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## Arizona Board of Regents Chair Ron Shoopman Statement on Fiscal Year 2020 State Budget

“The Arizona Board of Regents appreciates that Gov. Ducey and the Legislature have delivered a budget that continues to focus on public education. The board thanks the Governor for the \$35 million in unrestricted, one-time funds. We are eager to continue to partner with the Governor on the Arizona Teachers Academy. The \$15 million for the academy is a meaningful investment in developing the state’s teaching workforce. The board also values the \$8 million in ongoing funds for the University of Arizona College of Medicine and the increased support for graduate medical education. Arizona’s public universities are significant contributors to solving Arizona’s most pressing needs and these critical investments will address physician workforce shortages in Arizona.

“The value of public higher education has never been higher. A [quality degree stands the test of time](#). The university enterprise is a vital and [major economic driver](#) for the state and Arizona must improve [post-secondary attainment](#) to attract more businesses to our state, increase the tax base, decrease poverty and remain competitive.

“The board continues to call on the state to be a committed partner to drive increased educational attainment by ensuring affordable access to quality, public higher education. Current state appropriations cover approximately 34 percent of the cost of educating resident students, a significant drop from about 75 percent more than a decade ago. Unfortunately, Arizona’s students and families have shouldered the brunt of state disinvestment. While the board understands and supports lawmakers’ commitment to responsible budgeting and saving for the future, a more balanced approach would ensure greater investment in public higher education along with an adequate Rainy Day Fund.

“It is unfortunate and the board is disappointed that this year’s budget also continues the practice of sweeping millions of tuition dollars to subsidize the state’s employee health plan. The board unequivocally believes that using students’ tuition dollars to prop up state employees’ health insurance is fundamentally unacceptable. This practice needs to stop.

“The board remains committed to doing its part to ensure affordable access and is working hard to position Arizona for a prosperous future. However, we cannot do it alone. We all have a stake in increasing educational attainment and ensuring a strong, quality public higher education system that is accessible and affordable to all.

“We call on our state lawmakers to be firmly committed partners who work with us to ensure affordable access to Arizona’s outstanding public universities.”