

Arizona Case Study Report
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Arizona is a young, vibrant and diverse state with great potential. We enjoy a spirit of optimism, a beautiful physical environment and a dynamic population. More than most states — indeed more than most nations — Arizona is poised to thrive in the fast-paced 21st century. But to get there, we will need an education system that ...ensures that all of our children and youth succeed in school and are prepared to succeed in life.

Educating Arizona, 2008, p.3

Optimism in the face of the reality of huge challenges characterizes this recent report from the Arizona Community Foundation. The report cites huge demographic challenges and poor ranking of Arizona on numerous indicators of educational performance, but concludes that “the good news is that we can fix these system conditions.” Among the promising signs that the state is starting to address its challenges, according to the report, is the work of the Governor’s P-20 Council. Our case study of the P-20 Council affirms this finding: although just three years old, the Council has mobilized stakeholders across the state behind a common agenda of raising educational attainment of Arizonans and improving the state’s economic position in the face of unprecedented challenges.

This case study report begins with descriptive information about the Council’s origins and its operations and then offers analysis of the value and challenges of this particular Council mechanism in terms of promoting the agenda to align high school and postsecondary education and meet the state’s educational policy priorities.

State Policy Context

Arizona’s education system is facing rapid population growth, particularly among low-income individuals and non-English speaking students – the very students whose academic achievement has lagged statewide averages. It faces these challenges with fiscal constraints more severe than many states, in view of its political culture and history of anti-tax and low public investment and its use of ballot initiatives to tie the hands of its legislature in addressing public priorities. Funding per student in both K-12 and postsecondary education is well below national averages.

The state suffers from poor performance on most of the indicators that have become commonplace in comparing among states. Since the National Center began issuing its fifty-state report card, *Measuring Up*, in 2000, Arizona has been among the very lowest performers in the “preparation” category. It is one of the poorest performing states in the percent of young people completing a high school credential and Arizona 8th graders score very poorly on national assessments – especially in mathematics. There is reportedly a weak college-going culture in the state – evidenced in part by the importance given among many Arizonans to celebrating 8th grade graduations.

Like most states, Arizona has a complicated governing structure for public education that have evolved over time, leaving decision-making authority and accountability diffuse. It

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is one of eleven states with an elected superintendent working with a state board appointed by the Governor. The superintendent serves four-year terms and oversees the Arizona Department of Education and the Board of Education sets policy for all public schools. The superintendent serves as an executive member of the State Board. The Department is charged with implementing Board policies. Among the policies established by the Board are the minimum course of study, requirements for high school graduation, and competency tests. There are 219 school districts with locally elected boards that administer the districts within the policy framework adopted by the State Board.

In the postsecondary arena, college participation patterns do not produce the levels of educational attainment that the state seeks or needs. Comparatively few high school students enroll directly in college – a pattern of college enrollment that is much more likely to result in degree completion. Instead, Arizona has relative high rates of adult enrollment in community colleges, but completion rates of those students are low. The combined effect of these patterns is baccalaureate production far below what outside consultants have advised the state that it needs to be competitive in today’s global economy.

Contributing to these low rates of baccalaureate completion is a university system that is, by all accounts, under-sized for the state’s growing population and not readily accessible to rural populations. Arizona, a state of over six million people, has only three public universities. In keeping what some describe as the “wild west” culture, its higher education enterprise has operated without a clear design for differentiating among the missions of the three universities and the ten community colleges. The three universities are research universities without, until recently, a strong focus on accommodating undergraduate education demand. One effect of the constrained access to a public baccalaureate is a very large community colleges system. Within the public sector, 63 percent of enrollments are in community colleges, which is fourth highest in the nation and well above the national average of 47 percent. The high use of the community colleges is less the result of design, as in California for example, and more the result of limited access to four-year institutions.

Another aspect of higher education governance that presents challenges for educational planning and reform in Arizona is the lack of a central oversight body, or system, for the state’s community colleges. The system office was eliminated by the Legislature in 2002 out of concern that system priorities were interfering with local priorities.

Financial challenges loom large among factors contributing to the shortage of college-educated Arizonans. Arizona has been slow to provide financial aid for college yet college tuition has risen precipitously in Arizona as it has across most of the country. The state has received failing grades in the *Measuring Up* report card for “affordability,” as families must devote unsustainable amounts of their incomes to paying for college. But financial challenges have also provided some of the impetus for action. In 2002-03 when many states raised tuition, the Arizona Board of Regents, which oversees the three public universities, rejected its staff recommendation to increase tuition at a time when

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state general fund resources were stagnant as well. The press of growing enrollment demand against flat budgets led to the state's application to participate in a national project, called *Changing Direction*. Led by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), the project aimed to help states better coordinate their finance policies as one means to improve higher education access and outcomes. This proved to be just one of several efforts by the state's political and educational leaders to draw upon national experts to help rationalize its educational system.

Politics, of course, affects the context of education planning and reform efforts. Political battles have been shaped by the dominant conservative legislature, and the current and former elected state schools superintendents, confronting a growing immigrant population, with its English learner needs and general lack of preparation for school success. These battles play out both in spending decisions and educational policy. A protracted battle occurred in the first part of the new century, over testing requirements for the awarding of a high school diploma. Low passage rates on the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) test, especially in mathematics, prompted concern among teachers and parents over whether the test was reasonable and whether there had been enough time for schools to implement a standards-based curriculum and enough opportunity for students to learn the material on which they were tested. The superintendent responded to these pressures by relaxing the timeline for the new standards, even as she stressed that the standards are to be a fixture of the educational policy landscape. The upshot of the battle was a lowering of the passing score and a delay in implementing the graduation requirement of passing the test and the first steps of what was to be a series of actions to increase math requirements for graduation.

