



## KY Council on Postsecondary Education Statewide Outreach Campaign

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**Goal:** Develop and execute a statewide communications campaign, with regional components, that will increase the number of students who take 15 credit hours a semester, or 30 credit hours a year.

**Background Information:** A key component of CPE's *Stronger by Degrees* strategic plan is to increase the educational attainment of Kentuckians. The P-20 education reforms in Kentucky, going back to KERA in 1990, followed by the *Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act of 1997*, as well as subsequent legislation, focus on getting more Kentuckians more highly educated. A campaign that promotes on-time graduation will support a full range of college readiness and student success strategies integral to the mission.

*15 to Finish* is a promotional campaign that encourages Kentucky college students to take 15 credit hours per semester to graduate on-time (2 and 4 years). Part of this effort involves changing the longstanding perception that taking 12 credits per semester is enough to get students to degree in the 2 or 4-year timeframe.. Most 2-year degrees require 60 credits and 4-year degrees require 120 credits. Therefore, a critical component of the 15 to Finish message is getting students, their parents and families, and the education community to understand that students must complete 15 credits per semester (or 30 credits per academic year) to graduate on time.

The benefits of taking 15 credit hours each semester include:

- Increase the likelihood of graduation
- Lessen opportunity cost (get a job earlier, earn income sooner)
- Lower cost for students (pay less tuition overall for a college degree and incur less debt)
- Lower cost for campuses in support services
- Lower cost to the state and taxpayers

Data indicates that of the 2005 BA-seeking, first-time, full-time (in the first semester) students enrolled at four-year institutions in Kentucky with degree completion within six years:

- 50 times more likely to complete a degree if they stay enrolled every fall semester.
- 3.5 times more likely to complete a degree if they have accumulated 60 credits by the end of their second year.
- Twice as likely to complete a degree if they complete credit in the summer term.
- 1.5 times more likely to complete a degree if they have accumulated 30 credits by the end of their first year.

**Objectives:**

- Convene a statewide core team appointed by the provosts (Rena Duncan and Catherine Sivills are representing Murray State University on this team).
- Convene an advisory group of influence groups and campus reps to identify and develop state, regional and campus components.
- Develop and implement a statewide outreach and free media campaign, with regional components, to drive awareness of the value and affordability of taking 30 credits per year.
- Develop campus-based, internal campaigns to reach students directly at freshman and new student orientations, mandatory advising, and first-year experiences.
- At the high school level, reach students through GEAR UP, TRIO, Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search, high school transition courses, and GED college planning, and others to be identified.

**Approach:**

- Low-cost, but highly effective, public service type campaign that is statewide in scope with regional components.
- Extremely well-branded and a memorable campaign.
- The Kentucky campaign will incorporate elements of the Hawaii campaign.
- Utilize heavy social media and PR components to create buzz.

**Specific outcomes include:**

- Promote on-time graduation.
- Create awareness that graduating in four years requires a minimum of 15 credit hours a semester for most programs.
- Encourage more students to take 15 credit hours a semester by promoting the benefits: save dollars in tuition, incur less debt, increase likelihood of graduating, and enter the workforce more quickly and start earning money sooner.
- Change the norm of 15 credits=full time; not 12.
- Build a complementary strategy for encouraging high school students to not only be college ready, but to earn college credit before enrolling in college through Advanced Placement, dual credit, CLEP, and other early and middle college programs.
- Engage the campus and K-12 community, KHEAA, and other workforce and education partners in joint efforts to promote the *15 to Finish* campaign.

**Target Audiences**

- High school juniors and seniors
- Parents and families of incoming college freshman
- GEAR UP students
- High school counselors and teachers
- College freshman primarily
- College advisors