The Crisis at Kentucky State University

A Signal, A Test, and A Warning for HBCUs and Minority-Serving Institutions





Kentucky State University campus views. Images supplied by the presenter.

KSU's future raises questions about public investment, institutional control, and who has power to shape a Black educational space.

What changed under SB 185

Signed April 13, 2026, SB 185 became Chapter 120 of the 2026 Kentucky Acts. [1]

Policy area	What Chapter 120 provides [1]
Mission	Designates KSU a four-year residential polytechnic institution, retaining liberal studies and its historical HBCU mission.
State oversight	Declares financial exigency for up to five years. The Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) must approve obligations or spending of $20,000 or more in advance.
Academic programs	Requires program review and limits academic areas of study to 10, subject to the statutory exception and accreditation safeguards.
Student access	Restricts enrollment when balances exceed $1,000 and are over 60 days past due, with an approved-payment-plan exception.
Campus life	Maintains good-standing fraternity and sorority charters. The final staffing provision uses a target of at least 1,000 in-person students, not a ceiling.

The resource context matters

$172,135,168. The 2023 federal comparison estimated this KSU funding gap for 1987–2020 relative to UK's per-student state support. It is a historical parity estimate, not a court award or current cash balance. [2]

CPE's 2025 review documented institutional improvements alongside unresolved financial-management concerns. A full accounting must examine university leadership and the Commonwealth's funding and policy decisions together. [3]

Prepared by Sabrina Tiggs • sabrinatiggs@yahoo.com

Why the KSU Crisis Matters Beyond Kentucky

Institutional futures involve resources, educational mission, and community power





Historical campus views. Images supplied by the presenter.

What Other Institutions Should Watch

Policy analysis by Sabrina Tiggs

A SIGNAL KSU shows how legislation can connect a declaration of financial crisis to changes in academic mission and governing authority. Other HBCUs and minority-serving institutions should track both funding decisions and the powers attached to reform.

A TEST The case tests what accountability includes: historical public investment, institutional management, the fit between the problem and the remedy, and meaningful participation by students, faculty, alumni, and surrounding communities.

A WARNING Keeping an institutional name or designation does not answer whether communities retain the resources and influence needed to sustain educational and cultural life. Examine who defines the crisis, who determines the solution, and who bears its consequences.

Connect with Defenders of KSU

DOKSU describes itself as a community-funded effort supporting the federal civil rights challenge to SB 185. Its website provides legal documents, student resources, updates, and ways to support the legal effort. [4]

Scan to connect with Defenders of KSU

https://defendersofksu.org/ | sabrinatiggs@yahoo.com

Sabrina Tiggs • KSU alumna, KSU parent, educator and researcher

Defenders of KSU is an independent advocacy effort, not affiliated with Kentucky State University. [4]

Sources and further reading

[1] Kentucky General Assembly. 2026 Ky. Acts ch. 120, §§ 1–3, 6; SB 185 legislative history.

[2] Jess Clark, Louisville Public Media, September 20, 2023. Federal KSU funding comparison.

[3] CPE. KSU Management Improvement Plan final report (2025).

[4] Defenders of KSU. Website and legal-defense information.

Prepared November 2, 2026. Sources distinguish documented facts from the presenter's policy analysis.