Developed and coordinated by the University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture, Food and Environment’s Department of Agricultural Economics and Office of Diversity; Kentucky Council of Cooperatives; and the Cooperative Extension Service’s 4-H and Youth Development, the American Private Enterprise System helps prepare students for an active role in business through direct involvement with business and professional leaders—offering and encouraging an exchange of ideas between the groups. In doing so, it acquaints students with career opportunities in business and provides leadership training for those serving as officers and committee members in local, area, state, and national programs. It can also provide citizenship training as participants learn about applied American business practices.

For those who excel, scholarships are available to attend the Kentucky Youth Seminar and the summer meetings of the National Institute of Cooperative Education, where participants are invited to share their experiences with council members at special meetings, member cooperative meetings, and with other groups.

American Private Enterprise System
University of Kentucky
400 Charles E. Barnhart Bldg.
Lexington, KY  40546-0276
859-257-3482

uky.edu/Ag/apes
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
The American Private Enterprise System is for students. High school juniors and seniors are eligible to participate in the program—representing some of the brightest future leaders of Kentucky.
Participants have the opportunity to meet and engage with leaders in their communities while building their own leadership and analytical skills through different aspects of doing business. They can even serve on a board of directors of a corporation or a cooperative—solving problems that real businesses face daily—all while forming relationships with Cooperative Extension Agents, community leaders, university administrators, and peers across the nation.

COUNTY EXTENSION AGENTS
The American Private Enterprise System is for agents. County Extension Agents identify local interest, sponsors, and meeting facilities—selecting business and professional leaders for discussions, explaining program objectives, and developing a financial plan. They also administer all exams; plan and coordinate the awards program; and elect the participants, counselors, and sponsors for the Kentucky Youth Seminar, concluding with the completion and submission of their final report.
Start-up scholarships of up to $500 are available for agents interested in starting the American Private Enterprise System in their county.

COMMUNITY LEADERS
The American Private Enterprise System is for leaders. Business and professional leaders are crucial to the success of this program—volunteering to share their knowledge, viewpoints, and perspectives on business as well as the local and global economies with the future leaders from our state. On average, over 1,500 leaders serve our system in different capacities on an annual basis.
From those of us at the American Private Enterprise System, we offer sincere thanks to these local leaders who offer their time to support our youth participants and our agents.

ON A LOCAL LEVEL
Local programs are the heart of the American Private Enterprise System. Here, agents coordinate with local business and professional leaders to discuss engaging, dynamic topics while also visiting selected businesses in the area. This can happen in one of two program formats.
The extended format meets 1 to 2 hours once a week for 6 to 8 weeks. While more challenging to organize and conduct, the concentrated impact approach is a three-day format that tends to encourage larger involvement and attendance as well as stronger school support—resulting in a larger number of those beginning the program to complete it satisfactorily.

ON A STATE LEVEL
Participants who excel in local programs are selected to attend the three-day Kentucky Youth Seminar at the University of Kentucky. They continue their study and, as officers and directors, solve the business problems of their corporations. Top seminar Youth Scholars receive cash awards totaling $1,500 or more. In addition, 20 all-expense-paid trips are awarded for the annual meeting of the National Institute of Cooperative Education (NICE), held each year on the campus of one of the nation’s leading universities.

ON A NATIONAL LEVEL
Participants who excel at the Kentucky Youth Seminar are selected to attend the largest youth conference in the country—the five-day National Institute on Cooperative Education (NICE). Here, students work in teams to gain knowledge on cooperative business principles, develop valuable leadership skills, and to get to know peers from across the U.S. through various components, including a student-run cooperative, case study competition, and a business simulation. Each state also nominates one male and one female candidate to be selected Outstanding Youth Scholar based on written applications that focus on exhibited leadership skills, cooperative knowledge, and interviews before a panel of judges.