

TITLE: Report from CPE President Aaron Thompson

DESCRIPTION: President Thompson will highlight specific initiatives during his report to the Council. This written report serves as his official report for January 27, 2023.

PRESENTER: Aaron Thompson, CPE President

CPE Student Success Summit – CPE will hold its signature event for academic and student support professionals on February 27-28 at the UK Gatton Student Center. Campus teams are invited to attend best practices workshops and develop action plans for continuous improvement. In-person registration closes on February 15, and online registration closes on February 24. (The virtual option includes the plenary sessions on both days and the breakout sessions on the first day only.) Featured speakers include:

- **Dr. Alison Kadlec** - Kadlec is a senior partner and co-founder of Sova, a higher education consulting service. She has worked deeply with systems and institutions in more than half the states in the U.S. to help leaders improve student-focused reform of policy and practice at scale.
- **Dr. Drew K. Koch** - Koch is the chief executive officer of the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education, a non-profit organization which partners with schools and systems to improve outcomes associated with teaching, learning, retention and completion. Koch is a staunch advocate and leader of efforts that increase student access to and, ultimately, completion of postsecondary education.
- **Dr. Zainab Okolo** - Okolo is a strategy officer at Lumina Foundation, an independent, private foundation that works with governmental, nonprofit, and private-sector organizations to bring about change. Okolo has developed assessment tools for institutional practitioners and has served as a licensed clinical marriage and family therapist.

Organizational Changes at CPE – CPE created a new External Affairs and Economic Partnerships unit, which will be led by Vice President Rick Smith and includes Sue Patrick, Gabrielle Gayheart, Lisa McKinney and Mary Jackson. The unit will lead the agency’s strategic communication efforts, promoting the value of higher education and increasing public awareness about the role and priorities of CPE. The office also will work to strengthen our external partnerships with economic development leaders, associations, state agencies, nonprofit organizations, community organizations, and other key stakeholders.

CPE Forms Action Network to Examine Food and Housing Insecurity – CPE’s Kentucky Student Success Collaborative has formed an action network to examine the scope of housing and food insecurity in the Commonwealth and identify ways to increase support so students don’t opt out of college. To support this work, college and university faculty members are conducting a campus voice research project, studying student basic needs and auditing student supports available at all 49 postsecondary education institutions in Kentucky. The network will use this research to create a set of policy recommendations for CPE and state policymakers to increase students’ access to public benefits and scale and replicate effective campus support programs. The 47-member network held its first meeting on January 18. The group includes leaders from Kentucky colleges and universities, government and education-focused nonprofits. Five additional meetings are set through May. The project is funded by a grant from Lumina Foundation.

CPE Wins Grant to Improve Transfer – CPE will get some extra help to improve the student transfer process, thanks to a national education group that is recognizing best practices for student success. The National Association of System Heads (NASH) announced last week that CPE was in the first round of awardees for its newly established Catalyst Fund. According to NASH, the awards are aimed at recognizing hotspots of best practices that demonstrate interventions that are already underway and proving to be successful with the potential to have a catalytic impact in meeting NASH’s goals. CPE’s proposal builds on work with Western Kentucky University (WKU) and Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College (SKYCTC) that grew out of an earlier NASH project. This effort helped campuses identify unnecessary obstacles to transfer and implement a rapid improvement process, which identified relatively low-cost strategies to simplify the transfer process in just a few months. CPE plans to use the new grant to implement the rapid improvement process with an additional set of partners, which would include one regional university and at least one feeder community college. The team will identify transfer process barriers, address those barriers in a short timeframe, and then start conversations about instituting fundamental change

CPE Selects Three Student Voice Fellows - Three Kentucky college students were selected to serve as student voice research fellows for the Kentucky Student Success Collaborative, collecting qualitative data on two- and four-year college students' experiences across the Commonwealth. The research will be used to improve transfer processes between colleges, strengthen the student advising experience, elevate campus efforts related to student basic needs and increase equity in higher education. The student voice fellows will conduct one-on-one interviews, lead focus groups and distribute surveys to gather information on students' experiences at each of Kentucky's public colleges and universities. The interns were selected based on their ability to understand issues facing diverse students; their exceptional verbal, written and presentation skills; and their demonstrated interest in improving the college student experience. They are: Katie Bellman, UofL; Sydney Jones, ECU; and Darryl Parker, Morehead State University.

Speaking Engagements – I delivered a presentation at the AAC&U Annual Meeting in San Francisco on January 18-20, as well as an address about Dr. Martin Luther King's legacy as an educator at the ABL Foundation's unity breakfast on MLK Day. I gave the keynote at the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents' annual conference on December 5. I also sat down with The Bottom Line News to discuss higher education's plan to improve economic opportunity and Kentucky's workforce.