

SUMMARY OF YOUTH TOWN HALL ON HIGHER EDUCATION



IMPACT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

- There is a direct impact by increasing the number of educated individuals and thereby improving the economic and social health of our communities.
- Crime and poverty rates are reduced.
- Students and the parents who support them become role models for others and provide inspiration to future generations to pursue higher goals.
- The quality of decisions made in the community will be improved if more people have achieved a higher educational level.
- Having an educated workforce available will attract businesses to the community.
- On a personal level, a college education provides greater job opportunities, higher income, lifelong skills, increased civic engagement, and greater appreciation for diverse perspectives.

CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING HIGHER EDUCATION

- Information about careers, college and financial aid is lacking for middle and high school students.
- The main obstacle to accessing higher education is cost.
- Grants and scholarships to cover application and testing fees are not widely available, and there is misinformation about who is eligible for financial aid.
- Proper documentation is an issue for immigrants and their children.
- Many students must work at least part-time to afford higher education or support their families and this creates scheduling and studying challenges.
- Encourage college students to visit high schools to promote higher education, and to advise and inform high school students about opportunities to learn more.

ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

- Technology plays a great role as an enabler and is not a substitute for a classroom experience.
- Recent advances in technology, such as the “blackboard” and video in classes have helped bring concepts to life and engage today’s students.
- Online classes offer flexibility, self-paced learning, and access for those who are not near a college campus or have transportation issues.
- Online learning can have a negative impact on writing and social interaction skills, which are important in school and throughout life.
- Technology is not always reliable and not everyone has technology available to them, so other resources need to be available as well.
- Working with technology during their educational careers helps students develop skills that they will use in other areas of life.

ROLE OF SCHOOLS, GOVERNMENT, FAMILIES AND BUSINESSES

- The motivation and support to pursue a higher education begins with the family.
- Schools, government, families and businesses can work together to push the next generation to obtain a higher education.
- Mentoring programs between adults and college students and between college students and high school students will improve attendance and graduation rates.
- Businesses can provide more paid internships to give students hands-on experience in their career field and orient them to the working world.
- Schools can do a better job of providing information, resources, and workshops for students and their families.
- Business and government should let students know about employment opportunities available and provide tuition incentives.

MESSAGES FOR ELECTED LEADERS

- The State of Arizona should restore or increase funding for higher education to increase the number of individuals with college degrees.
- Take the politics out of education and focus on the students and helping them achieve their goals.
- Teachers should be paid according to their actual worth and their impact on our communities.
- Provide more educational opportunities and options for those outside metro Phoenix and Tucson.
- Find ways to reduce the cost of tuition and increase financial aid opportunities.
- Show that education is important by supporting it with actions, not just words.

Bailey Alka, Gila Ridge H.S. “I gained a new appreciation for the community and learned that no matter what your age, your opinions and decisions can affect our community.”