



YOUNG SCHOLARS ACADEMY AT NKU:

A REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE ACCESS MODEL



EST. 2020

CPE KENTUCKY STUDENT ACCESS SUMMIT
NOVEMBER 17TH, 2025

ABOUT US + OUR SESSION

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SESSION OUTLINE

- Collaborative structure
- Recruitment and retention of scholars
- Wraparound support
- Actionable strategies



COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURE

OUR CIRCLE OF SUPPORT



OUR MISSION

Young Scholars Academy is built upon the foundational belief that **equitable access** to and **support** through post-secondary education should be available to **all young people**. We do this by leading a **community-built, immersive, early-college experience** for academically motivated 11th and 12th grade students that focuses on **college transition, career preparation, and holistic development**.



OUR VISION

Empowering a community of learners to engage in authentic growth.

OUR PURPOSE

Northern Kentucky University delivers innovative, student-centered education and engages in impactful scholarly and creative endeavors, all of which empower our graduates to have fulfilling careers and meaningful lives, while contributing to the economic, civic, and social vitality of the region.

NKU is committed to serving our P-12 community and promoting post-secondary access for students throughout our region and across the state.

Young Scholars Academy is an exemplification of our purpose, and of work worth doing, as the program centers our belief in giving back to our community by providing access and opportunity to young learners that will empower their long-term growth throughout their lives.



OUR STRUCTURE

**COHORTS BEGIN DURING THEIR JUNIOR YEAR
AND CONTINUE THROUGH SENIOR YEAR**

SCHOLARS ON CAMPUS DAILY, 8AM-2PM

ENROLLED FULL TIME (12-16 CREDITS) EACH SEMESTER

**SCHOLARS CAN PURSUE AN INTERDISCIPLINARY ASSOCIATE DEGREE
AND/OR BEGIN BACHELOR'S DEGREE PROGRESS IN ANY DISCIPLINE**



OUR STORY



Founded as a partnership between Kenton County School District and NKU
Cohort 1 began YSA for pilot year

← 2020

2021 →

Successful pilot led to expansion efforts with regional districts
Cohort 2 began



Expansion MOU signed involving NKCES and 8 additional districts
Cohort 1 graduated
Cohort 3 began as first regional cohort

← 2022

2023 →

Cohort 2 graduated
100th Associate degree awarded
Cohort 4 began



Cohort 3 graduated
Cohort 5 began
Surpassed 500 total scholars served

← 2024

2025 →

Cohort 4 graduated
Surpassed 350 graduates
Cohort 6 began

OUR UNIVERSITY

COORDINATING LOGISTICS

- Developing systems and structures to support population
-

ENROLLMENT, PATHWAYS + TRACKS

- Reporting enrollment projections ~3-4 months prior to registration
- Developing process for AA to be earned through participation
- Designing tracks and registration guides for areas of study/majors

ADVISORY BOARD

- Representatives: colleges; Math and Statistics Chair; Writing Coordinator; Gen Ed Director;
- Updates and data sharing, advocacy, support

OUR DISTRICTS

INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL BOARD APPROVALS

- 3-party MOU between NKCES, NKU, and individual school district
- District determines which associated costs will be covered
- Students remain students within their respective districts

STEERING COMMITTEE

- Representatives: NKCES Chief Academic Officer, 3 superintendents from participating districts, YSA regional director
- Meet once per semester; additionally as-needed
- Program oversight and evaluation

SCHOOL-LEVEL COLLABORATION

- Counselor and/or CCR; administrator
- Regular progress review
- Inclusion in academic support meetings/decisions

OUR SHARED INVESTMENT

DISTRICTS PAY FOR:

