



Media Contact: Jessica Fletcher
Communications Manager
Kentucky Chamber
jfletcher@kychamber.com
502-848-8731 (office)
859-539-0511 (cell)

Postsecondary progress report notes continuing challenges for state

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 19, 2009) – Although there are some signs of progress – with growing degree production and the recently imposed cap on tuition increases – daunting challenges persist as Kentucky strives to achieve the goals of the 1997 postsecondary education reforms.

That is the conclusion of a progress report released today by the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, whose Postsecondary Education Task Force issued a comprehensive review of the state's higher education system in December 2007.

The 1997 reforms established two primary goals:

- To expand the capacity of postsecondary institutions, making connections between education and the development of a strong economy
- To increase Kentucky's education attainment and per capita income to a level that meets or exceeds the national average

The Chamber's progress report was based on a series of indicators suggested by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, which assisted the Task Force in developing the initial study. The update also included developments related to the Task Force's recommendations for strategies and actions to improve Kentucky's postsecondary education outcomes.

"The private sector has an important role to play in Kentucky's effort to achieve its goals in postsecondary education. This progress report – and those we will issue in future years – is key to ensuring that we maintain the proper focus on this work," noted Kentucky Chamber President and CEO Dave Adkisson. "The Chamber also acknowledges the need to expand our own, independent activity to accelerate the state's progress."

Developments since the Task Force report was issued in 2007 included:

- Kentucky's per capita income has declined to 80% of the national average (from 82.1% in 2005).
- The percent of working-age Kentuckians with a bachelor's degree or higher has declined, but more older Kentuckians are attaining associate degrees.
- High school seniors made slow improvement in college readiness from 2004-2008, based on their ACT performance. All Kentucky high school juniors are now required to take the ACT.
- Kentucky has made notable improvement but continues to face challenges with an education pipeline that leaks at every seam, based on the number of 9th graders who graduate from high school and successfully complete postsecondary education.
- The number of degrees and certificates awarded by Kentucky's postsecondary institutions continues to increase.
- Transfers from two- to four-year institutions continue to be a key weakness within the postsecondary system.
- Only one public institution, the University of Kentucky, exceeds the national average of the six-year graduation rate.
- Tuition rate increases were limited for the 2009-10 academic year after increasing an average of 10% a year for the past decade. Kentucky received an F for affordability in the national *Measuring Up 2008* report.

Download a PDF version of the progress report at www.kychamber.com.

###