ARIZONA COMMUNITY COLLEGES: LONG-TERM STRATEGIC VISION

www.arizonacommunitycolleges.org
Arizona’s community colleges, through a collaborative effort with education, business, and community partners, will significantly increase the number of Arizonans who achieve their postsecondary education and training goals, complete a degree or certificate, and/or transfer to a university.
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ARIZONA COMMUNITY COLLEGES: LONG-TERM STRATEGIC VISION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OUR VISION:
Arizona’s community colleges, through a collaborative effort with education, business, and community partners, will significantly increase the number of Arizonans who achieve their postsecondary education and training goals, complete a degree or certificate, and/or transfer to a university.

CORE METRICS & 2010 BASELINE DATA:
- 28% K-12 to Community College Rate (45% K-12 to all Higher Education)
- 135,789 FTSE Enrollment in Community Colleges
- 69% College-Level Course Success Rate*
- 62% Developmental Course Success Rate*
- 20% Success After Developmental Math*
- 37% Success After Developmental English/Reading*
- 49% Fall-to-Fall Retention Rate*
- 11,435 In-State University Transfers
- 26% In-State University Transfer Rate
- 30,520 Degrees/Certificates Awarded Annually
- 20% Graduation (Degree/Certificate Completion) Rate*
- 61% of Learners Achieve a Successful Community College Outcome*
- 52% of Occupational Program Completers Employed with a Livable Wage or Enrolled in Further Education*
- 26% of Adults have a Bachelor’s Degree (1 Million Adults)

*Corresponds to a key metric included in the American Association of Community Colleges’ national Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA).
ACCESS GOAL:
Ensure broad access to high-quality education and training for all Arizonans and times and places that are convenient for learners; strengthen educational pathways through comprehensive partnerships and educational linkages; and ensure awareness of the opportunities community colleges provide for postsecondary education.

KEY INDICATORS OF PROGRESS:
- Enrollment of underserved populations
- Number of learners engaged in online, night, and/or weekend courses
- Percentage of high school graduates who enroll directly in community colleges
- Number and percent of learners who progress through a developmental math course or sequence and successfully complete a college-level course in math
- Number and percent of learners who progress through a developmental English and/or reading course or sequence and successfully complete a college-level course in English
- Cost of attendance as a percentage of Arizona mean family income

MACRO STRATEGIES:
- Close access gaps, especially among underserved populations
- Optimize programs and partnerships leading to college readiness
- Provide courses and programs that are convenient for learners

RETENTION GOAL:
Improve the retention of learners through the achievement of their education or training goals.

KEY INDICATORS OF PROGRESS:
- College-level course success rate
- Developmental course success rate
- Percent of learners completing college-level math and/or English
- Percent of full-time learners completing 42 credits—and percent of part-time learners completing 24 credits—within 2 years
- Semester-to-semester and fall-to-fall retention rates

MACRO STRATEGIES:
- Provide high-quality academic and occupational programs
- Provide and promote a broad array of student support services
- Create career and transfer pathways that link developmental, academic, and occupational programs

COMPLETION GOAL:
Significantly increase the number of learners who achieve their education or training goals, complete a degree or certificate, transfer to a university, and/or complete non-credit workforce education courses or programs.

KEY INDICATORS OF PROGRESS:
- Number and percent of learners who achieve their education or training goals
- Number and percent of learners who earn a degree or certificate
- Number and percent of learners who complete an AGEC
- Number and percent of learners who transfer to a university
- Number and percent of learners who achieve a successful community college outcome
- Percent of community college transfers who go on to earn a bachelor’s degree
- Percent of occupational program completers passing a licensure exam within one year
- Percent of occupational program completers either employed with a livable wage or enrolled in further education
- Percent of ABE/GED completers who continue their education or gain employment

MACRO STRATEGIES:
- Center completion efforts around the identification and achievement of learners’ education or training goals
- Provide academic and occupational programs and partnerships that are aligned with state and/or local workforce development needs and that lead to a degree, certificate, or immediate employment
- Collaborate to strengthen programs and pathways leading to the baccalaureate
INTRODUCTION
to the strategic plan
OUR MISSION

• To ensure broad access to high-quality education and training for all Arizonans
• To improve the retention of learners through their education or training goals
• To significantly improve goal attainment, transfer, and degree/certificate completion

The Arizona community colleges present this long-term strategic vision as a framework for improving the economic strength of our state and quality of life for Arizonans. This plan is organized around three critical goals: Broad Access to Postsecondary Education and Training, Improved Retention, and Greater Completion and Transfer. Within each area are key indicators of statewide progress toward these goals, as well as strategies and initiatives for achieving excellence in each area.

