

# Efforts to Increase Degree Attainment in Arizona: Innovative Ideas to Share with Other States

**Sarah Harper**  
Vice president, engagement and communications

**Roxanne Murphy**  
Director, postsecondary attainment

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# Serving Arizona

## By the numbers: Arizona's public universities

### ECONOMIC IMPACT

**\$1.6B**

Total state taxes paid by university alumni

*Source: FY 2022 Alumni Wages Report*

**30.9K**

Total employees working at Arizona's public universities

*Source: FY 2024 Personnel Report*

**\$24,924**

Wage gap in Arizona for those with a bachelor's degree compared to someone with a high school diploma

*Source: FY 2022 Alumni Wages Report*

**182**

Patents earned by university students and faculty

*Source: FY 2024 Technology and Research Initiative Fund Report*

**21**

Startup companies formed by universities' students and faculty

*Source: FY 2024 Technology and Research Initiative Fund Report*

### ENROLLMENT

**230K**

Students enrolled at Arizona's public universities

*Source: 2024 Fall Enrollment Report*

**52K**

Bachelor's and graduate degrees awarded by Arizona's public universities

*Source: 2022 College Completion Report*

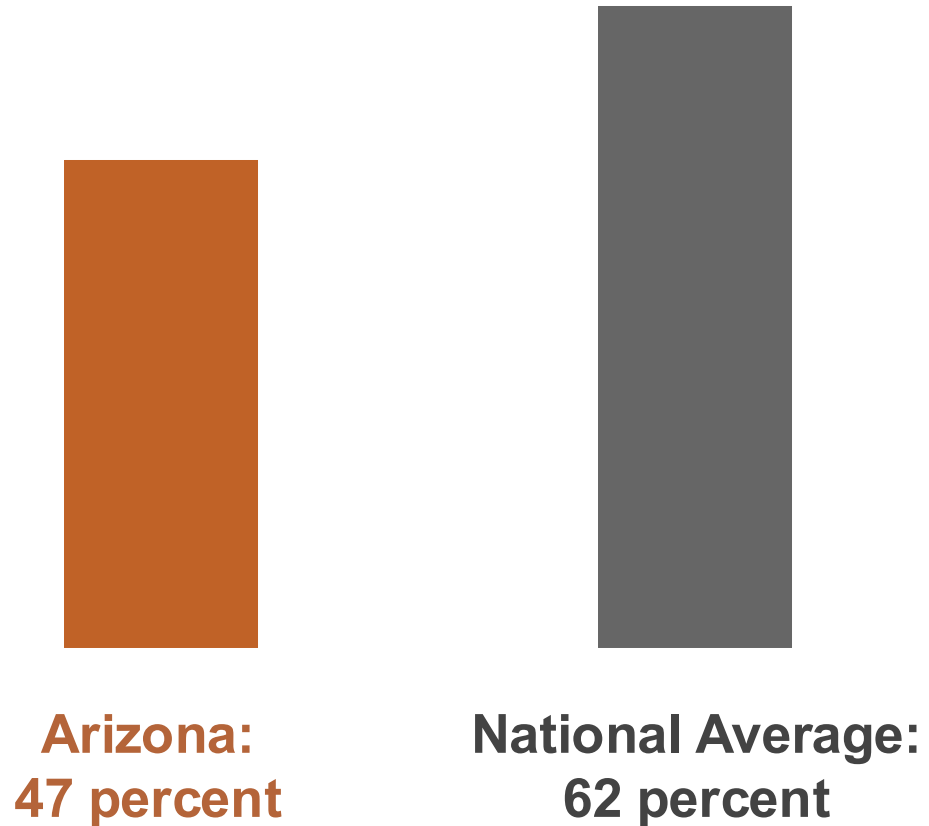
**104K**

Online students enrolled at Arizona's public universities

*Source: 2024 Fall Enrollment Report*

# AZ college going rate lags national average

- Less than half of Arizona high school graduates enroll in some form of postsecondary education.
- Arizona consistently trails the national college going rate by **15 percentage points**.



