



**Search for
CEO/Executive Director
The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) and the Kentucky Higher Education
Student Loan Corporation (KHESLC)
Frankfort & Louisville, KY**

THE SEARCH

The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA) and the Kentucky Higher Education Student Loan Corporation (KHESLC), state-affiliated entities that share the common goal of improving access to higher education in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, seeks an experienced, inspiring, and innovative leader as their next Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director (CEO/ED). The CEO/ED reports to the Board of Directors and leads a strong and dedicated team of 215 staff across KHEAA, KHESLC, as well as Kentucky's Affordable Prepaid Tuition Plan (KAPT) and the Asset Resolution Corporation (ARC). Through a collaborative and collegial approach, open and transparent communication, and strategic leadership, the CEO/ED will work closely with the Board of Directors, senior staff, and external partners to advance and extend KHEAA/KHESLC's public mission.

The new CEO/ED will join KHEAA/KHESLC at a moment of great possibility as the organization navigates the ever-changing financial aid and postsecondary education landscape. The CEO/ED will provide leadership, vision, and policy direction within the organization, as well as at the state and national levels, to support and amplify higher education affordability, access, and attainment. To this end, they will be an adept relationship builder and advocate, possessing the political acumen and subject matter expertise needed to communicate and partner with state agencies, legislators, decision-makers, and community organizations across the Commonwealth and beyond to move forward KHEAA and KHESLC's educational aims.

The successful candidate will be a mission-driven change agent, identifying and implementing creative strategies to increase the financial sustainability, effectiveness, and impact of KHEAA/KHESLC's offerings, and proactively adapting to the shifts and uncertainty within the field of post-secondary student financing. The CEO/ED will support the agencies' deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and to expanding opportunities for diverse and low-income students. As the executive of a large and distributed team, the CEO/ED will be an accessible and inclusive leader, modeling a culture of transparency, mutual respect, and collaboration and providing support, guidance, and inspiration to staff at all levels of the organization.

KHEAA/KHESLC has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in conducting this important search and to help identify outstanding candidates. All inquiries, applications, and nominations for this opportunity should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

THE KENTUCKY HIGHER EDUCATION ASSISTANCE AUTHORITY, THE KENTUCKY HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT LOAN CORPORATION, & THE ASSET RESOLUTION CORPORATION

The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA), the Kentucky Higher Education Student Loan Corporation (KHESLC), and the Asset Resolution Corporation (ARC) are a group of state-affiliated entities that share a common mission to ensure all students seeking to further their postsecondary education are successful, as well as a vision to connect all Kentuckians to higher education.

KHEAA, KHESLC, and ARC are governed by a shared board of directors appointed by the Governor of Kentucky. Additionally, there are five ex officio voting members on the board: the President of the Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities, President of the Council of Postsecondary Education, Secretary of the Finance and Administration Cabinet, Commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Education, and Kentucky State Treasurer.

KHEAA's headquarters are located in Frankfort, KY, the state capital, KHESLC is based in Louisville, and there are regionally based staff across the Commonwealth. Of KHEAA/KHESLC's 215 total employees, 12 fall under KHEAA and 203 fall under KHESLC.

The Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA)

KHEAA is a public corporation and government agency and instrumentality to the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Established in 1966 to improve students' access to higher education, KHEAA administers financial aid programs and disseminates information about higher education opportunities. KHEAA provides multiple grant and scholarship programs to Kentucky's college-bound citizenry to finance their education. The four largest programs KHEAA offers are:

- Kentucky Education Excellence Scholarship (KEES): Kentucky's merit scholarship program that rewards academic achievement and encourages the state's best and brightest to stay in Kentucky.
- The College Access Program Grant: helps students with financial need at any Kentucky college.
- Kentucky Tuition Grant: assists students attending private or independent colleges.
- The Dual Credit Scholarship: helps students take college courses while still in high school.

In FY21, KHEAA disbursed over \$278 million to more than 176,000 Kentucky students in the form of grants and scholarships.

