



# EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ROUNDTABLE MINUTES

February 11, 2026

The Education and Workforce Development Roundtable of the City of Mesa met in The Studios at Mesa City Center, 59 E. 1st St., on February 11, 2026, at 1:33 p.m.

## BOARDMEMBERS PRESENT

Councilmember Heredia, Chair  
Candice Copple, Vice Chair  
Dr. Richard Daniel  
Councilmember Duff  
Marcie Hutchinson  
David Loutzenheiser  
Dr. Shane McCord  
Bob Nelson (Designee for Sally Harrison)  
Rich Nickel  
Renee Parker (Designee for Dr. Matthew Strom)  
Jenny Jackson Robinson  
Jennifer Schwartz (Designee for Dr. Chad Wilson)  
Matt Sexton (Designee for David Williams)\*  
Kristin Sorenson  
Jessica Steadman (Designee for Dr. Joseph Foy)

## BOARDMEMBERS ABSENT

Vince Yanez  
Dr. Perry Berry

## STAFF PRESENT

Lisa Cartwright-Harris  
Holly Moseley  
Rafaella Safarian  
Sarah Tolar

(\*Participated in the meeting through the use of video conference equipment.)

Chairperson Heredia conducted a roll call.

Chairperson Heredia excused Boardmembers Yanez and Berry from the entire meeting.

### 1. Call meeting to order, welcome announcements and reminders from the Chair.

Chairperson Heredia called the meeting to order. He welcomed Designee Bob Nelson, Director of Communications at the Mesa Chamber of Commerce; Designee Renee Parker, Director of Community Partnerships at Mesa Public Schools; Jennifer Schwartz, Dean of Instructional Programs at East Valley Institute of Technology; Designee Matt Sexton, Community Development

Manager at Meta; and Jessica Steadman, Campus Manager and Director of Marketing at Benedictine University.

2. Introduce the new member appointed to the Education and Workforce Development Roundtable.

Education and Workforce Administrator Sarah Tolar displayed a PowerPoint presentation. **(See Attachment 1)**

Chairperson Heredia introduced Councilmember Duff and welcomed her to the Education and Workforce Development Roundtable (EWDR).

Chairperson Heredia reviewed the 2026 quarterly meeting schedule and reminded the EWDR to notify staff if there are any conflicts. (See Page 2 of Attachment 1)

3. Take action to approve the Roundtable Meeting Minutes from December 3, 2025.

It was moved by Boardmember Daniel, seconded by Boardmember Jackson Robinson, that the December 3, 2025, Education and Workforce Development Roundtable meeting minutes be approved.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – Heredia–Copple–Daniel–Duff–Hutchinson–Loutzenheizer–McCord–Nelson–Nickel–Parker–Jackson Robinson–Schwartz–Sexton–Sorensen–Steadman  
NAYS – None  
ABSENT – Berry–Yanez

Chairperson Heredia declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

4. City staff to provide update regarding the progress of Arizona Institute for Education and the Economy initiatives. City staff to provide additional update on the childcare needs assessment task force project in partnership with First Things First.

Ms. Tolar provided an update on current initiatives of the Arizona Institute for Education and the Economy, including its three initial “big bets,” the State 48 Graduate Profile, and AI guidance intended to serve as a resource for educators, students, and businesses. She reported that a spring convening is scheduled for April 1, bringing together K-12 teams from each district to review playbooks and sandbox practices that have been successful, examine permission-granted documents from districts statewide, and develop recommendations for broader implementation. (See Pages 4 through 8 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Tolar discussed the ongoing work related to early childhood education, noting that Melinda Gulick is leading statewide efforts to support young learners. She emphasized that early childhood education is both a family resource and an economic development issue, as it helps establish a foundation for kindergarten readiness and long-term success. She stated that childcare remains a statewide challenge and that the City of Mesa (COM) is seeking to better understand how Mesa businesses are affected before implementing strategies. She explained that the current effort is intended to identify not only the childcare gap, but also the reasons for it, including affordability,

accessibility, and family preferences, and reported that funding had been identified to support the project and create a task force to help identify key issues. She said the COM is also seeking consultant support to better understand the specific childcare challenges facing Mesa businesses, how those challenges may differ from neighboring communities, and whether City policies or practices affect childcare availability. She noted that the analysis will include a comparison with similarly sized cities to identify strategies being used elsewhere and invited feedback from the EWDR. She asked members to share the names of any interested organizations, businesses that should be contacted, or entities willing to assist with survey administration, adding that she would send additional information to the group by email. (See Pages 9 through 11 of Attachment 1)

Boardmember Nickel shared information regarding House Bill 4032, and noted that the bill addresses alternative tobacco products, including vape products, as part of a potential revenue stream.

5. Hear updates from Roundtable higher education representatives on priorities, challenges and initiatives regarding the support of post-secondary education outcomes in Mesa.

