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New ABOR Data Reflects College Enrollment, Completion Rates in Arizona

The Arizona Board of Regents released new data today that reflects college enrollment and completion rates for Arizona public high school graduates. Key findings demonstrate that rates of college attendance and completion remain uneven across ethnic and gender lines.

Current enrollment data indicates that in 2017, nearly half – 47.4 percent – of Arizona’s high school graduating class did not enroll in a two- or four-year college after graduation, a rate that has remained static over the past two years. Among 2011 high school graduates, just 27.3 percent had completed a two- or four-year degree six years after high school graduation.

Key takeaways from the 2018 [College Enrollment and Completion report](#) include:

- If educational attainment trends stay on their current trajectory, only 17.2 percent of today’s ninth graders will graduate from a four-year college by 2028.
- The needle is not moving on the rate of Arizona high school graduates going on to college. In 2017, the enrollment rate was 52.6 percent, a rate that has remained static since 2013 and actually has decreased from 53.5 percent in 2012
- Among 71,337 total high school graduates in 2017, nearly half – 33,812 – did not enroll in a two- or four-year institution.
- Female high school graduates continue to outpace males in enrollment in two- and four-year institutions, continuing a consistent trend over the past five years. Females make up 50.8 percent of all high school graduates, but 56.2 percent of two- and four-year college enrollments in 2017. The gender disparity is especially stark among four-year enrollments where females make up 59.3 percent of the class.
- While college enrollment rates among Hispanic, Native American and Black high school graduates improved between 2013 and 2017, they trail behind the percentage of White and Asian high school graduates.

“This report demonstrates a problem statement for Arizona and illustrates the need to focus on increasing educational attainment among students. If our current rate of attainment doesn’t improve, Arizona’s economy will underperform, and residents won’t realize benefits from increased education including higher wages, lower unemployment and better health,” said ABOR Executive Director John Arnold.

Data trends also highlight inconsistent performance among Arizona high schools. For college completions, the top 30 percent of Arizona high schools produce 65.2 percent of Arizona high school graduates and 83.7 percent of the high school graduates that go on to complete college. The remaining

70 percent of Arizona high schools produce 34.8 percent of Arizona high school graduates, but only 16.3 percent of the graduates who complete college.

Factors contributing to Arizona's uneven attainment rate include poverty, a leading indicator of reduced educational achievement. Poverty rates in Arizona are among the nation's highest, ranking 12th in the nation for individuals who fell below the federal poverty threshold in the past twelve months. In 2017, nearly a quarter of all Arizona children fell below the poverty line. Approximately 25,000 children attending Arizona public schools are homeless, and 57 percent of K-12 students qualify for free or reduced meals.

Individuals who earn a four-year degree realize considerable benefits from better quality of life to higher wages. A person in Arizona with a four-year degree earn median wages - \$53,091 - that are nearly double those of individuals with a high school diploma alone - \$27,708, according to the board's 2016 [Wages of Graduates](#) report. University graduates are also more likely to be employed and have stronger earning power.

"Increasing awareness regarding the need to focus on educational attainment in Arizona will be a primary focus during my term as chair," said ABOR Chair Ron Shoopman. "A stronger economy, robust workforce and greater personal success are a few of the benefits of earning an education past high school for Arizonans."

About the College Enrollment and Completion Report:

The Arizona Board of Regents College Enrollment and Completion Report is designed to provide a snapshot of the proportion of Arizona high school students who continue to postsecondary education, as well as the percentage who complete a two- or four-year program within six years. The years examined as part of this analysis are between 2010-11 and 2016-17 for college enrollment, and 2004-05 through 2010-11 for college completion. The universe of students considered in this report is limited to those who attended public high schools and two- and four-year institutions that accept federal financial aid. The report is compiled by matching unique student identifiers from the Arizona Department of Education with enrollment and college completion data from the National Student Clearinghouse.