In addition to grant and scholarship programs, KHEAA also provides information, tools, and outreach services to support students and families as they navigate the college and financial aid processes. Kentucky Goes to College, KHEAA's website for its major college access initiatives offers resources for schools and organizations interested in enhancing their programs. Other outreach services prepare high school students for life after graduation, increase the number of first-generation and low-income students applying to college, celebrate the accomplishments of college-bound seniors, help students navigate and complete FAFSA applications, and connect students with college coaches.

KHEAA also reaches beyond the Commonwealth, offering FAFSA verification and student default prevention services to higher education institutions across the country.

The Kentucky Higher Education Student Loan Corporation (KHESLC)

In 1978, the Kentucky state legislature created KHESLC, an independent municipal corporation to finance, make, purchase, service, and collect student loans. KHESLC has three departments involved in servicing student loans: loan servicing, loan administration, and operations support. As of FY21, KHESLC was servicing approximately \$1 billion in outstanding balances for approximately 51,000 borrowers. KHESLC's asset management operations, consisting of debt recovery, debt recovery administration, and operations, is responsible for all collections activities for the defaulted Federal Family Education Loan and Advantage Loan accounts.

KHESLC owns, originates, funds, services, and collects Advantage Education Loans to students, Advantage Parent Loans to parents, and Advantage Refinance Loans to borrowers already in repayment. Advantage Education Loans are among the most competitive private loans in the marketplace. In FY21, despite the impacts of COVID on higher education and the national economy, 127 colleges and universities added the Advantage Education Loan and Advantage Parent Loan to their preferred lender lists.

The Asset Resolution Corporation (ARC)

ARC was established in 2012 for the purpose of promoting higher educational opportunities by providing debt resolution services for student loan obligations. ARC is a full-service agency specializing in defaulted student loans and other education receivables.

Financial Position

Despite the uncertainty and changes within the financial aid sector, especially challenges brought upon by COVID and subsequent responses by the federal government, KHEAA/KHESLC's financial position remains stable. For FY23, project expenses are \$17.5 million for KHEAA, \$18.7 million for KHESLC, and over \$435,000 for KAPT. Revenue sources come from a combination of government funds such as student aid revenue and unclaimed lottery revenue, as well as proprietary funds, namely debt recovery commission and interest income on loans.

THE ROLE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

KHEAA/KHESLC opens the door to postsecondary educational opportunities for Kentuckians by removing barriers and improving access through educational and financial resources, with a particular commitment to diversity and increasing affordability for students of color and low-income students. With this guiding mission, the new CEO/ED will have an incredible opportunity to make an impact upon the lives of students and their families, as well as the Commonwealth's postsecondary educational landscape. They will serve as one of the Commonwealth's leading policy advocates for financial access to postsecondary education, representing the interests of prospective and enrolled Kentucky postsecondary education students and their families.

The CEO/ED will report to the Board of Directors and will lead KHEAA, KHESLC, ARC, as well as Kentucky's Affordable Prepaid Tuition Plan (KAPT). The CEO/ED's has 12 direct reports including an 11-member executive team and a Senior Executive Management Assistant. The executive team consists of:

- The Internal Audit Manager
- The General Counsel, who oversees Legal Compliance and Human Resources
- The Director of Outreach Services
- The Director of Customer Care & Business Development
- The Chief Financial Officer, who oversees Administrative Services, Financial Operations, and the Controller
- The Chief Information Officer, who oversees Software Engineering and Project Management, and Infrastructure Services
- The Vice President of Guarantee Operations and School Services
- The Vice President of Asset Management, who oversees Collections
- The Vice President of Operations
- The Director of Research

The CEO/ED has offices in both the Frankfort and Louisville locations and will be expected to go between the two locations regularly.

Duties and Responsibilities

- Provide leadership, advocacy, and policy direction at the state and national level to support the public purposes of higher education affordability, access, and attainment.
- Work effectively to improve access to and successful completion of postsecondary education in the Commonwealth, including by working collaboratively with other state agencies and the Executive and Legislative branches to innovate new training and education programs beyond high school or while still in high school.
- Formulate and implement enhanced, creative, and sustainable student financial assistance programs including the development of new lines of business to enable the organizations to continue to be self-supporting.
- Develop partnerships and relationships with other state agencies including but not limited to: the Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities (AIKCU) in removing barriers in postsecondary education, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) helping students transition from secondary to postsecondary education, the Kentucky State Treasurer's Office on

financial literacy, the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), the Finance and Administration Cabinet, the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS) who collects and integrates Kentucky education and workforce data, policymakers, and public or private organizations to promote the value of postsecondary education.