Boardmember Daniel highlighted key priorities that had been identified since he was appointed President of Mesa Community College (MCC). He emphasized that all efforts are interconnected and begin with supporting students through the educational pipeline to completion, whether for workforce entry or transfer to a university. He stated that MCC is focused on aligning programs with workforce needs, strengthening partnerships, improving student access to programs, and providing flexible support services to help students succeed. He noted the importance of exposing students earlier so they are aware of available opportunities and can better prepare for their futures. He reported that MCC is experiencing a budget reduction of approximately \$2.2 million in addition to the \$1.5 million lost this year, while continuing to expand programming and facilities without a corresponding increase in revenue. He emphasized the importance of working collectively with community partners to ensure continued student and institutional success. (See Pages 12 through 15 of Attachment 1)

In response to a question from Boardmember Nickel, Boardmember Daniel stated that no funding is included in the Governor's budget at this time. He reported that a current priority is restoration of aid to Maricopa Community Colleges that was eliminated in 2013, noting that approximately \$28 million had been proposed for phased implementation over a four-year period, but was not included in the budget. He added that the colleges will continue to advocate for the funding, which would help offset ongoing losses and budget reductions.

Vice Chairperson Copple commented on the strong partnership between Arizona State University (ASU) and the community college system, noting that the two systems rely on one another to support student success and workforce development. She observed that Arizona experienced the largest decline in state higher education funding in the nation last year but stated that efforts continue to identify creative opportunities to advance key initiatives. She provided updates on ASU activities in Mesa, including the opening of the ASU Health headquarters this spring, an upcoming Council Study Session regarding the Arts and Innovation District, and potential reuse of the post office site and other municipal properties in partnership with the COM. She pointed out the construction of a new student union building at the Polytechnic campus, and the newly offered bachelor's degree program in manufacturing systems. She encouraged the EWDR to attend a family event at the Interdisciplinary Science & Technology (ITSB) building on February 28, 2026, to showcase the program through hands-on activities.

Jessica Steadman, Campus Manager and Director of Marketing at Benedictine University, provided an update on Benedictine University's recent initiatives and programs. She reported that the undergraduate entrepreneurship degree has been renewed and aligns closely with the Cahoots Institute that is thriving this year with 12 participants. She shared that Benedictine has partnered with Howell Management Services to offer a graduate-level data analytics program designed for working adults, and that the first year of the in-person hybrid master's in business administration (MBA) program has attracted a strong number of graduate students. She highlighted the University's athletic and student support efforts and pointed out graduate assistant opportunities for sports teams. She recalled that this is the second year of the Redhawk Promise Program providing free tuition to qualifying COM students and noted monthly working sessions to better understand higher education needs and foster a welcoming campus environment. She announced that on February 26, 2026, a Journey in Leadership event will be held at 12 West Brewery where Mayor Freeman would participate in a question-and-answer session with students.

Designee Steadman discussed budget challenges affecting higher education institutions. She identified the most significant challenge for Benedictine in Downtown Mesa as securing practice locations for its 11 sports teams. She invited suggestions or contacts that may assist in identifying additional practice facilities.

6. Hear presentation from Arizona Board of Regents on *AZ Opportunity* initiative.

- a. Discuss priorities, work and opportunities for City of Mesa's engagement with *AZ Opportunity*.

Sarah Harper, Vice President of Communications at Arizona Board of Regents, provided an overview of the Board of Regents, including its role in governing Arizona's public university system. She reviewed the post-secondary attainment initiatives designed to support students, families, and educators, including resources available through the College Ready AZ website. She reported that the organization continues to expand its attainment efforts through Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion, with the goal of 50% increased participation by the fall semester. She explained that, through a partnership with Valley of the Sun and the United Way, students who complete the FAFSA may be eligible for scholarships of up to \$500, and schools that increase FAFSA completion rates by 50% may also receive funding as an incentive. She discussed the FAFSA Peer Coach Program that launched in 2022 and stated that it places trained students in high schools to work one-on-one with their peers to assist with FAFSA completion. She noted that the program is currently operating in 53 high schools, including all Mesa Public School campuses, with a focus on Title I schools and those with lower completion rates, and is now expanding to Pima County. She highlighted the College Connect program, which allows schools to track whether students have started or completed the FAFSA to better tailor outreach efforts. (See Pages 17 through 29 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Harper added that Arizona continues to face a degree attainment shortfall, with approximately 48% attainment compared with a national average of 62%, and that the State of Arizona is projected to face a shortage of 26,000 degrees by 2030. She stated that outreach to young people must go beyond financial messaging and instead emphasize purpose, belonging, and community connection. She expressed the need for continued coordination around FAFSA completion, including outreach to foster youth and adults who left college before earning a degree, as well as the importance of reaching students earlier in the educational pipeline. (See Pages 30 through 32 of Attachment 1)

In response to a question from Boardmember Hutchinson, Ms. Harper confirmed that FAFSA initiative participation had declined in some areas of the state and noted concerns about immigration-related fears affecting parents and student engagement.

