

**Report of the**  
**102nd ARIZONA TOWN HALL**  
**“Is Higher Education Ready for Arizona’s Future?”**

**Tucson, Arizona**  
**April 21-24, 2013**

**Introduction**

This is the second time since 2000 that Arizona Town Hall has brought citizens from across the state together to discuss the topic of higher education. This report captures the consensus that emerged from those discussions. Although not every Arizona Town Hall participant agrees with every conclusion and recommendation, this report reflects the overall consensus achieved by the 102nd Arizona Town Hall.

Since the 2000 Report, Higher Education in Arizona for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (67<sup>th</sup> Arizona Town Hall) (“the 2000 Report”), Arizona has experienced many changes that have affected Arizona’s higher education institutions, notably the 2008 recession and the resulting hundreds of millions of dollars in funding cutbacks.

Some issues, however, persist. The percentage of Arizonans with college degrees remains below the national average, funding for higher education is declining and unpredictable, and access to postsecondary education remains a challenge for many. The 2000 Report began by saying, “Of 100 children who start in the Arizona educational system, only 22 will go on to college and only 6 will obtain a bachelor’s degree.” That translates to 27% of high school graduates who start college completing their bachelor’s degree. In 2012, that number is down to only 21% for the 2003-2004 graduating high school classes.

The participants of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Arizona Town Hall conclude that the state’s system of higher education is not prepared to support a competitive and prosperous future for Arizona.

- Arizona’s public institutions of higher education are underfunded.
- Arizona’s students lack access to sufficient financial resources enabling them to afford and complete skill-based training, associates degrees, and bachelor’s degrees.
- Too many of Arizona’s graduating high school seniors are ill prepared academically and culturally to succeed in higher education.
- Arizona’s employers continue to face a skills gap in sourcing technical and specialized talent.
- While 61% of future jobs will require a postsecondary education, only 40% of adult Arizonans possess a high school education or less.

- Substantial evidence exists that new and emerging information and communications technologies will dramatically change the modalities of delivering education at all levels.

To achieve readiness by 2020, the state – its government, businesses, and citizens – must unite and embrace and aggressively pursue as its highest priority the strengthening of its educational structure and outcomes. The effort must include:

- The cost of higher education to a student and family must return to its historical levels in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century through a mix of state funding increases for institutions and a universal financial aid program.
- The institutions must continue to build their capacity for teaching, technology, research, technology transfer, and industry attraction. Student affordability cannot come at the expense of quality.
- The preK-12 system must, through direct investment and large scale community support structures, embrace the goal and the means of graduating every student prepared for appropriate postsecondary education or training.
- The breadth of educational opportunities must be better represented in the rural areas. This requires a large scale effort to provide universal network connectivity.

The most significant factors that will provide a student with a successful higher education include:

- A strong preK-12 system that adequately prepares a student for success at the postsecondary level.
- Access.
- Higher education institutions that possess the resources to provide quality faculty and facilities necessary to deliver an array of programs that benefit the student and the needs of society, particularly the state of Arizona.

### **The Role of Higher Education**

Higher education is rapidly evolving from the traditional notion of a four-year degree into a more continuous lifelong learning process that includes community and tribal colleges, part-time programs, online courses, and any form of education beyond high school, including technical and vocational programs, apprenticeship programs, and trade schools. Higher education is a “game-changer” for individuals, families, and society.

An increased education attainment level correlates to reduced unemployment rates. The following table shows January 2013 unemployment rates in the United States for persons 25 years of age with various levels of educational attainment. Persons with a bachelor’s degree have an unemployment rate less than half the overall unemployment rate.

## Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment in January 2013

United States	Unemployment Rate
Less than high school	12.0%
High school	8.1%
Some college or associates degree	7.0%
Bachelor's degree and higher	3.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7.9%</b>

Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Table A-4.

### Current Status of Higher Education in Arizona

Currently, public institutions of higher education provide quality education and research, while controlling the cost of tuition. Arizona's tribal and community colleges and public universities remain a strong option for Arizona's students. Private institutions provide students with other options, though the choice of private institutions is limited. With Arizona's growing population and the need for lifelong learning, Arizona's institutions of higher education provide ongoing opportunities for growth and improvement.

Higher education institutions also are economic drivers in their communities and provide unique opportunities for economic development. Workers in Arizona with bachelor's degrees earned 80% more than those with only a high school diploma and those with graduate degrees earn 135% more than those with only a high school diploma. Between 2005 and 2011, the median income for those with a bachelor's degree increased 9.6%, from \$42,399 to \$46,485, while the median income for those with only a high school diploma fell by 2.4% during the same time period.

