

ILPs can help turn student goals into postsecondary and career success

Kentucky has made real progress in helping more students see a future for themselves after high school. In 2025, we saw a 5% increase in postsecondary enrollment and completion, and we learned that six out of 10 college graduates are finishing school debt-free. But we still have work to do.

According to Kentucky's Longitudinal Data System, about 7 in 10 high school graduates have some college experience within nine years of graduation, yet only about 3 in 10 complete a postsecondary credential in the same time-frame. That gap should concern all of us. It tells us too many students are getting started, but not get all the way to a degree, diploma, or certificate that can change the trajectory of their lives. That's why CPE is committed to supporting K-12 in its work to provide high-quality career planning and postsecondary advising to all students.

During a recent Student Advisory Council discussion, CPE staff members Mitzi Holland, Jessica Fletcher, and Trey Pippin joined students in a conversation about postsecondary transition resources and the role of the Individual Learning Plan, commonly known as the ILP. Students reviewed resources focused on career exploration, postsecondary opportunities, financial literacy, and essential skills—the very building blocks young people need to make smart decisions after graduation.

That conversation reinforced an important truth: the ILP should not be treated as a form to complete to meet state requirements. It should be treated



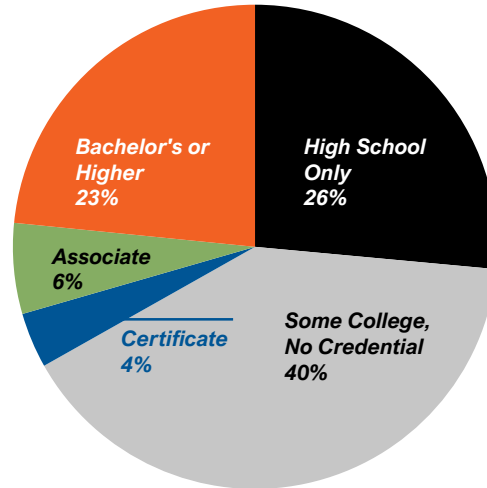
Aaron Thompson, Ph.D.
CPE President

as a roadmap. When students begin exploring careers early, reflect on their interests and strengths, and connect those interests to education and training options, they are more likely to make purposeful decisions about their futures. That is how we move students from aspiration to action.

These opinions from Kentucky's students resonate on a national level. A recent Jobs for the Future survey of Americans ages 16 to 24 found that 74% of respondents felt having greater access to information on different career and education options would have an impact on the range of career options they see available to them. Sadly, 62% of all respondents did not feel empowered or in control of their career path.

This is why our work right now is critical. CPE's Postsecondary Advising Framework gives schools a stronger structure for delivering consistent, high-quality advising. Futuriti gives students and families practical, Kentucky-specific information about careers, wages, education options, and planning for college costs. And our

10-Year Postsecondary Outcomes for Kentucky High School Graduates (2011-14)



Kentucky longitudinal data show that 10 years after graduation, only 33% of Kentucky students have completed a postsecondary credential. 67% either did not enroll in a postsecondary or did not complete a program.

Source: KYSTATS

newly-designed ILP collection tool helps organize those efforts so they build across grade levels instead of happening in disconnected moments.

Used together, these tools can help students understand a simple but life-changing connection: early career planning leads to informed postsecondary choices; postsecondary choices lead to a credential of value; and a credential of value can lead to a career that earns a sustainable wage.

The power of these tools is they were not built in a silo. Our partners at KDE, KYSTATS, KHEAA and ESG have provided input, data, funding and other invaluable resources. We look forward to continuing to build upon these partnerships as the work advances.

The ILP requirement remains important because Kentucky's students deserve more than encouragement. They deserve a clear plan, strong advising, and tools that help turn possibility into opportunity. That is work worth continuing, and CPE stands ready to help K-12 students and educators on this journey.

6 OUT OF 10 KENTUCKY UNDERGRADUATES GRADUATE DEBT-FREE



2024-25 Average Debt At Graduation

KCTCS \$13,739

4-Year Public University \$32,564

News Releases

- CPE recognizes faculty and staff for excellence in student-focused efforts
- CPE board approves additional budget request for ECU osteopathic medicine program
- New Futuriti.org homepage makes it easier for Kentuckians to find their futures
- Kentucky undergraduate enrollment continues to grow, outpacing national trends
- CPE Board approves new veterinary program at Murray State University
- CPE: 6 out of 10 Kentucky college students are graduating debt-free

Online & Print Coverage

- Senate unveils major reforms for Kentucky State University in bid to avoid 'closure'
Coverage by: Louisville Public Media, Hoptown Chronicle, The Lexington Times, ABC 36, Kentucky Lantern, LEX 18, WKYT
- KSU hosts student panels highlighting Black experience in higher education
Coverage by: WDRB
- CPE approves MSU's doctoral veterinary medicine program
Coverage by: WPSD, Lane Report, WKMS, Vet Candy, Murray State News
- NKY Chamber to host workforce best practices symposium, 'Future-Ready Workplaces'
Coverage by: NKY Tribune
- Total degrees, credentials up 5% at Kentucky colleges, universities
Coverage by: Spectrum News, NKY Tribune, Glasgow News 1
- Council on Postsecondary Education approves \$50 million request to the General Assembly for a new ECU doctoral program
Coverage by: WEKU, Lexington Herald-Leader
- Kentucky universities brace for possible funding cuts in new budget
Coverage by: Spectrum News
- Report shows more Kentuckians are graduating college without debt
Coverage by: Spectrum News, Winchester Sun

Op-Ed



"While the national media sound the alarm about rising college costs and ballooning loan debt, graduates like me have a different story to tell. Thanks to statewide and campus efforts, Kentucky is proving that an affordable college education remains within reach."

Alexia Juarez
Communications Associate

Television Interviews



Kentucky Newsmakers, March 15



WKYT, Spectrum News, March 4

Media Statements

Statement on HB 500

"Kentucky's progress in postsecondary education has resulted from sustained collaboration among institutions, policymakers, and state leadership. Continued investment is essential to maintaining that momentum and ensuring that more Kentuckians can earn the degrees and credentials needed to support their families and contribute to the state's economy."

CPE Statement on SB 185

"The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education is supportive of the committee substitute for Senate Bill 185 and the future direction it outlines for Kentucky State University. This vision represents an opportunity to build a targeted polytechnic university while honoring KSU's historic mission and legacy. The legislation is the result of thoughtful collaboration among legislative leadership in both chambers, along with leadership at KSU and the Council.