Discussion ensued regarding the need for a consistent community message about the value of post-secondary education and highlighting the Arizona Opportunity and Promise scholarship efforts, along with broader workforce priorities in allied health, STEM, water, agriculture, and forestry.

Ms. Harper stated that data alone does not always resonate with young people and emphasized that messages focused solely on earning more money may be less effective than those centered on happiness, community, and a sense of purpose. She stressed the importance of understanding students' perspectives and tailoring outreach accordingly. (See Pages 33 through 39 Attachment 1)

7. Roundtable members share information regarding their involvement in recent and upcoming education or workforce-related events or programs.

Designee Nelson expressed appreciation for the positive partnerships between the local School Districts, Mesa City Council and the Chamber of Commerce. He encouraged ongoing efforts to strengthen partnerships between the business community and the education community.

Boardmember Loutzenheiser highlighted several community partnerships, including the Business Partners Breakfast that brings local businesses together to discuss focused topics, civic engagement opportunities, and ways to connect students with the community. He noted that Higley schools help facilitate opportunities for community members to engage with and support students through initiatives such as Stuff the Bus, employer group partnerships, and the Future Leaders Project. He stated that these efforts create engagement opportunities and valuable early connections for student learning.

Boardmember Nickel shared the Power Hours series hosted by Education Forward Arizona and noted that this month's discussion focused on the connection between workforce and education. He stated that the topics evolve throughout the year and reflect a broader statewide theme of addressing a fragmented ecosystem by strengthening coordination among education, technology, business, and workforce partners. He emphasized the need to improve collaboration, planning, and alignment to build stronger bridges between education and workforce development. He added that the initiative is expanding its community engagement efforts.

Boardmember Hutchinson reported on a statewide initiative launched on March 9 aimed at protecting public schools by placing additional limits and accountability measures on the voucher program. She explained that the proposal would require accountability and safety measures for voucher recipients and providers, including fingerprint clearance for adults receiving funds, accreditation requirements for participating schools, administration of state testing for academic accountability, restrictions on non-educational or luxury purchases, and an income cap of \$150,000 for voucher eligibility. She added that the initiative includes a 30-day review period, requires 256,000 signatures by July 2 to qualify for the ballot, and has a goal of collecting 500,000 signatures. She emphasized that the issue has statewide implications and local impacts for districts including Higley, Gilbert, and Mesa.

Chairperson Heredia acknowledged Boardmember Hutchinson for being named Woman of the Year and commended her for her many years of service and dedicated work in the community.

8. Call to the public.

There were no public comments.

9. Call for future agenda items.

There were no future agenda items discussed.

10. Adjourn.

Without objection, the Education and Workforce Development Roundtable meeting adjourned at 2:38 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Education and Workforce Development Roundtable meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of February 2026. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
HOLLY MOSLEY, CITY CLERK

sr  
(Attachments – 1)

