

**Five Questions - One Mission
Better Lives for Kentucky's People**

**A Public Agenda for Postsecondary
and Adult Education
2005-2010**

Introduction

Kentucky's public agenda for postsecondary education has become a nationally recognized model for reform. The agenda calls for a fundamental, profound shift in the way the postsecondary system approaches its work: while institutions once competed against each other for their own interests, the public agenda challenges them to work *together* for the *common good*. It also urges the adult education system to eradicate illiteracy, which, according to the *Adult Education Act of 2000*, is a "fundamental barrier to every major challenge facing Kentucky." The motto of reform is "One Mission: Better Lives." The long-term goal is to raise the standard of living and quality of life in the Commonwealth above the national average by the year 2020.

The Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997 (House Bill 1) requires the Council on Postsecondary Education to review this public agenda every four years. The review began in early 2004 with an analysis of demographic, economic, and education data from 1997 to the present. Then, nine regional forums and a series of meetings with state policy, civic, and business leaders were held to find out what's working and where the system can improve.

This new public agenda reflects what we learned from our analyses and heard from concerned, engaged citizens all over the state. At the heart of this agenda are five questions—short, simple, yet powerful reminders of the public we serve. The questions have been revised to emphasize the importance of maintaining affordable, high-quality postsecondary opportunities that lead to more certificates and degrees, better jobs, and more productive, meaningful lives.

These new five questions will guide the work of the entire adult and postsecondary education system from 2005-2010. The public universities, the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, the Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities, and the Council on Postsecondary Education (including Kentucky Adult Education and Kentucky Virtual University/Library) have developed action plans to move this agenda forward. The questions also serve as the framework for accountability measures that monitor our progress and encourage and reward behaviors that move us closer to our goals.

The New 5 Questions of Reform

1. Are more Kentuckians ready for postsecondary education?
2. Is Kentucky postsecondary education affordable for its citizens?
3. Do more Kentuckians have certificates and degrees?
4. Are college graduates prepared for life and work in Kentucky?
5. Are Kentucky's people, communities, and economy benefiting?

Choosing our Future

This is a critical moment in the history of Kentucky's postsecondary reform. The system is poised to profoundly improve the lives of Kentuckians and the prosperity of the Commonwealth. The significant investments made in postsecondary and adult education produced impressive gains from 1998, reform's beginning, to 2004; total enrollment in postsecondary education increased 25 percent, degrees and certificates awarded increased 56 percent, and per capita income increased to 84 percent of the U.S. average. But without firm resolve and adequate resources, our momentum will stall.

One of two futures awaits us in 2020.

If we succeed in moving this agenda forward, life in the Commonwealth will improve. . .

- Kentucky will be acclaimed for its integrated, coordinated, and adequately funded system of education—from preschool through college and beyond.
- All students will understand what they need to know to succeed at the next level of education, and schools will prepare them for a successful transition.
- All students will complete at least two years of postsecondary education and will be prepared for transfer to a university or the skilled trades.
- Education will not end with a postsecondary degree. Kentuckians will seek advanced knowledge and skills throughout their lives to increase their professional mobility and keep pace with the demands of a knowledge economy.
- Postsecondary education will become a key strategy for creating good jobs, improving public health, and promoting civic engagement.
- Kentucky's population will grow as people realize the economic and cultural opportunities available here. An abundance of good jobs will keep Kentuckians working and living in the state and attract talented newcomers.
- Economic development and prosperity will be more evenly distributed across all geographic regions of the Commonwealth while communities will preserve their uniquely "Kentucky" character.
- Business, civic, and education leaders will work in concert to improve their communities. Civic participation, volunteerism, and charitable giving will increase. Crime rates and reliance on public assistance will decrease.
- Public health will improve as diseases linked to obesity and smoking decline.
- Kentuckians will develop a passion for lifelong learning that is handed down to the next generation.

THE 2020 IMPERATIVE

According to an analysis of U.S. Census projections, Kentucky will need nearly 800,000 working-age adults with a bachelor's degree or higher to match the national average in 2020; in 2000 we had only 402,000. Over the next 15 years, we need to nearly double the number of Kentuckians ages 25-64 with at least a four-year degree.

Choosing our Future

But if we fail . . .

