Kentucky College Application Campaign

Program Implementation Guide

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Introduction

For many students, particularly those who do not have an immediate family member who attended college, applying to college can seem overwhelming. For those students, having someone who can help them navigate the college application process can be enough to encourage them to pursue a postsecondary education. By implementing a College Application Campaign program, your school can ensure that every senior has the opportunity to receive hands-on assistance as they take the first big step towards continuing their education following high school.

The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) is pleased to sponsor Kentucky College Application Campaign. KHEAA, with support from the following partners, will provide resource materials and field staff counselors to assist any school interested in hosting a College Application Campaign event. **Planning, scheduling and implementation of any or all of the suggestions in this guide are the responsibility of the host school.** Kentucky College Application Campaign Advisory Board Members:

- 55,000 Degrees
- Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities (AIKCU)
- College Access Partnership
- Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE)
- GEAR UP Alliance
- Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS)
- Kentucky Association for College Admission Counseling (KYACAC)
- Kentucky Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (KACRAO)
- Kentucky Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel (KAEOPP)
- Kentucky Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (KASFAA)
- Kentucky Campus Compact
- Kentucky College Coaches Program
- Kentucky Counseling Association (KCA)
- Kentucky Department of Education
- Kentucky School Counselor Association (KSCA)
- Southern Regional Education Board (SRSB)

We hope that you will find the information contained in this guide useful as you implement a program in your school. In addition, you may also find it helpful to review some of the resources in the College Application Campaign Online Toolkit, available at kygoestocollege.com. Some additional websites that may be helpful include:

kheaa.com

careercruising.com

Good luck as you plan your event!

Recommendations for Participating High Schools

Following the recommendations below can help you make the most of your College Application Campaign program and ensure that your event runs smoothly and with maximum impact.

Identify a site coordinator. This can be a counselor or advisor, who will be responsible for planning and implementing the event at your school. It is also recommended that there is a back-up coordinator designated.

Register your event. Visit the Kentucky Goes to College website at kygoestocollege.com or follow the link on kheaa.com to register your school's event and submit contact information for the site coordinator. Registered schools will have exclusive access to certain free promotional materials, training opportunities and the latest news or information being shared by KHEAA or other program partners.

Build a school-wide team. Recruit counselors, teachers, and other staff to assist with the planning and implementation of the event. Forming a team will help share the work across multiple individuals and help ensure the entire school is supportive of the event. Students could also be identified to volunteer to help and earn community service hours.

Encourage school-wide involvement. Get the entire school excited about the event and applying to college. Remember, it is never too early to begin thinking about college! Encourage all students and staff to participate in activities like daily trivia contests, wearing college shirts, sharing college stories or decorating classroom doors with college logos, photos, and other mementos. For additional student activity ideas, check out the Counselors tab in the Online Toolkit.

Reserve your event location. Make sure it's equipped with a sufficient number of networked computers and printers, well in advance of the event. Typical event locations include the school's media center, computer labs and classrooms with computers.

- Ensure that enough computers are available to allow adequate time for each student to participate. Typically, each student requires a minimum of 45 minutes to an hour to successfully complete a college application.
- Work with technology support staff to ensure that school internet firewalls or other access restrictions will not prevent students from accessing online applications the day of the event.
- Consider reserving computer lab space for multiple days the week of the event, depending on the size of the senior class.

Promote the event early and often. Don't underestimate the power of talking up your College Application Campaign event. Consider any or all of these advertising opportunities:

- Promote activities in and around the school through banners, posters (provided FREE to registered schools), emails, letters, one-on-one conversations, school announcements, school newsletters, school calendar, and social media.

- Add messages of encouragement for seniors applying to college on exterior schools signs and ask local businesses to do the same.
- Remember to invite local media to attend the event. A press release template can be found in the Online Toolkit. Get students involved with this process using the Media Blitz activity under the Counselors tab in the Online Toolkit.