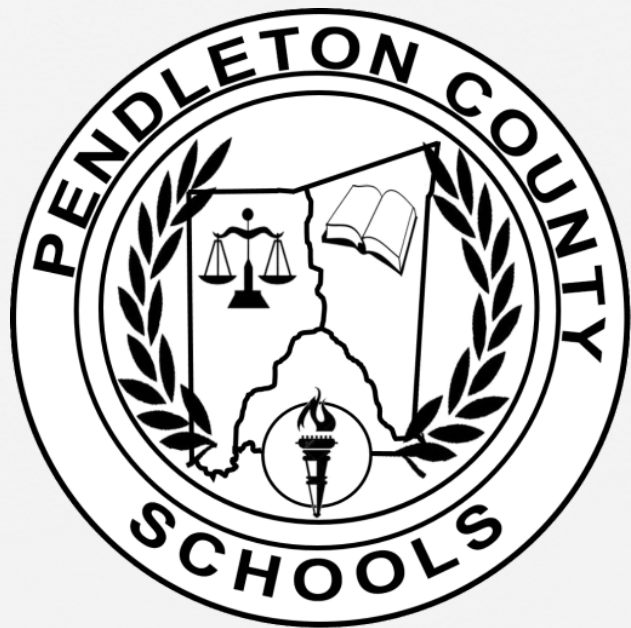
- (2) full-time team members
- Program fees (to NKCES and NKU)
- Varying by district, transportation, tuition, books/course materials, meals

NKU PAYS FOR:

- (2) full-time team members
- Annual program operating budget
- Costs of instructional materials not covered by student fees
- Costs of instruction and direct and indirect student support services

Note: Cost per family varies by school district.

OUR PARTNERS



OUR STORY

STUDENTS SERVED (6 COHORTS) → 700

AVERAGE GRAD GPA → 3.3

AVERAGE CREDIT HOURS EARNED → 58

% ASSOCIATE DEGREES AWARDED → 40%

% ENROLLED IN COLLEGE AFTER YSA → 95%

% ENROLLED IN STATE AFTER YSA → 80%

% ENROLLED AT NKU AFTER YSA → 54%

* based on student reported data at time of graduation



RECRUITMENT + RETENTION

OUR GROWTH

2020-2021 → 80

2021-2022 → 146

2022-2023 → 213

2023-2024 → 260

2024-2025 → 230

2025-2026 → 253



1 DISTRICT

1 DISTRICT

9 DISTRICTS

9 DISTRICTS

8 DISTRICTS

7 DISTRICTS

OUR FOCUS ON ACCESS

FIRST GENERATION ENROLLED → 263 (38%)

% EARNING ASSOCIATE DEGREES → 40%

EMERGING SCHOLARS (BEGAN 2022) → 28

CONDITIONAL ADMISSION OPTION FOR SCHOLARS WHO MEET ALL REQUIREMENTS EXCEPT MATH READINESS (LIMITED SEATS AVAILABLE)

EMERGING SCHOLARS RETENTION → 93%



SCHOLAR REQUIREMENTS

- **3.0 UNWEIGHTED HIGH SCHOOL GPA.** SCHOLARS ARE REQUIRED TO **MAINTAIN** THIS GPA THROUGHOUT THE ADMISSION CYCLE.
- **MATH READINESS** DEMONSTRATED THROUGH:
 - ACT MATH SCORE OF 19+
 - KYOTE COLLEGE READINESS SCORE OF 23+
 - THERE ARE A LIMITED NUMBER OF **EMERGING SCHOLARS** SPOTS YEARLY FOR SCHOLARS WHO SHOW EXCEPTIONAL PROMISE BUT DO NOT MEET THE MATH PLACEMENT SCORE. THESE SCHOLARS WILL BE DETERMINED BASED ON THEIR APPLICATIONS AND PERFORMANCE ON THE MATH PLACEMENT, EVEN IF THEY DO NOT REACH THE CUTOFF SCORE.
- **SCHOOL RECOMMENDATION** BASED ON:
 - ATTENDANCE RECORD
 - BEHAVIORAL HISTORY
 - **SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL READINESS**
 - ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT
 - OTHER CRITERIA AT THE SCHOOL'S DISCRETION
- WE WELCOME ALL TYPES OF LEARNERS, INCLUDING THOSE WHO ARE **FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS**, COME FROM A VARIETY OF BACKGROUNDS, OR HAVE DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS.
- SPECIAL CONSIDERATION IS GIVEN TO SCHOLARS WHO MAY BE **UNABLE TO ATTEND COLLEGE** WITHOUT THE YSA EXPERIENCE.

