

**ARIZONA COMMISSION FOR  
POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

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

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**FISCAL YEAR 2016**





**The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education (ACPE)**

Stretch Scholarship in 2011, as well as infrastructure funding to establish the Arizona College Access Network.

The following “Historical Review of Student Aid Programs” table shows that \$2.5M of the Commission budget in FY 2016 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 six years.

### Historical Review of ACPE Student Aid Programs

Fiscal Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total Aid Disbursed	\$ 3,711,781	\$ 3,511,920	\$ 4,178,488	\$ 3,521,142	\$ 2,484,619	\$ 2,483,125
% Decrease compared to FY 2008	-51%	-53%	-45%	-53%	-67%	-67%

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.

Moreover, student financial aid is critical if the Governor’s priorities of equal access to education, growing the economy, and opportunity for all are to be fully realized. Today’s Arizona postsecondary students have lost significant financial assistance due to budget reductions. Policymakers will find data on the impact of financial aid dollars administered by the Commission reported in the Goal 1 section of this report. The data is reflective of all sectors of higher education, i.e. community colleges (all 10 districts), public universities, Arizona’s 36 private degree granting colleges/universities, and vocational training schools. Likewise, the ACPE reports include student demographic data such as age, average family income, program of study, institution attended, and the recent grants can provide information regarding student reported behavioral barriers to continuing their education.

Again in 2016 there was a great deal of Commission activity regarding Goal 2 which calls for the Commission to provide support from knowledgeable professionals as well as accurate and timely information to help students and families take steps to enroll, finance, and succeed in postsecondary education. Three initiatives which stem from the success of the Commission’s long-standing College Goal Sunday Statewide Financial Literacy Initiative have been established within the Commission in support of building a college-going culture statewide. These include:

- x leadership of the Arizona College Application Campaign conducted in high schools in partnership with the public universities, community colleges, and private institutions and supported by a S

x a renewed focus on workshops at the high schools



**Goal 1: Maximize student financial assistance available to students and families**

Core responsibilities of the ACPE are related to postsecondary student financial assistance programs. The Commission has been administering student financial aid programs for Arizona since 1972. Named the entity representing Arizona in the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP), the ACPE has disbursed funds to students attending more than 100 public and private colleges and universities, community colleges, and vocational schools over the last four decades.

Over the past six years the Commission has been responsible for eleven financial assistance programs including:

1. Private Postsecondary Education Student Financial Assistance Program (PFAP), suspended in 2010, amounts varied up to \$800,000/year;
2. Postsecondary Education Grant (PEG), ceased in 2016, amounts varied up to \$5M/year;
  - a. Special Postsecondary Education Grant, \$540,000 designed to meet Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements, ceased in 2014;
3. Early Graduation Scholarship Grant, amounts varied up to \$4.8M, ceased in 2013;
4. College Access Challenge Grant financial assistance programs titled (a) Arizona College Access Aid Program and (b) the College Access Challenge Last Stretch Scholarship, \$1.1M/year, ceased in 2014;
5. Arizona Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (AzLEAP), currently \$2.3M/year;
  - a. Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP), federal match ceased in 2012, amounts of approximately \$500,000/year;
  - b. Special Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (SLEAP), ceased in 2012, amounts varied generally over \$600,000/year;
6. Arizona Math, Science, and Special Education Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program, currently \$176,000/year;
7. The Arizona Family College Savings (529) Program;
8. PFAP, PEG, and MSSE student forgivable loan repayment programs; and
9. AZGrants Student Financial Assistance Web Portal.