- Work to increase the postsecondary education rate of Kentucky's citizens through outreach, intervention, and marketing.
- Demonstrate a commitment to diversity and increasing affordability for students of color and low-income students.
- Communicate at state and national meetings, including testimony before legislative bodies, regarding the relationships between postsecondary education affordability and career attainment, to secure funds, garner support or convey information.
- Present strategic plans, budgets, and regulations to the Board for approval.
- Oversee the planning and execution of public financing to secure student loan capital.
- Orchestrate the continued growth of the state-based loan programs, while remaining compliant with all applicable laws and regulations.
- Guide and evaluate senior staff as they manage 215 employees with headquarters in Frankfort, Kentucky with regionally based staff across the Commonwealth; assess needed operational funds, information technology, and capital investments to efficiently and effectively deliver programs and services.
- Lead diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts to strengthen workforce development and career pathways for employees.
- Support the day-to-day operations of a combined municipal corporation, a state agency, and other instrumentalities that administer several diverse state and federal higher education financial aid programs and two 529 plans.
- Enter into contracts and agreements, and ensure compliance with federal, state, and administrative laws with the assistance of the relevant senior staff.
- Oversee a 501(c)(3) education-related foundation, created by statute and administered by KHEAA.

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

The CEO/ED will join KHEAA/KHESLC at a time of change and possibility with a distinct premium placed on inclusive leadership and a capacity to respond and adapt to the dynamic landscape of financial aid and postsecondary education.

Specifically, the challenges and opportunities for the next CEO/ED include:

Advance KHEAA/KHESLC's Mission Through Strategic Planning, Collaboration, and Vision Setting

The CEO/ED will be a strategic partner to the volunteer Board of Directors, actively collaborating with senior staff to advance KHEAA/KHESLC's public mission. They will collaborate with external partners and stakeholders at the state and national levels, providing leadership, advocacy, and policy direction that supports higher education affordability, access, and attainment. The CEO/ED will be responsible for presenting strategic plans, budgets, and regulations to the Board for approval. As the fulcrum between KHEAA, KHESLC, and ARC, they will be essential to strengthening open, transparent, and productive lines of communication and collaboration between units and actors, ensuring work is aligned.

Of particular importance will be navigating the changes and uncertainties currently facing the field of higher education and financial aid and leveraging creativity to ensure the continued financial sustainability of the organizations. Specifically, the Fresh Start program, initially announced by the Department of Education in spring 2022, has the possibility of significantly impacting KHESLC's work and revenue. Although the details of this initiative are still unannounced and the effects unknown, the CEO/ED will need to be at the forefront of understanding how federal, as well as state, policies and legislative agendas will affect the work of the organization and pursue innovative strategies to navigate this challenge and others that arise. They will need to be involved in creative planning and visioning processes to chart what KHEAA/KHESLC's work can look like given changes and uncertainty in the field.

Lead and Support the KHEAA and KHESLC Staff

The CEO/ED will provide leadership and management for KHEAA/KHESLC's 215 employees distributed between the headquarters in Frankfort, and regionally based locations across the Commonwealth. They will inherit a talented, dedicated staff with deep institutional knowledge and a strong commitment to KHEAA/KHESLC's mission. The CEO/ED will be expected to build, support, and empower these teams, utilizing the expertise of seasoned members while also helping them grow and develop as professionals.

It will be especially important that the CEO/ED work to recruit and retain top talent while cultivating community, camaraderie, and collaboration amongst team members and units. To do so, the CEO/ED will need to foster and model a culture of mutual respect, transparency, accessibility, flexibility, integrity, and shared accountability. Given the experience and dedication of the staff, it will be important for the next CEO/ED to make space for and demonstrate a genuine appreciation of diverse strengths and perspectives.

