

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Item Name: Update on Public Affairs and Solutions Through Higher Education

Action Item Discussion Item Information Item

<p>Issue: The Board will receive an update on public affairs activities and <i>Solutions Through Higher Education</i>.</p>

Background

- The goal of the Board's public affairs efforts is to secure opportunities to inform the community about university system accomplishments, initiatives, and challenges through targeted media, business, and community outreach.
- Launched in November 2007, *Solutions Through Higher Education* is a comprehensive, statewide public awareness campaign to inform Arizonans about the educational crisis brewing nationwide and in Arizona and to make residents aware of the critical role that higher education plays in ensuring economic prosperity for current and future Arizonans. As part of the campaign, a coalition of university system supporters was formed to help convey the messages about the value of higher education throughout Arizona and to advocate on behalf of the university system.

Strategic Implications

- It is critical for the Board to inform the various constituencies of the Arizona University System about challenges and opportunities that affect the university system and about the Board's role in meeting these challenges and enhancing higher education in Arizona.
- The *Solutions Through Higher Education* campaign specifically advances the missions of the universities and university system by promoting greater awareness about the critical economic and social challenges facing Arizona and the ways in which higher education provides solutions to these challenges.

Discussion

- Since the last report to the Board, the ABOR public affairs staff has been collaborating with senior public affairs officers at the universities to impact the FY09 and FY10 state budgets in ways that mitigate damage to the universities' funding, missions, and current and long-term value to the state's

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- economy. Specific actions taken include targeted media outreach through interviews; editorial boards, opinion editorials, and a tri-university press conference at the Capitol.
- The public affairs and government affairs groups at the central office and the three universities have been working closely to leverage each other's effectiveness in FY09 and FY10 budget negotiations.
- Public affairs efforts at the central office are focused on demonstrating the universities' economic and social impact on the state and the implications of budget cuts to the system. In collaboration with public information directors at the three universities, ABOR public affairs staff has developed a frequently asked questions document relating to the budget cuts and the federal stimulus bill, in an effort to provide accurate information to the public and legislators.
- *Solutions Through Higher Education* presentations have been made to 145 organizations throughout the state. Organizations recently receiving or scheduled to receive presentations include: Arizona Association for Economic Development, Southern Arizona; Cochise County Workforce Development Education Seminar; Democracy for America – Maricopa County; Scottsdale Parent Council; the University of Arizona Black Alumni in Maricopa County; the University of Arizona Phoenix Alumni Chapter; and Valley Interfaith Project.
- Membership in *The Coalition for Solutions Through Higher Education* has grown to nearly 5,600 individuals and 90 organizations statewide.
- Since its launch last month with an improved aesthetic and navigational design, the revamped *Solutions* website has experienced increased traffic. Several indicators point to increased traffic, including total visits, new visitors, number of page views, and length of time spent on each page. The revamped site includes several new features: including a flash piece on the home page with key points and images; an improved video section where viewers can more easily browse through leader and student testimonials; and a news section featuring the latest headlines in education.
- Since the last report to the Board, the *Solutions* team has issued four additional emails to coalition members in a regular series that addresses higher education issues and shares positive news about programs and activities at the universities. Recent communications have provided updates on the FY09 budget negotiations, providing specific calls to action for coalition members to support the universities.

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- Over the next several weeks, the *Solutions* team will work to engage the coalition in advocating for the universities' interest in the FY10 budget negotiations. Specific strategies may include: utilizing social media and interactive tools to engage the approximately 5,600 coalition members in a targeted, strategic way; mobilizing organizational members of *Solutions* to impact political will; reaching out to large employers, e.g. Raytheon, Intel, etc., and other organizations that are not currently members of the coalition; and asking the coalition co-chairs to write op-ed pieces and to communicate directly with legislative leaders.

Recommendation to the Board

This update is provided for the Board's information.