

College for Every Kentuckian

Closing the Gaps to Student Success

Commission on Race and Access to Opportunity
September 2026

Dr. Phil Neal, Executive Vice President and Provost, Kentucky Community and Technical College System
Dr. Anton Reece, Chancellor, West Kentucky Community and Technical College



STUDENT CENTERED, COMMUNITY FOCUSED

One student. One credential. One career at a time.

GOAL 1 | STUDENT SUCCESS

- Maximize student access, retention, and success
- Improve student career pathway completion

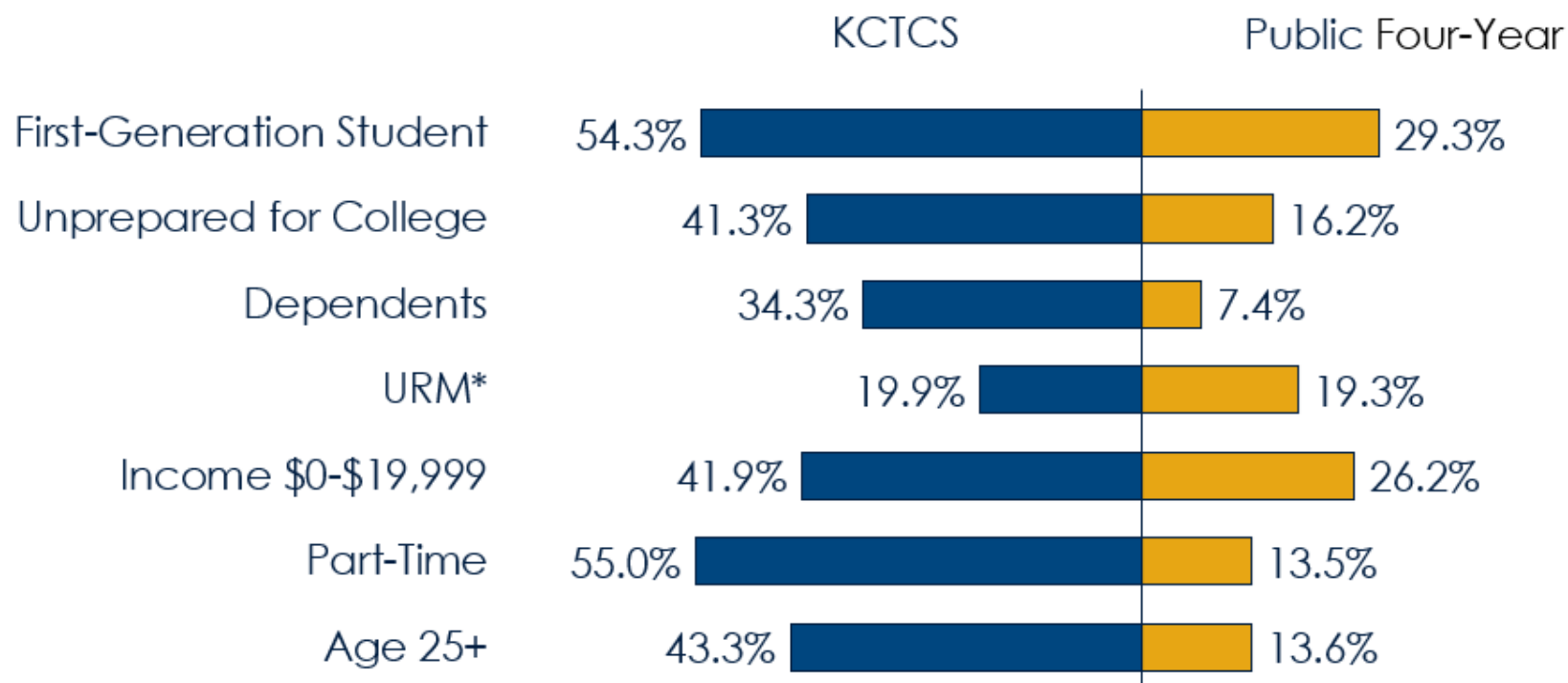
GOAL 2 | EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

- Leverage employer engagement to deepen relationships supporting student and program success
- Strengthen alignment between KCTCS programs and Kentucky's workforce needs
- Grow new workforce training programs

MEETING STUDENTS WHERE THEY ARE

As an open-access institution, the KCTCS student body, on average, is at higher risk of stopping out. Student success often requires additional support and wrap-around services to reach educational and career goals.

