



# ***MEDIA RELEASE***

— For Immediate Release —

## **Policy Brief Highlights Critical Need to Increase College Attainment and Expand Higher Education Pathways in Arizona**

*Recommendations Call for More Funding, Supports for Students and Families to Grow Workforce and State Economy*

Date: April 25, 2018

Contact: Greg Hyland, CPM, Director of Communications and Engagement at (602) 636-1850 / [ghyland@collegesuccessarizona.org](mailto:ghyland@collegesuccessarizona.org)

Phoenix, Arizona –Today, [College Success Arizona](#) released a policy brief that makes the case for investing in strategies that foster a comprehensive college-going culture and future-ready workforce. [Understanding College Credentials: Expanding the Key Higher Education Pathways That Can Increase Attainment in Arizona](#) details the gap in the credentials needed, the various paths to education beyond high school, how attainment aligns to salary, and recommendations for policymakers. An executive summary of the report can be found [here](#).

“Arizona’s prosperity and economic growth depends on our ability to increase college attainment across the state,” said Rich Nickel, CEO of College Success Arizona. “Boosting attainment not only helps more Arizonans benefit from greater economic mobility and a higher quality of life, but it also strengthens our workforce and prepares our state to be adaptable and competitive in the global economy.”

The brief reports that currently just 44 percent of Arizona residents ages 25-64 hold a college certificate or degree. Of the 11.6 million jobs created since the Great Recession, 99 percent have gone to workers with at least some college education.

In recognition that higher education is the key to a future of opportunity and success, [Achieve60AZ](#)—a coalition of the business and education communities in the state—set a statewide goal of 60 percent attainment by 2030. In order to reach this goal, Arizona needs 1 million additional college credentials.

While more credentials are needed, the two largest community college systems in Arizona no longer receive state funding. There also are no substantial state-sponsored need-based grant aid programs to help students afford the rising cost of college.

“This gap means we need to do much more as a state to raise awareness about—and provide greater support for—a variety of degree programs and pathways,” said Nickel. “Policymakers and the public in Arizona need to understand the importance and value of different types of college credentials. Higher education, in all its forms, is a powerful force for change in Arizona.”

The brief points out that the public conversation about higher education often focuses on programs that lead to a bachelor’s degree and either excludes or glosses over certificate and associate’s degree programs. These credentials are important options that students and families can choose according to what best suits their needs—and represent a viable pathway to well-paying jobs and financial stability.

The brief concludes with four key recommendations for Arizona policymakers:

1. Restore support for Arizona’s two largest community college systems, Maricopa and Pima. Community colleges are among the largest workforce training providers in Arizona and are vital to increasing the number of skilled workers.
2. Create a program that provides flexible, portable, and visible funding to students in middle and high school to pursue formal education credentials beyond high school.
3. Develop and promote programs and policies that help students and families better understand their higher education options and make informed decisions about their future.
4. Adopt a statewide college readiness assessment that includes the ability for all public high school juniors and seniors to have access to take the ACT or SAT at no cost to them during the school day.

This is the fourth brief in College Success Arizona’s Policy Brief Series, which focuses on important issues that affect higher education access and attainment in the state. The other briefs in the series can be found [here](#).

**About College Success Arizona:** College Success Arizona is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization working to significantly increase the post-secondary attainment rate of students in Arizona, particularly for those who otherwise would not be able to attend or graduate. The organization was started as the Arizona College Scholarship Foundation in 2005. For more information about College Success Arizona and its partners, visit [www.collegesuccessarizona.org](http://www.collegesuccessarizona.org).

For further information contact Greg Hyland, CPM, Director of Communications and Engagement for College Success Arizona at (602) 636-1850 – office, (928) 580-4751 – cell, or [gdhyland@collegesuccessarizona.org](mailto:gdhyland@collegesuccessarizona.org) – email

###