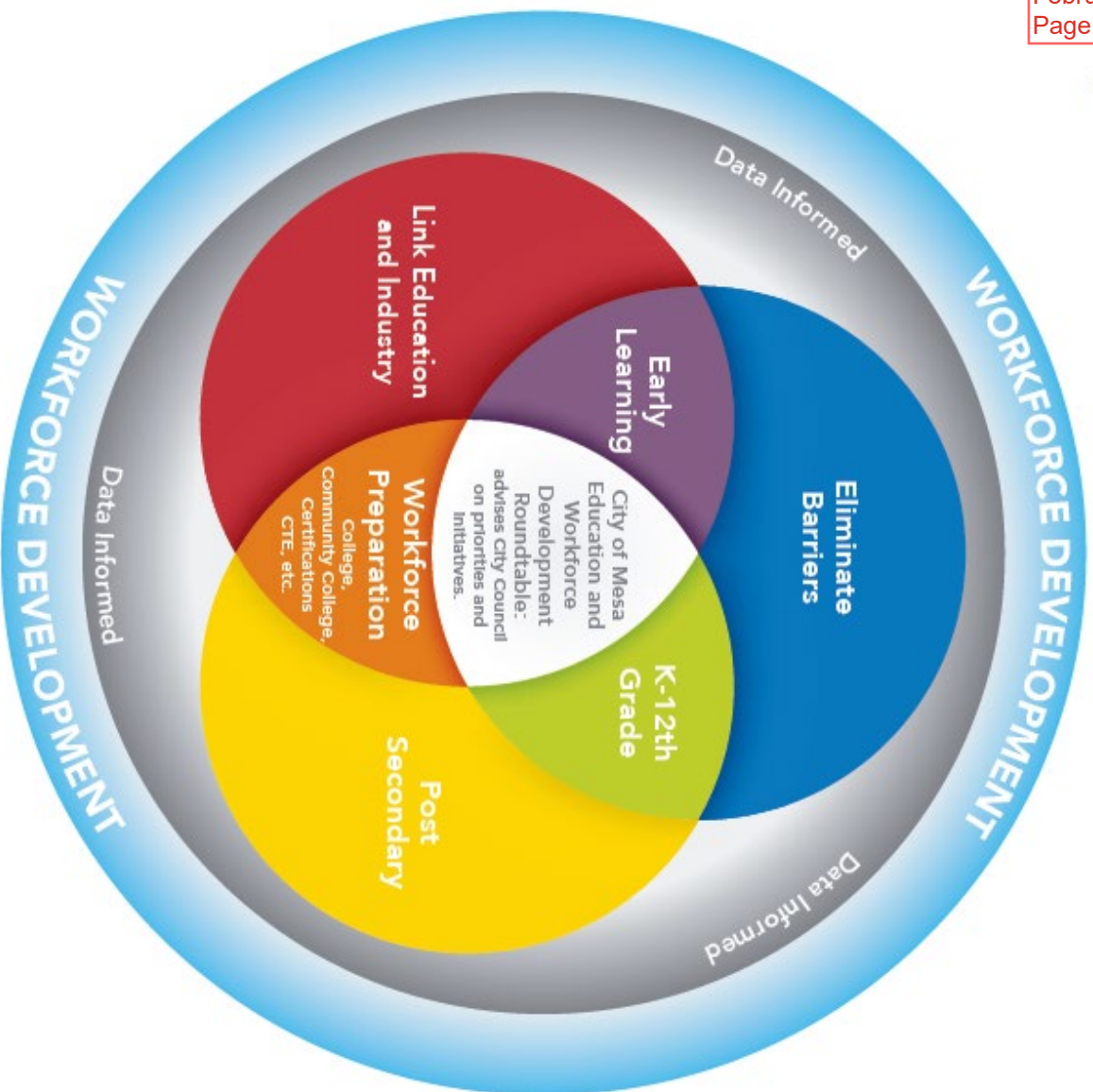
# **MESA EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ROUNDTABLE**

**February 11, 2026**

# 2026 Meeting Dates

- May 6, 2026
- August 19, 2026
- November 4, 2026

Share expertise to coordinate goals, amplify resources, track data, and advise the City Council on the highest priorities that will strengthen, streamline, and align Mesa's education and workforce needs.



**Eliminate Barriers:**  
 Identify and address common barriers, including awareness, financial, and other challenges that impact access to resources, opportunities and experiences for students, educators, businesses, families, and community.

**Link Education and Industry:**  
 Deliberate communication between industry and education partners. Facilitate a common understanding of skills, opportunities and experiences.

**Post-Secondary:**  
 Communicate the importance of post-secondary training, education, certification, opportunities and benefits.

**Data Informed:**  
 Measure outcomes, identify patterns and guide discussion by tracking community and city-wide data.

**Workforce Development:**

- Continue to bring industry to connect directly with education partners.
- Identify CTE pathways that align with high growth and in-demand industries.
- Prioritize promotion and awareness of opportunities.



**ARIZONA INSTITUTE  
FOR EDUCATION &  
THE ECONOMY**

**NAU** NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

---

*Future of School. Future of Work. Future of Arizona.*

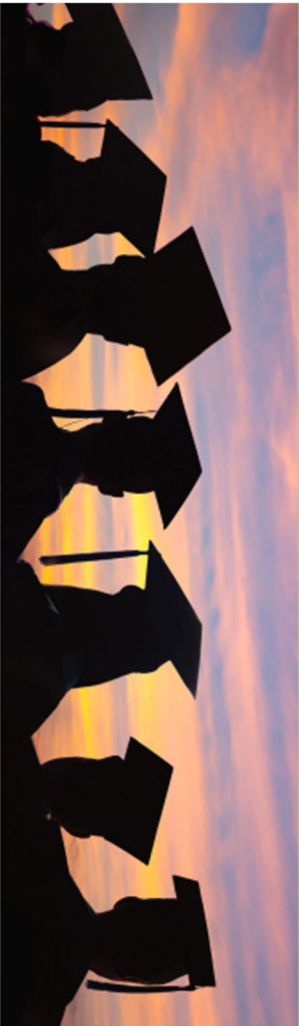
# Our Theory of Change in Action

## Initial Big Bets

*With the State 48 Graduate Profile as Arizona's new north star, the Innovation Playbook and Education and Workforce Innovation Sandbox will provide statewide and local ecosystems the tools, policy flexibilities, and inspiration to help schools modernize, experiment responsibly, and accelerate real change, ensuring every graduate is future proof - fully equipped to live, work, and thrive in Arizona and beyond.*