# Projected Arizona annual degree shortfalls

<b>Annual demand for bachelor's degrees</b>	<b>68,000</b>
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- Bachelor's degrees from recent graduates	22,500
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- Bachelor's degrees from in-migration	19,200
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<b>Annual shortage of degrees</b>	<b>26,300</b>
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*Simply by reaching the U.S. average for educational attainment, Arizona would benefit by nearly \$5 billion in additional state and local tax revenues over 10 years. Furthermore, fully resolving the bachelor's degree shortage would result in a 10-year cumulative state and local fiscal impact of \$8 billion.*

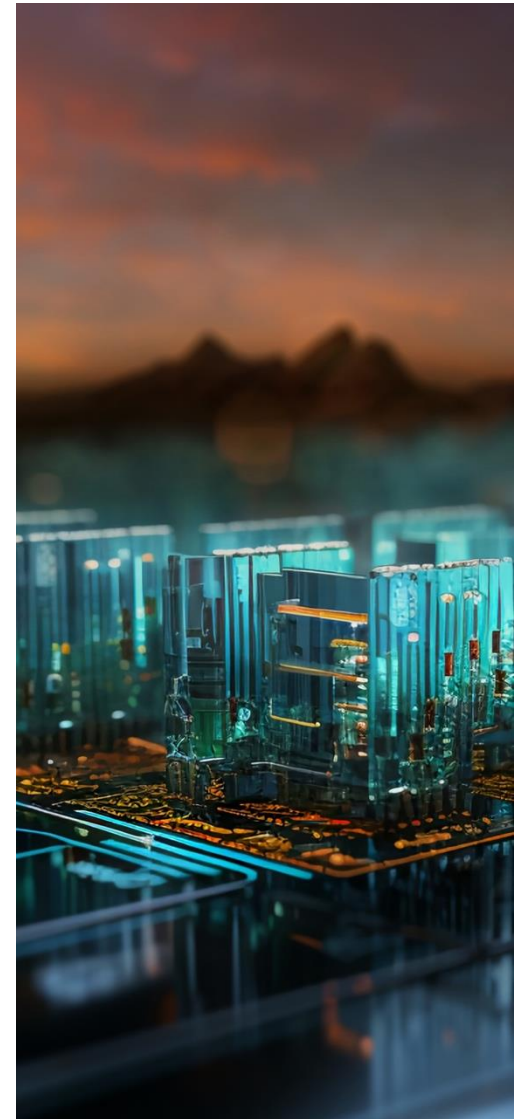
# Driving postsecondary success in Arizona

**AZ Opportunity – ABOR's plan to drive Arizona's workforce toward a stronger, competitive future.**

- Degree attainment is a central pillar of this plan and the long-term vision for the state.
- Aligned with workforce needs and informed by data
- Focused on measurable outcomes and statewide collaboration

## **Key Strategies to Share:**

- College Ready AZ: Statewide College Planning Platform
- FAFSA Completion Initiatives
- Targeted Attainment Outreach
- Data-Driven Decision Making
- Innovative Programs & Partnerships



# College Ready AZ: Arizona's college planning platform

# College Ready AZ – Arizona’s platform to help students and families plan and apply for college

- Increase knowledge of college readiness and planning among students and families.
- Create confidence that “college can be for you” and is accessible.
  - *One-stop shop website (English/Spanish) provides information and resources.*
  - *Meet users where they are in their journey; help educators and counselors with information they need to support students and families.*
  - *Informed by research to understand barriers to and motivations.*
  - *Hub and resource for statewide attainment initiatives.*



**Arizona,  
let's get  
ready for  
college!**

College Ready AZ makes it easy to plan and apply for college at Arizona's public universities. Use this website to find all the information you need to help create the future you deserve.