This plan both builds on and contributes to ongoing efforts to improve and align secondary and postsecondary education and training in Arizona, including the statewide Getting AHEAD (Access to Higher Education and Degrees) project funded by the Lumina Foundation. This plan also maps directly to several of the goals set out in the Arizona Board of Regents’ 2008 long-term strategic plan, titled 2020 Vision, in recognition that common goals and shared strategies are essential to the betterment of Arizona’s economy, workforce, and overall quality of life.

WHY THIS VISION IS SO IMPORTANT

Educated Arizonans will enjoy greater economic prosperity
All Arizonans, not just those with a degree or certificate, will benefit as more become educated
Arizona’s workforce will benefit from greater numbers of educated and skilled workers
Providing access to community programs and events will maintain and improve the quality of life in Arizona communities
MORE EDUCATION = HIGHER EARNINGS AND A MORE ROBUST ECONOMY

Greater educational attainment has significant individual and societal benefits. The benefits to the individual are clear: the more education a person attains, the more that person will earn over his or her lifetime.

And the difference in lifetime earnings is significant: a bachelor's degree recipient can, on average, expect to earn over $1 million more than someone with only a high school education. But even some college matters: Arizona residents who complete at least some postsecondary education will earn, on average, close to 20% more than a high school graduate.¹ And those who earn a community college degree or certificate in a high-demand field can expect to earn even more.

The societal benefits of an educated populace are also striking. By increasing educational attainment in Arizona, the state can expect to:

- Reduce unemployment and poverty rates
- Increase tax revenues
- Meet growing workforce demands for skilled workers
- Reduce dependence on social safety-net programs²

These outcomes are essential to the future of Arizona. By focusing on three overarching goals of improved access, retention, and completion, Arizona’s community colleges will help to generate a more robust economy, support a growing workforce, and create better opportunities for future generations of Arizonans.

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 (graph from same source)
VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Our vision for the future includes a significantly greater percentage of Arizonans entering and succeeding in postsecondary education and/or training. The chart presented here illustrates the core metrics guiding this plan, as well as a snapshot of where we were at the end of 2010. Progress along these metrics will depend largely on community college actions, but will also be heavily influenced by external support for community colleges, as well as how well community colleges can work with K-12 schools and universities to create and maintain educational pathways that attract, support, and graduate more learners.

Data pertaining to these metrics will be collected and analyzed—and best practices shared across the state—on an ongoing basis.

CONNECTION TO THE VOLUNTARY FRAMEWORK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Several of the core metrics, as well as a significant percentage of the key indicators of progress within each goal area, reflect measures included in the American Association of Community Colleges’ national Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA). The VFA attempts to create common, sector-appropriate measures by which community colleges can be held accountable. VFA metrics encompass student progress and outcomes measures, as well as workforce, economic, and community development metrics.

All VFA measures included in this strategic vision follow the definitions included in the most recent VFA technical manual. However, because the VFA is currently in its pilot stage, these measures should be considered interim. They will be finalized following any modifications to the VFA definitions in mid- to late-2011.

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<thead>
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EXTERNAL FORCES WILL AFFECT THIS PLAN

Community colleges in Arizona are buffeted by several external forces—demographic, economic, political, and educational. These forces, and in particular the current economic crisis and sharp downturn in state funding, will challenge the colleges’ ability to provide high quality education and training to a population with diverse educational goals and life circumstances.

Dramatic reductions in state support for Arizona’s community colleges—including cuts in state operating aid that are expected to continue for several years—are particularly damaging to our ability to achieve the goals outlined in this long-term strategic vision.

As a result of these reductions, Arizona’s community colleges will be hard-pressed to maintain current levels of enrollment and student services, let alone improve access, retention, and completion rates. Indeed, most districts will be forced to cut essential programs and services, as well as faculty and staff positions, in order to balance their budgets.

Although for years Arizona’s community colleges have been working to improve efficiency, the proposed dramatic revenue reductions may mean that districts will have to sacrifice one mission—access, for example—in order to maintain current levels of performance in other areas (e.g., retention or completion).

It is important to note that the current economic crisis and sharp downturn in state funding does not affect our goals or our long-term vision for Arizona’s community colleges. It does, however, severely hinder our ability to achieve those goals in the foreseeable future.

Dramatic reductions in state support for Arizona’s community colleges are particularly damaging to our ability to achieve the goals outlined in this long-term strategic vision.

Revenue reductions may mean that districts will have to sacrifice one mission—access, for example—in order to maintain current levels of performance in other areas (e.g., retention or completion).
GOALS AND METRICS of the plan
GOAL 1:

Ensure broad access to high-quality education and training for all Arizonans at times and places that are convenient for learners; strengthen educational pathways through comprehensive partnerships and educational linkages; and ensure awareness of the opportunities community colleges provide for postsecondary education.
BACKGROUND: A DIVERSE AND GROWING POPULATION

Arizona has the fastest growing population (next to Nevada) in the United States, with the 2000 population more than doubling to 10.7 million by 2030.¹ Immigrants and their children—the vast majority from Mexico and Latin America—are likely to account for about 38% of the state’s population increase.²

Latinos, American Indians, and African Americans—three groups that are historically less likely to enter and succeed in college—make up roughly one-third of the Arizona’s population. Furthermore, almost 15% of Arizona’s population is foreign-born, and 28% speak a language other than English at home (3 out of 4 of these speak Spanish).

