

A Summary of Next Steps  
Governor's P-20 Council  
November 8, 2007

The Governor's P-20 Council was established in 2005 to review, assess and recommend on the state of education in the State of Arizona. It is composed of a cross-section of members from education, business, parent and community organizations, and a variety of boards and commissions from around the state. In December 2006 the P-20 Council presented 32 recommendations for improving the state of education in Arizona.

One significant initiative undertaken at the recommendation of the P-2- Council is the **Higher Education Demand and Feasibility Study**. This study, which is now available, was undertaken in collaboration with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). The study indicates that Arizona is behind the U.S. in the education attainment levels of its young adult population and continues to lose ground.

Comparisons of attainment of associates and bachelors degrees against countries aligned with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) show Arizona lagging significantly; comparisons of Arizona to the same levels of attainment within the United States again shows a gap, with Arizona placing 35<sup>th</sup> among states in the attainment of a bachelors degree or higher in the 25-64 year age range. More troubling is that Arizona is 41<sup>st</sup> among states in the attainment of a high school diploma in this same age range and 42<sup>nd</sup> in the attainment of a high school diploma in the 18-24 year age range.

The study goes on to explain this situation part by the fact that Arizona has historically relied on in-migration for much of its workforce, and this workforce has not brought high levels of education attainment with it. This is particularly true of the 22 to 29 year age group. The implication of this situation is that to become internationally competitive Arizona will need to significantly increase its annual degree production. Moreover, given the relative age of the working population, much of this increase will need to come from "re-entry" students, those who are returning to school, if we are to meet the projected gap in number of degrees needed to populate an internationally competitive workforce.

To be specific, Arizona will need to increase its production of bachelors degreed students by 29,000 each year to close the existing gap by 2025. We will need to do this in large part by engaging the current population in continuing their education, as opposed to relying on the possibility of recruiting educated in-migrants to meet workforce needs. In short, we will need to "grow our own" competitive workforce.

Moving forward, the P-20 Council sees as major strategies:

- \*Increasing Arizona's competitiveness nationally and internationally
- \*Ensuring that students enroll in and complete college, with a focus on increasing the number of bachelors degrees

\*Developing effective funding models and governance structures for higher education.

Proposed action steps toward in these strategies include:

- \*Expansion of university branches in high-growth areas
- \*Expanding 2+2 and similar programs
- \*Developing effective hybrid delivery modes
- \*Increasing early college options for high school students

Accordingly, the P-20 Council encourages increased collaboration among community colleges and public and private universities, to include more robust 2+2 programs. The establishing of university centers on community college campuses is also recommended as a viable approach to addressing the issue of collaboration. At the same time, the P-20 Council urges the K-12 and postsecondary systems to better align expectations to ensure that students exiting high school are ready for college. A specific goal in this regard is to revise Arizona's math standard so that high school graduates are ready for college and/or the workforce upon graduation.

More information is available at [www.azgovernor.gov/p20](http://www.azgovernor.gov/p20).