



Spring Convening | 4 May 2021
1:00 to 3:00 PM

Participants

City/Town	Mayor	Team Members
Casa Grande	Craig H. McFarland	
Mesa	John Giles	Natalie Lewis, Deputy City Manager Melissa Randazzo, Chief of Staff Amy Trethaway, Education and Workforce Director
Phoenix		Willa Altman-Kaough, Policy Advisor
Sahuarita	Tom Murphy	Manny Valenzuela, Superintendent
Tempe	Corey Woods	Marie Raymond, Human Services Manager Leslie Totten, Tempe PRE Supervisor
ACF	Glenn Wike, Senior Director, Strategy and Public Policy	
ADE	Kathy Hoffman, Superintendent of Public Instruction Callie Kozlak, Associate Superintendent for Policy and Government Relations Emily O’Neil, Senior Communications Advisor	
Helios	Vince Yanez, Senior Vice President – Arizona Community Engagement	
Guests	Lupita Alcalá, Director, Education Policy & Outcomes, WestEd Fred DuVal, Arizona Board of Regents and WestEd Board Member Deb Sigman, Senior Program Director, WestEd	
Presenters	Rich Nickel, President and CEO, College Success Arizona Dr. Paul Perrault, Vice President – Research and Evaluation, Helios Julie Sainz, FAFSA Challenge Project Director, ACPE	
WestEd	Sheila Arredondo, Senior Program Associate Paul Koehler, Director of Leadership and Outreach Ian Hickox, Editorial Director, Collaborative Communications Kris Kurtenbach, Founding Partner, Collaborative Communications	

Sharing and Updates

Casa Grande

- Education and workforce development – always a priority/main agenda item and core strategic plan; we partner with elementary and high school districts as well as Central Arizona College and several charter organizations; a collaborative effort that is starting to move the needle.
- [Advanced Manufacturing Training Center](#) – recently opened at Central Arizona College and fully operational; used to train Lucid robotics program, two large electric vehicle robotics; looking for 1600 new employees by end of the year; ACA also helped with this facility.

- Mayors Reading Program – wrapping up after conducting virtual program this year; recordings sent to schools and many students listened.
- Tech Center – an elementary school is closing and will reopen as internet focused technology school that uses a hybrid approach.
- [AARP Foundation Experience Corps](#) – graduating our first third grade reading program; Phoenix and Tempe also have this program; model for Pinal County; 60 volunteer tutors; first small rural community to roll out this program; conducted online with observer and trainer helping the student; identified students needing most help; local donations, city and district funding; working well and will be rolled out to additional Pinal County communities next year.

Mesa

- [Mesa Education and Workforce Development Roundtable](#) – now an institutionalized city committee that includes the four superintendents, heads of higher education campuses, EVIT leaders, city council members, corporate leaders, foundation officials, and nonprofit representatives; regular convenings begin next month; enables us to fold in smaller committees and bring silos together under one tent.
- [Mesa College Promise](#) – fully funded and rolled out; received matching funds from AT&T, Apple, and other Fortune 50 companies that call Mesa home; Mesa students will be able to enroll this fall at MCC with funding from this program.

Phoenix

- Kindergarten enrollment PSA and partnership with First Things First – [AZ Central article](#) states more than 30% decrease in preschool enrollment and more than 10% decrease in kindergarten enrollment statewide over the past year.
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – On April 15, President Biden announced the release of \$39 billion in childcare relief funds to provide relief for providers and support for families that need help affording childcare. These allocations will help tremendously.

Sahuarita

- Vaccinations – Our numbers are some of the highest in the state. A strong collaboration with districts who provided space.
- [Sahuarita Wins](#) – A commission in place for several years; uniqueness is that it was started and led by the Superintendent; all about collaboration and working together to improve the community.
- Schools – back in session full time, modified prom and graduation this year; now qualify for third high school due to residential growth
- Early education – also on the radar; County Board of Supervisors meeting regarding scholarship opportunities
- Postsecondary – We have expanded dual enrollment with Pima Community College and partnerships with University of Arizona.
- CARES Act funding – We are concerned that allocations were based on the Title I formula and resulted in inequities. Some schools received \$180 per student while others received \$1,800 even though all sites had some similar needs during COVID. We are wondering whether the next round of funding will be distributed more equitably.

Tempe

- [Tempe PRE](#) – The program is finishing another successful year with over 70% enrollment; a strong indicator of confidence; recent survey shows that 90% of families felt positive impacts, both economically and for child development; already have applications open for the coming school year and anticipate full classrooms at all seven locations.
- [AARP Foundation Experience Corps](#) – The program is finishing its first academic year with 40 volunteers mentoring over 80 first through third grade students over the Google meet platform; new technology skills acquired, and friendships developed with tutors through this virtual environment. Experience Corps will participate in Tempe summer school, June 7-24, tutoring students at Arredondo Elementary School to improve their literacy skills.
- ReadOn Tempe – The hug program distributed 1,060 new books, resources, and literacy guides to 106 low-income families in the Thew-Escalante community. Our acceleration zone project received and distributed 16,000 new books to kids in the school districts. We also had a read aloud for Black History event, which distributed 104 books to 64 families during four sessions that featured prominent leaders, including Mayor Woods.
- [College Connect Tempe](#) – We hosted a FAFSA Drive-Up Event on April 14 at the Tempe Pyle Center at Rural and Southern. We have a lot of support for this program with a strong and diverse network of partners that includes College Success Arizona, Arizona State University, Tempe Union High School District, South Mountain Community College, and Be a Leader Foundation. We were able to assist over 31 students and families in preparing for the college journey.

ADE Update

Kathy Hoffman, Superintendent, Kathy.Hoffman@azed.gov

Topics & Resource Links

- Thank you to mayors and local government partners who played such a critical role in our response to COVID-19. ADE is grateful to all of you and the support offered to the schools.
- Collaboration across all levels of government has been key to building safe communities this year. The Superintendent continues to hold weekly meetings with education leaders and associations and regular advisory council meetings (e.g., meeting today with student advisory council). She also meets regularly with principals and school board members and other elected officials as well as other state chiefs.
 - School visits – observing in-person pandemic learning first-hand and safety features
 - Services – schools provided meals and special education services, served as testing and vaccination sites
 - Partnerships – worked with Mayor Gallego’s Office to provide hot spots and laptops to students
- Student Mental Health – [School Safety Grant Program](#) expanded in 2019 to fund more than 260 new social worker and school counselor positions but did not meet the full demand. We just announced an additional \$21.3M from ESSER funding to create another 160 positions, which fully funds the wait list for two years.
- Supporting Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing – ADE and Access are partnering on several initiatives. The newest program is the [Arizona Educator Peer Support Program](#), a hotline for free, confidential, peer support
 - [Social-Emotional & Mental Health Quick Reference](#) is a quick guide of strategies and resources meant to support the social-emotional and mental health needs of students during the pandemic and as the community begins to recover.
 - [Free Suicide Prevention Training](#) is also offered by ADE.

- [Federal Funding \(State set aside\)](#) – We are reviewing initiatives that will have impact and be sustainable. A few projects include \$2.5M for the Arizona K-12 Center to mentor new educators, \$3M for professional development through Arizona State University and University of Arizona, \$2.3M for community-based organizations, and \$1.5M for the Final Mile Project to address our digital divide and bring high-speed internet to rural areas.
- ESSER III – We estimate \$2.3B for Title I schools in new recovery dollars. There are new requirements this round for summer enrichment, extended day and year, and comprehensive afterschool programs. The allocation from state set-aside will involve a more robust stakeholder process. Please email any proposals directly to Superintendent Hoffman explaining your need and connection to COVID recovery along with funds requested and timeline.

Question – Will some of the state set-aside be used to equalize funding among schools?

Answer – Ninety percent of funds are allocated using the Title I formula. ADE has no control over this federal requirement. A significant portion of state set-aside funds have helped establish a baseline for distribution. It did not equalize support but helped to provide a minimum of \$150,000 to each district and charter, with some additional funds for rural areas.

Question – What is the lifespan of these funds?

Answer – Graphics are available on website. ESSER III goes through 2024; apply by the end of May. ESSER II must be spent by the end of 2023. We want to get these funds distributed first.