Keep parents in the loop. Include information about your event in newsletters or other parent communication such as texts, the school's automated call service or social media messaging. Include tips on how parents can support their students through the college application process.

Recruit volunteers. Ask school and community leaders to help with the event. Here are some examples of volunteers:

- School superintendent or principal
- Current students who have already completed the application process
- Local colleges and universities, including representatives from Admissions, Financial Aid and Registrar Offices, Office of Disabilities as well as current students
- Local Chamber of Commerce
- Local business leaders
- Community organizations
- Extension services
- Previous graduates of your high school who have gone on to college
- Local library staff
- Parents/PTA
- Family Resource and Youth Service Center staff
- Board of Education staff/school board members

Provide ALL seniors access to the event. Develop a schedule for your event (see sample schedule in the back of this guide) which will provide all seniors the opportunity to participate. Requiring that seniors sign up to participate beforehand is strongly discouraged as often those who could benefit the most from the event will not sign up.

Allow for adequate student preparation prior to the event. Help students make the most of their College Application Campaign experience. Meet with seniors early in the school year to allow adequate time for students to complete appropriate college research.

- Students can create a My KHEAA account to research all Kentucky colleges and universities, as well as check their KEES scholarship awards at kheaa.com.

Arrange for alternate activities for students planning to join the military. Not all students will want to apply to college, particularly those who are planning to enter the military following graduation. Plan to invite a military recruiter or a representative from Kentucky National Guard to set up a table at the same time other students will be filling out applications.

Have a paper application alternative. Some schools will only accept application fee waivers if they are attached to a paper application. Before the event, gather paper applications from the schools your students are most likely to be interested in and have them available in the computer lab or reserved event space.

Encourage students to attend one of the regional KYACAC college fairs in your area. You may even consider making arrangements for them to attend, if your school does not already do this. This will be a great opportunity for them to gather information and do some preliminary research. For more information, visit the KYACAC website at kyacac.org.

Student Preparation

Student preparation is the key to a successful College Application Campaign event. Make your students aware of why you are having an application event and what they will be doing so they are ready to complete applications when they arrive at the computer lab.

Encourage students to complete college research prior to the event. To help ensure students are able to make the most of their College Application Campaign experience, students should arrive to the computer lab with a list of colleges that they have determined would be a good match for them and to which they would like to apply. The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is a great online tool for conducting college research. College characteristics students should be encouraged to consider include:

- Location
- Size
- Available majors
- Cost
- Available financial aid
- Admission requirements

Make use of the student activities provided in the Online Toolkit at kygoestocollege.com. There are a variety of activities to help students with the college research and selection process as well as documents to help ensure they have the information needed to complete an application for college admission. Common information that students should be encouraged to gather includes the following:

- Student's full legal name
- Social Security number
- Citizenship status
- Residency information (such as date they moved to the state, state to which parent(s) filed taxes, driver's license and vehicle registration information, etc).
- Test information such as SAT/ACT test dates and scores
- Class rank
- Expected graduation date
- College essays and/or personal statements, if required by the college
- Letters of recommendation, if required by the college

Encourage teachers to incorporate college essay assignments into their curriculum. This will help ensure that students applying to colleges requiring essays will be prepared, and even if they don't need an essay, it will help them think about their college goals. KHEAA provides some essay writing prompts in the Online Toolkit. Students applying to colleges requiring an essay and/or personal statement should be encouraged to save their essay to a thumb drive so they can quickly and easily upload it or copy and paste it into the admission application during the event.

