



A Message From Mason



Mason Dyer
AIKCU President

With so much happening at the state and federal levels that impact independent higher education, I was grateful for the tremendous response from our members to our inaugural

AIKCU Winter Meeting on State & Federal Affairs.

While independent colleges and universities receive no direct state appropriations, Kentucky Lottery-funded student financial aid programs — in combination with federal and institutional aid — are tremendously important in helping our students access the high-quality education our institutions provide.

In fact, more than half of our members now offer a promise or guarantee that a qualified low-income Kentucky resident will pay nothing out of pocket for tuition and fees. That's possible thanks to the combination of private support that funds institutional aid, federal Pell grants, and the lottery-funded state aid programs.

We're thankful for the consistent support the General Assembly has provided for the lottery-funded state financial aid programs over the years that helps make this possible.

The return on that investment is high. Last year our members awarded a record number of bachelor's degrees, at 5,252. Independent college graduates represent one out of every five bachelor's degrees awarded in Kentucky, and many of our graduates obtain those degrees in key workforce areas like teacher education, nursing, and other STEM+H degrees.



Kentucky's independent college presidents gather at Marris Hall at Midway University, which hosted the AIKCU Winter Meeting on State & Federal Affairs.

AIKCU hosts meeting for members on state, federal affairs

Presidents and officials from Kentucky's independent colleges and universities gathered Dec. 13 for a look at how 2024 state legislation and federal regulations will affect higher education. The Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities hosted the AIKCU Winter Meeting on State & Federal Affairs.

The event took place at Midway University, one of AIKCU's 18 member institutions. **Dr. John P. Marsden**, Midway president and chair of the AIKCU Board of Directors, welcomed more than 100 guests to campus.

"This is the first time AIKCU has hosted a legislative preview of this kind," AIKCU President Mason Dyer said. "We had a great turnout, with presidents from almost all of our campuses able to attend in person and many of their top staff participating as well."

Dyer added, "We appreciate the state legislators who took time to give us some insight into their priorities for Kentucky's next budget session. We also got a heads up from presenters on upcoming changes to federal regulations that our member colleges need to start preparing for now."

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AIKCU FAST FACTS: Bachelor's Degrees

1 5,252 total bachelor's degrees (increase of 1.8%) earned by AIKCU students in 2022-23.

2 6.3% increase in bachelor's degrees earned by underrepresented minority students in 2022-23.

AIKCU Winter Meeting

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State Affairs Preview

With the 2024 Kentucky General Assembly kicking off Jan. 2, several state legislators were on hand to give their take on the top issues facing the legislature.

Sen. Damon Thayer, majority floor leader, started the session with a broad overview. His remarks were followed by a discussion of issues facing higher education in Kentucky. That panel was composed of **Sen. Stephen West**, chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Education; **Rep. James Tipton**, chair of the House Standing Committee on Education; and **Sen. Matthew Deneen**, co-chair of the Lottery Trust Fund Task Force.



Midway President John P. Marsden, left, talks with Senate Majority Floor Leader Damon Thayer.

The next segment focused on budget priorities and was led by **Sen. Amanda Mays Bledsoe**, vice chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations & Revenue; **Sen. Donald Douglas**, member of the Senate Standing Committee on A&R; and **Rep. Josh Bray**, member of the House Standing Committee on A&R.

Federal Affairs Update

Wesley Whistle, special assistant in the Office of the Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education, traveled from Washington, D.C., to provide an update on new federal regulations impacting higher ed.

AIKCU Affiliate Group Meetings

In addition to the plenary sessions, the AIKCU Board of Directors held a meeting that included a discussion with **U.S. Congressman Andy Barr** via phone. The board is composed of the presidents of each of AIKCU's 18 member colleges and universities.

Several of AIKCU's Affiliate Groups also met to discuss matters related to their area of expertise.



Kacey Coleman from Sturgill Turner presents to the Human Resources Affiliates Group.

Attorneys from **Sturgill Turner** gave an update to business officers on "Fair Labor Standards Act Hot Topics," to chief academic officers on "IP & Privacy Issues Related to AI," and to human resources officers on "Training Supervisors."

A representative from the **Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority** presented to the financial aid officers on "Recent Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Changes."

