



**Commencement season lets us celebrate
all who make earning a degree possible**



Mason Dyer
AIKCU President

The first Saturday in June, Spalding University held the final celebration of an AIKCU spring commencement season that saw thousands of graduates cross stages throughout the commonwealth.

In 2023-24, AIKCU members awarded more than 15,000 degrees and credentials, including 5,600 bachelor's degrees. While we don't have a final count of AIKCU graduates this academic year, we know that behind those many degrees are numerous individuals — not just the graduates themselves, but also the faculty, staff, family members, and other supporters who helped the graduates reach this crucial milestone.

I was reminded of this as I sat at my own child's commencement a few weeks ago and observed the families from around Kentucky and around the world there to celebrate. I am reminded when I hear about professors on our campuses engaging students in deep, meaningful academic research or advisors helping students connect to career opportunities.

I've been reminded again and again throughout commencement season as I've watched graduates talk about what comes next — employment, medical school, graduate school, or whatever that next step may be — and how the deep personal connections and mentorship provided by their small college experience made it possible.

As everyone involved with CPE knows, higher ed matters. So, as we celebrate the Class of 2025, let's also celebrate the people behind our graduates who make all of this possible.



**AIKCU helping to prepare future higher ed leaders with new
Advancing Leaders Program**

Preparing promising mid- to senior-level managers to take on even greater leadership roles is the goal behind the new AIKCU Advancing Leaders Program.

The inaugural Class of 2025 kicked off the program with a two-day, in-person session in January. Participants then met virtually each month until completing the program at a final in-person session June 2.

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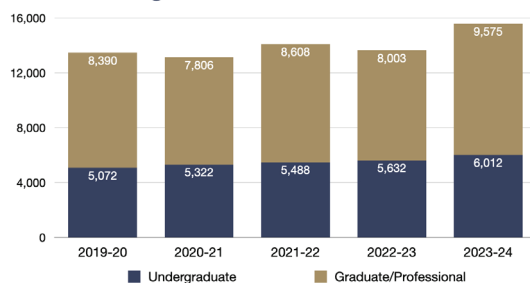
Enrollment up for second year in row at AIKCU schools

For the second year in a row, Kentucky's 18 independent colleges and universities saw an increase in enrollment. After a big jump in enrollment for Fall 2023, the sector saw another increase for Fall 2024, according to data from the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. Undergraduate enrollment increased 3.7% to 34,228 while overall enrollment reached a record 59,477 at AIKCU member institutions.

"In a year where there was so much uncertainty around the rollout of the new FAFSA form, there was good news for AIKCU campuses," AIKCU President Mason Dyer said. "Students and families continue to see great value in an independent college education, as evidenced by these strong enrollment numbers for the sector."

AIKCU FAST FACTS

AIKCU degrees and credentials awarded



AIKCU members produced nearly 1 in 4 bachelor's degrees in Kentucky tracked by CPE in 2023-24 (23.4%) and play a major role in Kentucky's overall educational attainment.

Source: CPE Database

ECONOMIC IMPACT: AIKCU contributes \$2.06 billion to Kentucky's economy in various ways

Economic Impact Statewide:

Kentucky's 18 independent colleges & universities

JOBS CREATED
17,933



Association of Independent
Kentucky Colleges and Universities
aikcu.org/economic-impact

Economic Impact Statewide:

Kentucky's 18 independent colleges & universities

SPENDING BY STUDENTS
\$490.7 million



Association of Independent
Kentucky Colleges and Universities
aikcu.org/economic-impact

Economic Impact Statewide:

Kentucky's 18 independent colleges & universities

UNIVERSITY PURCHASES
\$306.5 million



Association of Independent
Kentucky Colleges and Universities
aikcu.org/economic-impact

Advancing Leaders Program

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Seventeen participants from nine institutions and one AIKCU staff member completed the program.

The leadership development program helps rising campus leaders evaluate how their skills, natural abilities, and calling can be honed to meet key leadership needs in today's higher education environment.

AIKCU offered the program to its members, the 18 independent colleges and universities in Kentucky. Each campus president could select up to two participants from a wide variety of campus departments, including academic affairs, advancement, athletics, enrollment management, finance, marketing, and student affairs.

"Preparing leaders to serve effectively and courageously in higher ed is critical to the sustainability of our sector," AIKCU President Mason Dyer said.

"This program gives selected campus managers the tools to enhance and elevate their leadership abilities while also boosting their knowledge of postsecondary education."

AIKCU is collaborating on the programming with Credo, a higher education consulting firm that specializes in leadership development for middle-talent campus leaders and aspiring presidents.

Participants completed workshops that focused on four learning objectives: Common Themes in Thriving Institutions, Demands of Leadership, Cross-Functional Engagement & Awareness, and Leadership Readiness & Growth Actions.

AIKCU Advancing Leaders Class of 2025

Brescia University, Owensboro

Lauren Osowicz, Director of Advancement

Sagan Storm, Director of Institutional Research & Effectiveness

Centre College, Danville

John Perrin, Director of Equal Opportunity and Title IX Compliance

Ann T. Smith, Director of Budgeting and Procurement

Georgetown College, Georgetown

Alison Gillaspie, Director of Admissions

Chris Oliver, Vice President for Athletics

Kentucky Christian University, Grayson

David Manning, Vice President of Intercollegiate Athletics
and Athletics Director

William R. Stevens, Ph.D., Dean, School of Humanities & Science

Kentucky Wesleyan College, Owensboro

Lindsey Crowe, Dean of Online Learning

Morgan Russelburg, Vice President of Student Affairs/
Dean of Students

Midway University, Midway

Mona Chorera, Executive Director of International Affairs

Ashley Dudgeon, Vice President of Enrollment

Thomas More University, Crestview Hills

Joseph Christensen, Ph.D., Dean, St. Elizabeth College of Natural
and Health Sciences

Transylvania University, Lexington

Amanda Turcotte, Chief of Staff

Tiffany Wheeler, Ed.D., Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Union Commonwealth University, Barbourville

Eric Evans, Chief Information Officer

Preshus Howard, Registrar

Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities

Krista Hudson, Ph.D., Vice President of Finance & Administration



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