Higher education in Arizona is largely represented by public institutions. These public institutions, however, continue to face declining funding from the state, forcing the students and their families to bear more of the cost. Given the income profile of Arizona, these costs will mean that Arizona cannot meet the current and future needs for a skilled and educated workforce. Going forward, 61% of all jobs in Arizona will require some form of credentialed higher education, yet only 20% to 25% of Arizona's high school students go to college. With the current graduation rate, Arizona will need to continue to import workforce to meet its future employment needs. Prospective employers may reject Arizona if faced with an underperforming education system. Prospective employees also may be reluctant to come to Arizona because of the impact that Arizona's education system will have on their children.

Investment in education also attracts companies that grow and support arts, cultural, health, and social issues through corporate giving and engaged employees. It has a net positive effect. Education brings companies that reinvest in their communities. Quality companies expect a vibrant education system and arts community, also a direct result of corporate involvement.

Arizona's higher education system, nonetheless, has unique strengths and attributes that provide great opportunity for improvement. Arizona's community college system is among the largest and best in the country. Arizona's students recognize the value that these colleges offer. Arizona's tribal and community colleges provide broad access in rural areas, and they provide a valuable pathway for students who want to transfer to universities. The tribal and community colleges offer Arizona's high school graduates great access to educational and cultural programs.

Arizona's universities remain first class, considered to be some of the best in the world.

The recent recession and other financial stresses have resulted in increased innovation, collaboration, and partnership within and between the universities, the tribal colleges, and the community colleges. The university system, the tribal colleges, and the community college system have become more efficient at delivering education to Arizona's students.

Arizona has many areas in which it can improve its higher education system.

First, Arizona must do a better job of preparing students for entry into higher education. By having better prepared students, Arizona's tribal and community colleges and public universities will not need to divert resources toward remedial classes, which cannot fully remediate insufficient preparation in the preK-12 system. As part of the preparation, Arizona must do a better job making sure that students know their options for and pathways to higher education, including financial aid, and are engaged in preparation for college.

Second, Arizona must expand access to higher education, especially for Arizona's underrepresented students, including minority students and students from low-income families, rural areas, and tribal areas. Arizona must address the unique challenges these students face, such as promoting its successful programs to our tribal and low-income populations.

Third, Arizona must maintain strong tribal colleges, as well as strong community college and public university systems. Arizona students and their families do not always recognize the value of higher education. Arizona, however, must address the gap between the systems. Transferability and flexibility should be improved by promoting dual enrollment and portability of credits, such as using "2+2" and "3+1" transfer programs. Such programs would allow greater access because students could move seamlessly without repetition or loss of credits. Increased collaboration and camaraderie between the systems will improve the systems and improve the perception among Arizona's residents and transplants. Private institutions also can help fill the gaps.

Fourth, Arizona must address the public perception that higher education is not available or is not worthwhile. Though many Arizonans recognize the value of higher education, others do not or do not believe it is attainable, which contributes to segments of society that are under-educated. Certain graduating seniors fear the unknown and mistakenly believe that they are not suited for higher education or do not need higher education, leading to a segment of society that is perpetually under-educated.

Fifth, Arizona must ensure that our people understand and value investments in higher education. If the people of Arizona believe in higher education and in educating children, the state will expand access. Arizona must educate students so that they know about the options available to allow them to pursue higher education, including private institutions, the tribal colleges, community college system, transfer opportunities, financial aid, and other programs.

Sixth, funding is an area in need of improvement. Arizona underfunds higher education. Funding education, however, really is investing in Arizona's future. In reality, it is a co-investment with the student. The focus should be on the return on investment from our higher education dollars. The shift away from public investment means increased tuition, which disproportionately affects underrepresented students, including minority students and students from low-income families, rural areas, and tribal areas.

### **Creating Successful Students**

Graduation rate has been the traditional measure of success, but it merely provides a snapshot view of what is going on. We must take pride in infusing the joy of learning in our students. Students must be prepared for the rigors of higher education, which includes completing required preparatory course work, including standard Common Core and STEM classes that meet or exceed national standards.

The preK-12 system and its faculty play critical roles in educating and preparing students for higher education. For instance, as demographics evolve the preK-12 schools must align their educational mission with the academic requirements of higher learning institutions so that students are prepared to grow their intellectual curiosity when they enter higher education institutions.

