

Grant award extends Centre College participation in Kessler Scholars

CENTRE COLLEGE

Building on strong early outcomes, Centre College has been awarded a \$1.1 million, four-year grant to extend its participation in the Kessler Scholars Collaborative and deepen its work to assure opportunity and success outcomes for first-generation, low-income (FGLI) college students. This joint investment from Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Judy and Fred Wilpon Family Foundation assures Centre will continue as part of the national Collaborative network, providing comprehensive student support interventions and helping to distribute best practices and resources.

Centre launched the Kessler Scholars Program on its campus in fall 2023 and has welcomed 33 FGLI students as Kessler Scholars since the program's start. Kessler Scholars at Centre have benefited from personalized advising and support from dedicated staff and peer mentors; cohort-based activities to reinforce a sense of belonging; and evidence-based programming designed to elevate first-generation students' strengths and support their academic, personal and professional development.

Early results from Centre show the promise of this comprehensive support model to lower barriers to a world-class college education for first-generation students. The Kessler Scholar Program is one part of Centre's First-Generation Guarantee. Through the Kessler Scholars Program, Grissom Scholarship Program and Thrive Program, all incoming first-generation students at Centre are guaranteed wrap-around funding that provides crucial support and ensures access to transformational opportunities such as study abroad, mentored research and internships.

"We have seen how our community benefits from first-generation college students and the leadership, grit and determination they bring to campus," Centre President Milton C. Moreland said. "We strongly believe that cost should not be a barrier preventing talented students from enjoying all the benefits of a Centre education and unlocking opportunities that will impact future generations."

At scale, over 1,600 Kessler Scholars enrolled across the 16 partner campuses will benefit from the program's comprehensive support model. First launched in fall 2020 with six partner campuses, the Collaborative expanded to 10 additional sites in fall 2023 in a partnership with the American Talent Initiative, a national effort to expand college access and opportunity for students from low- and moderate-income backgrounds.



Investment from Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Wilpon Family Foundation builds on strong early findings from the Kessler Scholars Collaborative's comprehensive, cohort-based support model for first-generation, limited-income students. (Centre College photo)

Early results across the partner institutions in the Kessler Scholars Collaborative show the promise of the Kessler Scholars Program's comprehensive support model:

■ Early partner campuses saw Kessler scholars graduate at a rate 17% higher than their first-generation classmates at those same schools.

■ 97% of graduating seniors in the Kessler Scholars Program in spring 2025 reported they had participated in at least one high-impact practice such as research, an internship, or study abroad — a key indicator of student success during and beyond college.

■ 90% of Kessler Scholars in spring 2025 rated their experience in the Kessler Scholars Program as good or excellent, and 98% of graduating senior respondents indicated that they would recommend the program to students with similar backgrounds.

Although first-generation college students make up more than half of all undergraduates in the U.S., only 24% earn a bachelor's degree six years after starting college, compared with almost 60% of students whose parents hold a bachelor's degree. Too often, first-gen students fail to persist in college because the experiences they encounter on campuses leave them feeling unwelcome, unsure where to turn for academic or personal support, and with an overwhelming sense that college just isn't for them. They also are juggling numerous responsibilities, such as working alongside studying, making it difficult to take full advantage of all that college has to offer. According to First-GenForward, only 8% of first-gen college students study abroad, and fewer than 1 in 4 complete a paid internship during their undergraduate career.

Disrupting those patterns — at the individual and institutional level —

is the foundational aim of the Kessler Scholars student support model, which is based on research showing that sustained, comprehensive student support programs hold the greatest promise for changing the story of college access and success. Kessler Scholars overwhelmingly report a strong sense of belonging to the program.

The extension funding announced today will ensure the operations of Kessler Scholars Programs in the Collaborative continue through 2030.

"Through the American Talent Initiative and through projects like the Kessler Scholars Collaborative, we are providing colleges with new, innovative, and evidence-based resources and support they need to broaden postsecondary opportunity," said Nick Watson, who leads programs for college access and success at Bloomberg Philanthropies. "We are committed to ensuring that higher education is a place for opportunity for all students, regardless of their family's income or educational history."