RECRUITMENT TIMELINE

INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL VISITS OCTOBER

- Invitation to scholars with 3.0+ unweighted GPA
- Presentation
- Math placement at school



ON-CAMPUS MATH PLACEMENT AFTER SCHOOL; ONCE PER WEEK; OCT. 15-NOV. 15

- RSVP (30 slots)
- Computer Lab
- 3 PM - 5 PM



FAMILY OPEN HOUSE

SATURDAY; EARLY NOVEMBER; AM & PM

- Presentation
- Parent Panel
- Scholar Panel
- Campus Tours
- Placement Test

APPS OPEN: OCT. 1 | APPS DUE: NOV. 15 | DECISIONS: DEC. 15

PREVENTING MELT

YSA FOR A DAY FEBRUARY

- Field Trip
- Breakout Sessions
- Tour



SCHEDULING VISITS APRIL

- Pre-Registration Worksheets
- Learning Communities
- Intentional Scheduling

SCHOLAR SUMMIT JULY

- Alumni Summit
- Panel, Alumni Chats, Trivia



NEW SCHOLAR ORIENTATION AUGUST

- 3 Days
- Expectations, Community Building
- Logistics

WRAP AROUND SUPPORT

YSA TEAM WRAPAROUND SUPPORTS

SUPPORTED BY FIVE PERSON TEAM ON CAMPUS – 2 EMPLOYED BY DISTRICTS, 2 BY NKU, 1 AMERICORPS COACH

TEAM SERVES AS ADVISORS FOR A CASELOAD OF SCHOLARS BASED ON GOALS

WEEKLY GRADE ANALYSIS, OUTREACH, & INTERVENTION

WEEKLY COMMUNITY HOUR SESSIONS FOR ADVISING, NETWORKING, CAREER EXPLORATION, PROFESSIONAL SKILLS, + MORE

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC ORIENTATION TO COLLEGE COURSE