- Too many people in Kentucky will think that college isn't for them or within reach. There will be too much leakage all along the education pipeline—high school students failing to graduate as well as college students failing to complete a degree.
- Kentucky will trail the nation on key indicators of educational progress—standardized test scores, high school graduation rates, and degree attainment.
- Close to half of our working-age adults will lack the literacy, mathematical, and reasoning skills necessary for jobs in a knowledge economy.
- College will be too expensive for a majority of capable, low-income or minority students, who will not exceed their parents' education level or quality of life.
- Most of the job growth in every region of the state will occur in low-wage, low-skill sectors of the economy, since Kentucky will not be able to compete with other states or nations for high-value jobs.
- The higher-wage jobs that do not require postsecondary credentials will relocate to undeveloped countries. The remaining dislocated workers will not have the education needed to compete for jobs with comparable salaries.
- Our best and brightest will leave Kentucky to pursue lucrative career opportunities elsewhere. High school seniors will attend out-of-state colleges and will not return to Kentucky to live and work. Emerging entrepreneurs will be lured to states with abundant intellectual and venture capital.
- Kentucky will fare worse than nearly every other state on most indicators of public health and will lead the nation in obesity, type II diabetes, lung cancer, and heart disease.
- Voting, volunteerism, and charitable giving will decline. Community development will stagnate.

Kentucky has a choice: we can keep moving forward to this better future or we can slip back to an unpromising past. Implementing this agenda won't be easy, but the rewards will far outweigh the costs. College-educated workers make more money, which increases a state's tax base and demand for goods and services. This in turn fuels the economy. According to a recent analysis by the Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center, **Kentucky could expect a cumulative increase in revenue of more than \$5.3 billion if we reach the national average in educational attainment by 2020.**

In 2002, Kentucky's progress toward postsecondary reform was characterized as:

...nothing short of remarkable. To a striking degree, the reforms have addressed most of the issues identified just five years earlier and established the foundation for step-by-step progress over the next decade and beyond. Perhaps the most profound change over the past five years has been a change in expectations and frame of mind—among students, parents, business and civic leaders, postsecondary leaders, and the Commonwealth's policy leaders. There is a new sense of hope, pride, and confidence...the Commonwealth is leading the nation in demonstrating how sustained attention to education reform can bring about fundamental, long-term improvement in a state's quality of life and economy.

Aims McGuinness
National Center for Higher
Education Management Systems

PROGRESS

- Adult education enrollment has increased 135 percent in four years.
- Kentucky had the highest increase in the nation in the percent of adults with a high school credential from 1990-2000.
- More high school students are taking college preparatory courses. Since 1998, the number of dual enrollment courses taken in high school has increased five-fold, and the ratio of students taking AP courses nearly doubled.

"Kentucky loses too many students at key points in the education pipeline. For every 100 ninth graders in Kentucky, 65 students graduate from high school, 39 enter college, 26 are still enrolled their sophomore year, and only 15 students graduate within three years from a two-year program or within six years from a four-year program."

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education

QUESTION 1: ARE MORE KENTUCKIANS READY FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION?

Kentucky must do a better job preparing high school students and adults for postsecondary study. An overwhelming majority of high school students tell us they plan to continue their education after graduation but have not tackled the rigorous courses that prepare them for college-level work. Many adults recognize the need for advanced training but have not completed high school, or have been out of school for a while and need to refresh their skills. Postsecondary institutions must play a role in helping high schools prepare each and every one of their students for at least two years of postsecondary training, and Kentucky Adult Education must help more of their learners transition to college. For Kentucky to be competitive, all students—regardless of income level, age, gender, or skin color—need better access to high-quality instruction and guidance counseling that will lead them to postsecondary opportunities.

CHALLENGES

HOW WE GET TO YES

- Postsecondary involvement in efforts to restructure the high school curriculum and assessments.
 - Smoother transitions from high school, area technology centers, and GED programs to college through closer alignment of the secondary, adult, and postsecondary systems.
 - More concerted efforts to close achievement gaps and increase college going among minority, low-income, first-generation, and adult students.
 - More high school students taking Advance Placement and college-level courses.
 - Strengthened guidance counseling to provide early college awareness and planning.
 - More explicit information from the postsecondary community about what it takes to succeed in college and the skilled trades.
 - More adults participating in adult education programs and earning GEDs.
 - Better coordination among KCTCS and adult education programs to provide low- or no-cost college remediation services.
 - Better preparation and training for P-12 and adult education instructors and leaders at all levels.
 - Expanded efforts to recruit a diverse teaching force and to keep good teachers working and living in Kentucky.
- Too many high school graduates entering college are not adequately prepared. Compared to top performing states, middle and high school students perform poorly on national assessments, including the National Assessment of Education Progress, Advanced Placement exams, and the ACT.
 - Minority and low-income students are not taking challenging courses in high school, do not score well on standardized tests, and often are not encouraged to pursue college.
 - Adult education enrollment represents only five percent of adults at the lowest literacy levels.
 - From 1995-2000, 11,351 people with less than a high school diploma between the age of 22-29 moved to Kentucky while 5,087 left the state, resulting in a net gain of nearly 6,264 undereducated young adults.
 - Only 62 percent of 7th – 12th graders are taught by teachers with a major in their field, compared to 81 percent in top-performing states.

