



Increased attainment leads to a brighter future for all

By Rich Nickel, President and CEO of College Success Arizona

Arizonans recognize the importance of a high-quality education for all. As reported in a [recent survey](#) conducted by [Expect More Arizona](#), 94 percent of Arizona voters believe that all students regardless of their socio-economic status or family background are entitled to a great education. Eighty-five percent of voters surveyed indicated that they believe a great education should be accessible for all students through closing achievement gaps. In fact, those surveyed rank its importance above hot-button issues such as immigration and border security.

Nearly 31 percent of Arizona citizens are Latino. With this in mind, the fact that Latinos in Arizona are falling behind when it comes to education achievement and outcomes should spur us into action. As our state continues to undergo a significant demographic shift, Latinos will soon make up the majority of Arizonans. Latino youth already comprise the majority of students in Arizona high schools. However, Latino high school students are dropping out at rates much higher than their peers, and only 40 percent of Latino Arizonans have attended college with just 10 percent holding a bachelor's degree.

A postsecondary degree or certificate is key to an individual's chances for success in the 21st century economy. This is particularly true for individuals with a bachelor's degree, since they can expect three times more income over a lifetime than those who graduate high school but do not attend college. On average, Latinos who have a bachelor's degree see benefits that are even greater. They can expect to earn 3.5 times more over a lifetime than individuals whose highest credential is a high school diploma. Simply put, postsecondary education matters greatly to individual's prosperity.

It's worth noting that increasing the number of Latino's earning a post-secondary degree or certificate would not only improve the lives of our state's Latino population, all Arizonans would feel the impact, especially in terms of its effect on our economy. As a [report](#) from [College Success Arizona](#) shows, by equalizing college-going rates by race, which would primarily be achieved by increasing the number of Latinos enrolled in Arizona colleges and universities, our state would gain \$2.3 billion over the lifetime of each graduating class. These gains would effectively double Arizona's annual economic growth rate. Essentially, increasing the number of Arizonans who graduate from high school and obtain a degree will be crucial to Arizona's future economic growth.

Fortunately, across Arizona there is growing momentum behind attainment efforts to help more students and especially Latino students in our state graduate high school, attend college and earn a degree. Policymakers and education leaders are increasingly focused on ensuring that Arizona's K-12 and higher education systems are able to meet the needs of all Arizona's kids, and voters have made it resoundingly clear that education is a major priority.

Arizona is poised to reap the benefits of the hard work that leaders and organizations across the state are putting in through Achieve60AZ to ensure more students are able to earn a certificate or college degree. Continuing to work toward our attainment goal of 60 percent of Arizonans with a certificate or degree by 2030, we stand to benefit from increased prosperity and a brighter future for all Arizonans. We cannot pass up this opportunity.