



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

Employers, educators and citizens speak out about higher education

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Sept. 14, 2007) – Too many high school graduates are not prepared for postsecondary-level courses. Students and their families are often discouraged by the cost of attending college or postsecondary technical school. Employers need workers who have essential skills, a strong work ethic and can pass a drug test.

These and many other messages were delivered by employers, educators and citizens during nine regional meetings that the Kentucky Chamber's Postsecondary Education Task Force conducted during August.

The task force, chaired by Victor A. Staffieri, Chairman, CEO and President of E.ON U.S., was formed early this year to review Kentucky's progress toward the goals established by the 1997 postsecondary education reform legislation. The objective of the legislation was to elevate the state to the national average of educational attainment by 2020.

As part of its review, the task force convened meetings in Ashland, Bowling Green, Lexington, Louisville, Northern Kentucky, Owensboro, Paducah, Pikeville and Somerset to gather information about how well postsecondary education is working at the local and regional levels.

Hundreds of Kentuckians participated in the meetings, sharing their insights and opinions about what is working and what areas need improvement. Among the comments:

- Kentucky's community and technical colleges work effectively with local employers to develop and deliver training programs.
- Student financial aid remains an area of great need, especially for non-traditional students – generally older Kentuckians who work full- or part-time and want to improve their skills.
- There is effective collaboration between postsecondary institutions and economic development efforts in some, but not all, regions of the state.
- Employers have an important role to play in education – both in emphasizing the value of education and in communicating with schools about the skill demands of the modern workplace.

The task force plans to issue its report and recommendations at an education summit being planned for early December.

About the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce

From its beginnings in 1946 as a bipartisan voice for business at the state Capitol, the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce has evolved into the premier business association in the state. Today the Chamber represents more than 12,000 business leaders — from Fortune 500 companies and family-owned shops — which share a strong interest in the state's economic future. Kentucky employers benefit from a broad range of services offered through Chamber membership: year-round lobbying, timely communications on business issues, publications and seminars on evolving regulations and policies, and a variety of other member benefits.

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