Politics also affects attitudes toward the public universities and the level of support that the state is willing to provide. As one influential community member observed, "some of our legislators are not warm and fuzzy about what they think is taught in our universities." Those feelings might predispose legislators to argue that the private benefits of higher education might make it a lower priority for public investment than K-12 schools.

A democratic Governor, Janet Napolitano, was first elected in 2002 and reelected in 2006. She enjoys strong support in an otherwise strongly conservative state, in part because of her ability to unite Arizonans behind her education agenda and link it solidly to the state's economic future. The business community is a very strong presence behind this education agenda, and is a key element in preserving the bi-partisan support for the Governor's agenda to reinvent Arizona through increased educational attainment.

The Beginnings of the P-20 Council

Governor Napolitano created the P-20 Council by executive order in August, 2005 (see Appendix A) but it had its roots in the business community.¹ An organization called Greater Phoenix Leadership (GPL) spearheaded concern among the larger business community about the serious underperformance of the state's educational system. GPL is a member organization of leading private sector and civic chief executives with the mission to engage with the public and nonprofit sectors around policy issues for the betterment of the state. It enlisted the support of two other business leadership groups in the education reform effort – the Southern Arizona Leadership Council and the Flagstaff Forty.

GPL published a report in 2003 that began the P-20 dialog, after its members became convinced that individual efforts to improve early childhood education, K-12, and postsecondary education would fail if they were not integrated. The report, called *P-20: An Approach to Integrated Learning*, clearly laid out the P-20 concept through diagrams, benchmarks, and a clear statement of rationale:

“In recent years, there have been many significant efforts to improve our institutions of learning and address some root causes of student failure. There have been task force reports, blue ribbon committees, grass-root efforts at places of learning, but the effort remains disjointed, with diffused authority and lack of total commitment to a common goal that speaks with a clear articulated plan for education. K-12 education must be linked seamlessly with preschool and postsecondary education. These linkages between the stages of educational development must be better defined and smoothed out for the learner. P-20 offers an approach to achieving such an integrated learning system.”

According to Jim Zaharis, Vice President of GPL, an additional goal at the time was to cultivate good civic stewards outside of the education system who would come to understand the key role that education plays in their own self-interest as Arizonans. GPL sought common ground to accommodate the business community, which always seemed to be calling for reform, and the education community, which always seemed to “trump” the reform. “My task,” said Zaharis, “was to try to find a way to get a bigger tent.” GPL, under Zaharis’ guidance, marketed the P-20 concept to the incoming Governor Napolitano who “picked it up and ran with it.” According to the stakeholders now involved, the Governor has not stopped running.

¹ The Governor issued a superseding Executive Order in 2008 that slightly alters the membership of the Council and changes the wording of the strategies to be considered by the Council to read more as intermediate outcomes than as specific strategies. The new order calls for the status of the Council to be reviewed no later than December 31, 2010.

The Council Structure and Operation

The P-20 Council is large and highly structured. All of the 40 members are appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of, the Governor. Members include the elected Superintendent of Public Instruction, one member of the Board of Regents, the presidents of the three public universities, four community college representatives, four K-12 education representatives, four ex-officio members of the Arizona legislature, a Tribal representative, and representatives of parent and community organizations, workforce and economic development, early education, career technical education, youth, the business community, and philanthropy.

The Council is chaired by the Governor and co-chaired by Rufus Glasper, the Chancellor of the large Maricopa Community Colleges. There are six standing and two ad hoc committees, the names of which indicate the Council's priority areas:

- Education & Workforce Pathways
- Data & Graduation
- Teachers
- Education Alignment & Assessment
- Literacy
- Communications
- Early Education (ad hoc)
- Higher Education (ad hoc)

It is notable that, with the exception of the ad hoc committees, the structure is thematic rather than institutional – signaling a commitment to avoid recreating the silos that the Council is itself intended to dismantle. Each committee has a designated chair and receives staff support from the Governor's office. Committee membership can include people who are not members of the Council.

A Steering Committee, chaired by Chancellor Glasper, consists of the chairs of the eight committees. Its charge is to make recommendations to the P-20 Council regarding priorities and strategies that will support the Council achieving its stated purpose to improve education in Arizona. The Steering Committee gets updates from all committees and makes sure their efforts are coordinated before presenting committee work to the full Council. Although the executive order declared that the Council meet at least quarterly, it meets monthly, as do the Steering Committee and most of the other committees. The executive order also states that members may not send designees to represent them at meetings. Full meetings of the Council are scheduled for two hours. Meetings are reportedly well attended by members and observers. Participation is balanced, with good engagement across the membership. One interviewee observed that despite the generally good and widespread participation, the “driving forces” are really the universities, business, and the Governor's office, adding that “if you have not gotten those three lined up, you have no hope of moving an agenda forward.”

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The Council has a designated staff in the Governor's office. Staff consists of an executive director and a second staff person, who is nearly full-time. The Governor's chief K-12 and higher education advisors (two additional individuals) dedicate considerable portions of their time as well to the operation of the Council. Staff time is spent organizing and staffing the Council and its many committees, arranging for agenda items, developing committee work plans, and following up on the many initiative and action items emanating from the Council and the committees.

The Council has a formal identity, captured in a logo and a set of brochures and other materials. There is a well-developed website for the Council, with minutes and agendas posted for meetings of the Council and its committees.

Council Priorities

The published vision statement for the P-20 Council is that "every graduating student will be prepared for work and postsecondary education in the 21st Century." The stated goal is that "every young person who graduates from Arizona's schools is truly prepared for a world of competition and innovation." From the Executive Order, it is clear that the creation of the Council is motivated by the desire to:

- accommodate a population that is growing at twice the national average
- increase the college-going rate and bachelor's degree production
- increase alignment and rigor across the educational spectrum to produce highly qualified workers for high-value jobs, and
- achieve a more efficient and equitable education pipeline that keeps students on track at each stage.

