



NEWS RELEASE

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(Note to media: Dr. Thompson's photo is available at <http://cpe.ky.gov/aboutus/presidentialsearch.html>).

Dr. Aaron Thompson named fourth president of CPE

(FRANKFORT, Ky)—Following a national search, the Council on Postsecondary Education unanimously selected Dr. Aaron Thompson as its fourth president.

Thompson, who presently serves as the Council's executive vice president and chief academic officer, will transition to his new responsibilities Nov. 1.

He is the first Kentucky native and African-American to hold the position since the Council was formed 21 years ago.

"We have greatly benefited at the state level by Aaron's strategic leadership and statesmanship over the past decade. Time and time again, we have relied on Aaron as an essential advocate and leader across many fronts, including the critical areas of college opportunity and student success," said Council Chair Sherrill Zimmerman.

"We are confident that he will be the innovative, dynamic and transformational leader that will benefit Kentucky higher education and our students," added Zimmerman.

"I am humbled by the honor of being named the fourth president of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. I love Kentucky, and it has been my life's mission to add to the Commonwealth's prosperity through education," said Thompson.

Thompson is passionate about sharing how education was a catalyst for his own success.

"As a native of Clay County, a son of an illiterate coal miner and a mother with only an eighth grade education, I am not only a first-generation college graduate, I am a first-generation high school graduate. Now, I am immensely fortunate to have an opportunity to represent that great opportunity to all citizens of Kentucky," he said.

"I want to thank the Council, staff and leadership for this show of confidence," Thompson added.

Thompson came to the Council in 2009 from Eastern Kentucky University (EKU), where he held a variety of academic leadership positions and was a tenured professor in the department of educational leadership and policy studies. In May 2016, he left the Council for more than a year to serve as interim president for Kentucky State University.

As a nationally respected leader, he has served on more than 50 state and national boards and committees. He currently is board chair for the National Council on Community and Education Partnerships and serves on the Quality Assurance Commons for Higher and Postsecondary Education Advisory Board. He also serves on the corporate board for Baptist Health Care and is the chair of the Committee of Governance Effectiveness.

At the state level, Thompson serves on the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB), KWIB Employer Engagement Committee and KWIB Education Attainment and Completion Committee, the Charter Schools Advisory Committee, the Kentucky Humanities Council, the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board, and the Citizens Action Committee for the Destruction of Chemical Weapons, among others.

Thompson earned a Bachelor of Arts in political science and sociology from Eastern Kentucky University, a master's degree in sociology and a doctorate in sociology, both from the University of Kentucky.

Thompson will fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Robert L. King, who served as president for nearly 10 years.

AGB Search conducted the national search.

Council will negotiate a final contract at its next meeting set Nov. 15-16.

For more information on the search process, and to view Dr. Thompson's curriculum vitae, visit: <http://cpe.ky.gov/aboutus/presidentialsearch.html>.

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The Council on Postsecondary Education is leading efforts to get more Kentuckians more highly educated. By 2030, at least 60 percent of working-age adults in Kentucky will need to have earned a postsecondary education degree or credential to meet expected workforce demands.