PROGRESS

- Kentucky remains in the top third of states in providing affordable postsecondary education opportunities, according to *Measuring Up 2004*.
- Average tuition and fees at Kentucky institutions in 2004-05 were 15 percent below the national average.
- The cost of public postsecondary education as a percent of family income is unchanged from a decade ago.

QUESTION 2: IS KENTUCKY POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AFFORDABLE FOR ITS CITIZENS?

To increase Kentucky's intellectual capital, college must remain financially accessible, especially for families who are least able to pay. Historically, the cost of going to college in Kentucky has compared favorably to other states. This is still true today. Tuition remains relatively low and the average financial aid award is high. However, rising tuition and fees are placing a financial strain on many families. If this trend continues, Kentucky may overload students with debt or price them out of college completely. We must strive to provide Kentuckians with the highest quality of education possible at an affordable price.

"Kentucky higher education is within reasonable range of affordability for most students. The biggest exception to this is lower-income, independent students who do not receive as much state aid as dependent students and face a higher net price which requires more borrowing. Some dependent students in the lowest income quartile attending four-year public or private institutions are also at the margins of affordability."

College Affordability in Kentucky, *JBL Associates, Inc. and the Educational Policy Institute, September 2005*

HOW WE GET TO YES

- Increased public investment in postsecondary education and financial aid for the greater economic and social good of Kentucky.
- Increased institutional productivity and efficiency to contain tuition and college costs.
- More integrated and aligned policies governing financial aid, tuition, and state appropriations aimed at reducing financial barriers for students and increasing institutional capacity to meet the educational needs of the state.
- More and better communication with prospective students and their families about financial aid opportunities and net college costs.
- Expanded grant programs and low-interest/forgivable student loans that address workforce demands and the needs of underserved populations, including GED graduates, part-time students, and transfer students.
- A re-examination of the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES) program to ensure students are rewarded, not just for good grades, but also for taking rigorous courses.

CHALLENGES

- While college in Kentucky remains affordable compared to other states, it is losing ground. The state's ranking in overall affordability slipped from 8 to 14 from 2002 to 2004.
- The purchasing power of the federal Pell grant has declined considerably over the last two decades. In 1980-81, the Pell grant covered 36 percent of the average cost of attending a public, four-year institution; by 2003-04, it covered only 23 percent, according to the College Board.
- Kentucky undergraduates borrow more than the national average. In 2003, the average loan amount was \$3,018.
- Adequate financial aid is not available for part-time students, a barrier for adults in the workforce.

PROGRESS

- Since 1998, total enrollment in postsecondary education increased 25 percent.
- The number of GED graduates transitioning to college increased from 12 percent in 1998 to 19 percent in 2002.
- For the first time, a Kentucky 9th grader's chance for college exceeds the national average, up from 34 to 38 percent over the last decade.
- In the past decade, the college participation rate of minority young adults (ages 18-24) rose from 15 to 32 percent.
- At the state's public universities, the systemwide six-year graduation rate rose from 36.7 percent in 1998 to 44.3 percent in 2004.
- Kentucky resident African-American undergraduate enrollment increased from 7.3 percent in 1995 to 8 percent in 2003.

QUESTION 3: DO MORE KENTUCKIANS HAVE CERTIFICATES AND DEGREES?

Kentucky must double the number of college-educated adults in Kentucky by 2020 to reach the national average. To do this, the postsecondary system must recruit and enroll more students, ensure more students persist to certificate and degree completion, and keep graduates living and working in the state. Reaching our goals will require an infusion of high school graduates and working-age adults into the postsecondary pipeline at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, including two- to four-year transfer students. If we succeed, everyone in the state, even those people who never set foot on a college campus, will benefit: more certificates and degrees mean more nurses, teachers, social workers, and public safety officers, not to mention cutting-edge medical research, technological innovations, and cleaner water and air. The state's future in large part depends upon Kentuckians' ability to advance seamlessly through the educational system and obtain credentials that will enrich their lives and life in the Commonwealth.

