



AIKCU to advocate for students during 2026 General Assembly



Mason Dyer
AIKCU President

The legislative season is under way, and like our friends from the Council on Postsecondary Education, the public institutions, and the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, AIKCU will be monitoring the action closely and advocating for students over the coming months.

As always, our primary interest lies in the General Assembly's support of the student financial aid programs funded by the Kentucky Lottery and administered by KHEAA. Kentucky has a strong student financial aid system that has been well-supported by the General Assembly for decades, and we look forward to seeing that support continue in this year's budget session.

In combination with federal and institutional aid, these state aid programs make it possible for AIKCU students, about half of whom are Pell-eligible, to attend the college that best fits their educational needs.

And these lottery-funded state aid programs do the same for Kentuckians who choose KCTCS or public four-year institutions. They are an investment in Kentucky's future skilled workforce.

We don't take these programs for granted, and we are grateful for partners who are also looking out for the interests of students and the important role of state aid.



KCTCS President Ryan Quarles meets with AIKCU presidents

Presidents of Kentucky's independent colleges and universities hosted KCTCS President Ryan Quarles at the AIKCU Board of Directors' winter meeting.

The commonwealth's 18 independent four-year institutions and the 16 public colleges in the Kentucky Community & Technical College System share similar goals — to ensure postsecondary

and workforce education are relevant, accessible, and affordable while preparing graduates for meaningful careers.

AIKCU presidents and Dr. Quarles discussed strengthening transfer pathways and other areas of mutual interest, including the legislature's continued strong support for Kentucky Lottery-funded financial aid programs.

"Big 3" Kentucky Lottery-Funded State Aid Awards

Total awarded in FY 25 to Kentucky resident students attending AIKCU institutions

CAP
11,723

**College Access
Program Grant**

Need-based awards
tied to Pell eligibility

KTG
13,466

**Kentucky
Tuition Grant**

Need-based awards to
low- and moderate-
income students attend-
ing independent colleges

KEES
10,849

**Kentucky Educational
Excellence Scholarship**

Awards based on
high school performance
and test scores

AIKCU alumna Sydney Newton earns prestigious 2025-26 Milken Educator Award

Teacher, English/Language Arts · Taylor County High School · Campbellsville

AIKCU celebrates the power of a degree from Kentucky's independent colleges as Sydney Newton earns an "Oscar of Teaching" for her outstanding efforts in the classroom. She has been named a winner of the competitive 2025-26 Milken Educator Award.

The Milken Educator Awards, created by Lowell Milken in 1987, have rewarded and inspired excellence in the world of education by honoring top educators around the country with \$25,000



unrestricted awards. You can learn more at www.milkeneducatorawards.org.

Sydney completed degrees from two AIKCU member campuses. She holds a bachelor's degree from Lindsey Wilson University in Columbia and dual master's degrees from Campbellsville University in Campbellsville.

Congratulations, Sydney!

Kentucky's independent colleges celebrate graduates at December commencements

AIKCU congratulates the thousands of students who just graduated from its member colleges and universities



Campbellsville University honored its graduates at three commencement ceremonies Dec. 11.



Lindsey Wilson University celebrated its commencement Dec. 13 by graduating the largest class in its 122-year history.

Quentin Young is new president of the University of the Cumberlands

Quentin Young has been named the 11th president of the University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg. He succeeds Dr. Larry L. Cockrum, who will serve as president emeritus.



Dr. Young joined the Cumberlands in 2016 and previously served as executive vice president for finance and chief financial officer. In those roles, he oversaw all university budget, finance, and accounting operations and various administrative operations for university finances. He was also responsible for managing investments and endowment funds.

He holds a Ph.D., two master's degrees, and a bachelor's degree — all from the University of the Cumberlands.

AIKCU President Mason Dyer elected to Council of Independent Colleges Board of Directors

AIKCU President Mason Dyer was one of seven members elected to the Council of Independent Colleges Board of Directors during its annual board meeting in January. His three-year term will end in January 2029.

"The CIC Board benefits tremendously from the wide-ranging expertise and diverse missions represented by our member institutions," said President Marjorie Hass. "I am pleased to add new voices to our leadership team — voices that will contribute fresh thinking and broaden our collective impact. Together, we are poised to advance important initiatives that will benefit the entire independent higher education community."

The CIC is an association of more than 700 nonprofit independent colleges and universities and affiliates that work to support college and university leadership, advance institutional excellence, and enhance public understanding of independent higher education's contributions to society.



Association of Independent
Kentucky Colleges and Universities

502.695.5007 • info@aikcu.org • aikcu.org