[collegereadyaz.com](http://collegereadyaz.com)





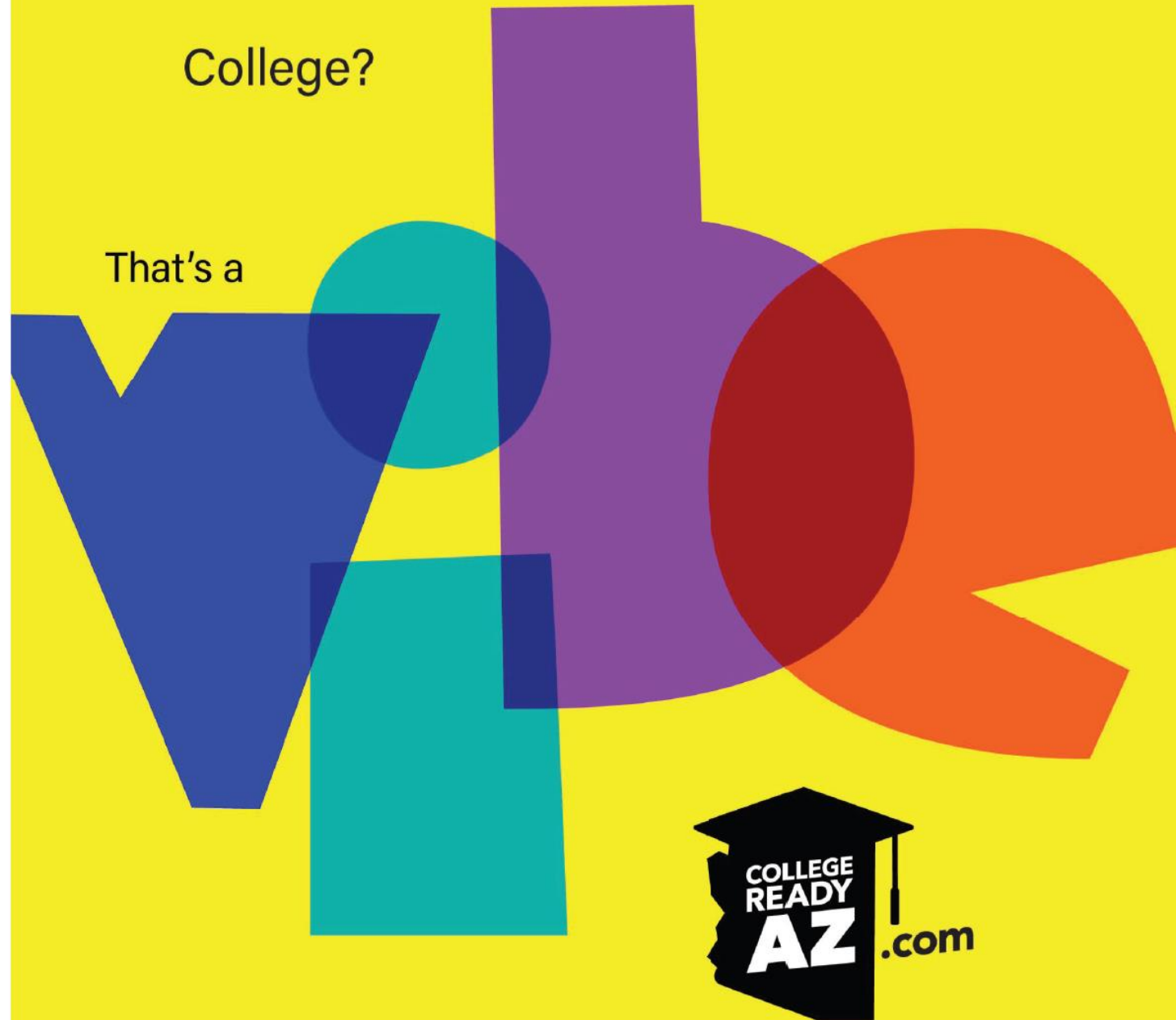
# Sharing the message

- Social media
- College Ready AZ ambassadors
- Outreach
- Counselor curriculum
- Marketing
- Third-party partnerships





**College Ready  
AZ marketing  
campaign  
targets middle,  
high school  
students**



You're

# COOKED

without a plan  
for college.

Plan here.



A future without a college degree?

Seems

# SWIS



A college degree  
would be

sink

on your resume.



