

**TITLE:** CPE's kynector partnership with CHFS

**DESCRIPTION:** The Academic and Strategic Initiatives Committee received an update on CPE's new partnership with CHFS to ensure basic student needs are met, thus allowing them to persist through graduation.

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### **COMMITTEE'S REVIEW**

The Academic and Strategic Initiatives Committee received this information update at their October 23, 2023, meeting. It will not be covered or presented in detail at the November 17 board meeting; however, staff will be available for questions.

### **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

CPE's Kentucky Student Success Collaborative (KYSSC) convened the Student Basic Needs Action Network (SBNAN) in the spring 2023 to develop a statewide strategy to address basic insecurity. The strategy focused on two objectives: 1) to increase access to basic needs support for postsecondary students, and 2) to increase access to postsecondary education for individuals receiving state support.

The SBNAN was comprised of over 50 stakeholders from the governor's office, state agencies, community colleges, universities, nonprofit partners, and workforce organizations. The SBNAN released a report in July 2023 outlining the current state of basic needs insecurity as well as eight recommendations to increase educational attainment and financial stability of Kentuckians.

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) was a highly engaged partner throughout the project. CPE provided a briefing to Secretary Friedlander on the emerging barriers and recommendations, and he proposed a partnership to place "kynectors" – CHFS employees who provide benefit eligibility screening, application assistance, and referrals to community-based organizations for basic needs support – at each of the KCTCS colleges and Kentucky universities.

To date, CPE is excited to share that 16 kynectors have been hired to add capacity to KCTCS colleges in support of students from low-income backgrounds and students who struggle with basic needs security. The kynectors will serve full-time at the college and lead outreach to students; promote benefit programs including SNAP (food assistance), CCAP (childcare

assistance), KTAP (cash assistance), and Medicaid (healthcare assistance); and serve as a point of contact for all basic needs issues. Many of the kynectors are still in training, but four started this week and all colleges will have kynectors by Thanksgiving.

CPE will be tracking the monthly impact of the kynectors including: # of students receiving outreach, # of students they screen for benefits eligibility, # of students they assist with benefit applications, # of new students enrolled in a benefit program (including SNAP, CCAP, KTAP, Medicaid). Connecting students to benefits such as SNAP ultimately reduces unmet financial need by approximately \$3,000 per year. The impact of benefit participation on retention, completion, and employment/earnings within one year of graduation will also be tracked.

The Cabinet is also committed to supporting kynectors at Kentucky's universities. Currently, kynectors will dedicate two days per month on university campuses to do outreach and support benefit screening and application assistance. CPE is just beginning to explore data sharing agreements and other ways to increase the impact of kynector outreach to students.

Kynectors will play a vital role in the overall student basic needs strategy. CPE is thankful for the support from the Cabinet for Health and Family Services and look forward to building on this great partnership.