Equally important is family support. Education starts in the home, and as such, parents are responsible to ensure students are provided the foundation and encouragement to learn. Business, tribal, and community leaders also play an important role in encouraging our students to pursue higher education.

Higher education should be responsible for coordinating mentorship and bridge programs for underrepresented individuals to assist in transitioning into higher education programs. Higher education should incorporate internship programs as an opportunity for students to implement their education skills in the real world environment.

Higher education institutions need to emphasize student retention. Only 17% of Arizona high school students have a bachelor's degree six years after graduation. Better retention can be accomplished by improving environmental conditions, like the quality of basic living conditions. Higher education institutions should begin to view students as customers. Students are more likely to succeed when they are engaged, happy, and treated well.

Higher education must be accessible to everyone. One way of accomplishing this goal is to make bachelor's degrees available in key locations around the state through partnerships

between Arizona's universities, tribal colleges, and community colleges. We must continue to do more for underrepresented students and their families, including financial support, wider availability of classes, childcare services, and one-on-one accessibility to advisors and counselors.

Finally, the long-term post-enrollment measurements should be tracked to obtain accurate information on higher education enrollment and outcomes. However, in the end, students must take ownership of their success.

### **Higher Education and the Economy**

Higher education, as a driving force behind Arizona's economy, will carry Arizona beyond the five Cs into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Arizona's long-term future economic growth depends on Arizona's ability to expand, retain, and attract successful businesses. The ability to produce a highly educated workforce will allow Arizona to be competitive in the ever evolving global economy, attracting capital, global talent, and economic activity. Business leaders from other states consider the quality of Arizona's higher education system as a major factor when they evaluate Arizona's attractiveness and competitiveness.

Arizona's higher education system, therefore, must develop a sophisticated, highly skilled workforce. Well-educated employees will be more willing to move to Arizona if Arizona offers them, family members, and their children a quality higher education system.

Arizona's higher education system itself is an economic engine. Investing in Arizona's higher education, technology, and research has a multiplier effect on Arizona's economy and tax base. Technology transfer and spinoff companies from the research universities, particularly in the biomedical, healthcare, financial services, and technology industries, play a vital role in Arizona's economy. In 2011, students who graduated from Arizona public universities between 1989-1990 and 2010-2011 earned \$11.9 billion in wages. So financially, the 236,000 graduates are contributing over \$800 million in tax revenue annually.

The key to securing Arizona's future through higher education is collaboration between employers, economic development organizations, and Arizona's higher education institutions. The challenge is getting these diverse organizations to work together. Employers need to understand that they are in the business of lifelong learning. When employers and higher education institutions align their economic interests, the economy as a whole benefits.

Employers should work with higher education institutions to develop experiential learning opportunities, internships, externships, apprenticeships, and clinical experiences. Higher education institutions also should work with local employers to identify their workforce needs.

In a global economy, Arizona must produce a world-class work force. Arizona's proximity to Mexico offers a unique opportunity for Arizona students to gain a global perspective and cultural awareness.

## **Role of Technology**

Technology increasingly plays a transformative role in Arizona's higher education system. Technology reinvents how higher education institutions deliver education and improve productivity. The range of educational technologies is growing at an exponential rate. Adaptive learning technologies and multi-modal course design delivered through online and in-person modalities have already changed higher education. They present opportunities to meet the wide range of means by which individual students learn best and outcomes can be analyzed and improved. New technologies and online delivery facilitate participation by non-traditional students, such as persons with disabilities, seniors, working adults, and gifted youngsters working beyond their grade levels.

The digital divide that currently exists needs to be addressed over time. The implementation of technology in instruction needs to recognize the importance of critical thinking and that human interaction is an important element of learning for some individuals and a requirement of some disciplines.

Distance learning also comes with its own set of problems, namely the "digital divide" and the lack of human element. They will cause some students to drop out of online courses due to lack of interaction. Technology, therefore, should not replace the role of face-to-face interaction or be championed at the expense of failing to develop necessary social skills. In addition, poor quality online programs at some higher education institutions must be improved.

There also are upfront expenses to implement new technology and security needed to administer the networks and to protect individual privacy. We also must address the fact that many Arizona communities and constituencies have restricted access to technology and infrastructure needed to support online education. While technology introduces higher education to most areas, some will be left behind.