Information about the ESSER I & ESSER II funding and the process available at <https://www.azed.gov/cares/esser>.

Presentations

What Data Tells Us About College Going and Increasing FAFSA Completion in Arizona: A Playbook for Success

Dr. Paul Perrault, Vice President for Research and Evaluation, Helios Education Foundation

- ❖ Data from ASU-Helios Decision Center for Educational Excellence shows the relationship between FAFSA completion and college going for every high school – schools in low-income areas tend to have fewer seniors completing FAFSA and lower college going rates; for Roundtable cities a wide distribution exists with some schools in low-income areas having high FAFSA completion and college going rates.
- ❖ Policy shifts – some states require FAFSA completion for graduation.
- ❖ Current college going rate = 49% for Roundtable cities; if increased 10% over four years, then we would increase lifetime earnings by just over \$1B and increase funding for local governments by \$386M.
- ❖ College Knowing and Going – College readiness teams assist with key elements that include FAFSA completion, ECAP planning, college application support, and ACT fees; a higher proportion of students matriculated as a result of this program.
- ❖ [FAFSA Playbook](#) – We partnered with many organizations to identify and disseminate key strategies (i.e., have a goal, plan events, provide incentives, have a deadline, involve community partners, and participate in professional training).

Question: Graduation rates are increasing yet matriculation is not keeping pace. Is there a difference or gap in the take rate?

Answer: We are seeing a gap now. Many 2020 college-ready graduates did not enroll. The impact was felt more at the community college level than at four-year institutions, especially for low-income students. FAFSA completion is down across the country; universities may be hit this fall.

We need to figure out why students don't matriculate. The [Helios-Adelante Scholarship](#) will provide a thousand, \$1,000 scholarships to the Class of 2020 who did not enroll after high school. We are working with ADE and ABOR to generate this list of students.

Question: Any thoughts about how the pandemic affected downward trends the state was seeing in postsecondary enrollment?

Answer: The pandemic increased this downward trend, especially at community colleges. We lost thousands of students nationwide. Arizona had a 4% decline pre-pandemic that jumped to 20% in 2020. We are also seeing fewer Black and Hispanic males attending college. The longer students are out, the less likely they will attend.

Comment: We expect a natural, organic demographic drop of 15-20% over the next five years that will erode attainment progress. The state has withdrawn its investment in higher education causing institutions to rely upon out-of-state and international students, which is not a stable revenue platform. Online learning has a lower retention rate. We have enormous systemic challenges for which higher FAFSA completion rates and Pell support are immediate answers.

Arizona FAFSA Challenge

Julie Sainz, Project Director, Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education

- Arizona FAFSA Completion
 - Arizona is ranked 48th for the Class of 2020.
 - Arizona rate is 47%; National average is 59.5%
 - #1 state is Louisiana at 79% (graduation requirement).
 - #2 state is Tennessee at 78% (statewide promise scholarship incentive).
- State policies/graduation requirements promote FAFSA completion in Illinois, Louisiana New Jersey, and Texas; Michigan, Indiana, California, and District of Columbia are considering similar laws.
- Challenge goal is to increase completion rates and create a college-going culture.
- Established in 2018, the FAFSA Challenge is a partnership between the Governor's Office of Education and the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education, and funded by a federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) grant.
- Coalition – The group is comprised of college access partners, postsecondary, Governor's Office, and Arizona Department of Education staff who meet to set annual goals, create resources, and bring additional resources to the state.
 - 2021 goal is 52% completion
 - 2030 goal is 78%
 - Research shows that 90% of high school graduates who file a FAFSA enroll directly in a postsecondary program.
- The website, FAFSACHallenge.az.gov, includes a message from Governor Ducey. FAFSA completion season kicks off October 1 of each year.
- [Completion Dashboard](#) – Provides state and local rates and benchmarks as well as estimated Pell Grant eligibility.
- [FAFSA Partner Network Graph](#) – The graphic identifies existing community partners and resources for FAFSA completion for each high school (black dots); also identifies 52 schools without partnerships and helps them to connect.
- [FAFSA Toolkit](#) – This online resource is for counselors, students, and families. It includes a FAFSA 101 and more than 50 resources, links, handouts, and trainings
- Communications – Our monthly newsletter is a platform to highlight high schools and their completion efforts.

