



Independent colleges helping to boost overall state enrollment



Mason Dyer
AIKCU President

AIKCU is pleased to see that our independent colleges and universities continue to contribute substantially to Kentucky's overall postsecondary enrollment growth.

The overall enrollment increase among AIKCU institutions for Fall 2025 shows that students and families continue to recognize the value Kentucky's independent colleges offer as they seek to prepare for careers and lives of purpose.

CPE data critical to annual reports

We appreciate the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, which provided the Fall 2025 enrollment data.

CPE releases updates each February after enrollment data collection closes, with the full report and interactive dashboards published in mid-February. The report looks at undergraduate enrollment across the Kentucky Community & Technical College System, public four-year universities, and AIKCU-affiliated independent institutions.

Kentucky is widely recognized as having one of the strongest P20 data systems in the country in KYSTATS.

The fact that AIKCU institutions have voluntarily participated in CPE data collections for more than three decades, and that CPE staff works collaboratively with our institutions to ensure the data is collected and verified, has contributed significantly to this first-class system that helps Kentucky track outcomes and informs policy decisions.

NEW REPORT: Enrollment growth strong at Kentucky's independent colleges and universities



Photo courtesy of Centre College



Fall 2025 undergraduate enrollment jumped 5.9% for a record 36,209, the third year in a row for a significant enrollment increase on AIKCU member campuses.

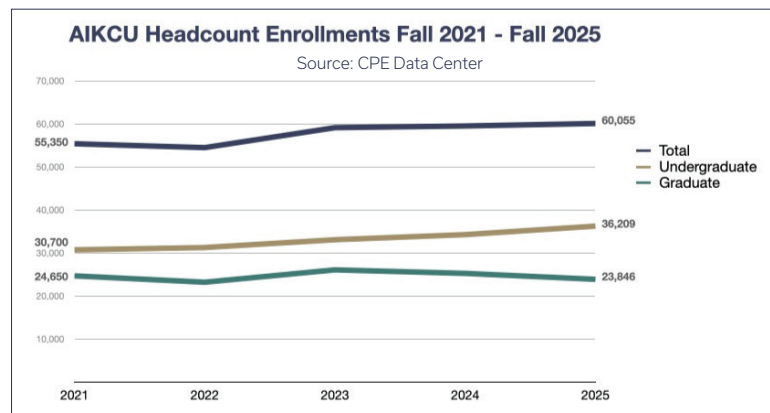
Enrollment up third year in a row at independent colleges

Enrollment continues to increase at a healthy pace at Kentucky's 18 independent colleges and universities, which saw a 5.9% increase in undergraduate enrollment for Fall 2025.

Undergraduate enrollment reached a record 36,209, while overall enrollment

(undergraduate and graduate) hit a record 60,055.

This is the third year in a row for significant growth at AIKCU member institutions. Undergraduate enrollment increased 5.6% for Fall 2023, 3.7% for Fall 2024, and 5.9% for Fall 2025.



AIKCU Fall 2025 Enrollment at a Glance

5.9% increase to record 36,209 in undergraduate enrollment.

Record 60,055 in total headcount (undergraduate and graduate) enrollment, a 1% increase from Fall 2024.

22% increase in adult (25-64) undergraduate enrollment.

14.9% jump in first-time undergraduate enrollment.

4.9% increase in overall enrollment (undergraduate and graduate) from Fall 2020-Fall 2025.

AIKCU growth contributed to 5% increase in Kentucky's overall statewide enrollment of both public and independent institutions, well over national average of 1%.

AIKCU kicks off leadership development program for new class of rising leaders

"Empowered, eye-opening, enlightening, energizing, motivating, affirming, introspective, encouraging, momentum, inspiring, and ameliorating."

These are a few of the words participants used to describe their first session of the Advancing Leaders Program at Transylvania University.

The Class of 2026 is the second cohort taking part in an annual leadership development program for rising higher education leaders offered by AIKCU in conjunction with Credo.

AIKCU launched the program in 2025 with the goal of preparing promising mid- to senior-level managers to take on even greater leadership roles in higher education.

See who's in the Class of 2026 at www.aikcu.org/advancing-leaders-class-of-2026.



AIKCU welcomed the Advancing Leaders Class of 2026 to the program at Transylvania University in February.

Presidents from Kentucky's independent colleges meet with members of Congress during Hill Day

Winter Storm Fern couldn't keep our independent college and university presidents and AIKCU President Mason Dyer from traveling to Washington, D.C., for AIKCU's annual meeting with the Kentucky congressional delegation.

AIKCU coordinated the Capitol Hill meetings, which took place Feb. 3. The group met with U.S. Reps. Andy Barr, James Comer, Brett Guthrie, Morgan McGarvey, and Hal Rogers. They also met with staff from the offices of Sens. Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul.

AIKCU appreciates the nine presidents who attended Hill Day: University of Pikeville President and AIKCU Board Chair **Burton J. Webb**, **James O. Stepp** of Alice Lloyd College, **Susan M. Donovan** of Bellarmine University, **Cheryl L. Nixon** of Berea College, **Madison C. Silvert** of Brescia University, **John P. Marsden** of Midway University, **Brien Lewis** of Transylvania University, **DJ Washington** of

Union Commonwealth University, and **Quentin Young** of the University of the Cumberlands.

The group also included senior staff from Centre College, Lindsey Wilson University, Midway University, the University of Pikeville, and the University of the Cumberlands.

The AIKCU contingent expressed appreciation to Kentucky's representatives for the continued funding for student aid programs in the FY26 federal budget, which was voted upon and passed while AIKCU was on the Hill. The presidents also discussed challenges emerging during implementation of the One Big Beautiful Bill and the substantial economic impact of Kentucky's independent colleges on communities throughout the commonwealth.

AIKCU Hill Day was held in conjunction with the NAICU Annual Meeting & Advocacy Day.



During Hill Day 2026, Kentucky's independent college presidents and AIKCU President Mason Dyer met with U.S. Rep. Andy Barr (left), U.S. Rep. Brett Guthrie (center), and U.S. Rep. James Comer (right).

Not pictured: Meetings with U.S. Reps. Morgan McGarvey and Hal Rogers, and visits with staff from the offices of Sens. Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul.