



ARIZONA COMMISSION FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

*...expanding access and increasing success
in postsecondary education for Arizonans*

ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2019

Revised December 31, 2019

Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education

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December 31, 2019

The Honorable Doug Ducey, Governor

The Honorable Katie Hobbs, Secretary of State

The Honorable Karen Fann, President of the Senate

The Honorable Russell Bowers, Speaker of the House of Representatives

I respectfully submit the enclosed FY 2019 annual report on behalf of the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education (ACPE). A planning process was undertaken by the 16 Commissioners and they identified an agency mission of *expanding access and increasing success in postsecondary education for Arizonans*. Therefore, the work of the Commission is directed toward and measured against this mission each year.

FY 2019 brought continuing financial challenges and additional opportunities to the ACPE. Challenges faced by the Commission include a sustained 80% reduction in the ACPE general funds appropriation as compared to FY 2008. Because the core responsibilities of the Commission focus upon student financial assistance, this loss of financial aid affects the education potential of nearly 20,000 students who in years past would have received financial assistance through ACPE administered grants or scholarships.

Each of these Commission programs, initiatives, and publications represent collaborative efforts. They are examples of leveraging the funding and impact of this small agency in order to provide quality education.

One Decision Package has been submitted by the Commission with the FY 2021 Budget Request. The benefits of this package are designed to advance educational equity and to diminish the achievement gap experienced by low-income and minority students. The proposal will allow for increased student achievement by increasing student access to quality teachers as a result of the additional committed to service teachers produced through the Arizona Teacher Student Loan Program budget increase. This service oriented program and students activities will help to diminish the achievement gap.

Issue 1: Arizona Teacher Student Loan Program (Formerly the Math, Science, and Special Education Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program) – \$312,400

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Goal 3 (2014-2015) Leveraging Media: Phoenix Magazine Higher Education Section

**The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education (ACPE)
FY 2019 Annual Report**

***...expanding access and increasing success in postsecondary education for
Arizonans***

Submitted December 31, 2019
Dr. April L. Osborn, Executive Director

Introduction

The work of the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education (ACPE) is guided by a strategic plan. The purpose of the plan is to provide focus for the activity of this small agency and its seven staff members in order to increase productivity and impact in the areas of its statutory authority. The mission and goals were reviewed and accepted by Commissioners and this report reflects a review of goals, performance, and outcomes as outlined in the plan.

Through a planning process, the 16 Commissioners identified an agency mission of *expanding access and increasing success in postsecondary education for Arizonans*. Three goals were named to achieve this mission: (1) maximize available student financial assistance to students and families, (2) provide accurate and timely information and assistance from knowledgeable professionals to help students and their families enroll, finance, and succeed in postsecondary education, and (3) provide a forum for all sectors of postsecondary education to dialogue, partner, and problem solve issues of mutual interest. A roster of the ACPE Commissioners follows this introduction.

The work of the ACPE has been highly impacted over the past eleven years by the reduction of over \$4.8M in state appropriated student financial assistance dollars and the loss of \$1.7M of federal student aid and infrastructure funding. These changes include:

suspension of the Postsecondary Education Grant (PEG) in 2011 and repeal in 2017;

suspension of the Private Postsecondary Education Assistance Program (PFAP) in 2011;

establishment of the Early Graduation Scholarship Grant in 2008, and ceased in 2013;

transfer of the Arizona Math, Science, and Special Education Teacher Loan Forgiveness program to the Commission and reduction of funding to \$176,000 annually in FY 2012;

establishment of several College Access Challenge Grant initiatives at the
College Access Aid Program (ACAAP) in 2009, later transformed into the Last
Stretch Scholarship in 2011, as well as infrastructure funding to establish the
Arizona College Access Network.

\$2.7M of the Commission budget in FY 2019 represented flow-through funds dedicated
to student grants and scholarships. In contrast, in FY 2008 the student financial
assistance dollars were \$7.5M. This table reflects additional ACPE budget reductions in
student grant/scholarship programs over the past eight years.

Historical Review of ACPE Student Aid Programs

The loss of these grant dollars affects the lives of nearly 20,000 students who in
previous years would have applied to the ACPE for grants/scholarships and received
funds. It is important to note that at the close of FY 2010 the ACPE had a waiting list of
an additional 8,799 students who were seeking financial aid, even when these grants
were available.

addition to verification of eligibility and fund disbursement, responsibilities also include loan administration, borrower service tracking, and loan repayment servicing. Unfortunately, funding for the program was reduced from \$2M to \$176,000, drastically limiting the number of students served by this popular forgivable loan for teachers-in-training. In 2017, funding was modestly increased to \$426,000. To better serve the eligible pool of Arizona teachers-in-training, the ACPE requests one FTE, one computer, and an additional \$312,400 in its FY 2021 Decision Package.

A detailed description of the implementation and outcomes of all active and inactive student aid programs under the administration of the ACPE are outlined in the following section. A description of the student loan repayment programs, the secure web portal which provides both information and a single application for all grants, as well as the Arizona Family College Savings Program are covered in the last pages of the Goal 1 section.