As already mentioned, only 17% of Arizona high school students have a bachelor's degree six years after they graduate. Higher education institutions need to emphasize student retention in the context of accessible enrollment. Better retention can be accomplished by better understanding student risk, success factors, a positive student experience, and incorporating programs to focus on improving college success.

## **Coordination and Collaboration**

Arizona's higher education institutions, including public universities, tribal colleges, community colleges, and some private institutions, coordinate their efforts to benefit students. Generally speaking, communication is solid among public higher education institutions in

Arizona. Examples include dual admission programs, student transfer arrangements, and common course numbering.

Professional organizations and councils, such as the Joint Council of Presidents, the Intertribal Council of Arizona, and economic development organizations, should further facilitate communication between higher education institutions. Special academic task forces helped obtain specific goals such as addressing transfer credits and a clearinghouse for data sharing. The downtown Phoenix medical campus is an example of increased cooperation between the universities. The Arizona Board of Regent's enterprise model is designed to facilitate even more coordination.

Arizona should review the tribal colleges, community college system, and university system to evaluate and determine ways to improve coordination. Changes to the public structure of universities, tribal colleges, and community colleges could improve coordination, collaboration, and partnership among those institutions. Arizona should review, evaluate, and determine ways to improve coordination among the tribal and community colleges and the universities.

### **Measurements and Outcomes**

Arizona has developed solid objective metrics of success. Subjective metrics remain a greater challenge.

The Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR), community colleges, and private institutions have developed models for creating objective performance metrics to measure academic success. ABOR has adopted the enterprise model for public universities as a way of measuring success. In a recent report, Vision 2020, ABOR established 32 different targets and goals for the public university system to achieve by the year 2020. The metrics used to measure success include input, output, and demographics. Input metrics include student enrollment numbers, face-to-face courses, online courses, and number of transfer students. Output metrics include the number of degrees awarded per year in various academic programs. Demographic metrics include a comparison of tuition to family income. Institutions of higher education have made significant movement away from enrollment-based metrics and toward outcome-based metrics. This movement gives higher education institutions better information and allows them to make better use of resources to improve outcomes.

We can identify objective indicators and proxies of subjective metrics, including student outcomes. They include accreditation, professional licensing, grading, merit-based scholarships, faculty evaluation by students, individual student assessment of that student's education experience, and post-degree employment.

Measuring subjective goals, however, is difficult. Some qualitative measures are unknown and unknowable, including some aspects of the quality of the education itself. Some outcomes can never be measured. Higher education institutions would benefit greatly if they had the ability to capture the student's intent at the time of enrollment and subsequently

measure that student's progress toward that goal. As ABOR continues to define and refine the metrics and as the community college system develops performance metrics appropriate to two-year institutions, it is important to prioritize and weight metrics in ways that are specific to the particular goals and mission of the particular institutions.

The metrics and the incentives that we select impact the delivery of higher education. Measuring and rewarding by the numbers can invite abuse such as "teaching to the test." External forces, such as federal requirements and accreditation, affect the metrics and the delivery methods.

The complexity of student enrollment makes measuring outcomes challenging as multiple higher education institutions have played a role in many students' success, but that role may not be measured by the metrics. That lack of measurement may cause the system to overlook some students. The metrics and incentives also need to take into account their potential adverse impact on underrepresented students, including minority students and students from low-income families, rural areas, and tribal areas. The changes put in place as a result of the metrics may have unintended consequences on these populations.

When developing metrics, private institutions face different challenges. These institutions by necessity must focus on outcomes and value added. The audience for their performance metrics is potential students. They also use enrollment as a proxy for subjective goals and public perception of the institution.

Looking forward, all metrics and incentives must encourage learning and reflect the goals and needs of the students, institutions, and Arizona.

### **Government's Role**

Higher education is a public good essential to the vitality of our democracy and economy. An educated citizenry is an important part of democracy. Government, therefore, plays several significant roles in higher education; most important is serving as a source of funding. The cost of higher education instruction should be "nearly as free as possible" per Article 11, section 6 of the Arizona State Constitution. Getting state per-student investment to the national average would facilitate this. Access also should be expanded through public support for financial aid.

The state should play a role in subsidizing the cost of higher education through scholarships and grants as a function of financial need. Arizona must make higher education more accessible to the poor and "near" poor. Otherwise, that student population risks becoming disenfranchised. Means testing should be used to ensure that all Arizonans have access to quality higher education. The national average is \$450 in financial aid and \$172 in merit scholarships. Arizona's average is \$36 per student for financial aid and \$50 for merit scholarships.