DISTRICT WRAPAROUND SUPPORTS

INTENTIONAL CREDIT AUDITING

**REGULAR, STUDENT-SPECIFIC
COMMUNICATION**

**SOCIAL EMOTIONAL
WELLNESS**



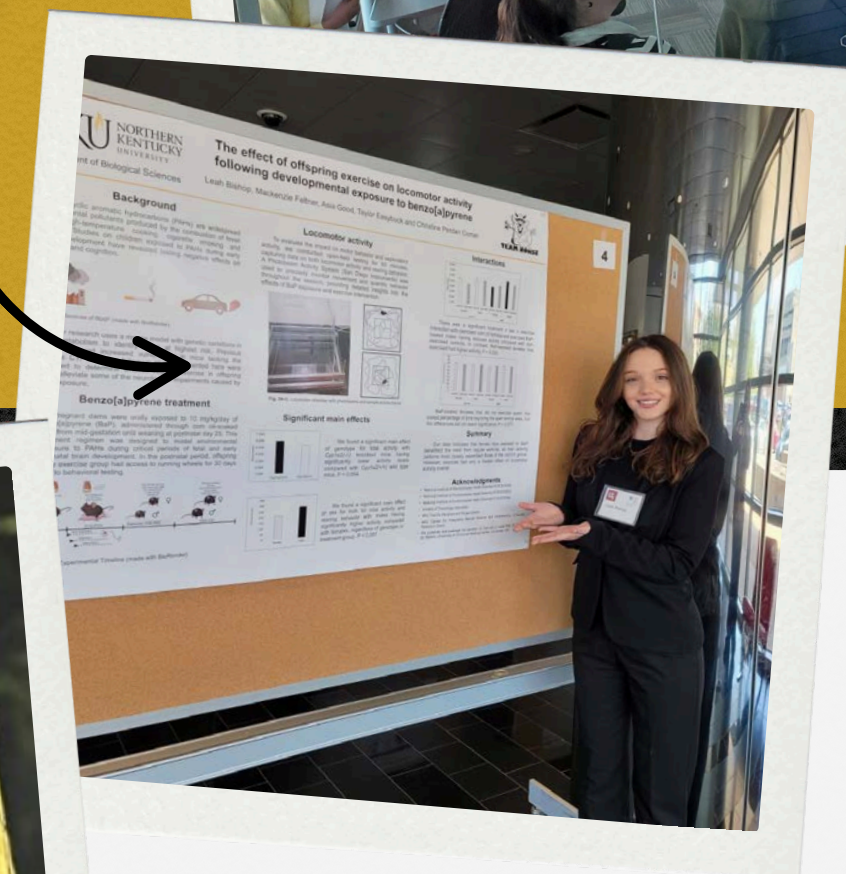
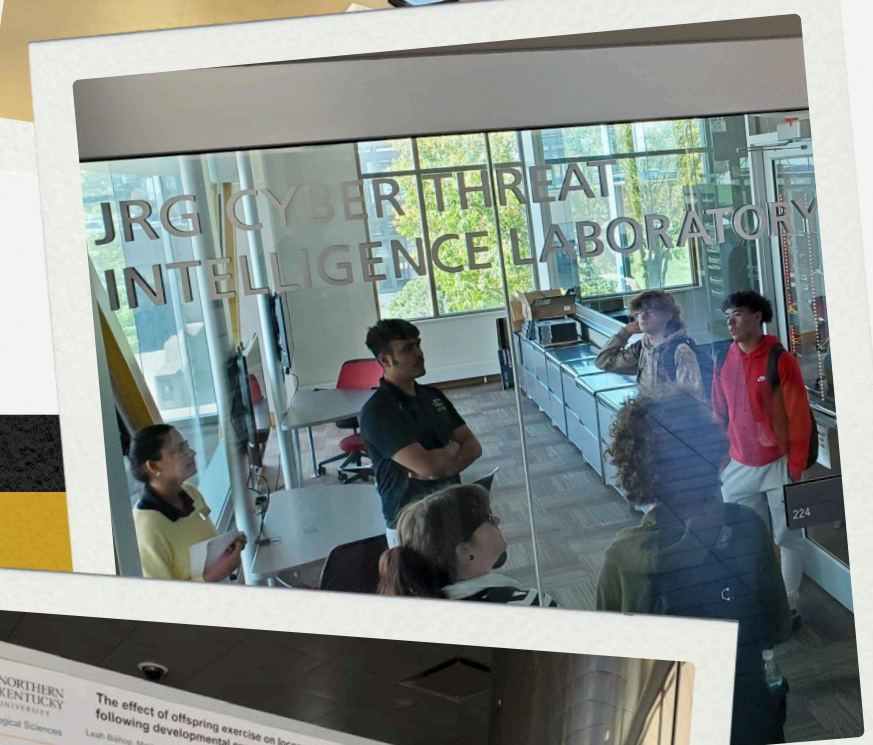
NKU WRAPAROUND SUPPORTS

**INTENTIONAL COURSE PLANNING +
SELECTION TOWARD GOALS**

CAMPUS RESOURCES + ENGAGEMENT

**STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS, HONORS, RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES,
REC CENTER, COUNSELING, TUTORING, FUEL NKU, CARE CLOSET**