KCTCS and Public Four-Year Student Characteristics
Fall 2022



ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

Investing in Students

LRC | “Nonacademic Barriers Facing Kentucky Community and Technical College Students” (2019)

- Financial instability
- Transportation
- Flexible work and education delivery models
- Childcare access
- Family support
- Technology
- Personal health issues
- Navigating college



OUR PROMISE YIELDS PROGRESS

Student Achievement is Increasing

74% of KCTCS students graduate **debt free**

48,109 credentials awarded in academic year 2025-26; first in the nation for credentials per capita

72% of graduates transferred to a four-year institution or are working in Kentucky

KCTCS moved to the **top 5** from the bottom 10 in **graduation rate among community colleges** in the last 25 years

Two-year persistence rate is nearly **70%**, increasing more than 8 percentage points in four years

KCTCS enrolls nearly **120,000 credit-seeking students** and more than **67,000** in customized training programs

WORKFORCE-ALIGNED PRIORITIES

PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

- Academic programs have external advisory committees that ensure graduates leave with workforce-relevant and responsive skills
- More than 250 programs modified or closed based on employer needs and feedback

WORK READY KENTUCKY SCHOLARSHIP

- Aligned to high-demand workforce sectors in the state

WORKFORCE PELL

- Opens Pell access to short-term, workforce-aligned, in-demand programs
- KCTCS is actively engaged in shaping policy and submitting programs

83.5%

Of KCTCS credentials awarded
aligned to the state's top-five
Targeted Industry Sectors

MISSION-ALIGNED PRIORITIES

Programs that Meet Kentucky Needs

ADULT EDUCATION

- 13 KCTCS colleges work in 57 counties to provide adult education
- Services include GED courses, family literacy, and college prep

KCTCS TRAINS

- \$6 million in each year of the biennium to support customized workforce training
- KCTCS works directly with employers to develop training programs that upskill incumbent workers, so they don't have to exit the workforce

KCTCS PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAM

CURRENT PROGRAMMING

- Nine KCTCS colleges are working in 14 state prisons, one Federal prison and several county jails
- At least one AA/AS degree is offered in every facility and technical degrees are offered in six facilities
- GED education for incarcerated persons

HB5 | EXPANDING OUR COMMITMENT

- Model prison education program to support inmate re-entry, reduce recidivism, accelerate workforce development, and increase savings to society
- Dedicated 51,000 square foot facility serving at least 400 inmates with employer identified workforce training programs



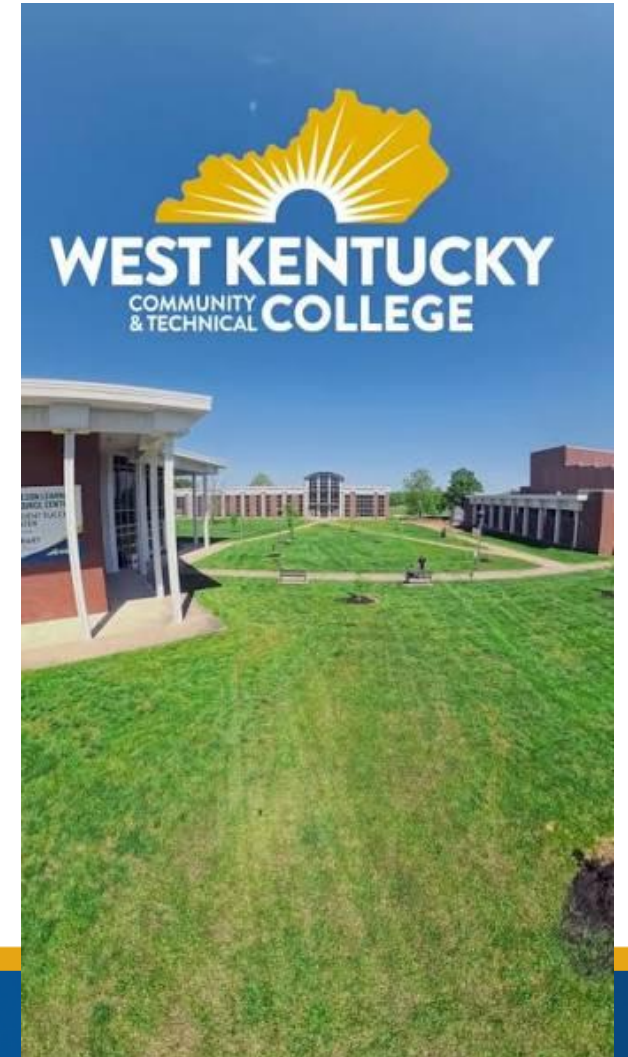
WEST KENTUCKY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