In order to significantly improve college access and success rates, Arizona’s community colleges will have to take the unique needs and experiences of a diverse and rapidly growing population into consideration. This will require paying close attention to who our students are—as well as who they are likely to be in the near future—and how they will access and utilize our colleges in ways that may be different from previous generations.

**Arizona Education Attainment by Race**

Source for pie graph: Arizona Department of Health Services, 2005
Source for bar graph: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-08 American Community Survey (ACS), Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) File
BACKGROUND: UNDERPREPARED STUDENTS

Arguably one of the greatest challenges Arizona’s community colleges face is the extent of developmental education required by incoming students—both those coming out of high school and those returning to postsecondary education after long stints in the workforce. In 2009 only 76% of Arizona’s high school students graduated within four years; four-year graduation rates were significantly lower for Native American and Latino students (63% and 69%, respectively), as well as economically disadvantaged students (69%).¹

Even among high school graduates, many are not prepared for college-level work. Statewide, roughly half of all incoming community college students require at least one developmental course in math (this figure is as high as 82% in some districts), and 41% require at least one pre-college course in English or reading. Almost one-quarter (23%) of incoming community college students require three or more developmental courses.

Although these statistics do not vary considerably from national figures, they do indicate a continued and growing role for developmental education at Arizona community colleges. College faculty and administrators will need to prioritize basic skills as an essential function of the institution—one necessary to preserving and promoting access—examine new ways of providing developmental instruction that best meet students’ needs, and work closely with K-12 schools to align college readiness and high school graduation standards.

¹ Arizona Department of Education, “2009 four year grad rate for the state by subgroup,” 2010
GOAL ONE: KEY INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

Access Goal: To ensure broad access to high-quality education and training for all Arizonans at times and places that are convenient for learners; strengthen education pathways through comprehensive partnerships and educational linkages; and ensure awareness of the opportunities community colleges provide for postsecondary education.

KEY INDICATORS OF PROGRESS TOWARD ACCESS GOAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment of underserved populations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of learners engaged in non-traditional (e.g., online, night and/or weekend) courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of high school graduates who enroll directly in community colleges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number and percent of learners who progress through a developmental math course or sequence and successfully complete a college-level math course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and percent of learners who progress through a developmental English and/or reading course or sequence and successfully complete a college-level English course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of attendance as a percentage of Arizona median family income</td>
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ACHIEVING OUR ACCESS GOAL:

1. CLOSE ACCESS GAPS, ESPECIALLY AMONG UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

If Arizona community colleges are to reach our access goal, we must work to close access gaps among those populations that are not enrolling and succeeding in community colleges at rates commensurate to their peers.

This will require:

• Providing outreach to—and increasing enrollment of—populations that are emerging from current demographic trends (including immigrants and their children, males, Latinos, American Indians, low-income students, and displaced workers)

• Partnering with K-12 schools and social service agencies to communicate the need for postsecondary education and/or training, and providing collaborative pathways to college

Initiatives include:

• Arizona Western College’s CAMP (College Assistance Migrant Program) recruits first-time college students from farm-worker families and supports their enrollment and success during the first year of college through residential living and learning communities. These learning communities provide comprehensive support for students, including language and/or math tutoring, financial planning, cultural awareness, mentoring, and connections to other students from similar backgrounds.

• In partnership with the County One Stop Shop, Mohave Community College has developed a fast-track program designed to enroll displaced workers in accelerated certificate programs in high-demand occupational fields.

• Maricopa’s Achieving a College Education (ACE) program targets students who may not consider college as an option. The district-wide program is designed to reduce dropouts among at-risk high school students, as well as assist in their transition to college. The ACE program recruits students in their sophomore year of high school to participate in the program as juniors and seniors, allowing them to earn up to 24 college credits by high school graduation. In addition, the Junior ACE Project offered at 4 of Maricopa’s colleges and the Adult ACE program at Rio Salado College engage middle school and adult learners in bridge programs leading to college readiness.
ACHIEVING OUR ACCESS GOAL:

2. OPTIMIZE PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS LEADING TO COLLEGE READINESS

Although community colleges did not choose to play such a central role in developmental education, it has nonetheless become a primary institutional function, and one that must be recognized for the role it plays in preparing an educated citizenry and in helping students from all walks of life achieve their personal, educational, and career objectives. As community colleges, we have a responsibility to optimize current developmental programs, as well as to work with K-12 schools to reduce the need for remediation over time.