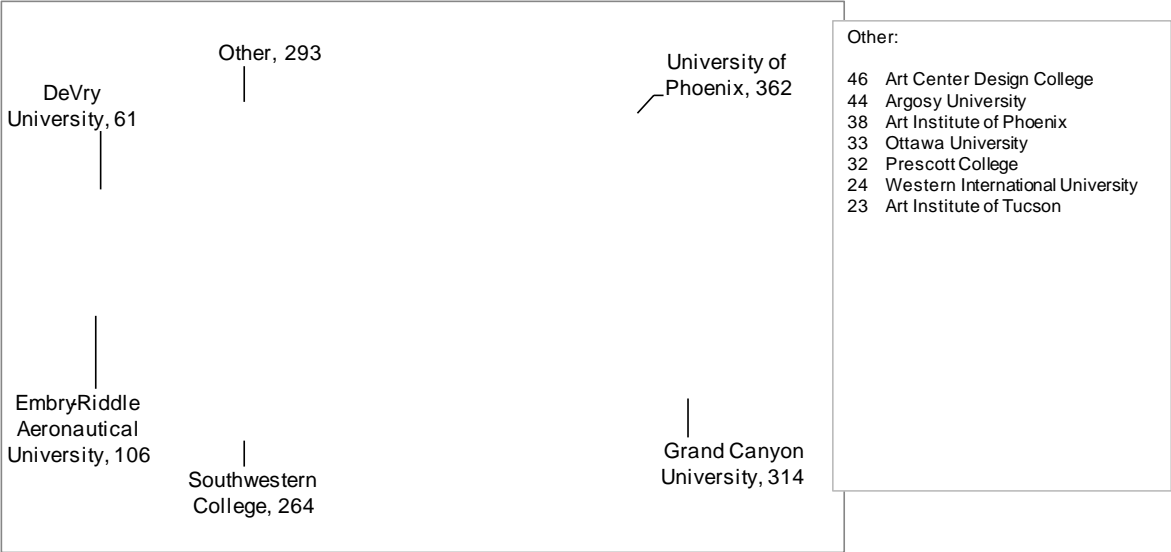
Dramatic changes have occurred in student financial aid programs (numbers 1-7 above) both at the state and federal levels over the past years as depicted in the “Historical Review” table on page 4 of the Introduction. Most notable are the suspension or termination of several successful financial aid programs administered by the Commission as well as the restructuring of several programs.

Funding for the Private Postsecondary Education Student Financial Assistance Program (PFAP) was placed on suspension in 2010 and the program remains suspended. The Early Graduation Scholarship Grant (EGSG) ceased in 2013. Additionally, the Special Postsecondary Education Grant (Special PEG) and the College Access Challenge Last Stretch Scholarship (CAC Last Stretch) ceased in 2014. The Postsecondary Education Grant (PEG) was terminated



year for up to four academic years (eight semesters/terms). These funds must be used