Active Student Aid Programs

1.1 Arizona Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (AzLEAP)

The Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP) has been in existence in Arizona since 1972 and has served as a low-income student grant program. LEAP is the primary low-income student grant and was always considered a temporary incentive program offered by the federal government. Arizona and approximately four other states have participated in the LEAP program. LEAP is a federal grant program that provides financial assistance to low-income students across all sectors of public and private education. A unique aspect of the Arizona LEAP program was that it leveraged the federal dollars twice. This occurred by requiring each institution to match the state funds in order to participate in the Arizona LEAP program. The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education has administered the program, ensuring adherence to all federal regulations and the Arizona Administrative Code.

The Commission was notified in the spring of 2011 that the federal grant funding for LEAP and the companion grant SLEAP would be eliminated beginning in FY 2012 and thereafter. This represented a \$1.3M reduction in available grant aid for low-income Arizona students. An ACPE survey of participating institutions indicated that they had a strong desire to continue the program and were willing to continue to provide institutional matching funds. Institutions also agreed to allow the administrative fees for this program to be removed from the institutional match. Therefore, the program continued using the \$1.2M state funding for LEAP and the institutional match of the same amount. The restructured Arizona Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (AzLEAP) program originated from the former Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP) program.

FY 2019 was the eighth year the Commission administered the restructured AzLEAP program. Private and public higher education institutions apply to the ACPE and the ACPE certifies institutional eligibility and determines a proportional distribution of funds

1. Elimination of the service area of teaching in elementary schools that are located in geographic areas that are experiencing a shortage of teachers,
2. Inclusion of three additional service areas: low-income schools, rural schools, or schools located on an Indian reservation,
3. Inclusion of students who are pursuing a teaching certificate through an alternative teacher certificate program as eligible students for the forgivable loan,
4. Inclusion of students who are pursuing a teaching certificate through an alternative teacher certificate program as eligible students for the forgivable loan, and
5. The allocation of forty percent of the annual amount appropriated to students who agree to provide instruction in a low-income school, rural school, or a school located on an Indian reservation.

During FY 2019, this student-centered, need-based forgivable loan was designed to support students in the K-12 system in the following areas: math, science, special education, low-income schools, rural schools, or schools located on an Indian reservation. The forgivable loan supports and encourages Arizona resident college students to take on a mission of service in order to repay their obligation by pursuing a teaching career in identified high need areas and to remain in the State after graduation. Forgivable loans to help defray the cost of tuition, fees, and instructional materials were granted to eligible junior or senior undergraduate education majors and students enrolled in an alternative teacher certificate program offered at qualifying postsecondary education institutions in the State. Additionally, students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The maximum forgivable loan is \$7,000 per academic year for up to three years.

ATSLP FY 2019 Student Profile

Total Applicants	Total Recipients	Total Disbursement	Average Loan Amount	Average Age of Recipients	Initial Recipients	Continuing Recipients	Good Cause Exceptions
115	81	\$411,624.52	\$5,082	30	50	31	0

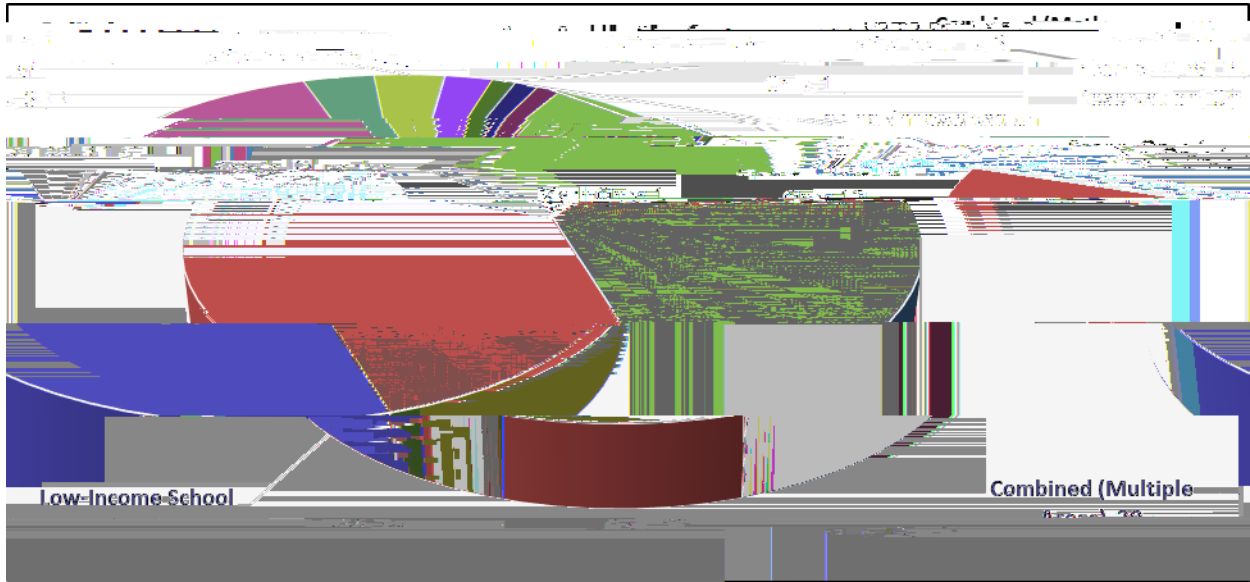
The difference between the total applicants and the total recipients is comprised of thirty-four applicants who did not meet program requirements.