This will require:

• Collaborating with K-12 and university providers to align curriculum to college-readiness standards
• Moving beyond a deficit model of development and promoting developmental education as an essential way of providing learners with opportunities for growth and preparation
• Using next-generation technology and alternative delivery models to make developmental education offerings more flexible and tailored to learners’ needs

Initiatives include:

• Eastern Arizona College and its feeder high schools have established several “7-14 associations”: collaborative partnerships between EAC faculty and middle and high school teachers that aim to increase student success by aligning curricula and placement evaluations, sharing best practices, enhancing instructor qualifications, and cultivating dual enrollment opportunities. Since the 7-14 organizations were established, participating teachers have applied more constructivist teaching practices, and their students have demonstrated better scores on posttests compared to a control group.

• Pima Community College is working to support an organizational culture dedicated to improving basic skills development for all students. As part of these efforts, the district has (among other things): developed Learning Center options for developmental math, reading, writing, and ESL courses; integrated ESL best practices into developmental courses; developed modular courses and other formats to meet learner needs; developed a peer mentoring program for developmental students; and established a Readiness Academy to prepare learners for math, reading, and writing instruction.
ACHIEVING OUR ACCESS GOAL:

3. PROVIDE COURSES AND SERVICES THAT ARE CONVENIENT FOR LEARNERS

Large numbers of community college students work full- or part-time, live far away from campus, and/or have other life circumstances that preclude them from taking courses at traditional times or locations. To meet our access goal, we must provide developmental and college-level courses and services at hours, places, and in formats that are most convenient for learners.

This will require:

• Utilizing a range of delivery methods such as distance education, outreach centers, and online or hybrid courses

• Providing courses and services at non-traditional times and places, including at night, on weekends, and at off-campus locations

Initiatives include:

• Northland Pioneer College’s service area encompasses 22,000 square miles, and thus the institution has long believed in providing education in local communities, particularly those with large populations of underserved or low-income learners. NPC has educational centers on the White Mountain Apache, Hopi, and Navajo Nations, and also offers developmental education at multiple reservation and non-reservation sites.

• Many of Arizona’s community college districts engage in distance education and provide online courses and services in order extend access to students who might not otherwise be able to participate in higher education. For example, NPC runs one multimedia and two ITV classrooms to provide multi-site access to all Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC) and associate of arts courses. Mohave’s videoconferencing/ITV reach includes 10 rural county sites, and its Distance Education campus now accounts for over 30% of overall enrollments. In addition to providing technology solutions and educational centers across its service area, Arizona Western College offers a vast array of web-based services through which students can monitor their classroom success, receive advising and tutoring, or seek assistance from local college personnel from their own homes or communities. Finally, Cochise College’s Online Campus offers 15 fully online degree or certificate programs, as well as numerous non-credit courses.
STRATEGIES FOR EXCELLENCE

MACRO STRATEGIES FOR PROVIDING BROAD ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1. Close access gaps, especially among underserved populations
   a. Increase enrollment of populations emerging from current demographic trends
   b. Partner with K-12 schools to promote postsecondary education or training and engage in collaborative pathways to college

2. Optimize programs and partnerships leading to college readiness
   a. Collaborate to align K-12 curricula with college-readiness standards
   b. Promote developmental education as an essential way of providing learners with opportunities for growth and preparation
   c. Tailor developmental education to best meet students’ needs

3. Provide courses and services that are convenient for learners
   a. Utilize a wide range of delivery methods such as distance education, outreach centers, and online courses
   a. Provide courses and services at non-traditional times and places
GOAL 2: Retention

Improve the retention of learners through the achievement of their education or training goals.
BACKGROUND: A SWIRLING STUDENT POPULATION

Community colleges are frequently criticized for retention rates that, at a national average of 52.2%, are significantly lower than retention rates at four-year public institutions (76.8%).¹

In response, college leaders typically respond with evidence that community college students attend for multiple reasons, not all of them academic; swirl among multiple institutions; stop out and drop out frequently; and that they must contend with multiple issues such as the need to work in order to pay tuition and fees, take several developmental courses, find childcare, and contribute to the support of their families.

Regardless of the reasons, it is clear that community colleges in Arizona and across the nation must work to improve student retention, especially among those groups (American Indians and African Americans, for example) who persist and complete at consistently lower rates than their peers.

With statewide retention rates 7.3% lower than the national average, improving student retention is a particular priority for Arizona’s community colleges.

Note: Statewide retention rates presented here differ slightly from those presented on page 5, which measure retention among a select VFA cohort of students. Overall (i.e., non-VFA) retention rates are presented here to improve comparability with the national average.

¹ NCHEMS, “Retention Rates – First-Time College Freshmen Returning Their Second Year,” 2008. (National average in graph is from same source.)
BACKGROUND: GATEWAY COURSES AND CREDIT THRESHOLDS

For many years, research has pointed to variables that may help to improve student persistence in community colleges, including the frequency of contact with faculty, staff, and other students; involvement in learning communities; the quality and availability of student support services; and greater state expenditures per full-time equivalent student.

Recently, several researchers have also begun to look at how retention may be affected by when and if students reach certain momentum points. For example, a 2009 study of students in California’s community colleges showed significantly higher retention and completion rates among full-time students who completed a college-level math and/or English course within two years, as well as those who earned at least 20 credits in their first year.¹

Based on these and similar data, as well as the inclusion of student progress metrics in the Voluntary Framework of Accountability, this plan incorporates several key momentum points as indicators of progress toward our retention goal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Momentum Points</th>
<th>Semester-to-Semester Retention (74%)</th>
<th>Fall-to-Fall Retention (58%)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College-Level Math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed Within 2 Years (21%)</td>
<td>92.8%</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Complete Within 2 Years (79%)</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College-Level English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Within 2 years (28%)</td>
<td>91.4%</td>
<td>84.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Complete Within 2 Years (72%)</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Year Credits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned 20+ Credits (24%)</td>
<td>99.3%</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Earn 20+ Credits (76%)</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note: retention figures in the above table are significantly higher than the Arizona statistics presented on the previous page, primarily because they include only full-time students and exclude students who enrolled only for one term.)

¹ Moore, C., Shulock, N., & Offenstein, J. “Steps to Success: Analyzing Milestone Achievement to Improve Community College Student Outcomes.” Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy, 2009. (Table adapted from same source.)
GOAL TWO: KEY INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

Retention Goal: To improve the retention of learners through the achievement of their education or training goals.

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Developmental course success rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of learners successfully completing college-level math and/or English</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of full-time learners completing 42 credits—and percent of part-time learners completing 24 credits—within 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester-to-semester and fall-to-fall retention rates</td>
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</table>
ACHIEVING OUR RETENTION GOAL:

1. PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY ACADEMIC AND OCCUPATIONAL PROGRAMS

Arizona’s community colleges provide a vast array of high quality and innovative academic and occupational programs. Improving student retention will necessitate continued investment in these programs, as well as ongoing support and professional development for faculty and staff.

This will require:

• Providing learners with opportunities for exploration and critical thinking through interdisciplinary courses, connections to the workforce, new technologies, and/or modifications to traditional liberal arts classes that help learners connect the curriculum to their twenty-first century lives
• Supporting exemplary teaching and learning through professional development and opportunities for faculty collaboration

Initiatives include:

• Engagement Opportunities at Estrella Mountain Community College is an initiative to implement active learning strategies into several college programs, including peer-to-peer mentoring, student government, the Learning Enhancement and Writing Center, and the NASA Center for Success in Math & Science. Active learning strategies—such as collaborative or cooperative learning, student debates, problem solving, role playing, and journal writing—have been shown to improve critical thinking skills and increase retention.

• Several of Arizona’s community college districts have made professional development a clear priority in acknowledgement of the link between professional development, effective teaching and learning, and student retention and completion. Central Arizona College, for example, annually reimburses up to 6 credit hours of study at an accredited postsecondary institution, and provides up to $800 for faculty and staff to attend professional development seminars or workshops. Coconino Community College sponsors two Employee Development Days each year to allow faculty and staff to participate in free professional development sessions of their choosing. And the Maricopa Community College District offers numerous professional development activities, including a summer institute for faculty working with developmental learners; a student success conference that brings together faculty, administrators, and student affairs personnel to discuss best practices in retention and completion; as well as various seminars and Dialogue Days to allow faculty to share ideas about how to enhance teaching and learning,
ACHIEVING OUR RETENTION GOAL:

2. PROVIDE AND PROMOTE A BROAD ARRAY OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

While community colleges have always offered support services for students, to significantly improve retention and completion rates, we need to think critically about how these services are provided and promoted, as well as how faculty and staff can work together to improve student engagement and persistence.

This will require:

• Providing and promoting a broad and easily accessible array of support services through one-stop centers, mandatory orientation or advising sessions, and/or learning communities

• Encouraging faculty and staff collaboration in identifying at-risk students early, providing just-in-time support services, and engaging in meaningful interactions with learners within and outside of the classroom

Initiatives include:

• Most of Arizona’s community college districts have consolidated their student support services into centralized locations in order to more efficiently and effectively engage learners outside the classroom and connect them with needed programs and services. Arizona Western College, for example, offers a one-stop center where students can easily enroll in classes, seek counseling or advising, learn about financial aid or scholarships, and explore transfer opportunities. Similarly, Pima Community College has recently renovated its Student Services Centers in order to provide a diverse set of services at a single location on each campus. As well, Mohave Community College has opened a Student Learning Commons (SLC) on each of its four campuses. Each SLC contains learning lounges for students, computer classrooms, and a Learning Assistance Center that provides space for academic debate, casual studying, group interaction, and formal academic support resources such as supplemental instruction and tutoring.

• The majority of Arizona’s community colleges have also implemented academic monitoring and early alert systems that use student data to track learners’ progress and provide appropriate interventions and academic supports. Several colleges have also adapted “intrusive advising” practices for first-year students and those most at risk of leaving college. As well, various colleges have adopted mandatory orientations, advisement, placement, and/or student success courses to ensure that learners start strong and have personalized academic plans to keep them on track toward their academic or occupational goals.
ACHIEVING OUR RETENTION GOAL:

3. CREATE CAREER AND TRANSFER PATHWAYS THAT LINK DEVELOPMENTAL, ACADEMIC, AND OCCUPATIONAL PROGRAMS

If Arizona’s community colleges are to create effective career and transfer pathways, as well as other curricular links shown to improve student engagement, retention, and completion, we must build stronger and more innovative alliances between academic, occupational, and developmental programs.

This will require:

• Creating career and/or transfer pathways that integrate instruction in basic skills as well as appropriate student support services
• Integrating academic and occupational preparation to both strengthen learners' technical skills and incorporate elements of general education that will accrue toward an associate degree and/or prepare them for career advancement opportunities

Initiatives include:

• Mohave’s Fast Track program provides displaced workers with access to accelerated developmental, academic, and occupational programs which, combined with wrap-around services, positions learners to quickly re-enter the workforce in a new field or continue their education. The program offers a rigorous orientation progress that includes placement testing, financial aid assistance, and course registration. Students requiring remediation are afforded special tutoring sessions between semesters to allow them to progress more quickly through developmental coursework.

• In January 2011 Phoenix College began implementing Project Degree as a way of improving retention and completion among learners requiring developmental education. Project Degree participants begin college in a learning community, take developmental reading and writing courses and a college success course, and receive supplemental tutoring in math. A resource specialist works intensively with each first-year student, and as learners transition into college-level courses and progress toward a degree or certificate, they are supported by a completion advisor who continues to connect them to college resources and support services.
STRATEGIES FOR EXCELLENCE

MACRO STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING RETENTION

1. **Provide high quality academic and occupational programs**
   a. Provide learners with opportunities for exploration and critical thinking
   b. Support exemplary teaching and learning through professional development and opportunities for collaboration

2. **Provide and promote a broad array of student support services**
   a. Provide and promote a broad array of easily accessible support services through one-stop centers, mandatory orientation or advising, and/or learning communities
   b. Encourage faculty and staff collaboration in providing meaningful and just-in-time support for learners both within and outside the classroom

3. **Create career and transfer pathways that link developmental, academic, and occupational programs**
   a. Provide academic or occupational pathways that integrate instruction in basic skills as well as appropriate student support services
   b. Integrate academic and occupational preparation to both strengthen learners’ technical skills and incorporate elements of a general education that will accrue toward an associate degree and/or prepare them for career advancements
Significantly increase the number of learners who achieve their education or training goals, complete a degree or certificate, transfer to a university, and/or complete non-credit workforce education courses or programs.

GOAL 3: Completion
BACKGROUND: THE COMPLETION AGENDA

In recent years, the federal government and several major philanthropic organizations have begun to focus attention on the community college’s role in dramatically increasing the number of Americans with bachelor’s and other postsecondary degrees. These completion initiatives are framed not only by a desire to retain the United States’ economic competitiveness in a global marketplace, but also by an acknowledgement that institutions of higher education—including community colleges—can do better in terms of transfer and degree/certificate attainment.

Nationally, almost 37% of community college students complete a degree or certificate within 6 years.¹ In Arizona, that figure is just under 18%.

Completion rates vary greatly among Arizona community college districts. Some—particularly those with large percentages of part-time students and/or those that prioritize the transfer mission—confer degrees or certificates on only 5 or 6 percent of learners. At other districts, particularly those that work closely with nearby businesses and industries, over a quarter of learners earn a degree or certificate within 6 years.

There is also significant variation in degree/certificate completion rates among different subgroups of students, with persistent achievement gaps between white learners and their Latino, African American, and American Indian counterparts.

Note: Statewide completion rates presented here differ slightly from those presented on page 5, which measure completion among a select VFA cohort of students. Overall (i.e., non-VFA) completion rates are presented here to improve comparability with national rates.

BACKGROUND: TRANSFER

Statewide, 26% of Arizona community college students who engage in transfer intent behavior successfully transfer to an in-state public university within 6 years. These rates are comparable to national figures. Transfer intent behavior is defined as: earning 12 or more community college credit hours; declaring an intent to transfer or obtain a transfer degree; and completing at least one core course from the Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC).¹

White and Asian students are overrepresented among the Arizona transfer population, while African American, American Indian, and Latino students do not transfer at rates commensurate with their enrollment in community colleges.² While Arizona’s community colleges engage in efforts to increase transfer across the board, we must pay particular attention to the success of these populations.

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GOAL THREE: KEY INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

Completion Goal: To significantly increase the number of learners who achieve their education or training goals, complete a degree or certificate, transfer to a university, and/or complete non-credit workforce education courses or programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY INDICATORS OF PROGRESS TOWARD COMPLETION GOAL</th>
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<td>Number and percent of learners who achieve their stated education or training goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number and percent of learners who earn a degree or certificate (graduation rate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number and percent of learners who complete an AGEC</td>
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<td>Number and percent of learners who transfer to a university</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number and percent of learners achieving a successful community college outcome</td>
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<td>Percent of community college transfers who go on to earn a bachelor’s degree</td>
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<td>Percent of occupational program completers passing a licensure exam within one year</td>
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<td>Number and percent of occupational program completers either employed with a livable wage or enrolled in further education</td>
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<td>Percent of ABE/GED completers who continue their education or gain employment</td>
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**ACHIEVING OUR COMPLETION GOAL:**

1. CENTER COMPLETION EFFORTS AROUND THE IDENTIFICATION AND ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNERS’ EDUCATION OR TRAINING GOALS

Unlike students at four-year colleges and universities who typically aim to earn a bachelor’s degree, community college students have a wide variety of educational goals. In order to more accurately analyze student retention and completion—and to more appropriately target interventions—we must center completion efforts around the identification and achievement of learners’ education or training goals.

**This will require:**

- Collecting student intent data—including reasons for attending, intended area of study, and whether or not the student plans to return to the college in a subsequent term—each semester
- Focusing retention and completion efforts around the achievement of learners’ stated education or training goals

**Initiatives include:**

- In 2007 staff and administrators at Pima Community College (PCC) launched an online student intent tracking process that collects data for all students the first time they register each semester. Students select their reason for attending PCC (degree or certificate, transfer, personal interest, job skills, or UofA student taking PCC classes), identify their intended area of study, and state whether they plan to return to PCC in one of the subsequent two terms. If they are not planning to return, students are asked to select a reason (completed program of study, achieved educational goal, transferred, financial reasons, etc.).

PCC intent data can then be combined with any other student information, including demographics, education level, financial aid status, GPA and grades, instructional delivery method, and course taking behavior, allowing the college to examine student retention and completion using a combination of intent and other data. Intent data can also be utilized to identify populations that are less likely to succeed in order to provide additional support, identify programs or subject areas where PCC and state universities can improve transfer pathways, and provide other targeted interventions that can increase retention and completion.

- Mohave Community College has begun to implement PCC’s student intent tracking model, and both Arizona Western and Maricopa Community Colleges have their own systems for collecting information on students’ goals.
ACHIEVING OUR COMPLETION GOAL:

2. PROVIDE ACADEMIC AND OCCUPATIONAL PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS THAT ARE ALIGNED WITH STATE AND/OR LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS, AND THAT LEAD TO A Degree, CERTIFICATE, OR IMMEDIATE EMPLOYMENT

In order to serve as a nexus of employment preparation for a diverse population of learners, we must provide programs and engage in partnerships that are aligned with state and/or local workforce development needs, and that help students attain their education, training, or career goals.

This will require:

• Monitoring economic and industry forecasts—as well as maintaining relationships with local business and industry leaders—in order to develop or redesign degree and certificate programs to meet emerging workforce demands

• Collaborating with state and local workforce development agencies, local businesses, and/or Joint Technical Education Districts (JTEDS) to design and provide occupational or contract training programs that prepare learners for immediate employment in high-demand areas

Initiatives include:

• In 2010, after consulting with various biofuel and solar companies operating in central Arizona; examining statistical forecasts of regional, state, and national employment growth in these fields; and reviewing the state’s plans to attract additional solar and biofuel producers, Central Arizona College applied for and received a $2.2 million Community Based Job Training grant from the U.S. Department of Labor in order to create instructional programs in alternative energy. In spring 2011 the college will be offering its first courses in biofuels and solar energy leading to a one-year certificate or a two-year associate degree.

• As the wine industry in the Verde Valley has grown significantly in the past decade, Yavapai College has developed a new occupational certificate program in viticulture. The college partnered with Merkin Green Vineyard Management to plant and maintain a one-acre vineyard on the Verde Valley campus, and has aligned itself with the Verde Valley Wine Consortium to facilitate alliances with vintners and viticulturalists throughout Yavapai County. The college plans to expand its viticulture program to offer an associate degree in enology and viticulture.
ACHIEVING OUR COMPLETION GOAL:

3. COLLABORATE TO STRENGTHEN PROGRAMS AND PATHWAYS LEADING TO THE BACCALAUREATE

Simply providing transfer courses and programs is no longer sufficient if we are to significantly increase transfer and bachelor’s degree production in Arizona. We must collaborate with our university partners to develop new and improve existing programs and pathways that both minimize common obstacles to transfer and maximize course transferability and applicability.