# STATE 48 GRADUATE PROFILE

Arizona's North Star for Education: Day 1 to Diploma



## 4 FUTURES



Enrollment



Employment



Enlistment & Service



Entrepreneurship

## 8 ESSENTIALS



Knowledge  
& Literacy



Digital  
Fluency



Critical Thinking  
& Problem Solving



Creative &  
Innovative Thinking



Self-Awareness  
& Management



Adaptability  
& Lifelong Learning



Collaboration  
& Communication



Ethics  
& Impact

Visit the State 48  
Graduate Profile Website  
For More Information



[STATE48GP.ORG](https://STATE48GP.ORG)

# AI Guidance

- **K-12 Guidance Document**
  - Understanding Gen AI
  - Teaching, Learning and Admin Uses
  - Responsible and Ethical Uses
  - Implementation Recommendations

Link to download: [azk12.ai](https://azk12.ai)

**Generative Artificial Intelligence  
in K-12 Education** —  
**Guidance for Arizona Schools and School Systems**

*A Balanced  
Perspective*

Original Publication: May 2024  
Version 25.01: May 2025

Please use and share  
this link to access the  
published version of  
this document.

[azk12.ai](https://azk12.ai)



**ARIZONA INSTITUTE  
FOR EDUCATION &  
THE ECONOMY**  
**NAU** NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

Direct questions about this document to LeeAnn Lindsey at the Arizona Institute for Education and the Economy.

# AIEE Action Items

- **January 8<sup>th</sup>** - Public release of State 48 Graduation Profile
- **April 1<sup>st</sup>** – Spring Convening
  - PK-12 Teams will overview ‘Permission Granted’ document



## Arizona's Early Childhood Agency

Committed to healthy development and learning from birth to age 5.



# 17% child care gap in Mesa

- 33,887 children aged 5 and under.
- 23,746 children live in home where both parents work.
- 14,482 available child care slots with licensed providers.

# Mesa Child Care Impact Task Force

## **Purpose**

To assess how childcare availability, affordability, quality, and accessibility impact business and industry operating within the City of Mesa. Childcare is a critical component of workforce participation, employee retention, productivity, and business growth. The assessment should focus on **childcare-related challenges** as experienced by employers, **identify opportunities** for the City to support businesses and the broader childcare ecosystem and will inform future economic and workforce development strategies, programs and initiatives.

## **Objectives**

- Understand key challenges and barriers faced by existing businesses in the City of Mesa
- Identify childcare-related needs and opportunities for business support
- Assess how city policies, processes, and services impact businesses
- Compare local conditions with other cities



**MESA**  
**COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
A MARICOPA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# Education & Workforce Development Roundtable **Update**

## February 11, 2026

# Priorities

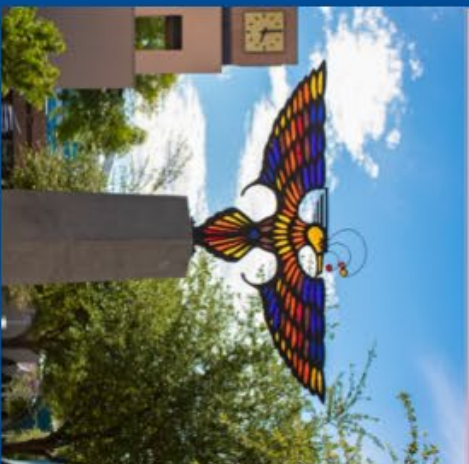
**Student  
Success &  
Completion**



**Workforce &  
Community  
Partnerships**



**Fiscal  
Responsibility &  
Transparency**



**College  
Strength &  
Sustainability**



**MESA  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
A MARICOPA COMMUNITY COLLEGE



**MARICOPA  
COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

# Realities & Opportunities

## Realities

- Budget
- Workforce Demands
- Student Access



## Opportunities

- Deeper regional alignment across education and industry
- Clear, earlier pathways from education to careers
- Flexible, student-centered delivery that supports persistence and completion



# MCC's Role in Regional Opportunity

## Pathways

- From K-12 through MCC
- Into careers or transfer

## Partnerships

- K-12 districts
- Universities
- Employers
- City & community partners

## Implementation

- Programs & Credentials
- Student supports
- Workforce alignment

# AZ Opportunity

Serving Arizona through a changing  
higher education landscape

**Sarah Harper**  
Vice President, Communications  
Arizona Board of Regents

February 11, 2026

# What is the Arizona Board of Regents?

- Duties and Structure Outlined in Statute, Title 15
  - A.R.S. §15-1625(A): The Arizona board of regents is a body corporate with perpetual succession. The board has jurisdiction and control over the universities

## Members:

Regent Doug Goodyear – Chair

Regent Jessica Pacheco

Regent Gregg Brewster

Regent Cecilia Mata

Regent Fred DuVal

Regent Larry Penley

Regent Lee Stein

Regent James McCain

Regent Jadyrn Fisher

Regent Felipe Garcia

Gov. Katie Hobbs

Superintendent Tom Horne

## The Board's Promise to Arizona

- Increase postsecondary access and attainment for Arizona students; to seek solutions to societal challenges; and to do both while increasing quality, affordability and efficiency.