Recipients by institution

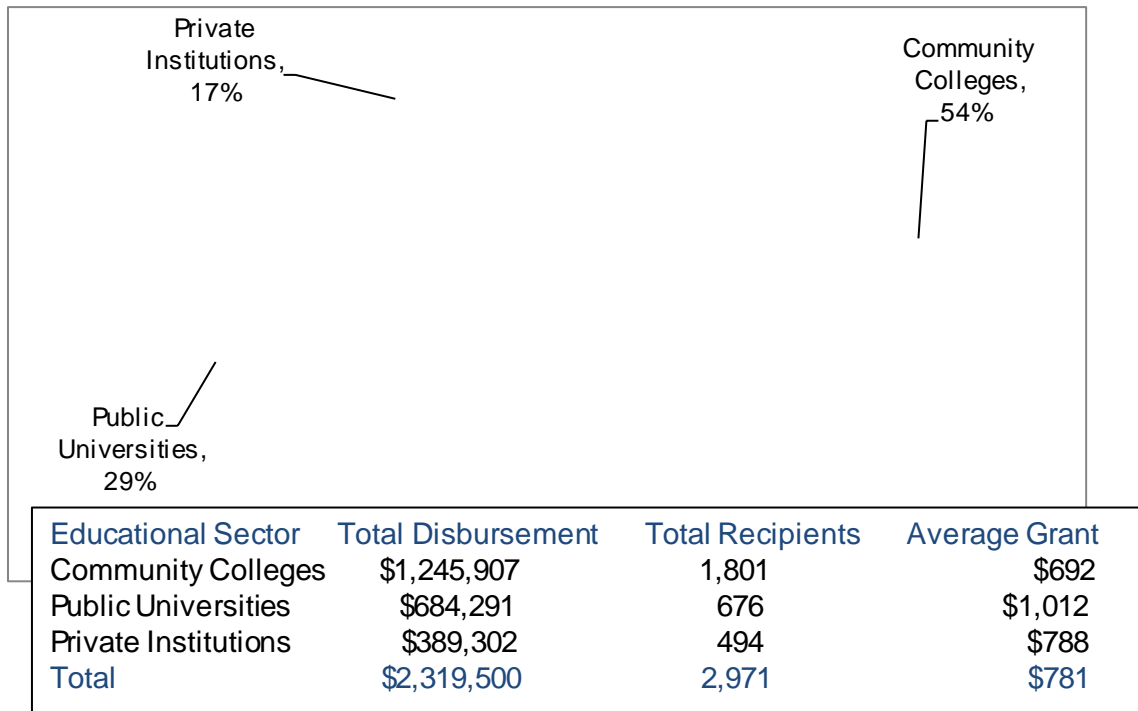


of institutional staff to review records to determine if the student graduated from that institution; locating the borrower using a professional tracking firm to provide contact information; communicating with borrowers regarding repayment status; and establishing a repayment plan. Monitoring of payments would be required for 10 to 15 years. Currently 1093 recipients are in repayment.

## **1.4 College Access Challenge Grant Last Stretch Scholarship**



## Distribution of AzLEAP Recipients by Institution in FY 2016



Annual AzLEAP administration performance measures were collected through surveys from institutional financial aid administrators and reviewed by ACPE staff. Based on the 2015-16 surveys, 92% of financial aid administrators indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with administration of this program by the Commission.

The Commissioners are pleased that the State recognizes the need to continue this important financial aid program. With the rising tuition costs and limited or reduced financial aid available, the Commission is pleased to be able to partner with the participating institutions to offer this much needed aid to low-income students.

### **1.6 Arizona Math, Science, and Special Education Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program (MSSE)**

The Math, Science, and Special Education Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program (MSSE) was created in 2007. This student-centered, need-based forgivable loan was designed to increase the number of math, science and special education teachers in the public K-12 system in Arizona by financially supporting and encouraging Arizona resident college students to pursue a teaching career in these identified high need fields and to remain in the State after graduation.

Forgivable loans are granted to eligible junior or senior students attending a qualifying public university or private college/university in the State to help defray the cost of







275 students have participated in the MSSE Program since inception in 2007. Below is a listing of the current status of the recipients.

- x 26 are still enrolled in a postsecondary institution
- x 14 are in their twelve month grace period (allowed by statute)
- x 22 are currently teaching in a public K-12 school in Arizona
- x

School	City	Subject Taught
Primavera Online High School	Chandler	Math Resource
TG Barr	Phoenix	Special Education
Centennial Elementary	Tucson	Math/Science
Montebello	Phoenix	Science
Alta Loma Elementary	Peoria	Special Education
Sunnyslope High School	Phoenix	Biology
Cholla High Magnet School	Tucson	Science

The Commissioners and staff look forward to helping increase the number of teachers in Arizona. The increase in funding for this program will aid the State in meeting Achieve60AZ goals.

### **1.7 Student Forgivable Loan Repayment Programs**

Currently the Commission administers four repayment programs: (1) the Private Postsecondary Education Student Financial Assistance Program (PFAP); (2) the Postsecondary Education Grant (PEG); (3) the Paul Douglas Teacher Scholarship (PDTs); and (4) the Arizona Math, Science and Special Education Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program (MSSE).

The Office of the Attorney General is used by ACPE for collections when normal investigative means to locate the former student are unsuccessful or when grantees have been contacted multiple times and refuse to enter the repayment program. The Attorney General's office performs this service for a variable fee on every dollar collected.

A brief summary of the status of each of the repayment programs administered by the ACPE follows.

The Private Postsecondary Education Student Financial Assistance Program (PFAP), a forgivable loan program, is a need-based program designed to financially support Arizona community college graduates to continue their education at a private postsecondary baccalaureate degree granting institution in Arizona. The program requires that the student achieve a bachelor's degree within three years or they must repay the loan. There have been 1,651 students awarded PFAP forgivable loans since its inception in 1996, and 10 borrowers are currently being tracked in the repayment program 69 have been referred to the Attorney General.