This will require:

• Developing and/or improving guaranteed admission programs with in-state universities to provide students in multiple degree programs with a clear path to the baccalaureate
• Collaborating to provide co-located or joint bachelor’s degree programs on community college campuses in order to extend baccalaureate opportunities to rural or place-bound learners

Initiatives include:

• Following Maricopa’s Academic Program Pathways (MAPP) model, which provides tuition incentives and guaranteed admission into Arizona State University (ASU) for community college students who follow one of several ASU-defined degree pathways and earn a minimum GPA, several other districts (including Pima, NPC, and Mohave) have developed similar Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG) programs.

• Coconino Community College has developed an exemplary joint admissions program with Northern Arizona University (CCC2NAU), allowing community college students to seamlessly transfer credits, benefit from tailored advisement, and receive assistance in navigating community college and university resources and systems. Mohave and Maricopa Community Colleges have set up similar agreements with NAU, and Cochise College has worked with the University of Arizona South to develop the Cochise Cats program, which provides programs, services, and joint advising to assist students in successfully transferring and earning a bachelor's degree.

• In fall 2011 Northland Pioneer College will begin to offer an RN>BSN program in collaboration with ASU. This program will allow graduates of NPC’s nursing program to earn their bachelor’s in nursing from ASU through distance education, with classroom and support services provided by both institutions.
STRATEGIES FOR EXCELLENCE

MACRO STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING COMPLETION AND TRANSFER

1. Center completion efforts around the identification and achievement of learners’ education or training goals
   a. Collect student intent data each semester
   b. Focus retention and completion efforts around the achievement of learners’ education or training goals

2. Provide academic and occupational programs and partnerships that are aligned with state and/or local workforce development needs and that lead to a degree, certificate, or immediate employment
   a. Monitor economic and industry forecasts in order to develop or redesign programs to meet emerging workforce demands
   b. Collaborate to provide occupational programs leading to immediate employment in high-demand areas

3. Collaborate to strengthen programs and pathways leading to the baccalaureate
   a. Develop and/or improve guaranteed admissions programs with in-state universities to provide students with a clear path to the baccalaureate
   a. Collaborate to provide joint or co-located bachelor’s degree programs on community college campuses to extend baccalaureate access to rural or place-bound learners
RESOLUTION BY THE DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARDS
OF THE ARIZONA COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN SUPPORT OF
“ARIZONA COMMUNITY COLLEGES: LONG-TERM STRATEGIC VISION”

WHEREAS, the District Governing Boards (DGBs) of Arizona’s community colleges recognize the need for a statewide, long-term strategic vision;

WHEREAS, the DGBs of Arizona’s community colleges support the three critical goals of Broad Access to Education and Training, Improved Retention, and Greater Completion and Transfer; and

WHEREAS, the DGBs of Arizona’s community colleges recognize the importance of common core metrics and key indicators of progress toward the three critical goals;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARDS OF THE ARIZONA COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

Section 1. That the DGBs of Arizona’s community colleges commit to integrating the long-term strategic vision into their own strategic plans and planning processes;

Section 2. That the DGBs of Arizona’s community colleges commit to incorporating the long-term strategic vision, goals, and metrics into collaborative efforts with education, business, and community partners; and

Section 3: That the DGBs of Arizona’s community colleges commit to collecting and sharing data on the core metrics and key indicators of progress on an ongoing basis.

Cochise Community College District Governing Board
Maricopa Community College District Governing Board
Navajo Community College District Governing Board
Yavapai Community College District Governing Board

Coconino Community College District Governing Board
Mohave Community College District Governing Board
Pinal Community College District Governing Board
Yuma/La Paz Community College District Governing Board
MEMBERS, ARIZONA COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS’ COUNCIL

Dr. Jeanne Swarthout, Chair
Navajo Community College District

Dr. James Horton
Yavapai Community College District

Dr. Leah L. Bornstein
Coconino Community College District

Mr. Dennis Jenkins
Pinal Community College District

Mark Bryce, J.D.
Graham Community College District

Dr. Michael Kearns
Mohave Community College District

Dr. Roy Flores
Pima Community College District

Dr. Glenn Mayle
Yuma/La Paz Community College District

Dr. Rufus Glasper
Maricopa Community College District

Dr. J.D. Rottweiler
Cochise Community College District

Arizona Community Colleges: Long-Term Strategic Vision was created with the assistance of Dr. Carrie B. Kisker and the California Community College Collaborative (C4) at UC Riverside. www.c4.ucr.edu

All data not explicitly cited in this plan were provided by the institutional research effectiveness offices at Arizona’s 10 community college districts, each of whose staff members were incredibly helpful in the development of this strategic vision and its metrics.