Encourage students to become familiar with application fee payment options prior to the event. If the college(s) to which they plan to apply requires an application fee:

- Students should be encouraged to meet with their school counselor to determine if they are eligible for a College Board fee waiver. Eligible students should investigate whether the chosen college(s) accepts fee waivers and how to go about providing that waiver with the application.
- Students not eligible for a College Board fee waiver should conduct research to determine the amount of the required application fee for the college to which they plan to apply. They should also investigate payment methods accepted by the college (credit card, online check, mailed check, etc.)
- For those colleges requiring that payment information be entered online in order to complete the application submission process, students should be made aware of the following options which may be available to them:
    - Save the application and submit it at home later when they have access to a payment method
    - Purchase a prepaid credit card in the amount of the application fee so credit card information can be entered into the online application
    - Students may bring the appropriate payment information to the event

Provide students with information about the Common Application. Make sure they know if a college they are considering accepts or requires the Common Application instead of a school-specific application. If students plan on completing the Common Application during the event, they will need to do their research and prepare for it ahead of time, as it is typically longer and more detailed than other applications. For more information, visit commonapp.org.

Have students sign up for a My KHEAA account on kheaa.com. Setting this account up early will help facilitate college research and state financial aid processes, and gives students access to a variety of college planning resources.

Volunteer Coordination

Never underestimate students' need for help! Since the College Application Campaign began in Kentucky in 2011, student surveys responses have shown overwhelmingly that students considered the event a major factor in their decision to apply to college. Volunteer support is crucial to holding an event that will positively impact the students.

Consider setting up an online volunteer registration form. This is particularly helpful if you have a large senior class and will need to recruit volunteers outside of the school building. Many free online survey tools are available to help with this. It can be helpful to collect the following information on the volunteer registration form:

- Volunteer name
- Email
- Phone number
- Affiliation (name of postsecondary institution, company, nonprofit or government agency)
- Area of expertise
- Hours they are available
- How they heard about the College Application Campaign

Follow your school's security policy. Once you have received your volunteer sign-ups, remember to allow for enough time to conduct any necessary background checks, if your school policy requires this.

Utilize student and other leadership in the school as volunteers for the event.

- **School Planning Team:** Student ambassadors from all grade levels can be used to share ideas, distribute materials, decorate the school, and promote the College Application Campaign to their peers through Facebook, Twitter and other social media outlets.
- **School leadership:** Involve school administrators and counselors, Family Resource and Youth Service Center personnel, and PTA/O members in the planning and logistical details.
- **Peer mentors:** Consider using seniors who have already completed the college application process to assist other students during the event.
- **Kentucky College Coaches:** If your school hosts a near-peer college advisor through the Kentucky College Coaches program, utilize their resources.
- **College and Career Readiness Counselors or Coaches.** If your school hosts someone specifically dedicated to helping students with college preparation, utilize their expertise.

Enlist teachers. They can volunteer during a planning period, and/or to dedicate class time for college-related activities, for example, writing college essays or conducting college or career research.

Identify contacts in the community. Civic groups and community organizations may be interested in helping make the event a success by either donating time and/or resources. Examples include: school alumni, parents and families of students, PTA members, senior citizens, church

groups, college students, college representatives, business, community, political leaders and youth organizations such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, 4H, Boy/Girl Scouts of America, etc. Be sure to use any press releases or publicity to promote the need for volunteers.

Stress that College Application Campaign events are NOT a recruitment opportunity for colleges. While representatives from local colleges and universities may make official visits prior to your college application event to assist students with the college research process, they should remain institution-neutral when helping students complete applications during the event. Volunteers from institutions should assist all students, regardless of where they want to apply, and should not simply communicate information about their institution.

Have plenty of volunteers. The most successful College Application Campaign events have a "the more the merrier" atmosphere. It is recommended that you plan to have 1 volunteer for every 4-5 computers in use during the event. Extras may be needed to assist with sign-in, printers, etc. and to provide the opportunity for volunteers to take breaks.

Communicate with volunteers early and often. Create a system such as an email distribution list or send regular updates via text message. Be sure to contact all volunteers ahead of time to provide them with specifics such as parking, what time to arrive, where the event will be held, options for lunch and other logistical details.

Assign each volunteer a specific responsibility. Take into account areas of expertise (e.g. greeting students, helping students complete their application, answering financial aid questions, etc). Consider collecting areas of expertise during volunteer registration process to facilitate the volunteer assignment.

Provide volunteers with a printed schedule. Include lunch times and breaks when no students will be in the lab/media center/classroom.

Follow up with a thank-you letter. Contact all participating volunteers, thanking them for their dedication and support in making the event a success. This is a great way to leave volunteers with a positive feeling towards the event and to increase the chances that they will volunteer again in the future. A sample volunteer thank you letter can be found in the Online Toolkit.

The Day of the Event

Make sure students are prepared. Students should be aware of what they are doing and what your College Application Campaign event is about before they sit down at a computer to complete their application(s). Follow the suggestions in the Student Preparation section to make sure students arrive with everything they need to apply.

Welcome each volunteer.

- Thank volunteers for their participation
- Volunteers should know the "game plan" for the day including:
    - Their room assignment, if multiple rooms/locations will be in use during the day
    - Letting them know when there will be breaks
    - When they can break for lunch
    - If lunch will not be available at the high school, consider providing all volunteers a list or map of local restaurants (*providing lunch is a nice way to say "thank you" if at all possible)
    - The location of the restroom
    - Who can reset student passwords or provide technical support if needed

Welcome each group of students and explain the events for the day.

Explain:

- The importance of applying to college
- That the goal for the day is for them to complete and submit at least one application for admission
- That they should feel free to request the assistance of the available volunteers if they need help while working on their application or if they have any questions about applying to or attending college
- What they should do once they have completed an application
- That they should plan to complete their admissions application by mailing in the appropriate documents to the college, and who they can seek for assistance with this if needed

Provide proper oversight. High school staff should remain available throughout the event and should not expect volunteers to run the event alone or ensure students stay on task. Remember, the volunteers are there to help students complete the admission process, but not to discipline students!

Don't forget the survey! Before they leave the computer lab, students should complete the Student Survey at kygoestocollege.com. The survey is very brief and provides valuable program information back to KHEAA. Schools with at least 50% of seniors completing the survey will receive a school-specific report back with their results.

Making the Event Special

Invite educational and community leaders. Include school board members, district administration, local and state representatives in your event. They can volunteer to help with applications or speak to students prior to the event about the importance of attending college.

Contact local media (print, television, radio). Invite local media representatives to cover your event. Encourage newspapers, radio and television stations to attend with cameras and reporters to fuel student excitement. Let KHEAA know if you receive any media coverage so it can be shared statewide via social media.

Contact local businesses. Businesses may be interested in donating snacks for participating students and/or volunteers or even lunch. Finding a local business willing to provide a pizza lunch or ice cream for participating students can be a fun and exciting way to wrap up a week of applying to college! Providing lunch for participating volunteers is a nice way to say "thank you" for their assistance.

Rewards and Incentives. Ask local colleges and universities to consider providing college gear and goodies that can be raffled off to students participating in the event.

Hold a senior assembly or pep rally. A pep rally at the beginning of the week will communicate expectations for the event. Throw a party at the end of the week to celebrate the achievement of applying to college and having a plan for the future!

Dress the part! Encourage all faculty and staff to wear clothing from their colleges in the days and weeks leading up to the event and during the event. Students should be encouraged to ask all faculty and staff about their college experiences. Download the "Ask Me!" door sign from the Online Toolkit at kygoestocollege.com.

Incorporate college-planning activities in the classroom. Encourage all teachers to build lesson plans as part of the event. English teachers may want to organize writing workshops for personal statements or essays to encourage students to work on admission or scholarship essays.

Follow up. Check with students after the event to be sure they take the necessary steps to complete the admission process:

- If they were unable to submit their application during the event, be sure they submit it.
- Be sure all students send the appropriate supporting documentation to the college:
    - Fee waiver forms
    - High school transcripts
    - Official test scores

Sample Schedule of Events

Below is a sample schedule that your school may consider using when planning your event. The items on this schedule are just examples. This gives an outline for a week-long College Application Campaign program, but yours may be longer or shorter depending on the needs of your students and the flexibility of your school's schedule. Gather ideas from this sample and use the options that work best for your students. Remember to include your regional KHEAA Outreach Counselor for workshop sessions, exhibits and more!