The Postsecondary Education Grant (PEG), a forgivable loan program created in the 2006 legislative session, is a non-need-based program designed to financially support and encourage students to attend a private postsecondary baccalaureate degree granting institution in Arizona. The program requires that the student achieve a bachelor's degree within five years from the initial disbursement date or they must repay the loan. Since the program's FY 2007 inception, 4,478 students received the forgivable loan. Of those recipients, 2,897 have already graduated with a baccalaureate degree within the required five year time frame. Of the remaining 1,581 promissory note holders, 1,563 are reported as not enrolled or attending the last institution on file at the time of their last grant award. There are currently 18 promissory note holders still enrolled in institutions. Promissory note holders who fail to meet the requirements of the forgivable loan must enter into the repayment program.

In addition to these state loans, the ACPE is responsible for the collection of one small federal loan repayment program: Paul Douglas Teacher Scholarship (PDTs). All the 254 former Paul Douglas Teacher Scholarship (PDTs) forgivable loan recipients have



3. ensures security compliance with FERPA and Title IV regulations related to student personal information by allowing for secure transmission and storage of data;
4. provides interface and communication with financial aid staff and academic personnel in more than 100 postsecondary institutions who are required to certify student eligibility factors such as verification of attendance, certification of 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' applications;
7. has the capability to provide in "real time" data to Arizona's educational leaders and policy decision makers regarding student demographics, performance, success, and behavioral barriers to continuing their education.

The ACPE is using this secure portal for the new Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Completion Initiative, FAFSA Finish Line reports. The Commission has requested \$9,700 in software update costs, \$42,560 for secure web portal annual maintenance and hosting expenses, \$1,500 for one computer and \$60,900 for one full time employee. The portal can provide automation of the following: 1) a search and match for the specific senior's application among more than 800,000 Arizona residents' Institutional Student Information Records (ISIR) in the Commission database; 2) extraction of the allowable ISIR information; 3) compilation of specific data elements into reports and unique records; 4) preparation of summary reports for authorized entities; and 5) 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 progress of each student's application and if something is preventing it from moving forward to completion. High schools which have signed a data sharing agreement with the ACPE have identified authorized high school staff members with valid user credentials to access these sensitive data reports via the Commission's secure web portal.

The public information pages of the web portal provide importa0(e d)10(a)10(t)2(TTd ( )Tj .28 0 Td

## **1.9 Arizona Family College Savings Program (AFCSP)**

The AFCSP continues to focus on increasing public awareness on the importance of Arizona families saving for college, through public events, enhanced social media and an enriched web presence. The 529 college savings plans are the single most accessible option for Arizona families to save for college and reduce reliance on student



institutions offer a diverse array of investment options for families saving for college. A brief description of the providers and their investment offerings follows.

<b>AFCSP Investment Offerings <sup>1</sup></b>	
<b>College Savings Bank (direct-sold, FDIC Insured)</b>	
x CollegeSure CD:	variable rate CD indexed to college costs
x InvestorSure CD:	variable rate CD indexed to the Standard & Poor's 500 Composite Index
x Fixed Rate CD:	fixed rate CD with principle and interest guaranteed
x Savings Account:	holds matured certificate of deposit (CD) funds greater than \$250 when the expected withdrawal to pay qualified higher education expenses is sooner than one year after the maturity date of the CD
x Honors Savings Account:	high yield, tax-advantaged savings account. No fees, no penalties, no fixed term
x Accumulator Account:	holds contributions until sufficient funds are accrued to purchase a CD
<b>Fidelity Investments (direct-sold)</b>	
x Three (3) age-based strategies:	actively managed, indexed, and multi-firm portfolios
x Six (6) static mutual fund portfolios	
x Six (6) individual fund portfolios	
x Bank Deposit Portfolio,	FDIC Insured interest-bearing account
<b>Ivy Funds InvestED: Waddell &amp; Reed (advisor-sold)</b>	
x Three (3) Age-Based Portfolios	customized based on college time horizon
x Three (3) Static Portfolio options	in which investor selects risk level: conservative, moderate or aggressive
x Sixteen (16) Individual Fund Portfolios	invest in a single mutual fund; including domestic and international equity funds, specialty funds and fixed income funds
<sup>1</sup> Details of individual offerings can be found at <a href="http://www.az529.gov">www.az529.gov</a>	

Critical to the success of the Arizona Family College Savings (529) Program (ASFCP) is the expertise and advice from the AFSCP Oversight Committee. The AFCSP Oversight

Committee, as defined by state statute, comprises 10 members with financial, tax and legal expertise. The Oversight Committee's main responsibility is to make recommendations to the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education, the AFCSP Trustee. The Oversight Committee makes recommendations of providers along with reviewing and advising the staff and Trustee regarding investment and operational

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 Accounts and Assets Under Management





higher education for personal/professional development. Surprisingly, twenty-six percent of Arizona adults, according to 2010 census data, have earned some college credit yet do not hold a degree. It is the potential within these statistics that propels the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education to engage in leading, strengthening, and supporting college access and success initiatives for both high school students and adults.

