Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities

GOOD NEWS REPORT
November 2026

AIKCU members are producing exceptional Kentucky teachers



Mason Dyer
AIKCU President

High-quality teachers are vital to the future of the Commonwealth, and Kentucky's independent colleges and universities have long histories of preparing teachers to serve in our schools.

For many AIKCU institutions, teacher preparation goes directly back to their founding missions. Today, 16 of AIKCU's 18 campuses have formal teacher preparation programs leading to initial teacher certification (the other two partner with graduate programs for students pursuing teaching careers).

AIKCU members are critical to meeting the needs of Kentucky's educator workforce, from those initial certification programs through advanced degrees and specializations. AIKCU members produce outstanding teachers who go on to lead classrooms and schools throughout the state.

That's why we're proud to highlight the second straight Milken Award recipient to graduate from an AIKCU institution. Congratulations to Dr. Tyler Saylor, a Union Commonwealth University graduate who represents one of thousands of AIKCU alumni shaping the future in classrooms across Kentucky.

Milken Educator Award goes to AIKCU graduate for second straight year

Union Commonwealth University alumnus Tyler Saylor earns prestigious 2026 Milken Educator Award

Teacher · English Language Arts · Harlan High School

For the second consecutive year, AIKCU celebrates the power of a degree from Kentucky's independent universities as Tyler Saylor, Ed.D., is named the 2026 Kentucky recipient of the Milken Educator Award — called the "Oscars of Teaching."

Saylor, an 11th and 12th grade English teacher at Harlan High School, earned a bachelor's degree in English education with secondary certification and a master's degree in education from Union Commonwealth University in Barbourville, where he now serves as an adjunct instructor and education studies advisor. He went on to receive a master's degree in English from Arizona State University and a doctorate in education from Liberty University.

"I am proud to be here to honor Tyler Saylor, an educator who has devoted his entire career to making sure the students in Harlan receive as solid and engaging an education as any student in the Commonwealth," Kentucky Commissioner of Education Robbie Fletcher said at the school celebration. "He encourages his students to aim high and chase after their dreams."



Harlan High School English Teacher Tyler Saylor is surprised with the 2026 Kentucky Milken Educator Award Oct. 28.

The 2025 Milken Educator Award from Kentucky went to Sydney Newton, who completed degrees from two AIKCU campuses. She earned a bachelor's degree from Lindsey Wilson University in Columbia and dual master's degrees from Campbellsville University in Campbellsville.

The Milken Educator Awards are celebrating 40 years of recognizing excellence in the world of education. Learn more at www.milkeneducatorawards.org.

AIKCU Affinity Groups share ideas, updates at joint fall meetings throughout the state



AIKCU Admissions, Business, and Financial Aid Officers met Sept. 29 at Transylvania University.



AIKCU Advancement Officers and Chief Academic Officers/Provosts met Oct. 2 at University of the Cumberlands.



AIKCU Human Resources and Information Technology Officers met Oct. 7 in Georgetown.