Pre-Event Activities

- **Advertise events and activities through various methods:**
  - Social media
  - School and community signage
  - Local media outlets
  - School newsletter
  - Parent teacher conferences
  - School website announcements
  - One Call system
  - Emails sent to students and families
- **Have a door decoration contest among teachers, especially those with senior students**
  - Teachers can select a college (alma mater, local college, or any other Kentucky college) and decorate their doors in celebration of that institution. During the actual application days, college reps and other volunteers can judge for best door decorations. Prizes could include:
    - College gear or goodies donated by college reps (depending upon college donations)
    - Pizza party for winning classroom
- **Conduct college essay writing workshops in English classes**
  - Invite guest speakers from selective institutions that may require an essay.
  - KHEAA can provide a list of sample college essay questions.
- **Research colleges**
  - Attend a KYACAC regional college fair in your area.
  - So that the students know where they would like to apply and have a strong base of knowledge about that school and the admissions requirements, students will need to have researched colleges prior to the application event.
  - Encourage students to utilize the KHEAA website, kheaa.com, and set up a My KHEAA account to make the most of their online college research.
- **Build folders**
  - Students can begin gathering materials to aid in application submission: biographical information, college resumes, essays, transcript, test score reports, payment information, etc. Registered schools receive FREE folders with built-in admission and financial aid checklists for every senior.

College Application Campaign Program Schedule (based on week-long program)

Every day:

- Morning/Afternoon Announcements: each day, a college admission tip or fact can be presented during the morning and afternoon announcements. Seniors will also be reminded of/encouraged to attend the day's or following day's activities. Check the Online Toolkit for sample announcements you may want to use. Consider adding a trivia question to make it into a contest for a prize at the end of the week.
- Apparel: students and teachers can be encouraged to wear college clothing each day of the week.

Invite the KHEAA College Information Road Show and/or your KHEAA Outreach Counselor

- KHEAA's College Info Road Show will be available on a first come/first serve basis. The College Info Road Show's mobile classrooms provide a host of critical services directly to students and families in their own communities. Equipped with satellite Internet access, laptop computers, an instructor's podium and screen and an outdoor projection unit, the Road Shows use state-of-the art technology to connect students with the information they need to research, pursue and succeed in their educational future beyond high school. Students can come onboard to access their KEES account, research colleges, search for scholarships and complete applications!
- Your Regional KHEAA Outreach Counselor, also available on a first-come, first-served basis, can give presentations on admissions, financial aid, and other college access information, as well as assist with application completion.

Monday
- Daytime Kickoff Events
  - Whether schools decide to do a senior pep rally or a presentation in the auditorium or cafeteria, the kickoff event will inform students of the week's activities, as well as encourage them to participate and build enthusiasm. Consider inviting all grade levels to enhance the school-wide college-going culture.

- Drive to Successful College Admissions
  - KHEAA's *Drive to Successful College Admissions* presentation provides students with the timeline, resources and information they need to successfully research and choose the college, university, technical or trade school that's the best fit. (For senior classes or an optional evening event to include parents)

Tuesday
- Daytime
  - KHEAA.com presentations
    - KHEAA Outreach Counselors can provide senior students with the information they need to successfully navigate the career exploration, college preparation and financial aid processes using KHEAA's web portal.

- Evening
  - Professional Mixer
    - Schools can invite professionals from the community to mix and mingle with seniors who may be interested in their career field. Students are encouraged to dress in professional attire and to practice professional networking during the event.

Wednesday
- Daytime
  - Mini-college fair
    - Schools can invite local colleges to which most students plan to apply (or whichever colleges may be able to attend) to set up for an allotted time during the school day for students to ask questions and gather more information.
    - Schools can use reports provided via the Kentucky Department of Education's Individual Learning Plan (ILP) tool to be sure to invite schools of interest to their particular students
- Evening
  - Collegiate Sports Information Night
    - Schools can invite athletic directors and/or compliance officers from local colleges for a panel discussion on NCAA and/or NAIA athletics. Student athletes should be invited to attend to learn more about the eligibility rules and procedures.

