



**ACHIEVE60AZ**  
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**JUNE 28, 2019**

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## **Arizona Education Organizations Win \$1,000,000 Grant to Help Increase FAFSA Completion Rates Among Middle-Income Families**

**Phoenix, AZ**—A coalition of Arizona leaders has received a \$1,000,000 grant from Schmidt Futures' Alliance for the American Dream to implement an initiative aimed at increasing the number of Phoenix families who submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, FAFSA. *"Project Benjamin: The Power of the FAFSA for Middle-Income Families in Arizona"* will focus on developing a chatbot that will address students' and parents' questions about the financial aid process and how to complete the FAFSA. The project aims to reach at least 10,000 families and increase Arizona's FAFSA completion rate by 14 percent.

"So many students and families think they aren't eligible for financial aid and we want students and families to know that's not true," said **Rich Nickel, College Success Arizona President and CEO**. "We know that the financial aid process can serve as a barrier to students and we want to remove as many barriers as possible."

The team comprised of leaders from Achieve60AZ, Arizona College Access Network, Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education, Arizona State University, Be A Leader Foundation, Chandler-Gilbert Community College, College Success Arizona, Helios Education Foundation, and Mesa Public Schools pitched their project, "Project Benjamin: The Power of The FAFSA for Middle-Income Families in Arizona" on June 27. It is projected this initiative will increase the average federal aid award for families by \$10,000 annually once implemented.

FAFSA Completion is important as it is a strong indicator of postsecondary enrollment and attendance. 90 percent of students who complete the FAFSA go on to college. This academic year, only 43 percent of Arizona's high school seniors completed the FAFSA, a seven percent difference from Arizona FAFSA Challenge goal of 50 percent. If the team is successful at reaching 10,000 high school seniors and families, Arizona's FAFSA completion rate would jump to 57 percent, a 14 percent increase that would exceed the Arizona FAFSA Challenge Goal.

"Increasing FAFSA completion will increase postsecondary enrollment, attainment and will bring money into the state," said **Rachel Yanof, Achieve60AZ Executive Director**. "We want to make a difference in the lives of middle-class Arizonans and their families, and we think this is a good place to start."

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**About Achieve60AZ:** More than 75 organizations in Arizona form Achieve60AZ that is fueled by a community-based effort to ensure Arizona remains competitive through the power of education. Their collective goal is to generate greater awareness of the importance of increasing Arizona's level of educational attainment while building support to improve college entry and completion; boost adult education and training; and fuel a pipeline of competitive talent for Arizona's employers. Achieve60AZ promotes support for the long-term steps needed in college entry and completion, adult education and training, and identifying and closing skills gaps to better prepare our workforce and our state for the future when the majority of jobs in Arizona will require some type of higher education.

For more information, visit: [www.achieve60az.com](http://www.achieve60az.com).