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NEWS RELEASE

Release Date: Jan. 18, 2023

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(Note to Media: A student basic needs infographic is available at cpe.ky.gov/ourwork/kyssc.html.)

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(FRANKFORT, Ky.) -- The statistics are alarming. More than half of all college students across the nation struggle to meet their needs for food, housing and other basic necessities, which can adversely affect their ability to succeed in school, according to [The Hope Center for College, Community and Justice](#).

In Kentucky, college enrollment of students from low-income families has been declining for nearly a decade. Yet, state data show that these students are five times more likely to move out of poverty if they earn a college degree.

To address these challenges, the Council on Postsecondary Education's Kentucky Student Success Collaborative has formed an [action network](#) to examine the scope of the problem in the commonwealth and identify ways to increase support so students don't opt out of college.

"Our state's economic future depends on us ensuring that every Kentuckian has the resources and support to further their education, regardless of their background or income level," said Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman, who spoke at the network's inaugural meeting on Wednesday. "Students can't focus on studying or attending class if they are worried about their very basic needs being met. A student that doesn't know where their next meal is coming from, worried about how they will get to class or pay for incidentals, is already at risk of dropping out."

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.

"This network aims to deepen our understanding of student basic needs for food security, housing security, and financial stability and to identify the resources that exist to support students," said CPE President Aaron Thompson.

“Ultimately, the goal of the project is to find ways to get the right public benefits and basic need services to students – with a focus on students of color, students from low-income families, students in rural areas and working-age adults who have returned to college,” he said.

[The 47-member network](#) held its first meeting on Jan. 18. The group includes leaders from Kentucky colleges and universities, government and education-focused nonprofits. Five additional meetings are set through May.

"We are proud to be a partner in CPE's Kentucky Student Success Collaborative to give students help with their basic needs and well-being so they can devote their time and energy toward academics and career readiness," Department for Community Based Services Acting Commissioner Lesa Dennis said. "Our statewide family support team is ready to help students understand what benefits they may qualify for and hearing the lived experiences from the student research project will help us improve services to this group."

The project is funded by a grant from Lumina Foundation.

College faculty and staff interested in learning more about efforts to meet students' basic needs can register for the Kentucky Student Success Collaborative's Student Success Summit, which will be held Feb. 27-28 at the University of Kentucky Gatton Student Center. The summit includes sessions on student basic needs featuring Carrie R. Welton of the Institute for College Access and Success, whose work focuses on improving federal and state policies to better support students from low-income families in completing a college credential. Register for the summit at cpe.ky.gov/studentsuccess/index.html.

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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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