Arizona should establish other funding sources for students to use in funding their higher education. Arizona has reduced funding for public universities by \$406 million from

2008 to 2012. State-level scholarship funding could leverage the limited, but currently available, higher education scholarship funds. Arizona also could expand existing tax credits so that they apply to higher educational institutions. The federal government should expand established funding programs for veterans to enhance access. Arizona's congressional delegation should maintain and seek to increase available PELL grant funds. Private resources, including for-profit businesses and not-for-profit foundations, also are important and should be tapped to fund educational opportunities.

Higher education is critical to Arizona's future success, so higher education spending should be perceived as a necessary, long-term investment in Arizona's future. On the federal level, higher education institutions should continue to seek the benefits of funding for research and other grants. Those institutions must be careful not to get distracted by overly burdensome regulations. On the state level, we should urge the Legislature to consider a return of over \$400 million to the university and community college systems. The restored funding would be focused on making higher education more accessible and affordable for Arizona students. State funding should support capital improvements and competitive faculty salaries necessary to maintain our universities' status as top-tier research institutions.

Additionally, merit-based scholarships, grants, and partnerships between higher education institutions and local governments are important ways to provide access to higher education. We also should improve the preK-12 education pipeline and graduation requirements to relieve our higher education institutions of the burden of the remedial instruction sometimes required for admitted students. Realistic metrics and accountability must continue to be applied to all institutions receiving government funding to measure overall success and return on investment.

### **Affordability**

When it comes to higher education, access and affordability are not consistent across Arizona. Particularly at the tribal and community college level, public education in Arizona is fairly affordable and accessible today. Arizona also has done well at diversifying the choices and price points for higher education. Arizona's institutions should provide significant scholarships and student aid, particularly for students from low-income families, and also for middle-income families who do not qualify for PELL grants but who do not otherwise earn enough money to support their educational needs. In general, Arizona students are able to complete their higher education with low indebtedness.

The link between cost and access is direct and critical. Cost remains a principal barrier for large populations of poor and near poor who are one paycheck away from financial disaster. People in this economic group and even middle-class families are frozen out of higher education because of economic pressures and lack of disposable income to invest in higher education today.

The economic impact has a geographic and cultural component, particularly when it comes to baccalaureate programs. People in rural and tribal communities in Arizona are

struggling. Compared to a 12% poverty rate statewide, Arizona's rural areas have nearly 25% poverty rates and tribal areas have 40% to 48%. Many Hispanics and tribal members also have strong cultural ties to where they live, creating mobility constraints that restrict their access. We should be more culturally sensitive to underrepresented students and their families by providing improved awareness of higher education opportunities.

Arizona could take several actions to improve access and affordability to all students. Some of those actions include educating students and their families regarding higher education, helping them identify available resources, helping them become wise consumers, and providing them greater access to options. Arizona also should do more to reduce the cost of higher education.

Arizona students and their families need greater access to information regarding funding options for higher education. Arizona could do more to educate students and their families about those funding options. The process for seeking scholarships and financial aid is confusing. Arizona should consider creating a clearinghouse to publicize these opportunities so that they do not go unused.

Students and their families need to be wise consumers of higher education. Students and their families need to learn the actual cost of higher education, taking into account available resources. Arizona also should improve higher education financial counseling for students and their families while the students are in preK-12, maybe even adding financial planning for higher education to the preK-12 core curriculum. Part of that counseling should educate students about making wise short-term and long-term financial decisions when looking at higher education funding and should address non-tuition expenses such as books, supplies, and housing.

Arizona must do more to formalize pathways, including alternative pathways, between institutions of higher education to facilitate access. Coordination of institutional scholarships will reduce barriers to transfer students. This coordination will benefit underserved communities, including rural and tribal communities that lack access to four-year programs.

## **Recommendations**

To be competitive on the state and worldwide platforms, Arizona must commit to student success in higher education.

- Arizona's education systems at all levels must continue to refine and improve the preK-12 pipeline so that incoming higher education students have successfully completed their Common Core Curriculum and are prepared for higher education. High school graduation requirements must be aligned with higher education entrance requirements.
- Critically, higher education requires dedicated and sustainable funding sources. Arizona's government leaders, specifically the Governor and the Legislature,

must make this a top priority and respond to the strong desires of the people of Arizona to provide long-term, balanced solutions to funding education at competitive levels. This should include, at a minimum, increasing financial aid for students, expanding tax credits so they apply to higher education institutions, increasing funding for public higher education, and targeting programs for underrepresented, minority, and first generation students.

