

EMPOWERING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS TO ENGAGE IN AUTHENTIC GROWTH.

Young Scholars Academy (YSA) is an immersive dual-credit, early-college experience for high school juniors and seniors based at Northern Kentucky University (NKU). Founded in 2020 through a pilot partnership between Kenton County School District and NKU, Young Scholars Academy was designed to fill an early-college access gap for students in the Northern Kentucky region. The successful pilot led to a regional expansion in 2022, and YSA now also partners with Covington Independent, Dayton Independent, Erlanger-Elsmere Independent, Ludlow Independent, Newport Independent, and Pendleton County. Through participation in the academy, scholars experience wraparound support that empowers them to grow personally, academically, and professionally - all while earning their high school diplomas and creating personalized plans toward their goals, including options to complete Kentucky general education requirements, an Associate's degree, and beginning progress toward a Bachelor's degree!

OUR STORY

- 2020** Cohort 1 began YSA for pilot year
- 2021** Successful pilot led to expansion efforts
- 2022** Cohort 3 began regional expansion
- 2023** 100th Associate degree awarded
- 2024** Surpassed 500 total scholars served
- 2025** Surpassed 350 graduates

OUR SCHOLARS

Young Scholars Academy is built upon the foundational belief that equitable access to and support through postsecondary education should be available to all young people. Juniors and seniors spanning 9 high schools from 7 districts in 3 counties make up the Young Scholars Academy community. Creating an environment for and by first-generation college students is in our DNA.

OUR IMPACT

Our regional partnerships allow scholars from all backgrounds to receive holistic support while experiencing college, discovering their passions, and preparing for their futures. Alongside their high school diploma, scholars can graduate with around 60 college credits earned - and, so far, 40% have also earned an Associate degree!

700 **TOTAL STUDENTS SERVED SINCE 2020**
INCLUDING COHORTS 1 THROUGH 6

38%

FIRST
GENERATION
COLLEGE
STUDENTS

3.3

AVERAGE
GRADUATE
GPA

367

PROGRAM
GRADUATES -
COHORTS 1 - 4

82%

ATTEND
4-YEAR KY
UNIVERSITIES

147

ASSOCIATE
DEGREES
CONFERRED

58

AVERAGE
CREDIT HOURS
EARNED

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

SCHOLAR SELECTION

Sophomores from partner schools may be invited to join our community if they have a 3.0 GPA, can demonstrate college readiness in math, and have a recommendation from their school based on social-emotional readiness, behavior, and attendance.



To promote access, limited conditional admission spots are held in each cohort for Emerging Scholars which provides math support in their first semester of YSA. 93% of scholars have demonstrated college readiness in math during this time and continued in YSA.

SCHOLAR ADVISING + SUPPORT

From selection through graduation, scholars receive advising based on their needs and goals. In 1:1 and group advising, scholars learn about academic options and degree requirements. To customize the academic experience for each scholar, students choose a Pathway (Associate Degree or Bachelor's Degree Preparation) and a Track to pursue during YSA - with the option to remain fully exploratory.

As scholars explore, they are welcome to change their goals and work with a specialized advisor to adjust their plans.



SCHOLAR SCHEDULES

After arriving at NKU's campus in Highland Heights by 8:00am, a day in the life of a scholar includes a combination of attending 2-3 classes per day, engaging in YSA programming, going to learning community meetings, working on class assignments, taking advantage of NKU's various study spaces and resources, then getting picked up at 2:00pm to head back to their high schools. At their high schools, scholars continue to participate in productions, athletics, student government, and more.



SCHOLAR PROGRAMMING

Through weekly events, scholars are provided with intentionally designed experiences that promote: engaging with peers; connecting with faculty, staff, alumni, and community members; and developing their personal, academic, and professional skill sets.

From building bonds with new friends to exploring academic and career interests to learning how to navigate the college search and application process, scholars are well-prepared for life during and after YSA.



ACADEMIC OVERVIEW

Throughout their time enrolled at Young Scholars Academy, students complete their remaining high school requirements and pursue coursework that allows them to explore career interests and begin working toward their long-term goals. Common courses include:

ORIENTATION (1 course)

UNV 101 - Orientation to College and Beyond (1 credit)

CAREER EXPLORATION (6-10 courses)

Scholars choose from exploring courses in one or more of the following tracks while working toward an Associate's and/or Bachelor's degree: Business, Computing and Analytics, Education, Fine Arts, Health and Human Services, Humanities and Social Sciences, Media and Communication, and STEM: Pre-Professional.

ENGLISH (2 courses)

ENG 101 - Writing for College and Beyond (3 credits)
ENG 102 - Writing for Research (3 credits)

MATHEMATICS (2-3 courses)

MAT 102 - Introductory College Algebra (2 credits)
MAT 103 - Intermediate College Algebra (2 credits)
MAT 115 - Mathematics for Liberal Arts (3 credits)
MAT 119 - Pre-Calculus Mathematics (3 credits)
STA 205 - Statistical Methods (3 credits)

HISTORY (1 course)

HIS 102 - History of the United States through 1877 (3 credits)
HIS 103 - History of the United States since 1877 (3 credits)
HIS 111 - Global Viewpoints in History (3 credits)

SCIENCE (1 course)

AST 110 - Solar System Astronomy (4 credits)
AST 115 - Stars, Galaxies, and Cosmology (4 credits)
BIO 120/L - Understanding the Living World (4 credits)
BIO 150/L - Introduction to Biology (4 credits)
BIO 208/L - Human Anatomy and Physiology (4 credits)
CHE 120/L - General Chemistry I (4 credits)
PHY 110 - Introduction to Physics (4 credits)
SCI 110 - Integrative Science (4 credits)

GENERAL EDUCATION (5-7 courses)

Beyond the courses above that fulfill general education requirements, many scholars complete Kentucky's full general education certification.

CREDENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

ASSOCIATE OF ARTS - INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

Scholars have the opportunity to earn a college degree during their time in Young Scholars Academy, which is conferred during the summer following their high school graduation. Scholars must earn at least 60 college credit hours, including completing general education requirements, coursework in their area(s) of interest, and core degree courses that provide instruction on how to solve problems in an interdisciplinary world.

KY GENERAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATION

Per Kentucky's general education transfer policy (KRS 164.2951(2)), scholars can complete Young Scholars Academy certified in specific general education categories or even fully general education certified. This allows students to transfer general education credits to any public university within Kentucky with the promise of credit acceptability for the other institution's general education program.