

**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 June 25, 2021.

**PRESENTER:** Aaron Thompson, CPE President

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**Shot at a Million** – On June 4, I was invited to participate in the Governor's press conference to announce the "Shot at a Million" lottery for Kentuckians who have been fully or partially vaccinated. Besides the three \$1 million jackpots that will be awarded to adults over the age of 18, vaccinated Kentuckians between the ages of 12-17 can enter to win one of 15 full scholarships to a Kentucky public postsecondary institution of their choice, including tuition, room and board and books. CPE has been heavily promoting this opportunity on its website and social media accounts. Prize drawings will occur on July 2, July 30, and August 27.

**Kentucky Students' Right to Know Website** – CPE and KYSTATS teamed up to develop a new tool to help students research degree programs at Kentucky's public colleges and universities. Students can compare the overall cost of attendance, tuition, financial aid and graduation rates for each institution, among other factors. Users also can review workforce and salary data for particular fields of study. The site was developed in response to House Bill 419, which called for the Council to collect and publish these data annually. Jessica Cunningham from KYSTATS, David Mahan, and I testified before the Interim Joint Committee on Education on June 1 about the development and implementation of this site.

**Staffing Update** – I'm pleased to announce that Rick W. Smith Sr., a professional with more than 30 years of experience in higher education and private sector leadership, will serve as the Council's new associate vice president for workforce and economic development. Smith has held key leadership and development positions at the Kentucky College of Art Design, Kentucky State University and Northern Pennsylvania Regional College. He most recently served as the president and CEO of the United Way of Ross County, Ohio. He also has held leadership roles in health care administration, public

relations, business development and nonprofit leadership over the past three decades, as well as being named one of Atlanta, Georgia's 40 under 40 Top Business Executives in 2005.

**Strategic Agenda Update** – CPE staff is continuing work on the next strategic agenda for Kentucky's public system of higher education. I'd like to thank Stefanie Ashley of EKU's Facilitation Center for sifting through an incredible amount of feedback from dozens of focus groups and interviews to give us a snapshot of key and emerging issues facing Kentucky higher education. Her comprehensive write-ups are saved in the Strategic Agenda OnBoard Resource Folder for your reference. Draft vision, mission and value statements were reviewed by the ASI committee at its last meeting, which Ms. Harper will cover in her committee report.

**Commonwealth Education Continuum** – On Wednesday of this week, the CEC met to discuss insights it has gleaned through focus groups and interviews with educators, parents and students. These sessions were conducted in partnership with the state's eight regional education cooperatives to determine both opportunities and obstacles facing Kentucky's K-12 and postsecondary systems.

**Annual Trusteeship Conference** – Planning has begun for CPE's trusteeship conference, which will be held in-person on September 14-15 at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Louisville. An option to attend remotely will be made available as well. The CPE business meeting and new board member training will take place the day before, also at the Hyatt. Dr. Paul Friga, noted UNC professor and AGB consultant, will be this year's keynote presenter.

**Speaking Events** – Over the last several weeks, I have been interviewed by several prominent state and national outlets. This past weekend, I appeared on Kentucky Newsmakers with Bill Bryant discussing the impact of the pandemic on higher education, with a look ahead to the fall term. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* interviewed me about CPE's financial support of summer bridge programs, the *Hechinger Report* interviewed me for a story on innovative strategies for adult learners, and WEKU's show Eastern Standard featured me in a piece about the growth of short-term credentials in Kentucky.

Additionally, I have participated in the following speaking events since the last Council meeting:

- May 8 – Panelist at the Education and Civil Rights spring virtual conference hosted by KCTCS, the University of Kentucky, and the NAACP

- May 12 – Panelist for the “Symposium on Institutions of Higher Education: Financial Viability and COVID-19,” hosted by UK’s Martin School and the Philadelphia Federal Reserve
- June 1 – Testified to the Interim Joint Committee on Education in Frankfort on the implementation of HB419, The Student Right to Know Act
- June 2 – Testified to the Budget Review Subcommittee on Education on performance funding and asset preservation
- June 17 – Presented to a WKU cohort of doctoral students in education on leadership and inclusive excellence