Build Relationships and Serve as a Thought-Partner to Policy-Makers and External Partners

As the public face of the organizations, the CEO/ED will be a trusted, highly informed, and nonpartisan partner to governmental, legislative, and executive actors in the Commonwealth. Given that KHEAA/KHESLC's work is enmeshed with and ever impacted by state and federal policy, the CEO/ED must cultivate and maintain working relationships with decision-makers so that they can stay abreast of upcoming policy recommendations and serve as an expert resource on legislative matters pertaining to KHEAA/KHESLC's mission. It will also be important that the CEO/ED develop partnerships with other related state entities, as well as colleges, universities, and community organizations in the Commonwealth to remove barriers to postsecondary education, increase college affordability, and promote the value of inclusive, accessibly higher education for Kentuckians.

In addition to political savvy and strong relationship building skills, the CEO/ED will also need a nuanced understanding of the local cultural and political context of Kentucky, appreciating the values and mores across the Commonwealth's diverse geographies including urban centers, rural Appalachia, and small towns.

Champion Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts

KHEAA and KHESLC are dedicated to upholding the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) through the work they do to improve students' access to higher education through information, counseling and mentoring, and financial aid. The CEO/ED must be aligned with these values and bring an understanding of and commitment to the ways in which DEI is central to the mission and goals of KHEAA and KHESLC. Working in partnership with the Board and senior staff, the CEO/ED will lead practices that expand and support DEI efforts to the benefit of college-bound Kentuckians, as well as KHEAA and KHESLC's own diverse workforce. They will bring a nuanced perspective of the barriers that diverse and low-income students face, as well as the strengths these students bring as they navigate the college and financial aid process, and work to develop innovative tools, resources, and strategies that support these populations.

Generate New Lines of Business and Evaluate Existing Programs

The next CEO/ED will need an entrepreneurial spirit and innovative thinking as they evaluate KHEAA/KHESLC's current programs and look to create new opportunities for growth. Given the changing landscape of financial aid and its impacts upon the organization's portfolio, it will be important for the CEO/ED to think creatively about pursuing new lines of business as revenue generators. Knowledge of and familiarity with the higher education and financial aid community will be key as a means towards identifying such opportunities.

In a similar vein, the CEO/ED will also lead efforts to evaluate the performance of existing programs and offerings. Leveraging a data-driven approach, the CEO/ED will work with KHEAA/KHESLC's teams to ensure that programs are financially sustainable, as well as impactful. For those that are underperforming, the CEO/ED will develop strategies to enhance and reenergize those offerings or think critically about their continued role within the KHEAA/KHESLC's portfolio. These efforts will be of critical importance to ensure that KHEAA/KHESLC's work is most efficiently and effectively meeting the needs of students and families navigating the college and financial aid process.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Bachelor's degree required. Graduate, professional, or doctoral degree preferred.
- Management-level knowledge of or experience in higher education policy, student financial assistance, or student aid-related service industry.
- Knowledge of higher education financial aid programs and policies.

- Demonstrated leadership skills and ability to lead and work effectively with internal staff within an organization to manage projects, accomplish objectives, and meet goals.
- Demonstrated ability to manage staff through a collaborate culture.
- Familiarity with state government and nonprofit organizations.
- Ability to work effectively with legislative and executive branch leaders on both the state and the federal level.
- Excellent communication skills (oral and written) and a strong negotiator and facilitator.
- Ability to work effectively with a Board or Boards of Directors.
- Familiarity with or involvement in national organizations related to student financial aid and/or higher education.
- Ability to be adaptable to a changing environment, and exhibit innovative thinking.

APPLICATIONS, NOMINATIONS, AND INQUIRIES

Confidential inquiries, nominations/referrals, and applications (including resumes and letters of interest responding to the opportunities and challenges outlined above) should be sent electronically to the Isaacson, Miller executive search team via the link below.

Dan Rodas, Partner
Katy Ryan, Senior Associate
Isaacson, Miller

<http://www.imsearch.com/8628>

KHEAA and KHESLC are committed to hiring employees who are qualified for their respective positions and maintaining a diverse workforce. We maintain a family-friendly atmosphere and help employees succeed in both their private lives and careers. We offer competitive benefits to attract highly qualified employees and to help us meet the ever-changing requirements and conditions in today's business environment.

KHEAA and KHESLC are equal opportunity employers. We do not discriminate based on age, sex, religion, race, or national origin.