Know what's

fire?

A college degree.



# College Ready AZ campaign results to date – building momentum

- Launched in April; ran through May; restarts late August
- 8.4M impressions
- 36,001 users to the website
- Utilizes:
  - **Display ads** - 3,072,934 impressions
  - **In App video games** - 733,175 impressions
  - **Google YouTube** - 1,718,600 impressions
  - **Google paid search** - 11.27% click-thru rate
  - **Paid social** - 2,908,606 impressions and 22,259 clicks to the website.



# Driving postsecondary success in Arizona

## FAFSA completion initiatives



# FAFSA in Arizona

Arizona high school graduates missed out on nearly

# \$300 million

in available Pell Grant funding by not completing the FAFSA in 2021, 2022 or 2023.



## AZ FAFSA Progress High School Class of 2025



40% of Arizona high school seniors from the class of 2025 completed a 2025-26 FAFSA



Ranked 49th in the Nation in FAFSA completion



Ranked 6th in the Nation in year of year % change in FAFSA completion



34% of seniors on free or reduced lunch completed the FAFSA



Hispanic students had the highest FAFSA completion rates among any other race/ethnicity in the **Arizona** high school senior class.

# FAFSA Peer Coach Program



- **Developed in 2022: Pilot 24 high schools**
- **Fall 2025: 53 high schools; expansion into Pima County**
- **50% average FAFSA completion rate**

# FAFSA Peer Coach Project 2024-2025

**40**

**Schools Served**

**169**

**Peer Coaches  
Empowered**

**69**

**Peer Coach Advisors  
Supported**

**18,184**

**High School  
Seniors Reached**

# New FAFSA completion initiatives for 2025-26

- **50 x Fall Campaign**
  - Targeted, statewide initiative designed to incentivize schools to participate in significantly boosting FAFSA completion rates among Arizona high school seniors.
    - Support for participating schools - FAFSA toolkits, virtual and in-person FAFSA trainings, workshops.
    - Performance-based incentives to high schools that meet key FAFSA completion benchmarks - \$1K - \$4.5K, depending on senior enrollment.
- **FAFSA Scholarship**
  - Statewide scholarship initiative, incentivizing students to complete the FAFSA.
  - \$1 is donated for each FAFSA completed in 2025-26 toward 50% FAFSA completion goal = \$50K.
  - Randomly select and award \$1.5K scholarship.



# Driving postsecondary success in Arizona

## Data-driven decision making



## FAFSA NEWS

- 2025-26 FAFSA will launch December 1, 2025
- What you need to know about the FAFSA submission summary
- What to expect for the 2025-26 FAFSA experience



### October areas of focus

[FAFSA Awareness](#)

[Creating FSA IDs](#)

### San Luis High School

**50% FAFSA  
COMPLETION RATE**

1. San Luis High School
2. Yuma Union High School
3. Glendale High School

### FAFSA events

9/23/24 – FAFSA webinar  
10/1/24 – FSA ID workshop  
10/15/24 – Preparing for the FAFSA

[email/text students](#)

[view senior lists](#)

[view FAFSA progress](#)

### Communicate resources to students



#### Text Ask Benji

Ask Benji, Arizona's Digital FAFSA assistant. Benji responds 24/7 to any FAFSA and college/career questions. To use a language other than English, text #language to select a different language.

TEXT 'HI BENJI' TO 602-786-8171



#### Arizona FAFSA hotline

Students and families can call the Arizona FAFSA Hotline at 1-833-293-2372. FAFSA experts are available between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

CALL NOW



#### Schedule an appointment

Students and families can schedule a one-on-one appointment with a local FAFSA expert. All appointments take place virtually via Zoom, Google Meet or Microsoft Teams.