"We are thrilled about this exciting next chapter for the important student success work of the Kessler Scholars Program," said Gail Gibson, executive director of the Collaborative. "We are demonstrating how a comprehensive, cohort-based approach can help close outcome gaps and promote a sense of belonging for first-generation students. We are so excited to be able to extend this effort and continue to amplify its work to provide guidance to colleagues and institutions across higher education."

This funding extension is designed to ensure that campuses participating in the Collaborative have the opportunity to deepen the program's impact and plan for its sustainability. The extension period also provides time to assess core outcomes, including

retention and degree completion, across the undergraduate journey. During the extension period, Ithaka S+R, a non-profit organization focused on higher-education research, will continue the project's multi-site external evaluation.

"The continuation of the Kessler Program through the 2030-31 school year will allow Centre to unlock a world of opportunities for more first-gen students," said Hannah Stokes '13, director of the Kessler Scholars Program at Centre. "In coming years, we'll reach capacity at 80 scholars and build a strong alumni support network to aid Kessler Scholars as they transition from Centre to the workforce and postgraduate studies. I'm excited to see their impact on campus and the world."

Public hearing discusses proposed US 150 water commission

BY JOSELY LABARRERE

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A recent public hearing held in Danville addressed the potential formation of the US 150 Corridor Water Commission, a multi-county partnership aimed at improving access to clean water and supporting economic development across central Kentucky. The meeting drew local officials, water system representatives, and concerned residents, including former Danville resident Carl Beckman.

The proposed commission would oversee a new water transportation line stretching approximately 30 miles across the US 150 corridor, connecting multiple cities and water districts including Danville, Lancaster, Stanford, Mount Vernon, and others. Utilities Director Marshall Carrier outlined that the project aims to create redundancy in the water supply system, address water quality and availability issues, and serve future industrial development.

Beckman raised several questions during public comments, including concerns over potential rate increases, fluoridation, PFAS ("forever chemicals") in drinking water, and whether outlying communities want Danville controlling a regional water system. "Our rates are already high enough," he said. "We shouldn't have to buy back a water system we already own."

Carrier responded that the proposed commission would be independent from the City of Danville and would not shift debt service to local customers. "This is really about water availability and infrastructure along the US 150 corridor," Carrier said. "There's currently no infrastructure along that corridor."

City officials also noted that the City of Danville is well-equipped to supply additional water. The city currently treats 6 to 6.5 million gallons of water per day but has the capacity to pump up to 12 million gallons daily. An existing agreement with Kentucky Utilities allows for up to 15 million gallons to be drawn from Lake Herrington.

To address PFAS concerns, Carrier explained that Danville has been ahead of the curve, having installed granular activated carbon (GAC) filters in 2016-2017. "We're one of a handful of providers in Kentucky that already has GAC filters, which put us in a great position to provide clean drinking water," he said.

The proposed \$60 million project, if approved, would be eligible for federal and state funding. Organizers believe its regional scale and economic potential—particularly a 1,400-acre industrial site in Rockcastle County—make it a strong candidate for grants.

The hearing concluded with organizers noting that findings of fact will be published in the coming weeks.

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AIR, from 1

The AirBurner system uses air curtain technology to efficiently burn woody waste while minimizing harmful emissions. The resulting biochar is a carbon-rich byproduct that improves soil quality and can be reused in agriculture and landscaping. County officials estimate that the new system will

save Boyle County more than \$100,000 annually by reducing landfill usage and enhancing overall waste processing.

In addition to its environmental benefits, the AirBurner is expected to be a valuable tool during disaster recovery efforts. It will enable rapid removal of storm debris and vegetative waste, streamlining site cleanup and restoration in

emergency situations.

The AirBurner will be integrated into the county's existing solid waste and recycling operations in the coming months. Training and setup are underway, with the goal of having the system fully operational by the end of the year. The project represents a long-term investment in both sustainability and public safety for Boyle County.

court filing of the expungement process.

The event is part of a broader effort to support individuals impacted by substance use and past legal challenges, aligning with the mission of Overdose Awareness Day to foster recovery and healing across communities.

EVENT, from 1

While the expungement event itself is free—including the opportunity to obtain a copy of your criminal history and receive legal advice—organizers note that there are fees associated with the final