



Commencement season is time to celebrate promising futures



Mason Dyer
AIKCU President

As another commencement season has just wrapped up, it is worth pausing to celebrate the accomplishments of our graduates, the sacrifices they made to achieve their goals, and the promise of the futures that lie ahead for them.

While the future is never certain, it looks bright for the thousands of AIKCU graduates who walked across commencement stages this spring. I always enjoy seeing photos from this special day and the sheer joy on the faces of graduates and their families as they celebrate.

But perhaps even more satisfying than the photos of the happy graduates and their families are the LinkedIn posts and social media stories highlighting the graduates' next steps.

While our institutions are not in the business of preparing graduates solely for their first job, we all know that the first job or next step on the education ladder is important. It is part of the value proposition that Kentucky's independent colleges and universities offer their graduates – that they will be equipped for whatever comes next.

So, whether the new graduate has parlayed an internship into a full-time job, accepted their first teaching position, or is off to medical school in the fall, cheers to the Class of 2026.



Asbury University hosts AIKCU Board of Directors

Presidents from AIKCU's member colleges and universities gathered at Asbury University in Wilmore for their spring board meeting.

KHESLC, who gave an update on state student aid and student loans in Kentucky.

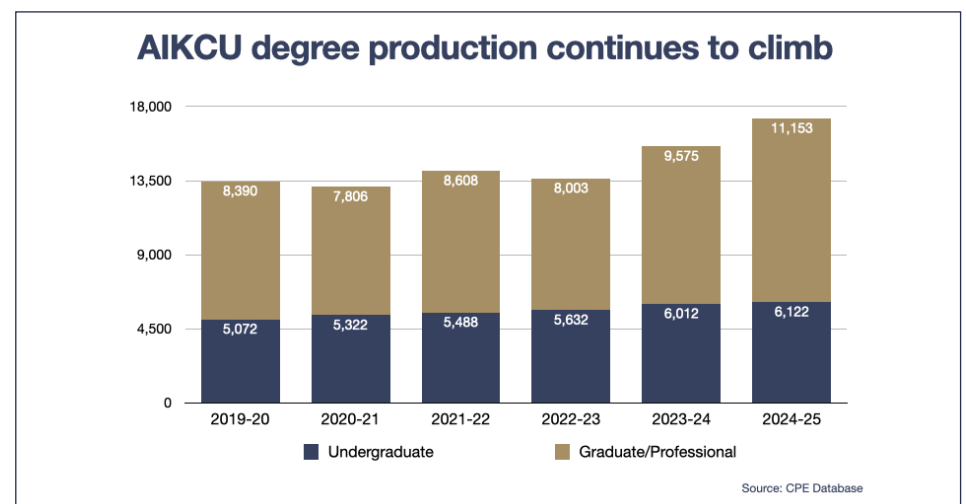
The group welcomed Jo Carole Ellis, executive director and CEO for KHEAA/

AIKCU appreciates Asbury University President Kevin Brown for hosting the meeting.

Kentucky's independent colleges see strong increase in graduates

Undergraduate and graduate degrees are both on the rise at Kentucky's 18 independent colleges and universities.

In the last six years, undergraduate degrees increased 20.7% and graduate degrees jumped 32.9%.



AIKCU celebrates the Advancing Leaders Class of 2026

AIKCU is proud of the 22 members of the AIKCU Advancing Leaders Class of 2026 who completed the program on June 2.

These promising managers at AIKCU member campuses have completed a months-long program to prepare them for even greater leadership opportunities in independent higher education.

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.

Learn more about the AIKCU Advancing Leaders Program at www.aikcu.org/advancing-leaders-program.



The AIKCU Advancing Leaders Class of 2026 posed for a photo on the last day of the program, held at Transylvania University.

Members of the Advancing Leaders Class of 2026

Asbury University, Wilmore

Ben Andrews, Associate Athletics Director

Bellarmine University, Louisville

Matthew Vetter, Ph.D., Director of Housing & Residence Life

Berea College, Berea

Kristina Gamble, Ed.D., Associate VP for Student Life

Mary Robert Garrett, Ph.D., Dean of Faculty Development

Brescia University, Owensboro

Melissa Scuderi, Director of Residence Life

Kentucky Christian University, Grayson

Todd Maynard, Dean of the School of Business and Leadership

Jason McGlone, Ed.D., Dean of the Keeran School of Education

Rob Shoaff, Ph.D., Dean of the Keeran School of Bible and Ministry

Midway University, Midway

Kristen Dawson, Evening/Online/Graduate Recruiter

Alexandra Harper-Sharapov, Director of Career Services

Thomas More University, Crestview Hills

Ashley Gier, DNP, RN, CMSRV, Assistant Professor, School of Nursing

Vanessa Ramirez, Director of Financial Aid

Spalding University, Louisville

Michelle Standridge, Director of Financial Aid

Transylvania University, Lexington

Ryan Benjamin, Associate Dean of Student Life
Erin Roth, Regional Director of Philanthropy

Union Commonwealth University, Barbourville

Anisa James, Senior Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Research
Eelyan Shivji, Accounting Manager
Mackenzie Snelling, Admissions Counselor of Undergraduate Recruitment

University of the Cumberlands, Williamsburg

Brandy Martin, Ph.D., Assistant VP for Records and Registration
Timothy Noe, Ph.D., Assistant VP for Admissions
Hayley Rice, Assistant VP for Academic Compliance
Pamela Smith, Ph.D., Assistant VP for International Graduate Services

AIKCU welcomes Marc A. Mathews as finance and business services consultant

AIKCU is pleased to announce that Marc A. Mathews, CPA, has joined the association as a part-time finance and business services consultant.

He works closely with AIKCU's Chief Business Officers group and manages AIKCU's collaborative and cost savings programs, including its self-funded employee health insurance purchasing collaborative, competitive retirement benefits program, and discounts and pricing relationships on a wide variety of higher education products and services.

Mathews has more than 40 years of expertise in financial management and accounting, having served as vice president for finance and business at Transylvania University, an AIKCU member institution, and as treasurer for the University of Kentucky.

He is also a financial consultant for the National Association of College and University Business Officers, where he heads the Financial Risk and Audit practice.

His extensive experience spans financial operations, risk management, internal control, and endowment management, making him a trusted leader in navigating complex fiscal landscapes within higher education.

He holds a bachelor's degree in business administration and accounting from Transylvania University and a master's degree in accounting from the University of Kentucky.



Marc A. Mathews