



Higher Education in Arizona

Nearly a century ago as Arizona became the 48th State in the Union, the people of Arizona embedded their commitment to higher education in the state Constitution. When growth and maturation required more robust higher education, Arizona transformed its teachers' colleges into comprehensive universities and broadened the reach of higher education with the expansion of community colleges to virtually every county.

However, during the past several decades our commitment to higher education, while still strong, has been dwarfed by other financial, political, and bureaucratic demands. The Arizona Legislature has dramatically reduced its investment in higher education.

The current state of affairs is unfortunate but reversible. With renewed resolve and a sufficient level of investment, Arizona can reaffirm its commitment to higher education. We must support our universities and higher education, but we also expect those institutions will better support students and their families. This includes graduating more students with degrees and increasing the economic potential of university research to help link discovery to real world needs – creating cures for diseases, finding new energy sources to lessen our dependence on foreign oil, moving Arizona into the 21st century knowledge economy. As Governor, I will work with the Arizona Board of Regents, Community Colleges and the Universities to:

Provide for a better-educated workforce to build a more diversified and competitive Arizona economy;

Restore state investment higher education;

Develop new pathways to higher education that link all education systems and help students succeed and graduate in less time at less cost;

Create a funding formula that rewards innovation and performance;

Ensure access to higher education by implementing a meaningful state financial aid program for Arizona high school students; and

Better utilize data and research to identify and address factors that impede student progress from kindergarten to the workplace.

Arizona Economy – Diversified and Competitive

A century ago, no more than 5 percent of Americans graduated from high school. By 1940, that figure had increased to 50 percent and was considered a sufficient norm for educational attainment and made gainful employment possible. But according to US Department of Labor statistics, 90 percent of jobs that are considered well paying today require advanced education.

In the global knowledge economy, our national competitiveness – and the competitiveness of the State of Arizona -- depends on an educated workforce. Throughout the second half of the 20th Century, our nation's colleges and universities produced sufficient numbers of highly educated graduates to ensure that America dominated the world in scientific and technological innovation, increasing our prosperity. According to most assessments, America no longer leads the world in discovery and innovation. But the crisis is particularly acute closer to home. Arizona ranks at or near the bottom according to indicators of educational performance.

Consider, for example, that out of 100 Arizona ninth graders, only 68 graduate from high school four years later; only 19 enter a four-year program within a year of graduating high school; and only nine complete their bachelor's degree within six years.

In recognition of the direct relationship between jobs and higher education, the Arizona Board of Regents has a vision for creating a top-performing state university system, nationally recognized for excellence in academic and research pursuits that support and stimulating a growing economy and a higher quality of life for Arizonans. In working to achieve this vision, our universities would seek to produce enough high quality university degrees for Arizona to be nationally competitive by the year 2020; to increase the prominence of the system's research capacity so that it can contribute to the knowledge economy and improve the quality of life in Arizona; and to provide the educated workforce needed to fill shortages and to stimulate demand for higher paying jobs in Arizona. The community colleges must also play a role in improving students' opportunities to receive job training through career and technical education.

Consistent with the "2020 Vision" of the Arizona Board of Regents, Arizona must become nationally competitive in the percentage of residents with baccalaureate degrees by doubling the number of bachelor's degrees produced by 2020.

Restoring State Investment

Over the past two decades, the Legislature has made public policy choices that have reduced the priority of the state's investment in higher education. For every dollar the state spends on higher education, we spend \$1.35 on our prison system.

Many years of neglect of our public universities have made higher education *less* available to qualified high school students. The state general fund investment in public universities has been cut by \$105 million or 21% since FY 2008. Additionally, the state general fund per student investment in Arizona public universities has dropped from \$7,976 in 2008 to \$5,970 in 2010 (- 25%). These declines represent a return to state investment levels of 1980.

As Governor, I will use the following principles as a guide:

Investments will be based upon the outcomes that we seek, including successful transfer of associate degree completion and other community college credits toward Arizona university degrees; the seamless transfer of qualified community college students to Arizona's public universities; and baccalaureate degree completion at Arizona's public universities;

Support creative and innovative mechanisms for investing in higher education including new ways for public universities to make use of state trust lands to expand access to higher education;

Ensure our education system (K-12, community college and universities) is working together with the business community so that students are prepared for college and employer/industry expectations; and

Provide Arizona's colleges and universities with the ability to differentiate and innovate. We must allow universities to focus on what they do best and promote collaboration between institutions to increase our success nationally and globally.

New Pathways

In addition to better funding for our higher education system, we must find additional pathways for students to obtain the education they need to succeed in the diversified economy that Arizona needs. An ASU study notes that the educational attainment of young adults in Arizona substantially trails the national average. While Arizona ranks 26th in the percentage of citizens 25 years and older with a bachelor's degree, it falls to 39th in its younger population with a college degree.

An insufficient number of Arizona students are completing high school, while many who do graduate are not adequately prepared to pursue some form of higher education or enter the workforce with the capacity to earn a livable wage.

The “Pathways to Postsecondary” initiative emphasizes the development of “seamless pathways” between high school and postsecondary education for all Arizona students based on their aspirations and capacities.

As Governor, I will maximize the potential for student success and degree completion by:

- Requiring the coordination of credit transfers toward degrees for students to move from two-year to four-year institutions;
- Working with junior and high schools in Arizona to better prepare students to be college-ready;
- Coordinating high school programs with those at community college and universities to help students transition from high school to higher education and be successful in higher education programs;
- Improving policies and strategies that increase access to higher education.

Access to Higher Education

Over the past two decades, the de facto higher education policy of the State of Arizona has been to reduce investment in higher education relative to the overall state budget disproportionately. Clearly, this has reduced our economic competitiveness. To compete effectively with a new global economy, Arizona needs to develop an education system that keeps our students ahead of students from China and other countries.

We must commit to a higher education policy which balances our state’s long-standing commitments to both quality and access through a more informed approach that helps student succeed and does not shift the entire cost burden to Arizona families.

To accomplish this task, we must:

- Reform higher education funding to ensure high quality programs that train tomorrow’s students for the global workplace, and focus on timely graduation rates for college students;
- Provide a reasonable and affordable price for the various entry points to higher education in the State of Arizona; and
- Reform our financial aid programs so to provide the best value while leveraging any additional federal dollars available, to reduce the burden on Arizona families.

Data and Research

We cannot improve what we cannot measure. This maxim is certainly true with respect to student success and the quality of our educational system in Arizona. It is time that we enhance our ability to achieve clearly defined outcomes. We must develop a statewide, longitudinal data system containing elements such as:

Student-level information about the points at which students exit, transfer in, transfer out, drop out, or graduate from one of our educational institutions;

The capacity to communicate student-level transcript information with higher education data systems, including information on courses completed and grades earned, timelines for course and program completion; and

Student-level college readiness test scores as well as information regarding the extent to which students transition successfully from secondary school to postsecondary education, including whether students enroll in remedial coursework

By dedicating ourselves to this data initiative, our teachers, school districts, community colleges and universities will be better able to implement student career plans, monitor student progress through their entire educational career, as well as better link each student's interests to academic planning, and progress toward lifelong goals.

As Governor, I will work with the K-12, community college, university and business community to ensure that the students we are educating today are receiving a world class education and have the jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities available to them here in Arizona.