HOW WE GET TO YES

- Expanded outreach efforts at the state and grassroots level that focus on underserved regions and populations to increase the number of Kentuckians who value and pursue postsecondary education.
- Accelerated efforts to help more GED graduates transition to postsecondary education.
- Expanded capacity at public and independent institutions to serve more students more effectively through course redesign, alternative methods of program delivery, and better coordination of distance education.
- Concentrated efforts across the postsecondary system to strengthen the guidance and support provided to on-campus and distance education students.
- Expanded capability of our community and technical college system to deliver a general education component, incentives and encouragement for students to transfer from a two-year to a four-year institution, and reduced time to degree.
- Increased efforts to address workforce shortages in targeted regions and in degree areas (undergraduate and graduate) that support economic development.
- Incentives and rewards linked to increased degree production.

CHALLENGES

- For every 100 9th graders, only 15 complete a college degree.
- Minority and low-income students are much less likely to go to college than white, affluent students.
- The proportion of degree-seeking freshmen returning their second year is low and virtually unchanged over the last six years.
- The number of students transferring from two-year to four-year institutions was lower in 2004 than in 1998.
- Kentucky's graduation rate of 44 percent remains well below the national rate of 54 percent.
- In 2004, Kentucky ranked 47th in the nation in the percent of the adult population with a four-year degree or higher.

Kentucky's reality is that we will sink or swim not on how well we educate our youth, but on how well we educate our entire population, whether age 15, 35, 55, or 75. For the most part, our workforce of tomorrow is just our workforce of today grown older.

As the baby boomers mature, Kentucky will become an aging state. Many people may find if they retire too early that they will run out of income before they run out of life. Kentucky must develop policies for retraining and retooling people. We must invest in educating not just our youth but each and every one of us. We must educate and re-educate, train and retrain.

Ron Crouch
Director, Kentucky State Data Center
University of Louisville

QUESTION 4: ARE COLLEGE GRADUATES PREPARED FOR LIFE AND WORK IN KENTUCKY?

When students leave our colleges and universities, they must carry with them characteristics, skills, and behaviors that equip them for life's challenges and the world of work, in Kentucky or anywhere in the world. At its best, postsecondary education instills a sense of civic duty and pride and an obligation to help others through volunteerism and charitable giving. A college-educated individual possesses valuable attributes: a capacity for lifelong learning, the ability to analyze and synthesize information, effective communication and problem-solving skills, and the ability to relate to diverse individuals. Students who are academically engaged and active on campus and in their communities tend to vote more often, lead healthier lives, and be more productive workers and citizens. As we expand our capacity to serve more students, we also must strive to improve the quality of learning at our institutions.

PROGRESS

- College graduates perform well on licensure and teacher certification exams.
- Two-year college students score at or above the national average on Work Keys assessments.
- Public universities have made progress on measures of undergraduate student experience, especially "enriching educational experience" and "interactions with faculty members," according to the 2003 National Survey of Student Engagement.

CHALLENGES

- Four-year college undergraduates score below the national average on assessments of writing, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, according to *Measuring Up 2004*.
- The proportion of college students who vote, volunteer, and give to charity declined from 2001 to 2003, according to the National Survey of Student Engagement.
- Not enough Kentuckians score well on examinations needed for admission to graduate school, according to *Measuring Up 2004*.

HOW WE GET TO YES

- Improved undergraduate student learning so that more graduates are prepared for careers and graduate and professional programs.
- Integration of civic literacy into the curriculum and the overall college experience so that students become engaged citizens and leaders.
- Development of student learning measurements that track the postsecondary system's contribution to the educational capital of the state and make comparisons against national benchmarks and other states.

PROGRESS

- Federal research and development dollars per capita increased 92 percent from 1996 to 2002, the fifth-highest percentage increase in the nation for that time period. On this measure, Kentucky moved from 45th to 42nd in the nation.
- The Bucks for Brains program has dedicated \$700 million to support research and academic programs at the public universities; the number of endowed chairs is up from 55 in 1997 to 187 in 2004; professorships rose from 53 to 261.
- Since 2001, nearly 128,000 employees upgraded their skills through workforce education funded by Kentucky Adult Education and its Workforce Alliance initiative.
- Kentucky's per capita income increased from 79 percent in 1990 to 84 percent of the U.S. average in 2000.

QUESTION 5: ARE KENTUCKY'S PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES, AND ECONOMY BENEFITING?

