served as the motion. A second was not needed.

VOTE: The motion passed.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – REPORT AND ACTION ITEMS**

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Vice Chair Walker presented the Executive Committee report for its January 30<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Committee did not have a quorum and had no actions to present for full board approval.

The Committee received a mid-year update on the Council's current-year agency budget. Staff stated that CPE's expenditures are aligned to mid-year projections, and adjustments have been made, as necessary, to comply with a mandated 3 percent budget reduction.

The Committee also received a presentation from Blue and Company, PSC, highlighting the results of the annual audit for the year ended June 30, 2025. For fiscal year 2025, the auditors issued an unmodified opinion, stating that the Council's financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the governmental activities, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the Council as of June 30, 2025, and the respective changes in financial position for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. In addition, the expenditures of federal awards and supplementary information are fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the basic financial statements as a whole. The firm also noted that it did not identify any deficiencies in internal control that it considers to be material weaknesses.

MOTION: Rev. Akins moved the Council accept the audit results for fiscal year 2025. Ms. Hoover seconded the motion.

VOTE: The motion passed.

Vice Chair Walker also presented the revised meeting dates for September 2026, to accommodate several conflicts identified after the previous dates were approved. The revised dates proposed were:

- Executive Committee – From Sunday, Sept. 10 to Sunday, Sept. 27
- Business meeting – From Monday, Sept. 11 to Monday, Sept. 28
- Trusteeship Conference – From Monday/Tuesday, Sept 11-12 to Monday/Tuesday, Sept 28-29.

MOTION: Mr. Repenning moved the Council approve the revised meeting dates. Mr. Wheeler seconded the motion.

VOTE: The motion passed.

The Vice Chair made the following committee appointments, on behalf of Chair Silvert, to the Equine Trust Advisory Committee:

- Katie Kaufman, Morehead State University
- Shea Poor, Murray State University
- James Matthews, University of Kentucky
- Amy Lawyer, University of Louisville
- Dan Strunk, Western Kentucky University
- Remi Bellocq, Bluegrass Community and Technical College

## **COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES – REPORT**

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Vice Chair Walker presented the report of the Committee, which met on January 26, 2026. The meeting focused primarily on student success efforts and included a report from the Kentucky Student Success Collaborative. It highlighted KYSSC's initiatives around student basic needs and adult attainment, touching on their work in the areas of trusted sources training, parent student voice research, and system redesign grants for childcare solutions.

## **NOMINATING COMMITTEE – REPORT AND ACTION ITEM**

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Committee Chair Kevin Weaver presented the Nominating Committee Report. After soliciting nominations and expressions of interest, the Committee unanimously agreed to re-elect Madison Silvert as Chair and Elaine Walker as Vice Chair.

MOTION: The Nominating Committee's recommendation of approval served as the motion. A second was not needed.

VOTE: The motion passed.

## **UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT DEBT LEVELS IN KENTUCKY**

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Presenters included: Mr. Travis Muncie, Chief Information Officer; Dr. Chris Ledford, Director of Data and Advanced Analytics; and two student interns – Patricia Juarbe Rivera and Nushka Karki. They presented the data highlighted in the newest CPE report on undergraduate student debt levels in Kentucky.

The analysis examined changes in the proportion of completers graduating with zero debt, as well as average debt loads, over the past five academic years (2019-20 through 2024-25). Data were analyzed for students completing associate, bachelor's, certificate, and diploma programs at the time of their highest credential of record. Average debt was reported both for all graduates (including those with no debt) and for borrowers only providing a comprehensive view of borrowing patterns across sectors and student populations. The data reflected both federal (e.g., Pell, Stafford) and private loans.

Overall findings showed that the proportion of students graduating debt-free is increasing substantially. Further, student debt levels at graduation continue to decline across Kentucky's public postsecondary system. These trends reflect sustained efforts by institutions and state leaders to promote affordability through restrained tuition increases, expanded grant aid, improved financial literacy, and timely degree completion.

## **CAMPUS GOOD NEWS REPORTS**

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Reports from the institutions were provided in the agenda materials.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

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Vice Chair Walker reminded Council members to complete the annual Statement of Financial Disclosure, a requirement of the Ethics Commission. It is due by April 15, 2026.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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The Council adjourned the business meeting at 1:15 p.m. ET.