In December 2006, in the year following the creation of the Council, a two-day strategic planning retreat was held for all members. The retreat produced 32 recommendations which have become the agenda for the Council. The recommendations emanated from the various committees and most of them are very detailed and multifaceted. Some of the recommendations address funding priorities and the creation of incentives, some suggest legislative action, and some call for further assessment or research. A final set of 35 recommendations was adopted by the Council in June, 2008. The full list can be found on the Council website (<http://www.azgovernor.gov/P20/>).

Some of the key priorities, as expressed by interviewees during the case study visit, include the following:

Alignment

Align high school standards and graduation requirements with postsecondary and workforce expectations, with a special emphasis on adopting a more rigorous standard for high school math and science.

Assessment

Review methods of assessment, including the AIMS test and end-of-course exams, as a means of improving alignment across the education pipeline; gain agreement about what constitutes college readiness – at community colleges and universities – and align assessments to those readiness standards.

Baccalaureate production

Study the demand for associate and baccalaureate degrees and the capacity to meet the demand, with attention to the transferability of credits across institutions and the prospects for expanding transfer pathways.

Career Technical Pathways

Expand and improve alternative high school pathways by which students can obtain the skills needed for the workforce.

Teacher Quality

Attract and retain high quality teachers through appropriate compensation and support, with special emphasis on increasing the supply of math and science teachers (this recommendation references another Governor’s committee – the Committee on Teacher Quality and Support – which has done considerable work on the topics assigned to the “Teachers Committee” of the P-20 Council).

Data System

Continue to build the linked data system in accordance with National Data Quality Campaign standards, including the addition of the teacher identification component.

Communications

Create and execute a communications plan, in partnership with foundation and business leaders, to build public awareness of the importance of education and public will for P-20 reform.

The communications priority warrants further discussion, as it is less common among these kinds of councils across the country and a very high priority of the Council. The business and foundation leaders who were behind the P-20 concept, and who serve on and support the Council, were key supporters of the need for a public awareness campaign. There was a strong perceived need to do something drastic to change the culture in the state surrounding education. This applies both to families, who were perceived to be insufficiently inclined toward college, and to the business community, which has been largely able to rely on importing educated workers into the state. The public relations campaign was proposed as a means to communicate the new dimensions of the education challenge in Arizona and the urgency of improving the pipeline for educating the state’s own residents. In view of the state’s fiscally conservative political bent, the campaign was not-so-subtly aimed at ultimately increasing the state’s investment in education.

Council Accomplishments

A full list of self-reported accomplishments appears on the Council website and is included as Appendix B in this report. In this section we will concentrate on those major accomplishments that were repeatedly cited by interviewees.

One accomplishment was joining the America Diploma Project (ADP) – a national initiative operated by Achieve, Inc. to ensure that high school graduates are prepared for work and postsecondary education by increasing high school class rigor and aligning curriculum and standards. Although a Council mechanism is not required for a state to participate in this project, respondents believe that the Council was a critical player in moving the state to join.

A second major accomplishment, cited by everyone, is the increase in high school graduation requirements that were adopted by the Board of Education in December, 2007. When the Council was created, earning a high school diploma required just two years of science and two years of mathematics. Students in the class of 2013 will be required to take three years of science and four years of math. The minimum math requirement will increase from Geometry to Algebra II. Enacting this change was controversial in view of concerns that it would increase high school drop out rates in an era of heightened accountability for high school graduation and that it would cost schools more money to add teachers in math and science at a time of severe budget constraints.

This Council action is especially noteworthy because it says something about the power and structure of the body. When the item appeared before the Council, there was only one opposition vote but it was a strong one – the elected Superintendent of Schools Tom Horne. Horne, a Republican former legislator, is rumored to be interested in a run for Governor when his second term expires in 2010. Some believe that the Governor created the Council, or at least uses it, as way to have more influence over the K-12 agenda than is provided for under current governance structures with an elected superintendent. A smaller Council with less allegiance to the Governor and fewer countervailing votes would likely not have prevailed over a powerful elected official.

A third accomplishment, cited by many, is the acquisition of substantial outside funds to develop a public relations campaign. The campaign, under the name “Expect More Arizona,” is scheduled to begin Fall, 2008. When the committee structure was first formed, the charge given to the Communications Committee was to communicate the work of the other committees. But, said Paul Luna, chair of the Communications Committee and Executive Director of the Helios Foundation,

“What started to become clearer to us was that at some level we have to educate the state to what the P-20 Council is and who we are and what we’re trying to do...and that our work was actually going to be a little more difficult than what was initially presented. Because P-20 is not really a term that everybody’s familiar with.”

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Luna met with the Governor's staff to convince them that the charge involved more "heavy lifting" and got their endorsement of his effort to reach out to the foundation community for support. Four foundations each contributed \$50,000 and a professional firm was retained to build a communications strategy and a plan to implement it. The effort will involve statewide media messages and an interactive website – all aimed at motivating the public to change their own behaviors and to support the P-20 agenda.

Another major accomplishment within the postsecondary sector, but aided by the P-20 framework, is the redesign of higher education to increase access to the baccalaureate. This has involved better delineation of the missions of the three universities, alternative modes of delivery of upper division coursework to better match capacity with demand, and introduction of a 3-plus-1 pathway where a student need only complete the final year at a university, taking three years of course work at a community college.

Value Added by the P-20 Council

An important purpose of this study of P-16/P-20 councils is to understand if and how the council mechanism adds value to the work that would occur whether or not the council existed. This is a key question because a council is typically superimposed on existing agency structures and does not itself hold the power to legislate or even to implement legislative or executive directives. The power of this council, and all others of which we are aware, comes from its ability to influence the agenda of existing agencies and other organizations. The Council has no ultimate authority but is simply an advisory body that issues recommendations to the Governor. So the question becomes, as stated succinctly by Helios Foundation Director Paul Luna, "If a council is purely advisory, can it really champion and sustain change over time?"