The following pie charts represent a breakout of the institutions the 81 loan recipients attended and the areas recipients indicated that they would be teaching.



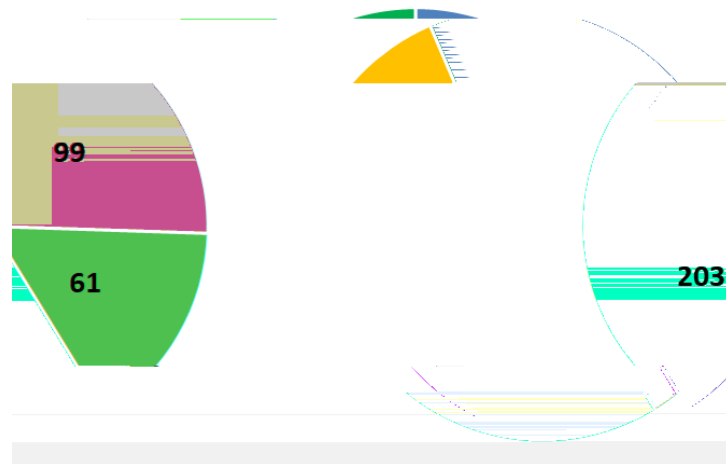
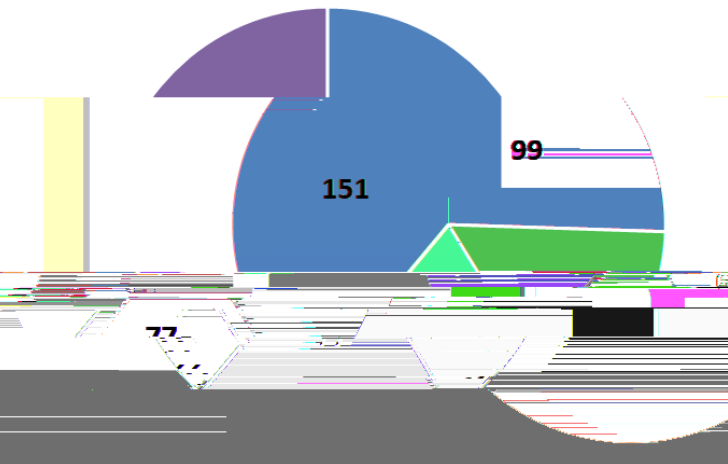
Pima Community College 1 Low-Income School Only	Rio Salado College 1 Low-Income School Only	University of Phoenix 1 Low-Income School Only
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Recipients by Subject/Location in FY 2019



Status of Recipients in ATSLP (MSSE) Program from Inception through FY 2019

Tracking responsibilities are significant for ATSLP as each loan recipient is required to be tracked between seven to eleven years, depending on the number of years each student



203

In the graph on the previous page, 228 (58.8%) loan recipients are or have been teachers. Of those 228 teachers 203 (52.3%) have had their loan forgiven, while 25 (6.4%) are still working on loan forgiveness, with the prospect of an additional 99 (25.5%) loan recipients becoming teachers.

School	School City	Subject Taught
Curry Elementary School	Tempe	Special Education
Thatcher High School	Thatcher	

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baccalaureate degrees in the State of Arizona, thus increasing the tax revenues from a

The PPEG program was patterned after the successful student-centered PEG program. Funds must be used for tuition, books, and fee expenses. Grant recipients must graduate in seven years if completing a baccalaureate degree or four if completing an associate degree; otherwise, the grant recipients must reimburse the Commission the granted funds.

The Commission looks forward to the administration of the PPEG program once funds are appropriated. Currently no funds have been appropriated for PPEG.

1.5 Early Graduation Scholarship Grant – Ceased

The Early Graduation Scholarship Grant (EGSG) was created in 2007. This non-need based college access scholarship was designed to provide an incentive for high school students to graduate early and promptly transition into a postsecondary experience. Students who graduated from a public high school district or charter school at least one year early and enrolled full-time at an eligible Arizona postsecondary institution could

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][*!æ q Fÿ 2007 ð &^] ð } , 4,467 •č å^} • received the forgivable loan. Of those recipients, 3,351 have graduated with a baccalaureate degree within the required five-year time frame. Of the remaining 1,116 promissory note holders, 95 are in repayment, 684 have been referred to the Attorney General, 36 have been closed by the Attorney General, 13 are deceased, 17 have been forgiven, 262 have paid their grant in full and 9 are in deferment. Promissory note holders who fail to meet the requirements of the forgivable loan must enter into the repayment program.

As previously mentioned, the Arizona Student Teacher Loan Program (ATSLP) formerly Arizona Math, Science and Special Education Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program (MSSE) has added the responsibility of administering an additional forgivable loan program. Moreover, the ACPE acquired responsibility for the required compliance and retention tracking of the 388 students who have been granted ATSLP/MSSE forgivable [æ • • ð &^ @] [*!æ q ð &^] ð } ,] | • @ & | ^ & ð } [~!^] æ { ^ } • , ð & ã ð * ð ç!^ • ç from those who fail to meet the requirements of the program. Of those students, 19 have paid their loan balance in full, 17 are currently in repayment, 25 have been referred to the Ad ! } ^ ^ G } ^! æ q O ~ ð ^ , 123 @ æ ^ & {] | ^ ç å @ 5 & ^ æ ç å ç } QÄ ç å ç

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), program of study, and other eligibility requirements;

5. performs back office tasks such as awarding of funds, disbursement of funds, and has the capability of monitoring students through repayment thereby reducing the manual labor necessary for the ACPE to administer student aid programs;
6. provides high schools and counselors with a FERPA secure portal to receive FAFSA Finish Line Reports on individual students;
7. can provide data regarding student demographics, performance, success, and behavioral barriers to continuing their education.

The ACPE is using this secure portal for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Completion Initiative and FAFSA Finish Line reports. The portal can provide application among more than 800,000 Institutional Student Information Records (ISIR) in the following ways: 1) search and retrieve specific data elements from the ISIR; 2) compilation of specific data elements into reports and unique records; 3) preparation of summary reports for authorized entities; and 4) secure dissemination of these reports. Moreover, a secure web portal is necessary for the high school counselors to submit lists of student information to the Commission for the data match process which results in an output report describing the data match process. Participating high schools and districts have signed data sharing agreements with the ACPE and have identified authorized staff members with access to the secure web portal.

The public information pages of the web portal provide important information about additional sources of financial aid beyond state aid; thereby linking students and families to important funding resources. More information about the portal and its use is included

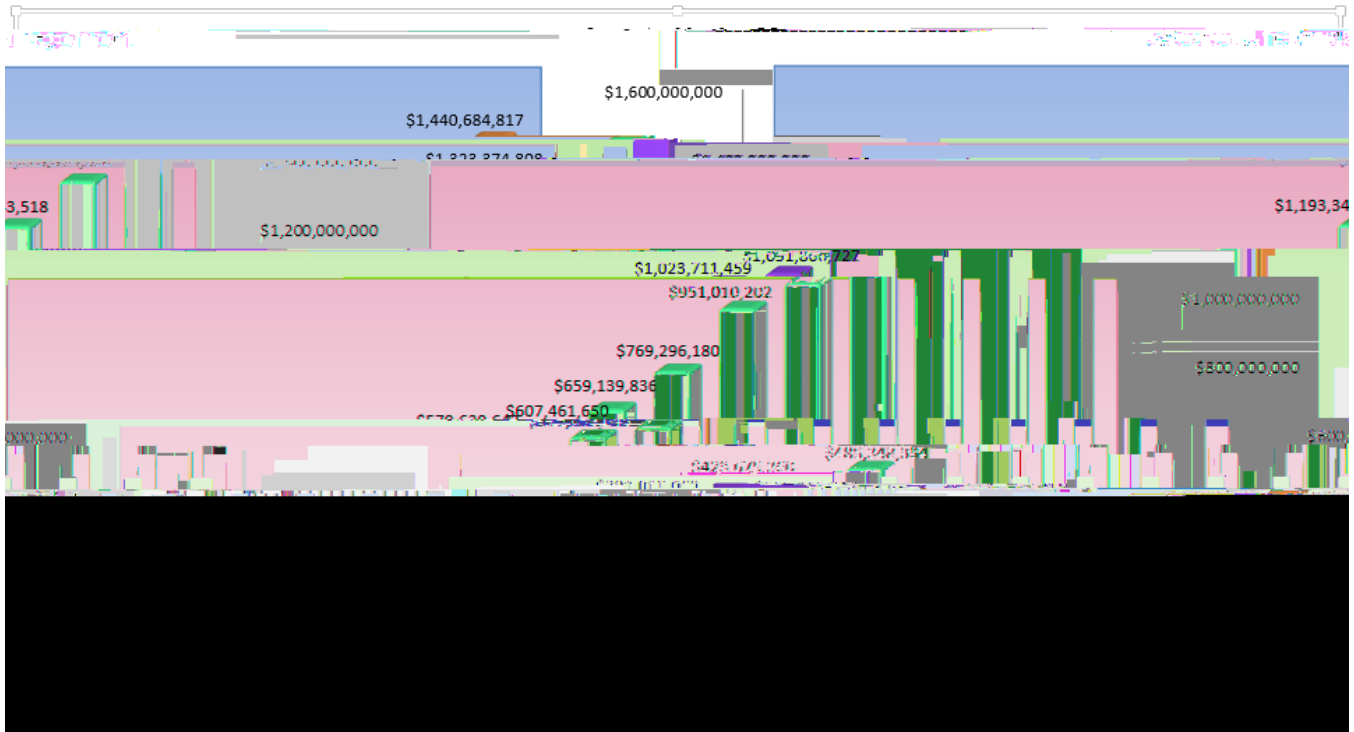
a public instrumentality of the State of Arizona, of which the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education

**Arizona Family College Saving Program Oversight Committee
Member Roster as of June 30, 2019**

The report titled *Accounts and Assets Under Management* following this section summarizes data as of June 30, 2019 regarding AFCSP funded accounts, Assets Under Management (AUM), as well as the average account balance for each of the three providers.

The table on the following page indicates that as of June 30, 2019, there were 84,324 AFCSP funded accounts. This represents a 3.66% increase in the number of funded accounts since June 30, 2018. The growth in new accounts is driven by both Arizona residents as well as residents of other states, indicating that the AFCSP provides attractive investments to both those inside and outside of Arizona.

The bar chart in the report titled *Assets Under Management* illustrates the growth of AFCSP Assets Under Management (AUM) by year. Since its launch in 1999, the Arizona 529 Program has grown steadily, with the exception of FY 2008, the height of the Great



The ACPE and its three program providers have taken measures to increase public awareness and increase accessibility of the Program for the benefit of Arizona families. These initiatives included a public awareness campaign promoting saving for college with AZ 529 Plan and December for Gift Giving Season, and tips to help children learn to be savers not spenders during Financial Literacy Month in April and the month of May, leading up to 529 Day (5/29/2019). Fidelity Investments continued to promote its Social Gifting platform to current account holders throughout the fiscal year, highlighting traditional gifting opportunities (back to school, holidays, graduation and birthdays). Social Gifting enlists the help of friends and family in making college dreams a reality.

During fiscal year 2019, the Commission continued several Program initiatives for the benefit of Arizona families. These initiatives included: (1) preserving and strengthening long term relationships with all three program providers, (2) a continued focus on working with the providers to reduce plan expenses and offer improved investment options each year, (3) an audit follow-up on a vacant Oversight Committee position, and (4) maintaining the integrity of the Program by providing continued oversight of the Program including a rigorous Annual Provider Review Process.

Capital Cities, Inc. entered a third investment consulting firm. The firm provides expertise, proactive reviews and continuous performance monitoring of three AFCSP program providers in support of the ACPE staff and Oversight Committee. Throughout the year, the firm has expanded the 529 industry knowledge base of the Commissioners and shared industry insights with the Oversight Committee and ACPE staff. The depth of their year-round performance and expense evaluation process spurs each of the program providers to focus on continuous

improvements. Capital Cities is based in Indianapolis, Indiana and has been providing investment consulting expertise in a co-fiduciary capacity for more than 20 years. They currently consult to three other 529 Plans, including Indiana, the District of Columbia, and Rhode Island . representing over \$12 billion in assets and more than 16 years of 529-specific expertise.

FY 2019 concluded the second year of a new investment menu for the Waddell & Reed Ivy InvestEd 529 program. The updated menu included an increased number of Age-Based portfolios and passive index fund options in addition to customary actively managed funds. These menu options continue to offer diverse investment options, improved capital preservation, reduced risk for families, and expense ratios lower than 75% of other advisor-sold 529 plans.

Fidelity Investments retained its position as one of the 529 college savings plans recognized by SavingforCollege.com as one of the least expensive direct-sold mutual fund investment offerings available in the industry. Waddell & Reed constantly seeks to improve investment options by reducing expense ratios for account holders each year. College Savings Bank adjusted interest rates on all of its FDIC insured product offerings in line with the Federal Reserve rate increases and decreases, while still preserving its top tier status among FDIC insured 529 products. All Program enhancements are designed to enrich the Arizona Family College Savings Program and ensure it remains a highly desirable plan.

In May 2019, the Office of the Auditor General began an 18-month follow-up process on the 2017 Performance Audit of the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education. The Office of the Auditor General conducted a very thorough review of the Arizona Family College Savings Program. The Auditor General's review identified several areas for improvement to further enhance the Arizona Family College Savings Program. The Auditor General's findings are as follows:

The Auditor General's review identified three areas for improvement. The Office of the Auditor General's 18-month review regarding the status of those recommendations is as follows:

addition, College Savings Bank still offers the highest interest rates in the 529 industry in the category of certificates of deposit and high-yield savings accounts. The AFCSP also benefits from recent Oversight Committee appointments, positioning the committee to effectively oversee the program well into the future. Most importantly, the number of Arizona families who recognize the importance of saving for college continues to grow as they look for ways to reduce their dependence on student loans.

The AFCSP Oversight Committee and the Commissioners who serve as Trustees continue to identify improvements and initiatives that will lead to the AFSCP mission of *assisting Arizona families to financially prepare for postsecondary education by providing quality college savings choices*. The Annual Report will be issued in March and provides an analysis by calendar year. For a copy, please visit <https://highered.az.gov/>.

Goal 2: Provide support from knowledgeable professionals and accurate and timely information to help students and families take steps to enroll, finance, and succeed in postsecondary education

The Commission is committed to aiding the Governor and the state in achieving the important priorities of equal access to education, growing the economy, and eliminating the achievement gap experienced by low-income and minority students.

We join our education and business colleagues in seeking to increase to 60% the percentage of working-age adults who hold a degree or professional certificate through the Achieve60AZ Alliance. The state has several pools of residents who could bring us closer to this number. For example, research indicates that almost every parent holds the dream of college attendance for their child. Yet, only 52.6% of Arizona seniors from the class of 2017 enrolled in postsecondary education. Moreover, only 27.3% of the 2011

First, the Commission provides current and relevant information for college planning and decision-making to students and their families. The *Arizona College & Career Guide*, a

timelines related to college and financial aid applications. High schools are building a college-going community where staff led a cohort approach among peers supporting first-generation and low-income students as they take the steps to enroll in college or some form of postsecondary education.