ASPEN INSTITUTE

- Five-time, top 10 college and named one of 25 semifinalists in the country for the 2027 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence

COLLEGE PROFILE

- 7,215 total enrollment
- 1,655 high school/dual credit enrollment
- 2,846 students over the age of 25
- 74% of students receive financial aid
- 71% of students attend part-time
- 2,619 credentials conferred last academic year



WEST KENTUCKY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Workforce and Economic Development Mantra - “All Hands on Deck”

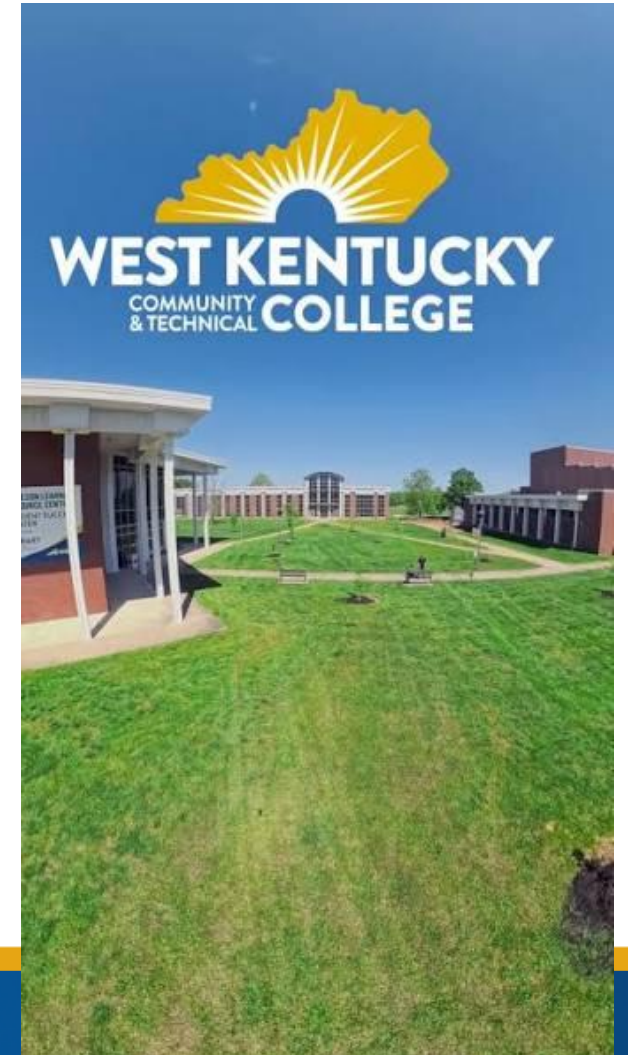
- “We never Underestimate You!”

College Regional Footprint

Serving and providing higher education access and training for 16 counties including Kentucky, Tennessee, Illinois, and Missouri (including some of the poorest counties)

Challenges

Historic population decline in Four River Counties
Retention of adults 25-40



WKCTC STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

- Financial support from the Paducah Junior College Foundation
- “Get Help” Campaign
- Student Success Center – “One Stop Shop”
- Campus Cupboard
- Scholar House
- Transportation Services
- Tech Hub

WKCTC PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAM

- Operates at the Kentucky State Penitentiary, Western Kentucky Correctional Complex and Ross-Cash
- Fall 2024, 19 students enrolled
- Fall 2026, 49 students enrolled



KENTUCKY
COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL
COLLEGE SYSTEM



"I'm not just building a future for myself. I'm building a future for my children."

- Taliyah



"WKCTC really opened that doorway for me as a non-traditional student. It just felt more welcoming here. Like if I needed support in any way, they were here for me."

- Amber

QUESTIONS