- Government at all levels should develop public-private partnership alternatives that promote investment in higher education.
- We encourage ABOR to periodically analyze the coordination between, and the proper weightings, effects, and effectiveness of metrics used by universities, tribal colleges, and community colleges.
- ABOR should be given state appropriations and, to the extent necessary, bonding authority to finance statewide research infrastructure. There are structural barriers to increasing funding for higher education that we should consider removing, including the repeal of Proposition 108, which requires the consent of a supermajority of the Legislature to develop new revenue resources.
- The Legislature and Governor should consider changes to Article 9, section 7 of the Arizona Constitution to allow public higher educational institutions to invest directly in private entities whose principal asset is intellectual property developed at the institution.
- On the state level, we should urge the Legislature to consider a return of over \$400 million to the university and community college systems. The restored funding would be focused on making higher education more accessible and affordable for Arizona students.
- Implement a grant and scholarship program focused on low and middle income students.
- Restore the required state match funding for the system-wide adult basic education program that provides pathways to post-secondary education to 800,000 individuals in Arizona who currently do not have a GED.
- ABOR, universities, the tribal colleges, and the community colleges must identify and support alternative approaches to increase funding, including expanding partnerships between higher education institutions and local and state community foundations to raise funds for loans and gifts. They also should support the enhancement of current endowment models.
- Advocate for restoration and continued funding of programs such as the federal TRIO programs that include Upward Bound, Talent Search, Student Support

Services, and Gear Up, which prepare middle school and high school students to be college ready. Local business leaders, charitable organizations, tribes, and communities must contribute time and resources to higher education.

- Arizona’s institutions of higher education must identify why so many potentially qualified high school graduates do not pursue higher education and address the reasons. For example, if the reason is largely based on financial restrictions, then improving funding sources can reduce or eliminate the reason.
- Remove the requirement that enrolled members of Arizona tribes be “on reservation” residents to qualify for “in state” tuition.
- Eliminate JCCR (Joint Committee on Capital Review) review of university projects.
- Authorize DREAMERs to qualify for “in state” tuition. DREAMERs are individuals who came to Arizona at a young age and who graduated from Arizona high schools.
- Arizona’s institutions of higher education must expand mentoring opportunities and job skills training for students, including mentoring students and families before they enter higher education.
- Experiential learning should play an expanded role in higher education to provide context and job skill training. Students should be able to participate in internships and have other workforce opportunities. This will require active partnerships between higher education institutions and businesses, local governments, and other organizations.
- Higher education institutions should continue to develop and implement technological innovations that improve the efficient delivery of education.
- Higher education institutions also must continue to enhance formal and informal coordination with each other to improve access to higher learning. The goal of the coordination should be to devise a long-term strategic plan. Coalitions should be formed to promote solid education policy, including increasing pathways for students.
- Higher education institutions and state and local economic development agencies must work to better align and coordinate strategic plans and initiatives in order to achieve a more diversified and sustainable economy for Arizona.
- Arizona’s institutions of higher education must meet, discuss, and encourage implementation of best practices for higher education, including coordination with high schools and middle schools and their students and families. They

must meet, discuss, and encourage implementation of best practices at high schools and middle schools for students and families so that they understand, engage in, and prepare for higher education. Student leader organizations in the public universities, tribal colleges, and community colleges should be included in the discussion. The exchange of information will provide pathways for improved efficiency and accessibility for all students.

### **Town Hall Participant Actions**

We must become advocates for improving higher education in Arizona. We must share the message from this Town Hall, including sharing this Town Hall Report with all of our contacts. We must participate in follow-up activities related to this Town Hall, and we should encourage our friends and colleagues to participate as well. We should create public service announcements to broadcast our message. We must spread the word.

We also should organize a youth summit to strengthen student engagement in higher education. Individually, we should look for opportunities to provide internship or scholarship support to higher education students.

We also must send a clear message about the importance of higher education to Arizona's leaders, including the Governor and Legislature. We must ask our leaders pointed questions about Arizona's higher education and score their voting record. We must become engaged in the legislative process, including monitoring legislation. We must pressure our leaders to support and to promote higher education in Arizona. Their support must include investment in higher education for Arizona's future, which must include reliable and dedicated funding and merit-based financial aid. We must recruit and support leaders who champion higher education. We must vote.