**ONGOING CAREER
EXPLORATION + EXPOSURE**



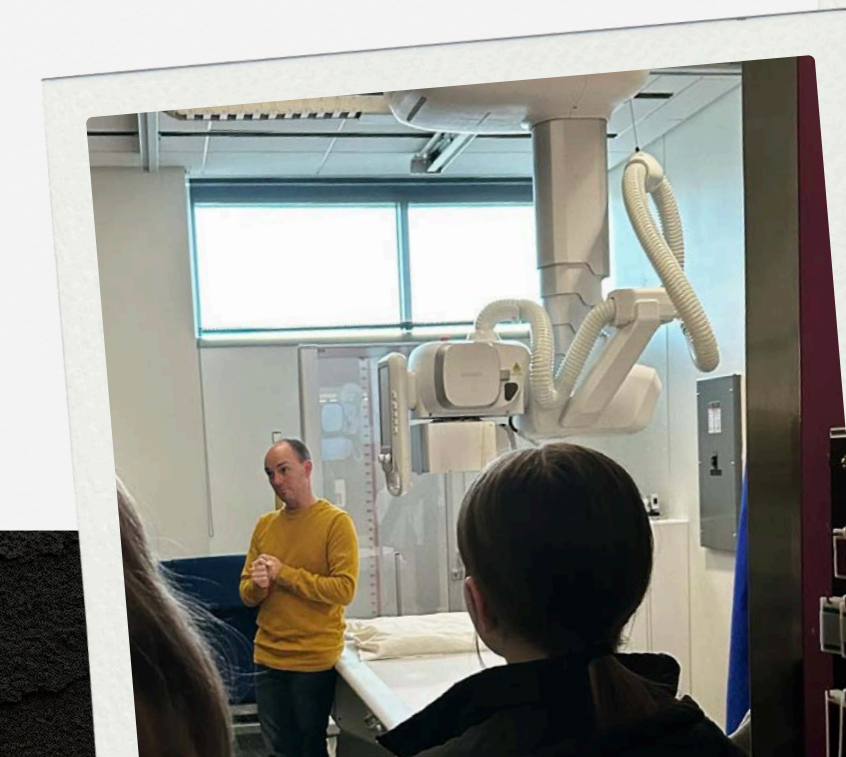
COMMUNITY WRAPAROUND SUPPORTS

HANDS-ON PROFESSIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT + NETWORKING

NKY CHAMBER COLLABORATIONS

SUPPORT WITH COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND EVENTS

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT FORM WITH FLEXIBLE WAYS FOR EMPLOYERS TO ENGAGE



ACTIONABLE STRATEGIES

ADVISING STRATEGIES

- Create advising structures that meet your needs (specialized/cross-trained advisors; college advisor support; schedule reviews; tracking documentation)
- Develop resources to guide meaningful exploration and intentional degree progression (registration guides)
- Design multiple avenues to educate students (YSA for a Day, orientation, UNV 101, learning communities, 1:1 appointments)
- Embed career exploration into conversations, UNV 101, and events
- Educate students on options and opportunities for informed decision-making

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- Emphasize community building and active learning/engagement
- Connect opportunities to student goals, motivations, and needs (speak their language)
- Build intentional time to bring students together regularly with different focuses (social, developmental, advising, networking, etc.), in small and large groups, and with peers who share interests and those who they haven't met before
- Utilize peer ambassadors or leaders to share ideas, plan experiences, support recruitment, etc.

GENERAL STRATEGIES

- Plan how to engage your local resources
- Create **intentional systems and structures** for monitoring student performance
 - Multiple adult advocates (advisor + UNV instructor + HS counselor)
 - Weekly team meeting
 - Weekly dashboard updates/outreach
 - Intervention strategies
- Build intentional **relationships** with point-people
 - "Our" kids
 - You have to know them



- Respect and **celebrate the strengths** on both the K-12 and higher education sides of the house
- Intentionally teach the **spoken and unspoken expectations** of academia
- Build a **culture** of one
 - One team (not just teams working together)
 - One goal - supporting our students
 - One community
- Always remember that these opportunities **feel and can be life altering** for students - even if they are our every day norm. **Every moment matters.**



THANK YOU!

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