# Serving Arizona

By the numbers: Arizona's public universities

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

**\$1.7B**

Total state taxes paid by university alumni

Source: FY 2023 Alumni Wages Report

**32K**

Total employees working at Arizona's public universities

Source: FY 2025 Personnel Report

**\$26,035**

Wage gap in Arizona for those with a bachelor's degree compared to someone with a high school diploma

Source: FY 2023 Alumni Wages Report

**247**

Patents earned by university students and faculty

Source: FY 2025 Technology and Research Initiative Fund Report

**30**

Startup companies formed by universities' students and faculty

Source: FY 2025 Technology and Research Initiative Fund Report

## ENROLLMENT

**237K**

Students enrolled at Arizona's public universities

Source: 2025 Fall Enrollment Report

**54K**

Bachelor's and graduate degrees awarded by Arizona's public universities

Source: 2023 College Completion Report

**87K**

Online students enrolled at Arizona's public universities

Source: 2025 Fall Enrollment Report

# Private and Public Impact of Higher Education

## Median salary of Arizona graduates

**\$82,162** Graduate degree

**\$67,466** Bachelor's degree

**\$47,923** Some college or Associate degree

**\$41,518** High school diploma

Source: American Community Survey, 2024

# Annual economic impact of Arizona's public higher education enterprise

**\$11.2 billion**

**84,355 jobs**

## Benefit of a college degree

**62%**

Bachelor's degree earnings  
greater than high school degree

**22%**

Graduate degree earnings  
greater than bachelor's degree



[Why College Matters](#)

[Plan](#) ▾

[Afford](#) ▾

[Apply](#) ▾

[Attend](#) ▾

[AZ Universities](#) ▾

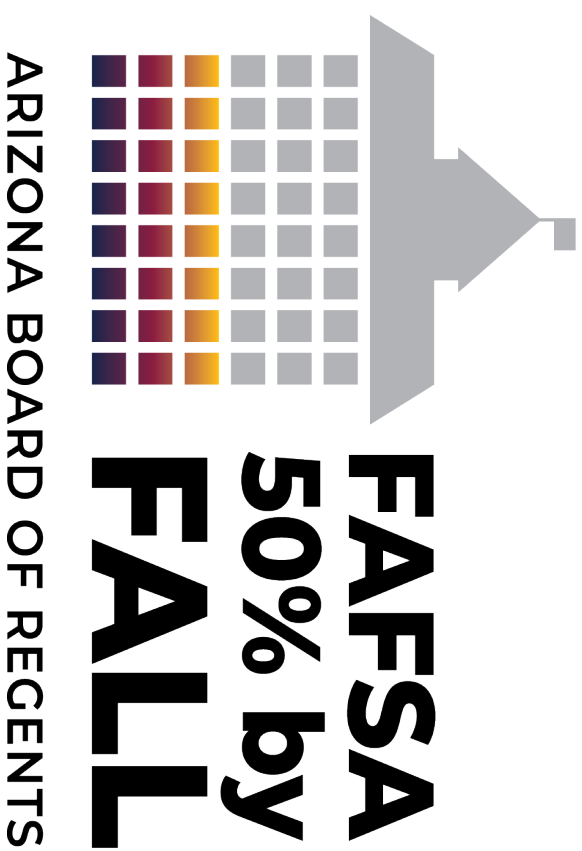
[Request Information](#)

# Arizona, let's get ready for college!

College Ready AZ makes it easy to plan and apply for college at Arizona's public universities. Use this website to find all the information you need to help create the future you deserve.

[FOR HELP WITH FAFSA](#)

# Expanding attainment initiatives



# Expanding attainment initiatives



## FAFSA Peer Coach Program



- Developed in 2022: Pilot 24 high schools
- Fall 2025: 53 high schools; expansion into Pima County
- 50% average FAFSA completion rate

# Engaging university athletes to share FAFSA messages

- 13 student-athletes across ASU, NAU and the U of A
- Instagram reels posted in collaboration with athlete and teams to widen reach
- Tri-university PSA video that features athletes from all three universities