2.1A The Arizona College Application Campaign (AzCAC)

The Arizona College Application Campaign (AzCAC) is a statewide initiative with three main goals: (1) increase the number of low-income students who apply to at least one postsecondary education opportunity during their senior year in high school, (2) support and enhance existing high school efforts that encourage all students to have a postsecondary plan and take timely steps toward postsecondary education opportunities and success, and (3) contribute to a college-going community within and among the school staff, the student body and their families, and the community. The campaign is inclusive of all sectors of public and private postsecondary education, with the objective of fostering a statewide effort to increase the number of students who pursue postsecondary education or training opportunities leading to a certificate, associate, or baccalaureate degree.

The first College Application Campaign began in 2005 in North Carolina as a pilot effort at a single high school. Since then, many other states have initiated College Application Campaigns. The percentage of first-generation and low-income students who pursue a postsecondary education. Arizona was encouraged to take part in the College Application Campaign initiative by Lumina Foundation and the American Council on Education.

Following a brief pilot by the three public universities in 2012, the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education (ACPE) was asked to assume leadership for the Campaign going forward. In 2013, the Commission piloted AzCAC with eight partner high schools with a data collection component for ongoing program evaluation. The Commission established an Advisory Committee for the initiative comprising the Arizona Board of Regents, Arizona Department of Education, public and private universities, community colleges, businesses, and college access professionals.

All agreed that the goal would be to increase the number of students statewide who submit applications for postsecondary education in the fall of their senior year. In addition, success would be measured by:

1. The number of student reported FIRST applications submitted and the number of total applications submitted to date as compared to previous years.
2. The number of students matriculating in the summer, fall, or spring semester/quarter following their participation in the campaign as compared to the number of students matriculating in previous years.

The fall 2018 campaign was very successful. Seventy high schools serving 21,661 seniors participated in College Application Campaign with the goal of 100% of their senior classes completing an application to at least one postsecondary institution. Eighty-one percent were Title I high schools. Additionally, high schools agreed to maximize student participation and school-wide engagement by staging AzCAC events on school grounds, during the school day. A total of 7,198 applications were filed during the AzCAC events and remarkably, 2,958 or 25% of these students filed an application for the FIRST time during the event.

The Commission continues to promote the College Application Campaign on the College and Career Goal Arizona website developed in June of 2014. The website received 28,220 unique visits from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019.

Similar evaluations and planning were used to prepare for and implement the 2018 campaign. The outcomes and the data were presented to the Advisory Committee on March 1, 2019 for review and input. The Commission is currently seeking outside funding to continue this intensive and highly valuable work for 2019 and beyond.

2.1B College Goal FAFSA Completion Initiative

The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education (ACPE) is a state-funded statewide program that provides free information and professional assistance to Arizona students and families seeking student financial aid for postsecondary education experiences. The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education has planned and coordinated the initiative for the past 23 years. The mission of the CG FAFSA Initiative is to increase the number of under-served and first-generation students entering postsecondary education.

The goals of the College Goal FAFSA Initiative are to:

1. provide high school staff, site coordinators and volunteers with online resources and interactive training to host successful Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion workshops,
2. support high schools as they work with families to assist all high school seniors to complete a FAFSA on time,
3. support community partners

the Commission with the Arizona Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (AASFAA), the Arizona College Access Network (AzCAN), the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), and the Arizona School Counselors Association (AzSCA) have proven to be great assets in this work.

2.1.B1. Develop Material and Provide Assistance on Financial Aid Processes and Applications

The College Goal FAFSA Initiative undertaken by the Commission, is designed to help fill the information gap for students of all ages and their families by providing year round information including important messages such as:

1. financial assistance is available to help pay for college costs,
2. the FAFSA is the first step in applying for financial assistance,
3. it is necessary to file the FAFSA early in order to be considered for all available aid, and
4. there are additional steps to take after filing the FAFSA.

When surveyed, high school students report in large percentages that they aspire to go to college and that they intend to file a FAFSA, yet their actions speak very differently. The FAFSA is the first critical step in applying for all types of financial assistance, yet the form and the application process are often overwhelming to students and families, especially for those whose parents did not attend college. It can be a challenge for students and their families to fully understand what they need to do and when. Many do not have adequate information about the availability of financial aid, the application process, nor the deadlines for filing the application.

The Commission promotes financial literacy providing accurate and timely information related to financial aid on both the College and Career Goal Arizona (C²GA) and AZGrants websites. Guidance on how to complete the FAFSA is provided on the College Goal FAFSA website to help students and their families who could not attend an in-person event. In 2012, the Commission added a social media (Facebook) component to the financial literacy campaign. Social media is one of the best ways to reach high school seniors. At the end of FY 2019, the College Goal Arizona Facebook page had 1,092 followers and received 1,106 % ^ . +

2.1.B2. College Goal FAFSA (CG FAFSA) Community Workshops

Each year, in-person FAFSA completion workshops are offered at various locations around the state in partnership with postsecondary institutions and the Arizona Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (AASFAA). College Goal FAFSA workshops are supported by more than 260 volunteer financial aid professionals and

organizations, and members of the Arizona College Access Network (AzCAN). Between October 2018 and March of 2019, 7 community-based locations across the state offered College Goal FAF\$A workshops and provided assistance to returning adult students, high school seniors, and parents to complete the online FAFSA form. Over 500 participants attended these community workshops to get FAFSA help and learn about the financial aid process.

