



ACHIEVE60AZ Broad Community-Based Alliance Launches Ambitious Goal to Boost Workforce Training and Educational Attainment for Arizonans

PHOENIX (Sept. 16, 2016) – More than 60 Arizona leaders from community, business, philanthropic and education organizations have formed an alliance to increase the number of Arizonans earning a job certification or college degree from 42 percent to 60 percent by 2030. Nationally, more than 30 states have set similar goals.

At a press conference to announce the initiative today, Gov. Doug Ducey endorsed the effort, “Arizona’s workforce is among the most innovative in the nation and we are working to keep our state competitive far into the future,” Ducey said. “I applaud the outstanding work of the Achieve60AZ alliance for recognizing the need for many more Arizonans to be prepared with the knowledge and skills they need to secure fulfilling jobs. Not only will this raise the standard of living for many individuals, it will attract more businesses to our great state and keep companies here thriving.”

The broad group of leaders began meeting last winter to garner consensus for the initiative. They have worked collaboratively to provide support, develop goals and create focus areas to boost job training and education levels in Arizona.

To support the achievement of this critical goal, the alliance has outlined four key focus areas, which include: increasing college readiness and high-school graduation rates; implementing policies to make it easier for adults to finish their certificates or college degrees; raising awareness about options beyond high school and making them more affordable; and engaging businesses, governments and educators to identify and close the workforce skills gap. Specific strategies and tactics will be developed to track and measure progress.

“The momentum behind this effort is truly inspiring. There are many organizations in our state working to increase job certifications earned and college-going rates,” said Eileen Klein, president of the Arizona Board of Regents, who has played a key role in convening the alliance. “Achieve60AZ brings many of these entities together into this collective effort to ensure that Arizona’s economy continues to grow and individuals are able to fill future jobs that require more education or training.”

Arizona’s current educational attainment rate is 42 percent, reflecting the percentage of individuals between the ages of 25-64 with a certificate, associate or bachelor’s degree or higher.

“When it comes to education, there is no single path to the American Dream,” said Michael Romano, President of Universal Technical Institute – Avondale campus. “Our state faces a critical shortage of skilled technical workers, and UTI is helping meet this demand while preparing students for success in high-skill automotive and diesel careers. UTI is proud to support the Achieve60AZ initiative and encourages Arizonans to seek the education and training they need – whichever path they choose.”

Benefits to the state are considerable if educational attainment is increased with each college graduate expected to contribute \$660,000 to the state and doubling Arizona's economic growth, according to a report by [College Success Arizona](#). Increasing the number of Latinos enrolled in postsecondary institutions would improve their individual quality of life and provide the state of Arizona with \$2.3 billion in social benefits over the lifetime of each graduating class, according to the report.

"As the largest workforce training provider in the state, nearly half of our graduates move directly into high demand jobs with the technical ability and interpersonal proficiency needed in today's marketplace," said Chancellor Maria Harper-Marinick of Maricopa Community Colleges and a member of the Achieve60AZ alliance. "Cutting-edge skills training not only boosts our students' individual earning potential, but also elevates the competitive strength and economic vitality of the region by adding \$6.3 billion in added revenue."

Steve Macias, president and CEO of Pivot Manufacturing and board member of the Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, is among many business leaders in Arizona supporting Achieve60AZ and the initiative's goal of increasing the number of people with college degrees and certificates.

"As our economy becomes more globalized, Arizona must remain highly competitive. Besides the gains that businesses will realize, an educated workforce provides a boost to our economy and will help replace thousands of baby boomers who are retiring," Macias said.

Governor Ducey encouraged all Arizonans to play a role in helping the state achieve the 60 percent goal. "Education is essential to the future of our state. It will take all of us working together to create a culture shift to focus on ensuring that Arizonans are prepared to contribute meaningfully to our communities and our economy. I implore each of you to find a way to support this shared vision for educational attainment, which will greatly benefit us all."

About Achieve60AZ:

More than 60 community, business, philanthropic and education organizations formed the Achieve60AZ alliance to support a goal of 60 percent of adults ages 25-64 with a professional certificate or college degree by 2030. Learn more at achieve60az.com.

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Editor's Note: Additional statistics

Current education and workforce analysis reflects an urgent need for the Achieve60AZ initiative:

- Two of every three jobs in Arizona will require additional training beyond high school by 2020, necessitating the drive for a more educated workforce. (*Source: 2014 Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce, June 2013*)
- Approximately 470,000 baby boomers will retire in the next 10 years in Arizona. (*Source: Arizona Board of Regents and the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity*)
- Just 7 percent of Arizona high-school graduates from the class of 2008-09 completed a degree or certificate at a two-year institution six years after graduation from high school while 20.8 percent completed a degree or certificate at a four-year institution. (*Source: Partnership*)

between the Arizona Board of Regents, Arizona Department of Education and the National Student Clearinghouse)

- National data illustrates the earning power of education with 2015 median wages reflecting: \$678 per week for a high-school diploma earner; \$738 for those with some college with no degree; \$798 for associate degree holders; and \$1,137 for individuals with a bachelor's degree. *(Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics)*