- Statewide collaborations and support – We have an advising hotline, [Ask Benji](#) (chatbot), College Depot and NAU virtual forums, AZ FAFSA Drive-Ins, and regional college access centers.
- Impact – Over 400 high schools have been recognized. We are increasing completion rates, improving awareness, and enhancing statewide collaboration.

Question: Looking at Louisiana (stick approach) and Tennessee (carrot approach), has anyone analyzed differences in matriculation? Did 20% of students not graduate in Louisiana?

Answer: Students may opt out in Louisiana and the state made no investment but did witness a major uptick in postsecondary enrollments after making FAFSA a graduation requirement, especially for target populations. In Tennessee, the state built a comprehensive platform to invest in higher education. The choice is political and budgetary. Both are great policies, but one requires significant investment.

See [Impact of Mandatory FAFSA Filing Policies](#)

Question: Any correlations among poverty and participation or observations?

Answer: Pell eligible students may have lower awareness and participation due to misconceptions. Tend to have more education in affluent high schools. Every senior qualifies for aid of some type.

Pooling Resources to Create Arizona’s Premier Education Advocacy Organization

Rich Nickel, President and CEO, College Success Arizona

- ❖ February 1 announcement that Achieve60AZ, College Success Arizona, and Expect More Arizona will merge into one robust, unified organization.
- ❖ Impetus to think differently – fragmented and crowded education community, limited resources, uncertainty, same people work across the three boards.
- ❖ Aligning organizations for more impact – All three organizations address advocacy, business and community engagement, higher education, student services, research, data, and policy.
- ❖ Process – CEOs and seconds met several months to develop the mission, vision, and strategic goals; boards also met monthly; all assets were transferred to College Success Arizona.
- ❖ Design principles – equity, diversity, action, public will, advocate for students, maximize strengths, statewide coalition, data and research, innovation, national engagement.
- ❖ Desired impact – significant and scalable, increase funding statewide, increase political and public will for change, create courage for change and champions.
- ❖ Arizona – The State has yet to directly incentivize students from low-income families to attend colleges. The Bidden plan would increase Federal Pell Grants.
- ❖ Action areas – culture that supports education, close achievement gaps, reach statewide attainment goal, secure adequate funding to reach goals
- ❖ Programmatic impact – Collaborate with and involved in many programs, including Arizona College Access Network, Advise AZ, College Knowing and Going, and Arizona GEARUP. Ask Benji, chatbot, is available to all seniors for FAFSA help; coordinates support.
- ❖ Economic power of FAFSA – The average student aid award is almost \$10,000, which adds over 16% to a typical middle-income household making \$60,000 per year.
 - If Arizona reaches 50% FAFSA completion, those students could receive \$64 million more in federal financial aid for freshman year, and over \$250 million over their academic career.
 - Students completing the FAFSA generated \$4.13 billion in Federal Pell Grants and direct student loans.
 - Reaching national attainment averages would add \$6.4 billion over the lifetime of each

student cohort.

- Every student who completes a bachelor's degree adds over \$660,000 to the state's economy over their lifetime.

See [*Doubling Arizona's Economic Growth*](#)

❖ Mayors and cities can:

- dedicate resources that align with local-ready activities (e.g., College Depot, Tempe Connect, Mesa Counts on College);
- focus on achieving equity and valuing diversity;
- encourage and align with schools, nonprofits, and other community systems to localize efforts (e.g., Achieve Mesa and Achieve Pinal).

Next Convening

- September Convening – We hope to convene in person at the new 65,000-square-foot Helios Education Campus located at 4747 N. 32nd Street in Phoenix. The Campus serves as a hub and main office facilities for Helios Education Foundation as well as College Success Arizona, Achieve60AZ, Expect More Arizona, and Teach for America – Phoenix. In addition, the Campus includes the Vince Roig Convening Center which provides the opportunity to host education-related events for up to 200 people.
- Early Childhood Education Scan – Future convenings will include updates on the statewide early childhood education scan being conducted by the Arizona PreK Alignment Team.

Thank You!