Realistic planning with appropriate and accurate information will ensure a potential student is academically ready, the family is financially prepared, and that student and family expectations are in line with the realities of postsecondary education. Two specific strategies are employed by the ACPE to engender realistic planning.

First, the Commission provides current and relevant print and web-based information for college planning and decision-making to students and their families. Two methods are employed to provide this information and assistance. First, 1,368 free publications were disseminated statewide to provide current and appropriate college-going information. The Commission also hosts multiple websites which attracted 132,135 unique visits in FY 2016. Online information is especially attractive to the adult learner. Each website is designed to provide specific and timely college-going information to the public including financial aid literacy, FAFSA completion, and a web-based compilation of postsecondary education opportunities statewide.

Second, the Commission supports knowledgeable professionals who assist,

1. every senior completes at least one postsecondary education application,
2. every senior files, on time, a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and
3. every senior attends a high school which provides a college-going community.

This approach works because high schools across the state are stepping up to advise and guide seniors and their families through the challenging milieu of decisions and timelines related to college and financial aid applications. High schools are building a college-going community where staff lead 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.

### **2.1.A. 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 state-wide effort that expands students' 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 to meet the needs of their respective states' goals to increase 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 on-going Advisory Committee for the initiative comprising stakeholders across the state including representation from the Governor's Office, Arizona Board of Regents, Arizona Department of Education, public and private universities, community colleges, businesses, and college access professionals.





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 and postsecondary institutions who help prospective, current or returning students in their community to complete the FAFSA on time, and
4. maintain online resources for students, families, and the public to access accurate and timely information regarding financial aid and financial aid processes.

All of these efforts are undertaken using no general funds. As the host of the initiative, the Commission secures grants and sponsorships to fund the activities and provides the leadership to implement the event. Long standing partnerships developed by the Commission with USA Funds, Arizona Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (AASFAA), the Arizona School Counselors Association, and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) 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 literacy providing accurate and timely information related to financial aid on both the Col



Commission is allowed to disclose limited information about individual students' FAFSA application status to high school personnel allowing high school personnel to provide help for the student to complete their FAFSA.

The Commission is the State repository for all FAFSA's filed by Arizona residents. Through a data sharing agreement between the Commission and the school or district, a report describing the status of a senior's FAFSA application can be submitted multiple times to adults prepared to assist the student to complete the application.

Some states are increasing access to Pell grants for their students through the FAFSA Completion Initiative. The same is possible for Arizona. This would be a major contribution to the State's economy, boost Achieve60AZ, and provide more educated citizens to bolster the available workforce.

By the end of FY 2016 26 high schools submitted the required data sharing agreement. Seventeen high schools participated, with results that identified 33 percent of their seniors in a completed status out of 46 percent who had submitted the FAFSA. The Commission and high schools partnering in the FAFSA Completion Initiative learned two important lessons from this early experience. 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 38 high schools and 15 community sites for this next round of FAFSA applications.

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

### **2.2.A. 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-stop source for information on Arizona postsecondary institutions' accreditations, course offerings, length of study, costs to attend, financial aid programs available, and the institution's website. This publication is widely used by high school counselors, Workforce Connections personnel, college access programs, and the information seeking public. The ACPE has compiled and disseminated this publication since 1975.

Emphasis is 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 receive the Arizona College and Career Guide free of charge to use with their students and clients. In FY 2016, over 510 copies of the ACCG were distributed. Non-Title I high schools may order the publication as long as the supply lasts.

Furthermore, the ACPE uses the Arizona College and Career Guide as a promotional tool to inform families of College and Career Goal Arizona programs and the Arizona Family College Savings Program (Arizona 529 Plan), as well as the various Arizona grants administered by the ACPE.

