

Bachelor's degrees in Kentucky flat while graduate degrees are on the rise, new report shows

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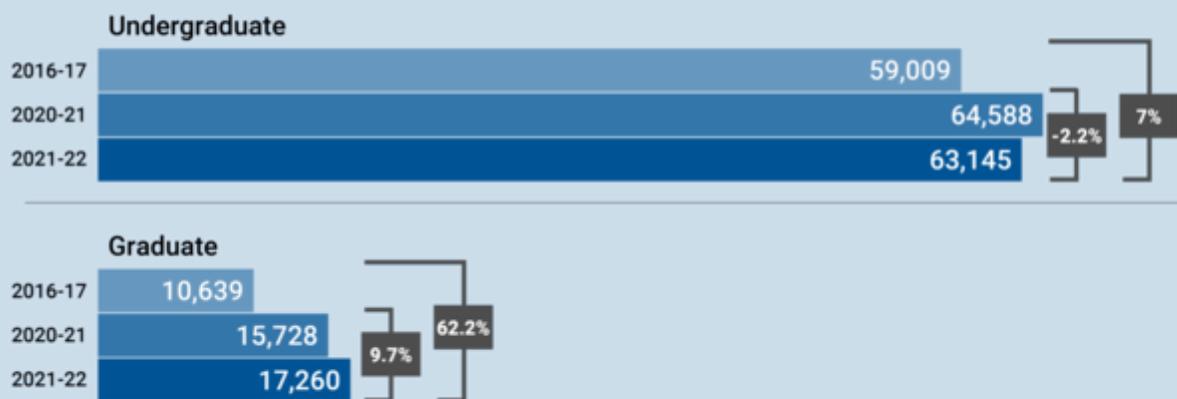
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Kentucky's progress increasing graduate degrees outpaces undergraduate credential production

Degrees and Credentials Awarded by Kentucky's Two-Year Public, Four-Year Public and AIKCU Institutions (Duplicated Counts)



Source: CPE Data, Research and Advanced Analytics Unit.

#KYHigherEdMatters



Bachelor's degrees in Kentucky flat while graduate degrees are on the rise, new report shows

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) -- [A new report](#) from the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education shows that total degrees and credentials grew slightly in 2021-22, while bachelor's degrees declined and graduate-level degrees made impressive gains.

Total degrees and credentials grew 0.6% in 2021-22 over the previous year, following a slight dip at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2016-17, total degrees and credentials have risen 16.6%.

“This increase in overall degrees and credentials in the last five years is especially impressive considering that total headcount enrollment grew by only 0.6% during that time frame,” said CPE President Aaron Thompson. “These climbing retention rates show that campuses are improving their efficiency in moving students through academic programs.”

In other findings, bachelor’s degrees fell 1.1% from last year and have remained essentially flat over the last five years.

The Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities (AIKCU) campuses grew bachelor’s degrees 2.6% since 2020-21 and 12.9% since 2016-17. Public universities, on the other hand, experienced a 2.1% decline in bachelor’s degrees over the previous year and a 3.2% decline over the last five years.

At the graduate level, total degrees jumped 9.7% from the previous year and have risen 62.2% over the last five years. Most of this growth occurred at AIKCU institutions, which increased their graduate degree production 9.7% from 2021-22 and 160% since 2016-17.

In 2021-22, AIKCU and the public institutions awarded 17,260 graduate degrees, and nearly 85% of these degrees, 14,650, were at the master’s or specialist level. The remaining 2,610 degrees were doctorates.

At the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS), undergraduate degrees and credentials decreased 3.5% in 2021-22 over the previous year, although total credentials have risen 10.4% since 2016-17.

“The state has set a goal to raise the percentage of Kentuckians with a high-quality postsecondary degree or certificate to 60% by the year 2030 for the commonwealth to be able to grow its economy and attract new business,” said Thompson. “That’s why tracking the data is so important to informing our work and seeing where our strong points are and where we need to invest more resources.”

The annual report details the number and types of credentials earned at Kentucky’s eight public universities, the 18 institutions of AIKCU and the 16 KCTCS colleges.

The number of degrees and credentials awarded is also an important metric in determining how funding is dispersed to public institutions by the Legislature.

Total degrees and credentials awarded include diplomas, undergraduate certificates, associate degrees, postgraduate certificates and bachelor’s, master’s, specialist and doctoral degrees. Counts include all credentials awarded during the academic year, even if a student

earned multiple credentials or two bachelor's degrees, as is the case with some double majors.

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The Council on Postsecondary Education is leading transformation in our workforce, economy and quality of life by advancing progress in educational attainment across Kentucky. As the state's higher education coordinating agency, we champion high-quality, inclusive and affordable postsecondary opportunities that prepare students for civic engagement and sustainable careers. That's why we are undertaking the 60x30 goal, an ambitious effort to raise the percentage of working-age Kentuckians with a postsecondary degree or certificate to 60% by the year 2030. At CPE, we believe that higher education matters – *for everyone*.

Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

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