2.1.B3. College Goal FAF\$A (CG FAF\$A) High School Workshops

The CG FAF\$A initiative continued its evolution in FY 2019 and grew the number of participating high schools to 96, up from 71 in the prior year. Resulting in a 35% growth in the number of participating CG FAF\$A high schools. The incorporation of more high schools is seen as a positive move by the Commission. By holding workshops at high schools where students and families feel most comfortable, financial aid and higher education professionals will be better able to assist under-served and first-generation students seeking access to postsecondary education.

Both community and high school FAFSA completion workshops are offered in partnership with the Arizona Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (AASFAA). At the high school workshops counselors, staff, and volunteer financial aid professionals from Arizona help students and parents in completing the online FAFSA form and to learn about financial aid processes. Over 8,600 students and families attended the 2018-19 high school workshops.

2.1.B4. FAF\$A Finish Line Project

The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education was identified as the entity to lead the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Completion Initiative in Arizona, inclusive of FAF\$A Finish Line reports. Through this Federal initiative the U.S. Department of Education permits the Commission to disclose limited information about FAFSA completion to the public.

39% of their seniors completing a FAFSA. The Commission and high schools partnering in the FAFSA Completion Initiative learned two important lessons: 1) that training of counselors/staff in reading and acting upon status reports is critical to success, and 2) that students should submit a FAFSA as early in their senior year as possible. The Commission currently is working with more than 164 high schools, 30 districts, and 7 designated entities for this next round of FAFSA applications.

2.1.B5. Arizona FAFSA Challenge

The Arizona FAFSA Challenge is a statewide initiative designed to increase the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion rates among Arizona high school seniors. The goal is to develop a statewide college-going initiative that will result in an educated workforce to serve a growing Arizona economy. The goal for the 2019-2020 school year is to achieve a 52% FAFSA completion rate. In order to contribute to the state goal, high schools are encouraged to increase their senior cohort FAFSA completion rate by 5% over the prior year. The State intends to gradually increase the goal to a 78% FAFSA completion rate by year 2030 in order to support Achieve60AZ target of 60% of Arizonans in the workforce holding a certificate or degree.

In the 2018-2019 school year, the Arizona FAFSA Challenge set a 50% FAFSA completion goal for the state. Arizona ended up with a 47% FAFSA completion rate, which resulted in a 4% increase from the previous year (2017-2018). In addition, 77 Arizona high schools increased their FAFSA completion rate compared to the previous year by 5% or more. The Arizona FAFSA Challenge also awarded 6 high schools throughout Arizona for leading the state in FAFSA completion and an additional 15 high schools for their work in promoting FAFSA completion among their high school seniors.

The Arizona FAFSA Challenge also collaborated with The Valley Leadership Education Impact team to support FAFSA completion in the state. The collaboration included the development of an online FAFSA toolkit that includes various FAFSA resources for counselors, students, and parents. The FAFSA toolkit, found at www.AZFAFSAtoolkit.com, contains over fifty individual FAFSA handouts, training videos, and website links to assist with FAFSA completion. In addition, a printed version of a FAFSA playbook, which is geared towards high school administration and legislative officials to raise awareness about the importance of FAFSA completion and its impact it

2.2 Provide Current and Relevant Web- and Print-Based Information on College-Going and Financial Assistance for Families and Students

2.2A The Arizona College and Career Guide (ACCG)

The *Arizona College & Career Guide* (ACCG) lists all Arizona public and private postsecondary institutions including proprietary, vocational, and career schools. This document is a one-•[] •[~|&^ { | } { | } { } Alã [] æ [] [••^& [] åæ^ } ••æ } ••q accreditations, course offerings, length of study, costs to attend, financial aid programs available, æ } å c@ } ••æ } } q , ^à•æ. This publication is widely used by high school

counselors, Workforce Connections personnel, DES, college access programs, and the information seeking public. The ACPE has compiled and disseminated this publication since 1975 in print and online.

In previous years, emphasis had been put on marketing and distributing the ACCG to Title I high schools. In addition to the Title I high schools, GEAR UP, Workforce Connections, Vocational Rehabilitation offices, Tribal Vocational/Education offices, and Correctional Institutions also received the *Arizona College and Career Guide* free of charge to use with their students and clients.

Now, in response to current trends, the *Arizona College and Career Guide* is only available as a digital publication and is no longer being offered as a printed hard copy. The online version is available at www.highered.az.gov, and had a total of 1,377 unique visits for FY 2019. The Commission staff is working on a communications plan to inform the public about the location and value of this document.

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and universities, as well as the various forms of financial aid available. The 529 website also provides information on when to begin saving for college, an interactive college Savings Calculator tool, and compares various tax-advantaged college savings options. In 2019, the Commission continued to build public awareness, encouraging families to save for college through a series of radio and television interviews and also via public information sharing events throughout the year. The Commission reached an estimated 638,000 Arizona residents by leveraging these information channels to promote financial literacy and the value of saving for college during Financial Literacy Month in April, promoting 529 Day in May, celebrating College Savings Month during October, and sharing the gift of education in November and December. This website received 65,

2.21 Leveraging Media: Phoenix Magazine Higher Education Section

The Commission staff seeks ways to promote college going and provide critical information to the higher education system. For more than a decade, ACPE has provided editorial direction for the *Phoenix Magazine* Higher Education section. This opportunity provides information for families across the state to learn more about higher education by featuring articles about the innovative programs and degrees offered throughout Arizona. *Phoenix Magazine* reaches over an estimated 350,000 monthly total readership. This collaboration was not initiated in 2018-2019.