Although it is always speculative to consider whether or not something would have happened in the absence of the council, we heard a resounding consensus that the Council added considerable value to ongoing educational improvement endeavors. We have classified the nature of the value added and provided some of the examples that were offered by respondents.

It Gets People Talking

Several people offered that the Council adds value by having "the right people at the right table." (Some did offer, however, that the legislative involvement is not as strong as it could be and that some groups, like labor, have not yet been included.) With the large membership, people are able to share information across all education sectors as well as the other stakeholder communities. One member noted that with 80 percent of the state's population in the Phoenix/Tucson regions, the other parts of the state have traditionally been excluded from these kinds of conversations, but that the Council has successfully involved rural communities. Another pointed to the side benefits of getting together monthly in that members can discuss other mutual business beyond what is on the formal agenda.

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Karen Nicodemus, president of Cochise College, citing the benefits of talking across boundaries, said: “I am a much better college president for being on the State Board of Education and being engaged with the P-20 Council.” She added that by bringing people together, the Council has been able to build alliances that can then move agendas. As an example, she cited work on the alignment of math standards, for which her Alignment Committee brought together community college and university faculty, representatives from the Department of Education and the business community, as they worked with partners from Achieve. Roy Flores, Chancellor of Pima Community College District, states the benefits simply: “once you get those folks together and give them a clear direction and constraints and time lines, good things are going to happen.”

It Raises Public Expectations

But Flores made a key distinction between the Arizona Council and other state P-16 forums with which he is familiar. He says that the real value comes not from just getting people together but from the expectations they face when they get together. Getting together for the sake of getting together “might make you feel good,” he said, but doesn’t do anything that can’t be accomplished with a phone call. The Arizona P-20 Council is different, he said, because it is public and brings expectations for action. As a member, this is what you hear:

“These are the problems, this is what the data show, these are the things that you want to work on, these are my expectations, and you have to report publically, and you have to make recommendations, and I’m taking some of these to the Legislature, and I’m sending a letter to the state superintendent and the board, saying these are my expectations, and I’m calling a press conference...”

He added that “it’s one thing for two people to get together and have a good idea” but another to hear “this is what the legislature or the Governor is expecting.” Other members had similar views. Arizona State University (ASU) President Crow said the authority of the Council derives from its being a public forum – which makes it more effective than if it had more formal authority but less public presence. President Nicodemus said that when, as a member, you publicly support an action, there is an assumption that you have agreed to take it back to your decision-making body and try to move it forward. Because there is regular staff follow-up in meetings, it is likely that members will be called upon to report back to the Council on their own follow-up.

It Fosters Common Agendas

Everyone acknowledged that the Council can only make things happen if the participating agencies act on Council priorities through their own regular channels. The Council is not a state agency and cannot directly implement educational policy. Yet all agreed that the Council was directly responsible for much of the movement that is occurring.

Many respondents attributed this to having so many members hearing and learning from one another. Jim Zaharis of Greater Phoenix Leadership has observed “people who did

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not used to talk to each other about these topics” coming together around a common agenda and beginning to know each other face to face, and then “coming to a common identification of the issues and the problem” and “kind of rowing the boat in the same direction.” ASU President Crow provided an example, noting that “we would not be at the point we are in understanding the connection between high school graduation requirements and university admission requirements without the Council.” The Council “gives us a whole different set of dynamics that doesn’t exist in any other forum” with the involvement of all of the various players, he said.

Several respondents noted that the increase in high school graduation requirements would not have occurred without the Council. John Haeger, President of Northern Arizona University, felt that the business groups on the Council were instrumental in “tempering reactions” of local communities against raising the standards. Were it left up to the Department of Education and the usual political forces, the change would not have happened.

Part of this dynamic seems to be a kind of a tipping point, where peer pressure acts to prevent dissent. President Haeger noted that there have been times when someone could have spoken up to kill an idea but no one has taken that step – probably because “the Council has a lot of support and momentum and they don’t want to be the one responsible for derailing it.”

Common agendas can translate to real influence, even in a body that lacks formal power. For example, the Council does not lobby the Legislature as a council, but to the extent that the individual agencies are on the same page, the individual lobbying can be that much more effective.

Luna pointed to the Council’s role in framing the education issue around one common agenda – not as multiple competing agendas. He felt this was an important part of keeping the public engaged, as competing messages can lead to public confusion and disengagement.

It Enhances the Impact of the Immediate Players

Respondents gave examples of how the Council has been able to leverage its own impact beyond its members and participating agencies. The most obvious example was the ability of the Council to engage philanthropy in the cause. Zaharis points out that Arizona had far less philanthropy than many other states, particularly compared to states in the eastern part of the country. But the last few years has seen a huge increase in the presence of philanthropy in Arizona to the point where “philanthropy has become the angel investors for education.” The Arizona Community Foundation – a statewide partnership of donors and nonprofit organizations – has picked up the mantle of education reform. It issued a major report in 2008, called *Educating Arizona*, that referenced and built on many of the Council’s recommendations.

On a smaller scale, President Crow credited the Council with enhancing his own ability to move his agenda within his institution, because “I can say ‘we’re doing this’ and it’s

not debatable.” Susie DePrez, the parent representative on the Council, gave an example of how the Council has added value by taking the many local initiatives and pulling them together into statewide policy initiatives. Local partnerships can work for years on small-scale projects and grants but it takes the statewide efforts of the Council to give these initiatives the boost that they need to really have an impact.

Co-chair Glasper provided a helpful summary of many participants’ view of the value that the Council has added to the landscape. He pointed out that the Council has worked hard to put the state’s interests at the center of the agenda – to keep it above the interests of the individual institutions. That is the challenge that faces most states in today’s economy, where the sum of the individual interests of institutions is unlikely to match the pressing educational and economic needs of the state.

