

The importance of senior year FAFSA completion

October is an important time for Kentucky's postsecondary education system—and a major opportunity for our high school seniors. This is when the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) for the next academic year opens, unlocking access to federal aid, state grants, and scholarships.



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CPE President

We are hopeful our partners at the Kentucky Department of Education will help us amplify the importance of FAFSA completion. According to the National College Attainment Network, 60% of Kentucky's 12th graders completed the 2025–26 FAFSA, placing us 12th in the nation. We hope to exceed that mark in 2026 – so that even more Kentucky students have the access and opportunity to earn postsecondary credentials.

And when we say postsecondary credentials, we mean all pathways to the workforce beyond high school, including:

- Apprenticeships
- Career and skilled trade certifications
- Associate degrees (2-year)
- Bachelor's degrees (4-year)
- Graduate and professional degrees

CPE is driving toward our statewide goal of 60% credential attainment among working-age Kentuckians by 2030 (we are currently at 56.2%). To get there, we must equip today's high school students with the tools and opportunities that will set them on a successful path.

CPE strategies to increase postsecondary access



Expanding FAFSA awareness through Futuriti

Our new platform, Futuriti.org, co-launched with KDE earlier this year, includes a financial aid section that explains FAFSA and its benefits. Soon, we'll add new guidance showing students how federal aid can also support short-term job training programs at KCTCS campuses. On Futuriti's Future Finder, students can explore careers that require short-term certifications by selecting "postsecondary non-degree awards."



Improving transition readiness through the Kentucky Advising Academy

Since 2021, the Kentucky Advising Academy (KAA) has trained counselors and staff in 90% of Kentucky counties. Through webinars and professional learning sessions, KAA equips advisors to guide students on FAFSA, scholarships, work-based learning, and more. Its current series, Advising for Education, Experience, and Employment, highlights the critical link between education and workforce success—showcasing innovative advising practices across schools.



Increasing dual credit participation

Kentucky was the first state to set a statewide dual credit goal: by 2030, half of high school students should complete at least one dual credit course with a grade of "C" or higher. Today we're at 46.2%, and the results speak volumes—students who complete dual credit are 19% more likely to attend college, and more likely to graduate on time. Dual credit enrollment has grown by 41% since 2019, and we're committed to reaching the 50% goal to lower financial barriers and boost long-term success.



Building careers through summer bridge programs

Summer bridge programs are designed to help incoming students transition from high school to college. These programs usually take place during the summer before the student's freshman year and offer support services to help participants succeed in college. CPE has worked with universities to host these programs in previous years and is currently requesting funding in the next state budget to scale opportunities for more students statewide.

First-ever Student Access Summit set for Nov. 17

I invite members of the Kentucky Board of Education, KDE staff, and district educators to join us on November 17 at the first-ever Student Access Summit at the Campbell House in Lexington. This summit will spotlight strategies, tools, and innovations that help students transition into and through postsecondary education—and celebrate Kentucky's progress in closing access gaps.

Please join us as we facilitate these impactful conversations about ensuring every Kentucky student has a clear, supported pathway to their future.

