

# CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Paradise Valley Community College Virtual Future Leaders Town Hall  
February 18, 2021 – Online via Zoom

## COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The community of Paradise Valley has several strong elements that help it be a healthy and vibrant community. Educational opportunities that exist with Paradise Valley Community College help our students. Classroom conversations, especially during the pandemic, have helped make issues relatable to students and have helped them connect to the world with issues, such as the effect of food deserts on the health of many residents. The college also works with many partners, including the K-12 schools and area universities, creating an interdependent system that helps the overall community.

Community design is an important element in our community. In particular, the light rail has provided more accessibility to residents with the areas they can travel to.

Although the pandemic has affected local businesses, there is economic opportunity that these businesses create and support through many events that help bring the community together.

Parks and recreation, which are supported by taxpayers, have been open when many other entities closed and gave residents the ability to be outside and enjoy the outdoors. Social workers in the area can help residents with their resilience during these difficult times. While there are a number of resources in Paradise Valley, it is important that residents know what resources exist in our community so that residents can access and utilize these important resources.



## CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The pandemic has brought to light a vivid illustration of general inequities in the nation as well as our community, seeing people who live in smaller complexes and the impact of COVID-19 in higher population density areas. This has reflected a highly visible, full-blown situation that the public cannot deny. Even making an appointment for the COVID-19 vaccine has become a situation demonstrating inequities for the general public due to access through transportation, such as residents who don't own a car, which is necessary for many vaccine centers, or being granted time off work.

COVID-19 has highlighted our own self-reflection; how we view ourselves as members in our own community, whether through race or socioeconomic status. Communities have become torn by race and inequities through lack of community resources or who gets helped first and who is helped last with essential services, such as medical resources or vaccines. It is essential that we all have important conversations on how racism affects us all, especially certain ethnic or professional groups. Education can help people address situations they see and stressors that affect our communities.

Learning itself has been affected by the pandemic. There are questions if schools should be physically in session, or if virtual learning meets the needs of students and teachers. Not all students can access virtual learning due to the lack of Wi-Fi, especially in rural areas.

Working with the public system needs to be proactive instead of reactive. The pandemic has exhausted our overall systems and has brought to light that many issues are dealt with reactively instead of proactively. As community leaders, we need to recognize these inequities and plan to create successful processes and procedures that are fair to all residents.

## **WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS**

Elected officials need to listen empathetically and deeply to different perspectives of their constituents in their role as public servants.

There is concern that there are populations that are not at the table. Legislators need to realize how legislation or lack of legislation affects the public they serve.

Create communities that are strongly inclusive. It is crucial to include everyone. An example during current times would have been to make the COVID-19 vaccine registration accessible through different phone lines, in different languages, including for the deaf and hard of hearing. Senior citizens may need to have someone knock on their doors, instead of having to leave their residence to receive vaccines.

In particular during the pandemic, access to the internet has been imperative for students to learn. A number of students and residents do not have easy access to the internet, which has significantly affected their ability to access learning during pandemic or even to access sites for testing or vaccines.

Affordable housing is a crucial element for our area. In a number of areas, affordable housing units are constructed in areas that are not easily accessible to jobs, transportation hubs, medical services, or stores.

Children's viewpoints are vital to be considered as the public that legislators serve. Public officials need to spend a day with children from different communities and cultures. This interaction can help them get to know people who are different from them. A child's point of view is basic and can teach us all something about one another that we didn't know before.

Resources for families have become even more important with the stressors that have affected them during the pandemic. Quality after-school programs at affordable prices are essential to provide a safe place for children while their parents are working.

Support for teachers is essential to provide for quality education for our youth. Several teachers are leaving their profession, stating that they do not feel safe.

Overall, it is important that everyone exercise their right to vote at all levels and elections as well as share their viewpoint with their legislators. We need to remind our legislators that they do not serve a party, they serve all of their constituents.

## **TAKING ACTION**

Our legislators represent our state. We all need to contact our legislators and set up a meeting or call their office. We need to take some of the burden upon ourselves to reach out to our legislators and share our opinions. We need to be open to the needs of our neighbors, not just our own. Above all, we all need to vote. Every election at every level counts.

High quality education is necessary for all, no matter the zip code.

Be informed of what is going on and research the issues that matter to you and issues that affect our community.

Revitalize Parks and Recreation. An unvarnished view of parks accessible to all of our children needs to be shared.

Healthy food options and their accessibility are essential to everyone. Low-income families are presented with resources that do not necessarily include healthy food options. There needs to be a focus on prevention of unhealthy issues instead of the current focus on acute care only.

Even distribution of public goods is crucial to the entire population.

Dialogue on racism and important issues, such as mental health, the environment, and health is essential. In particular, community members need access to counselors and mental health services

without being consigned to perpetual waitlists. Many of us need help to move forward. All members of society should not feel negatively judged by others for being who they are or the assistance they need.

Seeing the skies of Phoenix had an eye-opening impact during the pandemic as a result of less traffic. Residents have learned a greater appreciation for a cleaner environment since they have seen what a difference less pollution has made to their everyday lives.

Overall, it's all about education to create a safe, healthy and vibrant community. We, as community, need to educate ourselves on how we can best help and support our community. We should not underestimate ourselves. We can learn the best way to help others in the most meaningful way.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Paradise Valley Community College Virtual Future Leaders Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

***I WILL...***

- Convene conversations at the college bringing together state and local elected officials who have opposite perspectives to help combat the growing political and social polarization and show students that we can engage in difficult conversations with civility and understanding. Thus leading to problem solving for the public good.
- Find ways to ensure civic engagement is embedded into the student experience.
- Vote in local to federal elections.
- Contact my elected officials on issues that matter to me that I believe affect my community.
- Patient advocacy for those with low health literacy.
- Steadfast determination for continued self-education and education of others on social topics and their role in equity, equality, and inclusion.
- Encourage others to vote as well as this is the easiest way for our voice to be heard.
- Continue to engage with our elected officials to make our communities the best places to live, work and play.
- Finish Student Public Policy Form this semester then work on getting my social worker certificate next semester.
- Advocate for children well-being, education growth, and development, but also to speak up to their elected leaders as well about inspirations and change in their community and also empower them to be more aware of the real world around them and not feel underestimated or oblivious to the unexpected events or experiences we may have.