

# *Equity for All Arizonans*

## **PHOENIX COLLEGE COMMUNITY TOWN HALL**

**September 20, 2023 – Phoenix, AZ**

### **DEFINING EQUITY AND ITS IMPACT**

Equity is a fair share of everything that is needed—in education, affordable housing, public buildings. Equity is giving people what they need so that they can be successful in achieving their goal. Equity recognizes that everybody starts at different places. It is tailored to specific needs. If people need clothes and everyone is given the same size that would be equal, but if they are given the size that fits, that would be equity. Equity gives people a fair chance to be successful even if they haven't started at the same point. Equity allows people who start climbing the ladder of life at a lower rung to get boosted up a little. Equity entails generational concepts, parental impact, and the concept of privilege.

We all play a role in deciding how equity will impact society. People who have things may not realize that they have more than their fair share until after they have lived life and understand how things work. Then they must consider how to implement adjustments to make things more equitable.

### **OPTIMIZING EVERYONE'S POTENTIAL THROUGH EQUITABLE APPROACHES**

Equity is essential for a strong society and social cohesion. Equity requires that all people's needs be taken into consideration. To optimize the potential of people and communities we must ask them what they need. Education, housing, health care, and safety are important for everyone, not just the privileged few. People with enormous potential to contribute to society may be held back by a lack of resources, including lack of access to information about resources.

Equity is a verb; it requires action. If we invest in our people and communities now, then we won't have to invest in remedial measures later. To get support for such investment It is important to get people in our communities to recognize the value of equity to the community, as distinguished from the individual. We can do this by focusing on the opportunity cost of failing to invest in making conditions more equitable. If by failing to promote equity we create conditions where people do not produce as much, then the community loses out on the benefits that would otherwise be produced.

### **IMPROVING COMMUNITIES THROUGH EQUITY**

To achieve equity, we need to start with safe and secure communities, because without safety people aren't comfortable raising their voices and advocating for what they need. Communities that are steeped in violence, drug addiction, and similar conditions are disenfranchised, but those are the communities with the greatest need and those communities need a voice. We also need to make sure that children and people with disabilities have a voice.

There are great opportunities to use equity to improve our communities in educational institutions such as elementary, middle, high schools and colleges, and low-income communities. We should look at competitive settings. Knowledge is power. As women have taken lead roles, our culture has changed. People can be informed through representation. Community safety is important. Start with youth. Equity takes time. We are here to plant seeds. Housing is important. Language is important. We should be aware of the language we use and walk carefully as we seek to achieve equity.

## **NEXT STEPS AND ACTIONS**

It starts with us. All of us. We should bring awareness to others, those we elect to public office, from school boards on up. We should hold people accountable when they are not being equitable. We may have similarities and differences, but we should respect one another.

It is important to know what level of government has responsibility for an issue of equity, and to bring our concerns to that level of government. Take, for example, the issue of affordable housing. We should contact our elected officials, write letters, and make phone calls. If we have an issue with the police, we should go to our city council. If we have an issue with special education for a child with special needs, we should go to the school district or school board.

We can also use social media to raise public awareness of the issue. We can collaborate with one another, bringing groups together to join their voices, share different perspectives, and assure that it is not just a single cultural perspective that is expressed or considered. Finally, we can vote for public officials who represent our views and support equity.

## **INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENTS TO ACTION**

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 Phoenix College Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

### ***I WILL...***

- Research ways to help my community with equity.
- Walk away being informed how people have different chances depending on their location.
- Bring awareness about what we learned.
- Spread the word on equity.
- Spread awareness on what it means to be equitable.
- Share with my family and friends on the importance of equity in my community.
- Commit to educating my community about equity and how it affects us.
- Help educate others on the importance of equity on an individual level.
- Learn to be more intentional with brave language.
- Include the importance of equity in my advocacy trainings I hold in my community.
- Keep advocating for safety in our communities, especially in communities where resources are limited.
- Meet with my legislator to speak about issues that are affecting college students.