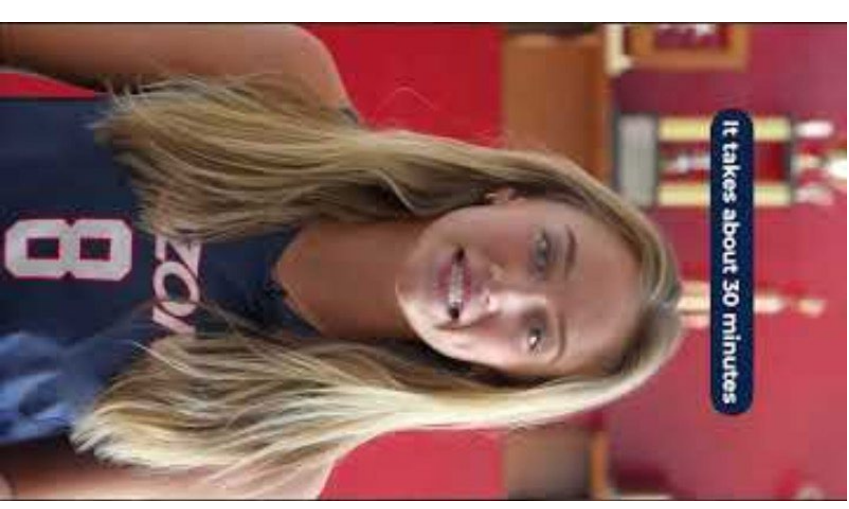
- Jordyn Tyson  
*(football)*
- Cole Carlon  
*(baseball)*
- Jayden Davis  
*(track)*
- Yannixa Acuna  
*(softball)*
- Logan Morrell  
*(hockey)*



- Audrey Taylor  
*(women's basketball)*
- Oakland Fort  
*(men's basketball)*
- Fou Ho Ching  
*(football)*



- Achol Magot  
*(women's basketball)*
- Anyssa Wild  
*(softball)*
- Haven Wra  
*(volleyball)*
- Koa Peat  
*(men's basketball)*
- Tre Spivey  
*(football)*



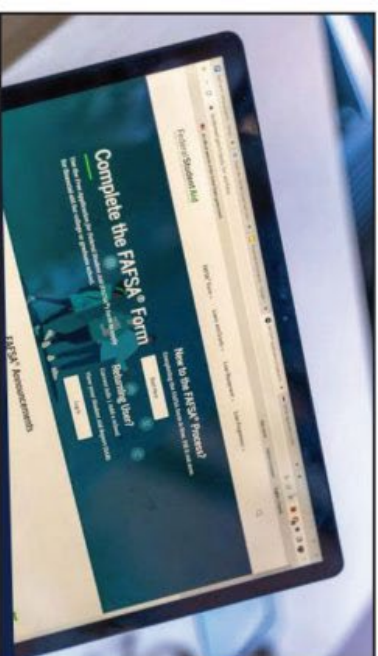
# Arizona College Connect Homepage



- Home
- Roster
- Reports
- FAFSA Resources
- Site Resources
- About Us

## FAFSA NEWS

- 2025-26 FAFSA will launch December 1, 2025
- What you need to know about the FAFSA submission summary
- What to expect for the 2025-26 FAFSA experience



### October areas of focus

[FAFSA Awareness](#)  
[Creating FSA IDs](#)

### Communicate resources to students



#### Text Ask Benji

Ask Benji, Arizona's Digital FAFSA assistant. Benji responds 24/7 to any FAFSA and college/career questions. To use a language other than English, text #language to select a different language.

TEXT "HI BENJI" TO 602-786-8171



#### Arizona FAFSA hotline

Students and families can call the Arizona FAFSA Hotline at 1-833-293-2372. FAFSA experts are available between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

CALL NOW



#### Schedule an appointment

Students and families can schedule a one-on-one appointment with a local FAFSA expert. All appointments take place virtually via Zoom, Google Meet or Microsoft Teams.

APPOINTMENTS



#### Additional supports

Find more FAFSA support at:  
Atlanta  
Arizona State University  
Be A Leader Foundation  
College Connect Tempe  
College Depot  
Metropolitan Education Commission  
[Tri-University Events](#)

#### San Luis High School

**50% FAFSA  
COMPLETION RATE**

1. San Luis High School
2. Yuma Union High School
3. Glendale High School

#### FAFSA events

- 9/23/24 – FAFSA webinar
- 10/1/24 – FSA ID workshop
- 10/15/24 – Preparing for the FAFSA

[email/text students](#)

[view senior lists](#)

[view FAFSA progress](#)

# Reaching key audiences with attainment outreach

## *Students, educators, business/community leaders and policymakers*

- FAFSA and College Readiness Symposium
- Starting Five Initiative
- ABOR Student Food and Housing Workgroup
- Student Mental Health and Wellness Learning Community
- Strada Education Foundation's Arizona Learning Mobility Collaborative
- SHEEO's national effort to expand access to quality postsecondary education for incarcerated students
- Future Ready AZ attainment summit