Thursday
- Daytime
  - College Application Event
    - During the event, students (by classes or by whatever method works best at your school) will be brought to a computer lab with their application folder they have built previously. School and community volunteers will aid students in applying to at least one college during this time. Students who complete at least one application will receive an official "I Applied" College Application Campaign sticker. Some schools also give tickets for a celebration at the end of the week. (This may take more than one day, depending on the size of your senior class.)
- Evening
  - Paying for College 101
    - KHEAA's *Paying for College 101* workshop provides students and parents with the detailed information they need to complete the FAFSA to apply for student financial aid. Students will learn about the financial aid process, discovering when and how to apply for state and federal funds.

Friday
- Daytime
  - Celebration
    - Whether you decide to do a pizza party, ice cream social, or other celebratory event, students who completed at least one college application will be invited to celebrate their future!

Post College Application Week Events

- *Getting the Facts* **Reports**
  - o All students can access this free personalized report through their My KHEAA accounts on kheaa.com.
  - o KHEAA outreach counselors can come back to the school after the College Application Campaign event to help students complete this valuable personalized report, which will give them college cost and student financial aid estimates for each of their selected institutions.

- **KHEAA Customer Care Team**
  - o If students have questions about their *Getting the Facts* report or about financial aid in general, the KHEAA Customer Care Team is always available to answer questions. Contact them toll-free at 800-928-8926.

- **FAFSA Completion**
  - o The new FAFSA form that high school seniors will need to complete opens every year on October 1. Depending upon the timing of your College Application Campaign event, it may make sense for your students to complete the FAFSA at the same time they complete admission applications or possibly even before. Your KHEAA Outreach Counselor is available to provide FAFSA completion workshops. Participants will receive direct help in completing each line of the FAFSA form as well as applying for an FSA ID. Sessions may be conducted for small or large groups or on an individual appointment basis, during the school day or in the evening.

- **Surviving College**
  - o KHEAA's *Surviving College* workshop is designed to help students prepare for the transition from high school to college life and to help them succeed in their new environment, persisting to degree completion. Topics covered include: Freshman Year 101, Academics, Financial Basics, Campus Life and Resources.

Program Evaluation

Plan to evaluate program effectiveness:
- Only three primary pieces of information need to be collected during your event:
    - Number of students who completed at least one application
    - Total number of admission applications submitted by participating students
    - Schools to which students applied (optional)
- Sign-Out Sheets
    - Before students leave the computer lab, have then sign out. Best practices for collecting student sign-out data, as well as a sign-out template, can be found in the Online Toolkit at kygoestocollege.com. Event totals should be returned to KHEAA for program evaluation.
    - School-specific reports can be shared back with participating schools as requested. All data shared publically will be reported on an aggregate basis only, and no school-specific data will be shown.
- Student and Site Coordinator Surveys
    - Each student who participates in your school's College Application Campaign event should be asked to complete the Student Survey. See the Online Toolkit or contact your KHEAA outreach counselor for the link to the survey. It is most effective to have students complete the survey before they leave the computer lab on the day of the event.
        - Schools with at least 50% of students completing the online survey can request a report with their survey results.
    - The site coordinator or designated individual from your school should complete the Site Coordinator Survey. See the Online Toolkit or contact your KHEAA outreach counselor for the link to the survey.
        - This is where the event totals are reports. There is no need to submit a separate report.
- Additional program review at the school level can include:
    - Collecting additional feedback from students, staff, and volunteers.
    - Hold debriefing meetings with organizers of the event to determine what worked and what should be improved for the school's program next year.

Contact Information

If you have questions about this guide or about the College Application Campaign program, please feel free to contact KHEAA Outreach, and we will be glad to assist you.

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