Barriers to Greater Success

Despite these many endorsements of the value added by the Council, many interviewees set the bar for measuring the ultimate success of the Council far higher than would enable them to declare success now. Paul Luna said he would judge success by whether the Council succeeded in changing the culture of the state around education such that people’s votes and the state’s funding patterns change to the betterment of public education. Success will also, according to Crow, require that people understand that public education consists of P-20, not just K-12. Other observations on judging the success of the Council were that it’s too soon to tell – because change is happening but happening slowly.

When asked what barriers were interfering with more or faster success, interviewees had much less to say than they did about its accomplishments. Barriers cited fell into five categories:

The Difficulty of the Task

Improving educational outcomes in the face of budget limitations, increasingly under-prepared students, and complex governance structures is no small task. The collection of 32 recommendations generated by the eight committees (now up to 35 as adopted by the Council) is as overwhelming as it is ambitious. The state has been among the lowest states in K-12 performance for a long time and members realize that it will not be easy to reverse these trends – or to convert high college participation into high rates of college completion. Adding to the difficulty of the task are political tensions within a complex educational governance structure. With an elected superintendent of public instruction of the opposite party of the Governor, the Council can become a venue for political battles in addition to the educational ones, as was the case with the action to increase high school graduation requirements.

Lack of Public Support

Success of the Council agenda will require a full-scale culture change in Arizona around issues of public support for education. Families need to become more aware of the

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benefits of high school and college success. The public at large needs to understand the benefits of increased investments in education for all Arizonans at a time of increasing diversification of the population. Legislators need to value the *public* as well as the *private* benefits of higher education. Council members are aware that in spite of its inclusion of so many stakeholders, the Council is still not well known – even, for example, among local school superintendents. One member spoke of the need for the Council to go up and down the state and hold town hall meetings to increase public awareness of the Council and support for its agenda.

Insufficient Resources

Surprisingly, there was not widespread pessimism about the impact of severe budget constraints on the ability of the Council to proceed with its work. It was mentioned by several people but not as something that would stop the Council in its tracks. One specific budget issue that was mentioned frequently was the impact of budget constraints on the ability of schools to hire the math and science teachers necessitated by the forthcoming increase in high school graduation requirements. As this change is universally viewed as a major accomplishment of the Council, it is understandable that lack of funds to implement would be viewed as a serious barrier. Of course, funds are also needed to implement a variety of the Council's recommended initiatives – and that was cited as a barrier by some of the respondents. One member suggested that the problem is not only a lack of resources but lack of knowledge or ability to figure out how best to use available resources.

Too Many Priorities

Several Council members cited an over-abundance of good ideas and a lack of focus on top priorities as a barrier to success. One referred to the “laundry list” of priorities and suggested that the Governor does not want to set priorities because that would make somebody unhappy. He said while these kinds of bodies generally don't like to make anyone unhappy, it is necessary for the Council to decide what Arizona's higher educational system is going to look like five and ten years from now. “Do we want to continue to have the same discussion, which we had...since I have been in the state?” He said the Governor could push forward the conversation, even though it might make some people unhappy but added, “If I was Governor, I don't think I would want to do that. She is in a tough spot.”

Sustainability

The last, but probably biggest barrier to achieving success is the expiration of the Governor's term in 2010 and the issue of how to sustain the Council. This is a major issue that warrants its own full discussion.

Sustainability

Whether and how the Governor's P-20 Council will outlast the end of Governor Napolitano's term in 2010 is the big question on everyone's mind. While the Governor

has not yet made her plans known for how she hopes to ensure that the effort continues, several of the key players have their own thoughts on the issue and many of them are concerned that the momentum they have built together is in jeopardy. Others were more hopeful, citing the strong support that the Council enjoys from a broad base of stakeholders as a strong force for sustainability. Respondents discussed three possible models for addressing the sustainability of the Council.

Continue under Executive Order

One option is to wait for a new Governor and hope that the executive order would be renewed. The current executive order calls for a review of the status of the Council no later than December 31, 2010. Some advocates of the Council agenda perceive this as a viable strategy. Said one member: “if the new Governor didn’t emphasize it, Council members would push for it.” Others feel this is risky because they view Governor Napolitano’s strong commitment as critical to the Council’s effectiveness. For these individuals, it is questionable whether the Council could maintain its stature and impact under a Governor who was less than fully committed to the current arrangement. As one member noted, “you can’t force a Governor to care about something.” Several members voiced the opinion that at some point the Council needs to be seen as Arizona’s agenda – not the Governor’s.

Put the Council in Statute

There are variants within the statutory option – having to do with the degree of authority a new entity would have with respect to existing agencies, primarily the Department of Education, the Arizona Board of Regents, and individual colleges and universities. No one seems to think that a “superboard” agency would be workable. Some point to Florida’s failed experiment with a P-20 governing structure as proof. Others simply note that politically, a superboard could not work, given the existing statutory and, in the case of the Board of Regents, Constitutional, authority of existing entities. Another respondent said that the Council would be viewed with suspicion and less respect than it now has if it were a state agency.

The other option within the statutory approach is to codify the Council as an advisory body – not as a state agency. If successful, that strategy would continue its current mode of operation but with the guarantee that it would outlast the current administration. This option might avoid the pitfalls of creating a new agency but it still confronts the need for legislation – something that many doubt could occur, because of the partisan divide between the Legislature and the Governor. One member noted that the split between branches of state government is not only motivated by partisanship but also by resentment over the Governor’s power and respect on education issues. According to this individual, the Governor has “co-opted” the economic development agenda normally pushed by Republicans and business to the point where “business thinks the Governor has the best ideas.” This has led to resentment in the Republican-controlled Legislature to the point where “we worry that the Legislature will want to dismantle the Council.”

