



A Message From Mason



Mason Dyer
AIKCU President

On Feb. 1, I celebrated both my 18th anniversary at AIKCU and my first official day as president.

Stepping into this role is a great honor, and I thank our board of 18 member presidents for the confidence they've placed in me and our talented staff.

AIKCU is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and working every day to support our member institutions through advocacy and policy work, information sharing, convenings, cost-saving initiatives, and collaborative programs.

I remain invested in this work because I believe deeply in the transformative power of independent colleges. That belief is partly rooted in my own experiences with AIKCU institutions: as an undergrad Pell Grant recipient from a rural Kentucky high school, as an adult graduate student with a full-time job and a very full-time family, and now as a parent of children attending independent colleges.

That belief also comes from knowing the significant role AIKCU members play in Kentucky's education ecosphere, like producing one in five bachelor's degrees awarded in the state. It comes from working with campus staff and observing how, despite challenges, they remain focused on student success. And it comes from hearing students and graduates reflect on the life-changing opportunities our members provide.

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AIKCU president talks higher ed with CPE president, state legislators, university presidents on 'Kentucky Tonight'

AIKCU President Mason Dyer joined other guests to discuss the state of higher education on KET's "Kentucky Tonight" Sept. 18.

Host Renee Shaw asked the panel to focus on what is and isn't working 25 years after higher ed reform in Kentucky, including a look at enrollment, cost, state education funding, COVID's impact on colleges, and the end of race-based admissions.

The panel also included Council on Postsecondary Education President Aaron Thompson; Sen. David P. Givens (R), president pro tempore; Sen. Gerald A. Neal (D), minority floor leader; Eastern Kentucky University President David T. McFaddin; and Murray State University President Robert L. "Bob" Jackson.

Dyer said that while Kentucky's independent, private colleges face challenges, there is positive news.

"Enrollment nationally is a challenge for independent colleges," Dyer said. "The perception of cost is a real stumbling block for a lot of folks. What people need to understand is that there is a lot of student aid out there and available once you fill out the FAFSA and go through the process."

He said there are also some challenges in attracting a qualified workforce, particularly on campuses located in rural parts of the state that are doing really good work but might find it hard to draw candidates to fill key roles.

"But overall, our members are strong," Dyer said. "I think overall our freshman enrollment is up about 3%. My presidents tell me that there's a lot of energy on campus, and things are much more normal, even more than they were last year."

Watch at ket.org/program/kentucky-tonight/higher-education-in-kentucky/.

AIKCU FAST FACTS: Lottery & Institutional Aid

1 \$88 million in Kentucky Lottery-funded aid was distributed to AIKCU students in Fiscal Year 2022-23.

2 \$400 million in institutional aid was distributed to AIKCU students in Fiscal Year 2021-22.

Brescia's SGA president to represent AIKCU students on statewide board

Emilee Clark, president of the Brescia University Student Government Association, has been appointed to the 2023-24 Kentucky Board of Student Body Presidents. Clark will represent the Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities as she works to build and convene a network of independent college student leaders.

"I am honored and excited to serve as the AIKCU representative for this school year, and I am proud to be the representative selected from Brescia University," Clark said. "I look forward to working with my fellow Student Body Presidents of Kentucky, as well as the AIKCU organization."

Clark, a senior from Owensboro, Ky., is a student-athlete studying pre-law and political science at Brescia University. In addition to being SGA president, she is also a member of the Student Athlete Advisory Committee and the golf team.

She previously served as SGA parliamentarian and a student ambassador, and was a Disney College Program Par-

ticipant. She received the 2023 Founder's Day Athletic Leadership Award and was the 2020 Kenergy Washington Youth Tour Recipient.

She contributes to her local community by crocheting blankets for residents in an assisted-living facility and donating to a nonprofit as a member of Impact100 NextGen Owensboro.

"Emilee's concern for the well-being of her student body and involvement in her community demonstrate her empathy and focus on helping others," AIKCU President Mason Dyer said. "Her enthusiasm and leadership skills will serve

her well as she represents independent college students at the state level and builds connections among our AIKCU student leaders."

Clark is the second Brescia student to serve on the KBSBP. Previous AIKCU appointees have also come from Bellarmine University, Centre College, Lindsey Wilson College, Spalding University and Transylvania University.



ABOUT THE KBSBP

The Kentucky Board of Student Body Presidents was established by state statute in 2013. It includes the student government leader from each of Kentucky's eight public universities, two student leaders from the Kentucky Community & Technical College System, and one student leader from an AIKCU member institution.

The KBSBP advises the legislative and executive branches, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, and Kentucky's university presidents on postsecondary education issues and the concerns of college students.

Kentucky's private colleges represented at NAICU Fall Leadership Conference

Midway University President and AIKCU Board Chair John P. Marsden, Campbellsville University President Joseph Hopkins, and AIKCU President Mason Dyer represented Kentucky's private colleges at the 2023 Fall Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C.

The event was hosted by the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities and took place Oct. 18-20.

The conference gave NAICU board members, members of the NAICU State Executives, and NAICU Policy Committee members the opportunity to discuss in depth the issues facing independent higher education.

President Marsden serves on the NAICU Tax Policy Committee, while President Hopkins and President Dyer were recently appointed to NAICU's Policy Analysis Committee and Public Relations Committee.

University of Pikeville President Burton J. Webb serves on the NAICU Board of Directors.

Policy update to be focus of December AIKCU member event

AIKCU will host a Winter Meeting on State & Federal Affairs for members on Wednesday, Dec. 13, at Midway University.

AIKCU members will be briefed by policymakers on a range of state and federal issues.

In addition, the following AIKCU groups will meet to dig into the specifics of some of these issues:

- AIKCU Presidents
- Business Officers
- Chief Academic Officers
- Financial Aid Officers
- Human Resources Officers

