



In spite of strong headwinds,  
AIKCU colleges remain optimistic



Mason Dyer  
AIKCU President

When I was in D.C. in October for the NAICU Fall Leadership Conference, the word of the week seemed to be headwinds. As in, "higher ed in general and independent colleges

in particular are facing strong headwinds."

This is evidenced by declining public confidence in higher education, financial pressures, another delayed FAFSA cycle, political pressures from both the left and right, new regulations, and so on.

While the last year has been especially challenging with the botched FAFSA rollout that made it harder for students to get timely information about how affordable independent colleges can be, I'm proud of the way AIKCU members have remained focused on the future and true to their respective missions.

That mission focus provides a sense of optimism for the future. This fall, AIKCU members have celebrated new presidents, new programs, new facilities, new gifts and grants supporting key institutional priorities, new faculty members, and new affordability initiatives.

What I hear as I visit campuses is that there's a spirit of excitement among students – particularly first-years – who are more engaged and active on campus than they have been since before the pandemic.

I appreciate our members for leaning into the wind to offer educational experiences that help students develop satisfying careers and lead purposeful lives.

4 AIKCU schools awarded Healthcare Workforce Fund dollars

Four of Kentucky's independent universities have been awarded \$1.22 million to further their efforts in educating students for careers in healthcare. They are Bellarmine University in Louisville, Campbellsville University in Campbellsville, Midway University in Midway, and the University of Pikeville in Pikeville.

The funds are part of \$11.8 million in matching dollars presented by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education to 33 eligible postsecondary healthcare programs. The programs are offered by 19 education and training providers in partnership with regional employers.

CPE announced the awards Oct. 30 as part of its Healthcare Workforce Collaboratory event, attended by nearly 200 healthcare representatives from across the commonwealth.

"AIKCU members have always prepared graduates to meet Kentucky's healthcare needs – from front-line nurses to future doctors and many fields in between," AIKCU President Mason Dyer said. "We're proud of these AIKCU members for stepping up their healthcare workforce development efforts with the assistance of the Healthcare Workforce Investment Fund, and we're thankful to their industry partners, CPE, and especially the legislature for making that possible."

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**Bellarmine University: \$1 million**  
with Anesthesia Services of Kentucky  
for nurse anesthesia



**Campbellsville University: \$45,000**  
with Taylor Regional Health  
\$30,000 for nursing  
\$15,000 for radiography



**Midway University: \$80,000**  
with CHI Saint Joseph Health  
for nursing



**University of Pikeville: \$98,000**  
with Pikeville Medical Center  
for nursing

## Lindsey Wilson's student body president to represent AIKCU students on statewide board

Zachariah Lawson, president of the Lindsey Wilson College Student Government Association, has been appointed to the 2024-25 Kentucky Board of Student Body Presidents. Lawson will represent AIKCU and serve as the convener of Kentucky's independent college student leaders.

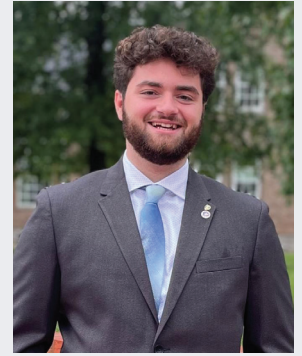
"I am deeply honored and thrilled to have been selected as the AIKCU representative for the 2024-2025 academic year," Lawson said. "I am eager to learn and grow in this role, as I draw inspiration from my fellow student body presidents across the state."

Lawson is a junior majoring in English and Christian Ministries. In addition to serving as student body president, he is a peer mentor and a public safety officer on campus. He is also a member of Sigma Tau Delta, the International

English Honor Society, and a Wesley Scholarship recipient, which gives him an active role in campus ministry leadership.

"Zachariah is a generous, kind soul," said Christopher Schmidt, dean of students at Lindsey Wilson.

"From the moment he stepped foot on campus, he has been part of something, immersing himself into the spirit of the campus. He flows in and out of different student groups, making connections with everyone, including faculty, staff, and trustees."



Zachariah Lawson

## Healthcare Workforce Funds

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Funding is provided through state appropriations to the Healthcare Workforce Investment Fund, enacted by the Kentucky General Assembly in 2023.

A majority of the fund supports scholarships for students enrolled in targeted programs in areas of critical workforce need, while the remainder rewards innovation and excellence among professional healthcare education and training programs.

To be eligible, postsecondary programs must partner with one or more healthcare employers, who pledge a dollar amount to be matched by the HWIF.

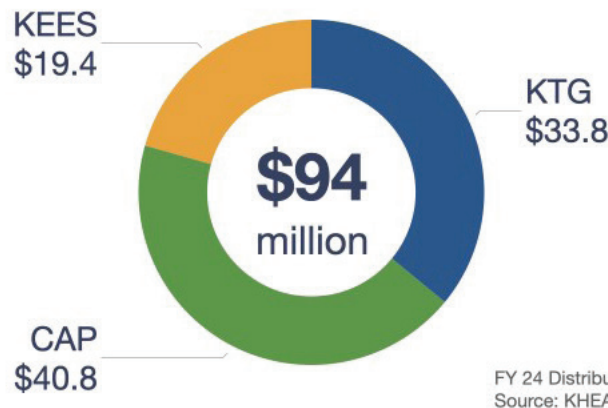
Students who receive partnership-funded scholarships will be required to practice in Kentucky in their specialty area for each year of financial support they receive, not to exceed two years.

*Information from CPE news release, Oct. 30, 2024*

## AIKCU FAST FACTS: Students Receiving Lottery-Funded State Student Aid

AIKCU institutions receive no direct state funding, but Kentucky Lottery-funded state student aid through KHEAA's "Big 3" programs is crucial for AIKCU students.

The "Big 3" are College Access Program Grants, Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarships, and Kentucky Tuition Grants.



FY 24 Distributions to AIKCU students.  
Source: KHEAA