Establish the Council Outside of Government

A third option is being considered by Greater Phoenix Leadership – which has a lot of stake in the issue of sustainability since it was the prime mover in creating the Council. Under this plan, still being formed, the current entities with statutory authority – the Board of Regents and the Board of Education - would agree on an agenda and “in essence give their authority for that agenda to the P-20 Council to work on.” If and how this could work, and the mechanism for accomplishing it, are unclear. What is clear is that this group has judged, at least for the time being, that the best strategy will be one that avoids going through the Legislature. Also clear are difficult choices facing the state in preserving the council mechanism across a gubernatorial transition.

Observations and Conclusions

Based on a review of summary information collected on P-16/P-20 Councils around the country by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, and of the three in-depth case studies performed as part of this project, we offer some thoughts about the ability of the Arizona model to promote the educational alignment and reform agenda and suggest some of the key policy themes that emerge from this study.

Especially given its relative youth – having been in existence just three years – the Governor’s P-20 Council in Arizona provides some hopeful lessons for the design of a council. There seem to be several factors, in particular, that have promoted its effectiveness.

Leadership

Everyone agrees that the strong and constant support from the Governor, who chairs the Council, has been important to its gaining stature and influence. There are some downsides to the Council being so heavily identified with one elected official but the experience clearly demonstrates the value of strong leadership from someone in a position of authority. Since these councils are almost certain to be advisory rather than policy-making, it seems that they must provide advice to someone in a position of authority for the advice to be taken seriously by participants and stakeholders.

Staffing

The Council enjoys an extraordinary level of staff support compared to other councils. It is hard to untangle this from the support of the Governor because it is due to the Governor’s support that four professionals have been assigned out of the Governor’s Office to staff the Council. Nevertheless, it seems that the level of staffing helps explain why this Council can meet as frequently as it does, bring so much information into the Council arena, manage such a large agenda and a large number of participants, and most importantly, follow up on recommendations and assignments so that participating agencies and groups feel accountable for acting, not just listening. Co-Chair Glasper described the staff as being the ones to “connect the dots” because they will have been at the majority of individual committee meetings as well as community meetings,

foundation meetings, and educational board meetings. So they can help the Council see the big picture and how each sector's actions affect one another. This simply could not occur with only limited staffing.

Structure and Composition

On balance, the large size of the council, *in conjunction with a tight structure*, appears to be a strength of the Arizona approach. If there were not enough staff and commitment of key players to staff and operate the many constituent committees, the large membership would be dysfunctional. But as it is, with university presidents and business CEOs taking on the task of leading committees, and with the Steering Committee pulling things together, the large membership brings significant strength to the process by expanding the stakeholder engagement and commitment. Although legislative involvement is not as complete as many would like, the Arizona Council does benefit from involving both branches of state government. As an advisory group, the Council must find champions to move its agenda. In some cases these champions are the agencies – when they can implement recommendations without legislation. But when legislation is needed, there is at least the possibility that some legislators will already be on board due to their participation on the Council. Conversely, having legislative involvement decreases the possibility that a “loser” on the Council can get the Legislature to weigh in against the Council majority.

Business and Philanthropy

One cannot visit the state and study the Council without being supremely impressed at the amount of support coming from the business and philanthropic communities. As important as the financial support is, just as important is the level of intellectual and moral support that these groups have provided. After seeing this, it is hard to imagine that a state council could be effective without engaging these groups deeply.

Data and Policy Knowledge

Arizona may well set the gold standard for a state's use of available resources from national educational policy organizations. Its participation in programs with WICHE, the National Center, NCHEMS, Achieve, and its use of data and special studies provided by such organizations is an important factor in the Council's ability to set forth a clear agenda – albeit perhaps an overly ambitious one. Most specifically, the Council is guided by the philosophy that its educational agenda is best accomplished by clearly articulating the needs of the state and determining how the various educational institutions can do their respective parts to meet those needs. This can be seen in the cross-cutting (as opposed to institutional) designation of committees and in the commitment to data-driven decisions where the data help Council members understand *statewide* patterns of supply and demand for education.

Use of Policy Levers to Close the Divide

In *The Governance Divide*, the National Center described the deep divisions between the K-12 and higher education systems of states that account for much of the inadequate educational attainment we see in the United States today. In its follow-up report, *Claiming Common Ground*, the National Center promoted four policy levers that states

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should use to close the divide and achieve better results. These are alignment of curriculum and assessments, fiscal incentives, linked data systems, and accountability that reaches across sectors. A central purpose of this study is to determine whether the P-16/P-20 council mechanism is, or can be, an effective means of bridging the divide, applying these policy tools, and carrying out this agenda.

The Arizona case suggests that even among the more successful P-16 councils, it may be some time before we see effective use of all four policy levers. Clearly of the four levers, alignment of curriculum and assessments has been the chief focus. But even there, the biggest win was in raising graduation requirements, which is only the first step in the alignment process. The Council has taken the next step for mathematics in its work to align high school with college readiness standards. And it has plans to extend this work to the English curriculum. But the remaining big step of aligning assessments to the standards and standardizing them across institutions has not occurred. Like many states, Arizona is unsettled as to what to do with the various types of assessments – high school exit, end of course, college entrance – and how to use them in ways that support the standards that are being aligned across sectors.

There has been less attention to the use of fiscal incentives to encourage the efficient transition of students through the educational pipeline. One key development was the enactment of legislation (SB 1069 in 2007) that established the early graduation scholarship program, designed to provide an incentive (in the form of \$2,000 of financial aid) for students to graduate early from high school and move promptly into a postsecondary institution. On a grander scale, there is just the assumption, expressed by Council Co-Chair Glasper, that at some future point the Council will develop a funding model that better aligns financial incentives with the goals that have been set for the state.

While the Council has made good use of aggregate data on the condition of education in the state and the unmet needs in the workforce, the development of a linked data system has not been a focus of the Council.

