

15 TO FINISH

>GET IN >> GET OUT >>> GET GOING...

Overview

15 to Finish is a campaign coordinated by the Council on Postsecondary Education that encourages Kentucky college students to complete 15 credits per semester, or 30 credits per year, to graduate on time.

The Challenge

Part of this effort involves changing the long-standing perception that taking 12 credits per semester is enough. Most 2-year degrees require 60 credits and 4-year degrees require 120 credits. However, only a small percentage of students complete the necessary 30 courses each year to graduate on time.

- Three out of four of Kentucky's first-time, full-time freshmen take fewer than 30 credits per year and by the sophomore year are not on track to graduate on time.
- The longer they stay in college, students are less likely to continue earning 30 credits per year.
- The challenge is tougher for students who require developmental ed courses, which do not count toward the necessary 30 credits per year but do figure into tuition costs.
- Selecting a degree program is pivotal to on-time graduation. Undecided students are much less likely to take 30 hours per year than those with declared degree programs.

Students Earning 30 Credits Their First Year in College

First-Time, Full-Time Freshmen
(Degree-Seeking and Undecided)
Kentucky Public Institutions
2012



Source: Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education Comprehensive Database System.

Why It's Important

The costs of late graduation add up quickly. For each year a student defers degree completion, he or she not only can incur additional debt of tuition and fees, but also may defer entry into the workforce and future income.

Adding a third year when earning an associate degree at KCTCS:

\$4,320	+	\$33,200	=	\$37,520
avg. tuition* (1 year)		potential lost income** (1 year)		

Adding two years when earning a bachelor's degree at a state university:

\$16,600	+	\$74,000	=	\$90,600
avg. tuition and fees* (2 years)		potential lost income** (2 years)		

*Average tuition and fees, 2013-14, Kentucky public institutions. Average tuition for KCTCS is calculated by the average full-time course load. Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

**Median annual earnings by postsecondary degree or credential level, 2010-11. "Employment Earnings of Kentucky's College Graduates: A Preliminary Report." Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics.

For more information, visit <http://15tofinishky.org>.

Campaign Objectives

- Promote on-time graduation (2 and 4 years).
- Change the full-time norm to 15 credits rather than 12.

Rationale

- 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, incur less debt).
- Lower cost to the state and taxpayers.

Participants

- Kentucky Community and Technical College System
- Kentucky Public Universities
- Association of Independent Colleges and Universities