Goal 3: Provide a forum where all sectors of postsecondary education dialogue, partner, and problem solve issues of mutual interest

The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education provides a unique statewide forum where senior level representatives from universities, community colleges, independent colleges, and private training and career colleges assemble to identify mutual opportunities and problems in postsecondary education. In addition to the postsecondary membership, two superintendents of school districts and a CEO of a charter school provide insight about transition into, preparation for, and awareness of postsecondary education opportunities from the K-12 perspective.

Issues arise from discussion among Commissioners, policy makers, and business leaders at ACPE meetings and events that warrant further investigation and policy analysis. Issues that have been identified as important include the achievement gap for minority populations, low-income, and first generation individuals in accessing and succeeding in postsecondary education; low high school completion rates; barriers to student advancement among students; and reduction or elimination of the financial barriers experienced by students and their families to postsecondary education.

Two strategies have been identified to meet Goal 3. The first is to raise awareness and develop a knowledge base for solutions through policy analysis and commissioned research studies. The second strategy is to establish, lead, or participate in collaborative action groups or task forces, informed by research, to plan strategies to develop opportunities or solve problems identified by the Commission.

3.1 Arizona Minority Education Policy Analysis Center (AMEPAC)

The mission of the Arizona Minority Education Policy Analysis Center (AMEPAC) is to stimulate through studies, statewide discussion, and debate improvement of Arizona higher education. AMEPAC is funded through donations from postsecondary institutions and non-profit organizations committed to its mission. Since 1996, AMEPAC has addressed numerous issues affecting minority access to and achievement in higher education. Results of this policy analysis are published (print and web-based) research papers and

Collaboration and partnerships such as the Achieve60AZ Alliance are a critical component of the work of the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education. Shared efforts allow the important agenda of postsecondary education access and success to move forward without duplication and with efficiency. At times the Commission itself identifies issues or barriers for students that warrant investigation. For example, in April of 2014, the lack of student financial aid became such a topic and the Commission formed a Student Financial Aid Task Force calling together key stakeholders. The group met and identified a mission of raising awareness of and support for solutions to financial barriers to postsecondary education access and attainment for low-income students.

This group, led by two Commissioners, Dr. Shouan Pan and Dr. James Rund, met four times and presented a framework for Arizona students financial aid at the November 2015 D^c^[[] q̄ * Alã [] æ H̄ { æ } Cæ ãæ conference.

All initiatives led by ACPE staff and Commissioners as described in Goals 2 and 3 rely on partnerships and collaboration both for funding and execution. These initiatives include the Arizona College Application Campaign, College Goal FAF\$A Completion Initiative, the Arizona FAF\$A Challenge, the Arizona Minority Education Policy Analysis Center, the Developing Alã [] æ Human Capital Conference, and Pathways to Postsecondary Education Awards.

Each of these programs, resources, and college awareness publications are offered at no expense to the State, but rather are sponsored through grants, collaboration, or sales. For example, College Goal FAF\$A benefits from in-kind assistance received from partners such as the public universities, community colleges, high schools, guidance counselors, Arizona Associate of Student Financial Aid Administrators, and Work Force Connections. These partnerships provided more than 260 financial aid professionals and & { { ~ } æ { ^ { à^!• ÷[{ Alã [] æ & ||^*^•, ~ } q̄^!•ãã•, @ @•&@ [|•, } [] -profit organizations, and members of the Arizona College Access Network (AzCAN) to help families complete the FAFSA.

To meet the goals of the state, the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education also supports other Arizona wide initiatives. In FY 2019, the ACPE Executive Director participated on the Expect More Arizona Public Engagement Task Force, College S̄ &&^•• Alã [] æ Aãçã [!^ C [{ { ãc^, c@ Alã [] æB̄ •q̄^•• æ å Eã &æã } C [æãã], æ å ADEq Alã [] æCæ^! L^æã!• @ N^ç [!\.

In 2013, the Commission accepted the leadership role for the Arizona College Application Campaign (AzCAC). In 2014, the 20ol51(2)-3(01on)Tj0 20050>80(01oo3(rts)-7k0>80-113n4(ol51(2)-)

The goals identified in the strategic plan are (1) maximizing available student financial assistance for students and families; (2) providing support from knowledgeable professionals and accurate and timely information to help students and families enroll, finance, and succeed in postsecondary education, and (3) providing a forum for all sectors of postsecondary education to dialogue, partner, and problem solve issues of mutual interest for the benefit of Arizonans.

The goal of maximizing available student financial resources has been severely impacted due to the ACPE general funds reduction of 80% and the elimination of federal LEAP, and SLEAP grant funding. An additional loss was that of the last two of five years funding through the College Access Challenge Grant by the state due to a failure to meet the Merit Scholarship criteria, as denied. Just under \$3 million was lost in both 2015 and 2016, including \$1 million dollars for each of those two years dedicated to student scholarships. Since FY 2010, student financial aid has been reduced by \$4.1 million. The table below represents the student