APPOINTMENTS



#### Additional supports

Find more FAFSA support at:

[Alliant](#)  
[Arizona State University](#)  
[Be A Leader Foundation](#)  
[College Connect Tempe](#)  
[College Depot](#)  
[Metropolitan Education Commission](#)  
[Tri-University Events](#)

Arizona  
College  
Connect  
Homepage

# Analytics

**343**

Active Data-Sharing Agreements

**692**

Individual Users Set-up Since Launch  
(Oct 2022)

An increase of 115 data-sharing agreements  
when compared the previous system

**82%**

Usage Rate

Captures over 80% of the Arizona  
high school senior population

## TESTIMONIAL

*"As a career specialist, I use the Arizona College Connect system to provide weekly updates on our FAFSA applications progress, and I appreciate how the database is effective, efficient and a very useful tool."*

-Danielle Padia, Career Specialist,  
Ironwood High School

# Future development

- NSC Data
- Postsecondary Data
- A-F School Grade integration: College and Career Readiness Data
- Enhanced Student Communication functionality

## TESTIMONIAL

*“It’s definitely an upgrade to see an instant updated match on individual students. It saves us time so that we may help other students complete the FAFSA.”*

-Cesar Castillo- Guidance Director,  
San Luis High School

# Targeted attainment outreach

# Reaching key audiences with attainment outreach

*Students, educators, business/community leaders and policymakers*

- FAFSA and College Readiness Symposium
- Starting Five Initiative
- ABOR Student Food and Housing Workgroup
- Student Mental Health and Wellness Learning Community
- Strada Education Foundation's Arizona Learning Mobility Collaborative
- SHEEO's national effort to expand access to quality postsecondary education for incarcerated students
- Future Ready AZ attainment summit



# AZ Opportunity: Future of Arizona series

- Convenes key state agency stakeholders, community/business leaders, policy makers, university leaders/researchers and board leadership for a thought-provoking dialogue regarding key challenges in Arizona.
- Outcomes are primed for funding for ABOR Regents' Grants to leverage collaboration between state agencies and universities to find solutions to key issues. Examples include projects in technology transfer, agriculture and forestry.
- NEXT: Department of Child Safety – how can we support foster youth in going to college
  - 97% will NOT earn a postsecondary degree



# **Innovative programs and partnerships**

# Engaging university athletes to share FAFSA messages

- 13 student-athletes across ASU, NAU and the U of A
- Instagram reels posted in collaboration with athlete and teams to widen reach
- Tri-university PSA video that features athletes from all three universities



- Jordyn Tyson  
*(football)*
- Cole Carlon  
*(baseball)*
- Jayden Davis  
*(track)*
- Yannixa Acuna  
*(softball)*
- Logan Morrell  
*(hockey)*



- Audrey Taylor  
*(women's basketball)*
- Oakland Fort  
*(men's basketball)*
- Fou Ho Ching  
*(football)*



- Achol Magot  
*(women's basketball)*
- Anyssa Wild  
*(softball)*
- Haven Wra  
*(volleyball)*
- Koa Peat  
*(men's basketball)*
- Tre Spivey  
*(football)*





# Cactus League partnership hits FAFSA out of the ballpark





# 2025 Cactus League partnership outcomes

- 1,155 tickets requested, 4,532 distributed.
- Arizona seniors from 10 out of 15 counties across the state submitted and received tickets to games.
- College Ready AZ team connected with nearly 1,600 students and families at spring training games.
- Earned and owned media and marketing:
  - 40 pieces of coverage
  - 2.8M estimated views of coverage
  - 419M combined total of publication-wide audience
  - 6.6K engagements



**“With all that is great in our state, we want to do our part to help build a strong labor force and create a pipeline of success that graduates exceptional students and keeps that talent and their families here in Arizona.”**

— Bridget Binsbacher  
Executive Director of the Cactus League Association





# New partnerships incentivize, celebrate students and schools

- New partnership with AZ Diamondbacks incentives FAFSA completion with ticket giveaway
- Cox Communications – partnership recognizes students and schools in AZ FAFSA Challenge
- Second Annual El Valle Puede Celebration, in collaboration with Phoenix Suns, celebrates AZ Decision Day
  - 1,400 high school seniors from across AZ gathered at PHX Arena to celebrate Arizona Decision Day 2025.
  - 36 pieces of coverage, 260K views