# Serving Arizona's students and families

College  
Ready AZ

Cactus  
League  
Partnership

FAFSA Peer  
Coach Program

College Ready  
AZ FAFSA  
Scholarship

Arizona  
College  
Application  
Campaign

Student Mental  
Health and  
Wellness Learning  
Community

Arizona  
College  
Connect

# Prioritizing all pathways to college success

- AZ Transfer
- Arizona Learning Mobility Collaborative
- AZ Comeback Initiative
- Advancing postsecondary access for incarcerated learners

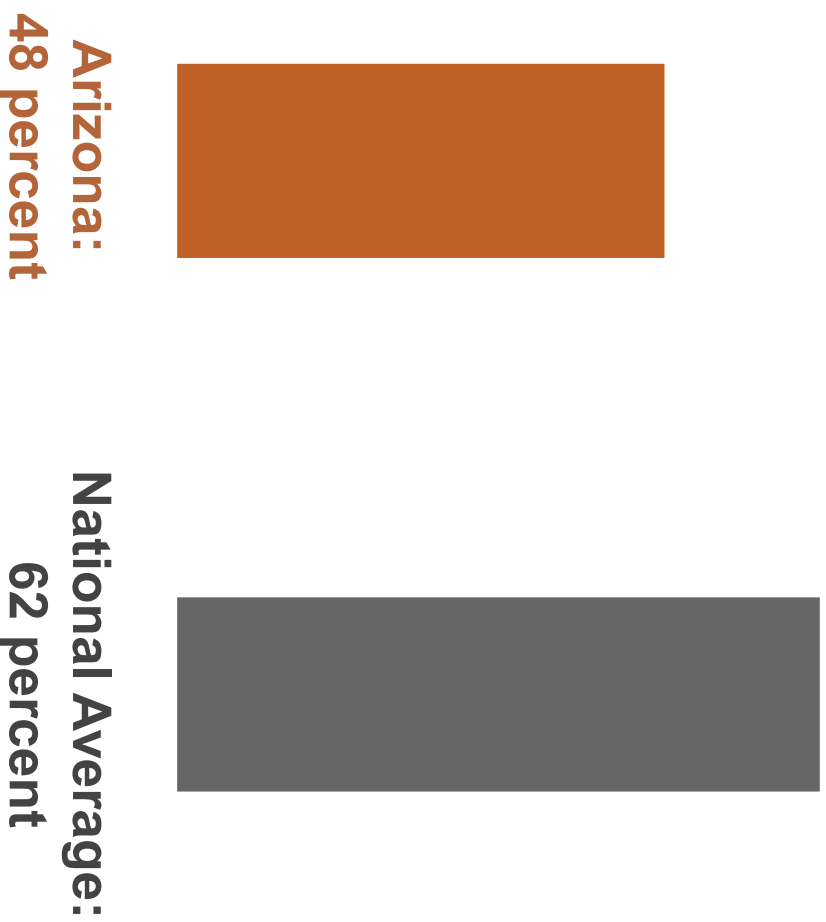


# Degree Shortfalls Impact Arizona's Workforce, Competitiveness and Economy

# College going rate lags national average

- Less than half of Arizona high school graduates enroll in some form of postsecondary education.

- Arizona consistently trails the national college going rate by **15 percentage points**.



Sources: ABOR 2022 Postsecondary Attainment Report and the NCES Immediate College Enrollment Rate publication.

# Projected Arizona annual degree shortfalls

**Annual Demand for Bachelor's Degrees 68,000**

- Bachelor's Degrees from recent graduates 22,500

- Bachelor's Degrees from in-migration 19,200

**Annual Shortage of Degrees 26,300**

*Simply by reaching the U.S. average for educational attainment, Arizona would benefit by nearly \$5 billion in additional state and local tax revenues over 10 years. Furthermore, fully resolving the bachelor's degree shortage would result in a 10-year cumulative state and local fiscal impact of \$8 billion.*

# East Valley by the numbers

## FAFSA Completion Rates in the East Valley (as of 1/29/26)

- Gilbert Public Schools – 42.56%
- Higley Unified School District – 48.21%
- Mesa Public Schools – 30.80%
- Queen Creek Unified School District 30.56%

# AZ Opportunity

## Proposed FY 27 Budget

### Focused on Enhancing Arizona's Opportunity Economy

# AZ Opportunity: The ABOR Budget Priorities

Strengthening Arizona's health care workforce

Retaining Arizona's talent pipeline

Securing Arizona's prosperity and protect Arizona's natural resources

Fueling talent for high demand careers

Preserving the state's capital investments

# What can you do?



@azregents,  
@collegereadyaz

# Roundtable Share outs

- **Education Forward February Power Hour: Building Arizona's Workforce Report**
  - Tuesday, Feb. 24<sup>th</sup>, 12 – 1PM