In addition to the print version, the ACCG is available online in an easily navigated format. The online version had a total of 2,306 unique visits in FY16. Publication and distribution costs of the ACCG are financed through paid advertising in the publication and per individual book fees from sales. Due to the rising costs of printing, the ACCG is under consideration to be online only publication.

### **2.2.B. AZhighered.gov: Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education**

With the implementation of Drupal as the State's new content management platform the

5. performs back office tasks such as awarding, disbursing of funds and monitoring students in repayment;
6. provides a secure portal to receive and disseminate reports;
7. provides real time data regarding student demographics, performance, success, and behavioral barriers to degree completion.

A recent and important function added to the [www.AZGrants.az.gov](http://www.AZGrants.az.gov) website has been the use of the secure portal to compile and disseminate FAFSA Finish Line reports to high schools. More information can be found in Section 1.8 and 2.1.B4 regarding the FAFSA Finish Line which has become critical to the FAFSA Completion Initiative.

#### **2.2.D. Pay4CollegeArizona**

As part of the Drupal conversion through ASET, Pay4CollegeArizona is now located under the umbrella site, <https://collegegoal.az.gov>. Pay4CollegeArizona, provides accurate and timely resources on how to financially prepare for college using current and relevant information on topics such as scholarships, using credit wisely, how to prevent identity theft, and much more. During FY 2016 this site received 6,629 unique visits.

#### **2.2.E. College Goal FAFSA**

As part of the Drupal conversion through ASET, College Goal FAFSA is now located under the umbrella site <https://collegegoal.az.gov>. College Goal FAFSA, provides accurate and timely information related to completing the FAFSA, as well as financial literacy information. Students and their families, who could not attend an in-person workshop, can find line-by-line instructions on how to complete the FAFSA in addition to other financial literacy handouts, including steps to take after completing the FAFSA. This portal also provides handouts and marketing materials for CG FAFSA site coordinators hosting in-person workshops. During FY 2016 this site received 13,741 unique visits.

#### **2.2.F. AZ529.gov: Help for Families Saving for College**

The Arizona Family College Savings Program website, [www.az529.gov](http://www.az529.gov), provides parents, grandparents and families with information regarding IRS approved college savings plans, which includes information specific to the Arizona Family College Savings Program. This website provides help for middle class families as they prepare to bear the costs of college for themselves and/or their children. Here, parents and other family members can learn about tax-advantaged ways to save for a college education.

Especially popular on this website, and also available in print, is the College Savings Planner which provides information on the college costs for different types of colleges 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, and compares various tax-advantaged college savings options. In 2016 the Commission continued to build public awareness with families, promoting 529 Day during May and celebrating College Savings Month during October by hosting information sharing events which reached an estimated 365,000 Arizona residents. Interest in the website also continued to grow as it received 46,856 unique visits between July 2015 and June 2016. The increased public awareness efforts continued through the growth of the Arizona 529 Program's social media efforts which resulted in 6,610 Facebook likes as of June 2016.

### **2.2.G. AMEPAC.org: Research and Policy Analysis Reports**

The Arizona Minority Education Policy Analysis Center website, <https://highered.az.gov/amepac>, currently showcases the policy analysis studies and current research reports commissioned by AMEPAC and the Commission. These studies and reports can be downloaded from this site. AMEPAC research is discussed under Goal 3. During FY 2016 this site received 4,473 unique visits.

### **2.2.H. Leveraging Media: Phoenix Magazine Higher Education Section**

The Commission staff seeks ways to promote college going and provide critical information to the public about the opportunities presented through Arizona's higher education system. Each year for the past 12 years, ACPE has provided editorial direction for the Phoenix Magazine special higher education section published in the magazine's August edition. 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 subscribers and news stand sales total \$78,489.

### **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 the segments of Arizona's higher education system toward a baccalaureate degree; 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 constructive improvement of Arizona minority students' early awareness, access and achievement throughout all sectors of 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 the initiation of forums or task forces to consider pressing issues related to the mission. Research can be viewed at [www.highered.az.gov/amepac](http://www.highered.az.gov/amepac)

In 2016, AMEPAC continued work toward its strategic plan of conducting policy research and analysis, and promotion of public discourse through its research. AMEPAC published and distributed the 6<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Student Minority Progress Report, which was completed in late 2015 by Dr. Jeffrey Milem from the Center for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Arizona.

