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Contact : Sarah Harper, 602-229-2542, 602-402-1341 Sarah.K.Harper@azregents.edu
Julie Newberg, 602-2292534, 602-686-1803, Julie.Newberg@azregents.edu

Statement from ABOR President Eileen Klein in Reaction to the release of Gov. Ducey's Budget

(Phoenix, Ariz.) – “Gov. Ducey pledged in his State of the State address this week ‘to be a partner in strengthening Arizona higher education.’ Although modest, his executive budget proposal for Arizona’s public universities for fiscal 2017 takes a real step in the right direction.

“Is the governor’s planned budget for public universities everything we had hoped for? Certainly not. But it represents a critical departure from the past eight years when higher education funding in Arizona was cut by more than \$463 million – the largest reductions, on a percentage basis, enacted by any state in the country. Tuition also increased during this time because of the deep cuts. Arizona leads the nation in funding cuts and tuition increases. To be sure, every dollar we receive from the state helps us keep costs down for families. New dollars also bring new opportunities to expand educational access, broaden personal horizons, prepare the next generation of Arizona’s workforce and bolster our public universities as economic drivers. That is something we can all cheer.

“Just as important as the funding is the manner in which it is to be delivered. Through his proposal, Gov. Ducey has adopted the principles of the Arizona Board of Regents’ new, student-centered funding model. Rather than appropriating for universities as faceless, bricks-and-mortar institutions, this new budgetary approach places a priority on funding Arizona resident students. This is a turning point and, going forward, every new dollar from the state of Arizona will tangibly improve affordability and access for Arizona students and families.

“The governor requested a study to review university funding models and cost containment, and we are pleased to partner with him in this study. When the universities were dealt deep cuts during the Great Recession, the cuts had an exacting toll on our university system in measures such as workforce reductions, closed academic programs, schools and campus sites, furloughs and more. The universities’ presidents worked diligently to implement innovative efficiencies to keep costs down in the face of cuts. In fact, since 2010 the costs per degree at our universities has continued to decline and are lower than their peer institutions. We will continue to build on our work to remain as efficient as possible to do our part to keep tuition affordable.

“Arizona students and families are the customers and majority shareholders of our state’s public universities. We are all the fortunate heirs of an amazing system imagined by Arizona’s forefathers, enshrined in the state constitution and nurtured over more than a century – through times good and bad – with the guiding wisdom that higher education is the surest path to the American dream. It remains so.

“In the weeks and months ahead and until the gavel goes down on this legislative session, we will be the strongest voice possible on behalf of Arizona students and families so that a quality higher education remains within reach and the state stays true to the governor’s mantra of opportunity for all.”

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