Postsecondary education can and must play a central role in transforming Kentucky's economy and quality of life. Through expanded research and development, faculty and staff expertise, and the commercialization of research, colleges and universities spur economic growth and development. But just as importantly, our institutions produce individuals committed to the social and cultural welfare of their communities. The Commonwealth needs globally competitive companies that invest in individuals and communities in every region of the state. We also need communities that embrace art, literature, music, dance, and theater because they reflect and enrich the spirit of Kentucky's people. Postsecondary institutions must do their part by being good "stewards of place," working with community leaders to advance economic, social, and environmental progress.

While the Commonwealth has taken significant steps to improve the competitiveness of Kentucky's economy, Kentucky's ratings on the Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED) report card have not changed much in 15 years:

"We are making progress, but so is everybody else... This is like a race, and we're at the back of the pack, and everyone else ahead of us is picking up speed. We have to take extraordinary steps if we are going to enhance our competitive position."

Kris Kimel, President
Kentucky Science and Technology Corporation

HOW WE GET TO YES

- Greater emphasis on the role of postsecondary institutions as “stewards of place” that partner with business, civic, and K-12 communities to solve local, regional, and state problems.
- Stronger relationships with economic development partners to develop, attract, and keep jobs that will enable Kentucky to compete in the global economy and retain and recruit more college-educated workers.
- Expanded research capacity directed at the state’s priority research and economic development areas.
- Greater efforts to attract more research dollars to Kentucky.
- The transfer of research and technology to applications that lead to economic growth, job creation, and improved quality of life.
- More adults earning workforce education certificates through expanded marketing to employers and employees. Better coordination of workforce training activities and resources across state cabinets and agencies.
- Larger numbers of college graduates remaining in Kentucky to work and contributing to the economic and social well being of the state.

CHALLENGES

- Kentucky currently ranks 42nd in the nation in the amount of federal research and development dollars generated.
- In 2000, Kentucky had a per capita personal income of \$26,352, which ranked 41st in the U.S. and was 84 percent of the national average.
- Kentucky earned a “D” in economic performance, a “D” in development capacity, an “F” in financial resources, and a “C” in business vitality, according to ratings assigned by the National Corporation for Enterprise Development in 2004.
- From 1995-2000, 17,584 baccalaureate recipients ages 22-29 left the state while 16,186 moved to Kentucky, resulting in a net loss of nearly 1,400 college educated, young adults.

Call to Action

Implementing this agenda will require a deliberate and renewed investment of time, energy, creativity, and resources. The need for adequate funding remains a major concern. Closing the gap between where we are and where we need to be will require a substantial, sustained financial commitment on the part of the Commonwealth.

Finding adequate resources for postsecondary and adult education in times of fiscal constraint is difficult. Revenue is needed from a variety of sources—tuition, philanthropic activities, and external grants and contracts—as well as reallocation of existing funds. A long-term strategy must be developed to generate and guide funding for research infrastructure, academic programs, workforce training, stewardship activities, financial aid, and adult learning to bring about economic prosperity and improved quality of life.

Kentucky's postsecondary and adult education system must do its part to move this agenda forward, but we cannot stimulate economic opportunity and remove barriers alone. The educational and economic aspirations of this state can be realized only through concerted and decisive action and sustainable resources.

We urge our partners, advocates, and other stakeholders all across the Commonwealth to join with us as we build on the early successes of reform and confront head on the challenges that remain.

Guiding Principles

As we implement this public agenda, the postsecondary system and its partners pledge to:

Work Together—We will strengthen existing partnerships and reach out to new partners to accelerate our progress. We will remember that the early success of reform is due in no small part to the quality of our working relationships with education, legislative, community, civic, and economic development partners—both statewide and locally.

Be Good Stewards—We shall, at once, dedicate existing resources and target future investments to our highest priorities. We will garner public support for the value of adult and postsecondary education and make the case for sustained, adequate resources for the system. We will give our investors and beneficiaries solid evidence about the performance of the system, benchmarked where possible against appropriate standards. We will find innovative approaches that make us more responsive, efficient, and flexible. We will use technology in ways that improve learning and support services, extend access, and increase our capacity to serve students and employers. These strategies and practices will be informed by data and research. We will eliminate unnecessary red tape that makes it difficult to respond quickly and creatively to those we serve.

Close the Gaps—We will strive to close gaps in performance among students from different racial, ethnic, geographic, and economic backgrounds that exist for every measure of educational progress—preparation, participation, persistence, and completion. Leveling the playing field will require the Commonwealth to address issues beyond the classroom, like quality prenatal care, early childhood development, and increased opportunities for individuals with disabilities. But if we succeed, everyone in the Commonwealth will benefit.