The report provides not only a snapshot of Arizona's educational achievement with the most recent data available in the form of easily identifiable and understandable charts and tables but also includes trend analysis, county data, graduate program data and policy recommendations. Earlier iteration -728 08(w 0 54( -6(ey)20-s7 (o)1oe- T(S)1(t)2(189.2738( H

The concept of “cracking the code” and the six essential skills for innovation outlined a newly published book titled The Creator’s Code served as the conference framework and the application of that theory to postsecondary education was the focus. Amy Wilkinson, author of the book and researcher, was the keynote speaker for the first day. She joined a panel of leaders in higher education for a discussion of the skills outlined in her research as they apply to Arizona.

Other topics presented on the first day included “Vision 2015: Arizona Comes of Age” by Dr. Lattie Coor; “A Five Point Plan: Making an Impact in the Community” presented by President Brian Mueller, Grand Canyon University; “Policy and Recommendations to Erase the Achievement Gap: New Data and Conversation” presented by Dr. Jeffrey Milem, University of Arizona and AMEPAC members; “Advancing the Economy through Attainment” by Rich Nickel and Darcy Renfro; “A New Policy Framework for Arizona Student Financial Aid” presented by Dr. James Rund, Dr. April Osborn, and Cassidy Possehl; and “Promoting Pathways to Economic Success” offered by Dr. Amanda Burke from the CFA, Roxanne Boxer from the Arizona Commerce Authority and Dr. Randy Kimmens, MCCD.

On the second day Commissioner Ed Vasko moderated a panel including Jacqueline Smith from ASU, Dr. Gene Giovannini from Maricopa Corporate College, Dr. Amanda Burke, and Chris Camacho CEO of GPEC on the topic of “Rewiring Arizona’s Labor Market”. Midmorning, Representative Bob Worsley, Representative Bob Thorpe, and Dawn Wallace, the Governor’s Education Policy Advisor, presented Looking to 2016: “The Legislative and Policy Agenda for Postsecondary Education.” The conference concluded with Ann Meyers Drysdale, Vice President of the Phoenix Suns and the Mercury presenting “Lessons from Life and Building a Winning Team”.

Other conference highlights included the presentation of the 12<sup>th</sup> Pathways to Postsecondary Education Awards to outstanding college access programs representing K-12, postsecondary education, business, community, and public/private partnership. The total conference evaluation was rated as 4.4 out of 5.0 by those attending. Outcomes of the conference include the Arizona Board of Regents calling together a working group to address “Advancing Arizona’s Economy through Educational Attainment.” The extended outcome of this group was the establishment of the Achieve60AZ Alliance.

The next Developing Arizona’s Human Capital conference will be held in November, 2017.

### **3.3 Collaboration and Partnerships which Address Common Opportunities and Problems Across Postsecondary Education**

Collaboration and partnerships such as the aforementioned Achieve60AZ Alliance are a critical component of the work of the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education.



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 meeting of 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

## Conclusion

This report reflects the FY 2016 outcomes of the strategic plan initiated by ACPE Commissioners. It also outlines the limitations posed due to the budget reductions for achieving the goals and statutory responsibilities.

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 Maintenance of Effort requirement when the Governor's Office request for a waiver was 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 \$4.3 million. The figures below represent the student aid disbursed by the ACPE in FY 2011 through FY 2016.

### Historical Review of ACPE Student Aid Programs

Fiscal Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total Aid Disbursed	\$ 3,711,781	\$ 3,511,920	\$ 4,178,488	\$ 3,521,142	\$ 2,484,619	\$ 2,483,125
% Decrease compared to FY 2008	-51%	-53%	-45%	-53%	-67%	-67%

The loss of grant dollars illustrated in the Historical Review affects the lives of nearly 20,000 students annually who in previous years would have applied to the ACPE for grants/scholarships and received funding. Evidence of the need for these funds is demonstrated by ACPE closing out FY 2010 with a waiting list of an additional 8,799 students who applied for funds and received none. Meanwhile, the Postsecondary Education Grant (PEG) language expired in July 2016, and the Private Postsecondary Financial Assistance Program (PFAP) remains on suspension.