Accountability for results across sectors has been addressed indirectly through the Council. There has been no movement toward building a formal structure of data-driven accountability for P-20 education. But representatives from across the educational pipeline appear to be held publicly accountable at least for their pursuit of the Council's agenda. As in other states, the distinctions between *institutional* accountability and *student* accountability have not been sorted out clearly. The political battles around the use of AIMS test results as a high school graduation requirement illustrate this issue. In opposing the high-stakes use of the test, parents and teachers fear that students would be held accountable for failing the exam when accountability appropriately belongs with the institutions, or more broadly with the state, for not providing sufficient resources, or appropriate curricula, to allow students to succeed.

The ability of the P-20 Council to adopt these four policy levers is limited because their authority is limited. Just as they can only advise the Governor about her agenda, they can only advise the Governor about *how* to accomplish it. It may simply be too soon to

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conclude if the Council will be able to move from the “what” stage to the “how” stage – especially until its status is settled.

**EXECUTIVE ORDER 2005-26
EXECUTIVE ORDER ESTABLISHING “GOVERNOR’S P-20 COUNCIL OF ARIZONA”
(AMENDING AND SUPERSEDING EXECUTIVE ORDER 2005-19)**

[M05-331]

WHEREAS, a healthy economy and individual earning potential depends on the quality and availability of education from preschool through adulthood; and

WHEREAS, Arizona’s population continues to grow at nearly double the national average, placing greater demand on the state’s public elementary, secondary and post-secondary institutions; and

WHEREAS, Arizona employers and educators alike recognize the importance of well-aligned, rigorous educational opportunities and to create a workforce that is qualified for high-value jobs that can sustain Arizona’s economy and fast-growing service needs into the future; and

WHEREAS, currently only one-third of all college age Arizonans enroll in two or four-year post-secondary institutions, only 50 percent of those enrolled complete a Bachelors degree, and these statistics place Arizona well below the national average; and

WHEREAS, improved access to and completion of higher education may require new, affordable and more flexible ways of delivering degree programs among and between community colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS, communities, employers and educators across Arizona have begun looking at new ways to address educational rigor and preparation for post-secondary training and college; and

WHEREAS, enhanced student achievement in elementary, secondary and post-secondary institutions, as well as in the workplace, requires a comprehensive, statewide approach to education that ensures opportunities for individual success from pre-school through post-secondary education;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Janet Napolitano, Governor of the State of Arizona, by virtue of the power vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of this State, do hereby create the Governor’s P-20 Council of Arizona (the “P-20 Council”) and order as follows:

- (1) The P-20 Council shall consist of an appropriate number of members to represent the education and workplace communities. The Governor or her designee shall Chair the P-20 Council and appoint all members who shall serve without compensation. Membership shall include but not be limited to the following:
 - Not more than four members of the Arizona State Legislature who will serve as ex-officio members;
 - The Superintendent of Public Instruction or his designee;
 - A Member of the Arizona Board of Regents who is a member of the Joint Conference Committee (JCC);
 - Arizona’s three State University Presidents;
 - Not more than four Community College Representatives, of which at least one shall be a member of the JCC, one shall be a rural community college representative, and one shall be an urban community college representative.
 - Two Superintendents of a Joint Technological Education District, of which at least one shall be a representative of a rural district and one shall be a representative of an urban district;
 - Three P-12 Education representatives, of which at least one shall represent a middle school or junior high school, one shall represent a high school, and one shall represent a charter school;
 - A Member of the Arizona State Board of Education;

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- A Representative of a four-year, private post-secondary institution;
 - A Representative of the Governor’s Council on Innovation and Technology;
 - A Representative of the Governor’s Council on Workforce Policy;
 - Not more than eight members of the public representing parent groups, business and industry;
 - A Representative of the Governor’s School Readiness Board;
 - A Representative actively engaged in high school dropout prevention programs or policy;
 - A Student representative of a high school or post secondary institution;
 - A Tribal Representative;
 - Not more than two locally elected officials.
- (2) The P-20 Council shall explore ways Arizona can achieve a more effective, efficient and equitable education pipeline through some or all of the following strategies:
- Aligning high school, college, and work expectations to meet industry-specific skill sets in high growth, high-skill occupations that will bring economic prosperity and diversity to Arizona.
 - Helping students at all levels meet higher standards and prepare for formal education and workforce training beyond high school.
 - Giving all students the excellent teachers and leaders that they need, particularly in the areas of math, science and literacy.
 - Strengthening high school and postsecondary accountability systems to better prepare students for college and increase enrollment and completion rates.
 - Improving middle school and elementary school standards to ensure high school preparedness for math and science.
 - Ensuring clear pathways for all students to obtain college degrees, regardless of point of entry.
 - Assessing the need to expand four-year degree programs at post-secondary institutions.
- (3) Members shall serve for staggered terms of one or two years. Members shall not serve more than two consecutive terms.
- (4) Members, unless otherwise indicated, may not send designees to represent them at the Council meetings. Members who miss more than three consecutive council meetings are subject to replacement at the sole discretion of the Governor.
- (5) The Chairperson may form an executive committee or other committees as necessary.
- (6) The Council shall meet to conduct its affairs at least four times each year at various locations across the state.
- (7) The status of the Council shall be reviewed no later than December 31, 2006 to determine appropriate action for its continuance, modification or termination.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of Arizona.

Janet Napolitano
G O V E R N O R

Done at the Capitol in Phoenix on this 5th day of October in the Year Two Thousand and Five and of the Independence of the United States of America the Two Hundred and Thirtieth.

ATTEST:

Janice K. Brewer
Secretary of State

P-20 Council Accomplishments

The Governor and her P-20 Council have been the impetus for planning and implementing significant policy changes in the state's education system and continue this work today. A number of accomplishments, to date, are listed below:

Education Alignment & Assessment

- Recommended that the Arizona State Board of Education (SBE) increase high school graduation requirements from two years of mathematics to four, and two years of science to three. The recommendation included increasing the level of mathematics rigor to a level better aligned with college and work readiness. In response, the SBE not only increased the required number of mathematics credits, but also the level of mathematics rigor. Previously, Arizona high school students were required to reach the level of Geometry; under the new requirements, all Arizona high school students will be required to reach the level of Algebra II. The P-20 Council worked with the SBE to bring this recommendation into policy.
- Provided specific recommendations for the increased rigor of the Mathematics Standard, which included developing language for 11th-12th grades and a bridge to college level work. This language was entirely new. The P-20 Council is working now to bring recommendations to align Arizona's English Language Arts Standard.
- Working to implement the Algebra II End of Course assessment by May 2008. The first operational administration of this exam will occur in many of the 15 partner states in May.
- Commissioned the report, "*From Education to Work: Is Arizona Prepared? The Alignment Project Report*," in 2006 which provided the baseline data for many of the P-20 Council's recommendations.
- Facilitated discussions and meetings with and between the Arizona Board of Regents and the State Board of Education to address the issues of alignment of K-12 curriculum, assessments, and graduation requirements that will prepare students for postsecondary education and the workforce.
- Engaged education policy boards in the work of the P-20 Council. Representatives from First Things First (Arizona's early childhood board), the State Board of Education (K-12) and the Arizona Board of Regents (public higher education) are part of the P-20 Council. Each group provides an update at each P-20 Council meeting.

Teachers

- Completed the report, “*Strengthening Teacher Quality and Support: Next Steps for Arizona*,” and integrated the recommendations into the work of the P-20 Council (2007).
- As a result of the abovementioned report’s recommendations, Governor Napolitano included teacher pay raises – \$100 million and \$46 million, respectively – in her 2006 and 2007 budgets.
- Governor Napolitano’s FY 2008 budget included \$4.75 million in grants for STEM teachers and related activities. The State Board of Education received \$2.5 M to promote improved pupil achievement in math or science by providing supplemental funding for innovative programs. The Arizona Board of Regents received \$2.25 M for scholarships to attract, graduate and retain more teachers in STEM disciplines.
- The Governor will build and fund a new, centrally located STEM Center that will improve and align STEM education in Arizona to ensure that all Arizona students are prepared to meet the demands of the 21st century. The STEM Center will provide the innovative programs, research, training, and communications that will assist the State in its current STEM education and teaching reform efforts.

Education & Workforce Pathways

- Recommended that the Arizona Department of Education and the State Board of Education (SBE) implement personalized graduation plans. SBE has adopted Education and Career Action Plans (ECAPS), which will be required for the entering freshmen of 2009.
- Partnered in hosting the state’s first Summit on 21st Century Skills in October 2007.
- Working to enhance the academic content within Career and Technical Education programs of study, in partnership with the Arizona Department of Education. It is expected that the CTE and mathematics standards will be cross-walked beginning in spring 2008.
- The legislature created an early college scholarship program that provides grants for students graduating early to attend a postsecondary institution (2007).

Literacy

- Providing scholarships to teachers ranging from \$1,500 to \$2,000 for teachers to attain the state Reading Endorsement.
- Created and distributed literacy toolkits for Arizona 4th, 5th and 6th grade teachers through the support of a National Governors Association Grant (2008).
- Hosted three regional Adolescent Literacy Forums through the support of a National Governors Association Grant (2007).

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- Worked with the Alliance for Excellence in Education in the preparation and presentation of the report, *“Improving Adolescent Literacy in Arizona,”* (2005) which is the baseline for the work being done by the Literacy Committee.

Data & Graduation

- Recommended that the Arizona Department of Education and the State Board of Education (SBE) implement personalized graduation plans. SBE has adopted Education and Career Action Plans (ECAPS), which will be required for the entering freshmen of 2009.
- In 2005 the Governor signed the NGA Compact on State High School Graduation Data committing to taking steps to implement a standard, four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. The Arizona Department of Education has implemented this definition.
- Working to ensure implementation of the 10 Essential Elements of a Longitudinal Data System. Elements 1, 2, 3, 8, 10 have been implemented; 4, 7, and 9 are in the process of being implemented or have the ability to implement; and the Committee is working aggressively to effect implementation of elements 5 and 6.
- Adopted goal to increase the graduation rate 12% by 2012.

Higher Education

- Commissioned *“A Feasibility and Demand Study for the State of Arizona,”* to determine gaps in access to degrees in all parts of the state. This work has resulted in a number of collaborative planning efforts including the work of the Arizona Board of Regents, the Arizona Legislature and the P-20 Council itself.
- Governor Napolitano’s final budget included an increase in the state contribution to the Arizona Financial Aid Trust (2007).
- Governor Napolitano’s final budget included increased funding for the private postsecondary grant program (2007).

Communications

- Will launch a public awareness campaign in fall of 2008. This effort includes major foundations, agencies and interests in an unprecedented coordinated campaign to raise awareness of the importance of increased educational alignment and attainment to make Arizona more globally competitive.
- The campaign is named “Expect More Arizona”.
- Expect More Arizona will have a significant paid and free media presence across the state and will include an interactive website that provides a call to action and integrates all educational information through one portal.

P-20 Council Related Legislation

- **SB 1512 (Signed by Governor into Law, 2006)**
Provides \$2.5 million additional funding for the Arizona Department of Education to continue development of Arizona's data system.
- **SB 1045 (Signed by Governor into Law, 2006)**
Requires integration of K-12 student identifier numbers at public universities and community colleges.
- **HB 2206 (Bill stalled but included in final budget, 2007)**
A \$2.25 million teacher student loan program was created to encourage more teachers to enter into the mathematics, science and special education teaching fields.
- **SB 1069 (Signed by Governor into Law, 2007)**
Established the early graduation scholarship program, which is designed to provide an incentive (financial aid of up to \$2,000) for students to graduate early from high school and promptly move into a postsecondary education experience.