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Arizona Teachers Academy to Bring More Highly Qualified Teachers to K-12 Classrooms

TOLLESON, Ariz. (Sept. 26, 2017) – A new initiative to bring more teachers to Arizona's classrooms was launched today as education, civic, community, government and business leaders celebrated the creation of the Arizona Teachers Academy, an innovative strategy to improve education in Arizona.

Governor Doug Ducey, who called on the Arizona Board of Regents and the state's public universities to help increase the number of qualified K-12 teachers during his state-of-the-state address, said the launch of the academy represents an educational priority that will bring more teachers to Arizona's high-needs schools. The event was held at Tres Rios Service Academy in Tolleson.

Arizona Teachers Academy programs began this fall at each of Arizona's public universities. Graduates of the academy who agree to teach in Arizona will have the costs of their tuition and fees associated with their program of study waived through a year-for-year tuition scholarship that rewards graduates who teach in Arizona schools, ensuring they arrive in classrooms highly qualified to teach and unburdened by tuition debt.

The Arizona Teachers Academy features multiple program offerings that allow individuals to participate at many points in their education or career. Arizona's public universities are enrolling approximately 230 students during the first year and anticipate building capacity to about 730 students in the academy's fifth year.

"We're honored that Governor Ducey turned to our public universities to bring more highly-qualified teachers to our state's classrooms. Our universities have a long and proud tradition of educating and training Arizona's teacher workforce. By working together, the universities are able to create new and expanded programs that will help meet a crucial need in our state's schools and offer more affordable options for students who aspire to this noble profession," said Bill Ridenour, Arizona Board of Regents chair.

Arizona's public universities graduate the majority of teachers in the state and continually improve teacher education programs to better prepare students for the real-world academic and social demands of the modern classroom.

"The Arizona Teachers Academy demonstrates a new commitment by the board and the universities to bring and retain new teachers to Arizona's classrooms, eliminating barriers to rewarding careers in education," said Eileen Klein, Arizona Board of Regents president. "We are proud to have led this effort

to develop this important initiative for the state, and I am confident that we will continue to innovate to create additional options to grow our teacher workforce."

The Arizona Teachers Academy offers an innovative approach with graduates receiving support through mentorship and connections to academy professors and alumni. With a ready job market for teachers, academy graduates will have a job waiting for them after graduation.

Academy participants at Arizona State University will utilize design labs, developing new knowledge and tools to create schools of the future in rural and urban communities.

"Graduates of the Arizona Teachers Academy at ASU will benefit from networked mentoring support during their first year of teaching," said Michael Crow, Arizona State University president. "We partner with more than 30 K-12 school districts and 600 public, charter and private schools and will leverage these partnerships to recruit candidates, create design labs and deploy a new workforce of educators."

As part of the Arizona Teachers Academy, Northern Arizona University will expand its Grow Your Own partnerships with local schools and community colleges. These partnerships identify and train future teachers in communities with teacher shortages.

"Our 'Grow Your Own' partnerships enable students to stay in their local communities to complete college, through great community college and NAU partnerships imparting the best teaching practices for high impact in K-12 classrooms," said Rita Cheng, Northern Arizona University president.

At the University of Arizona, the academy will be tailored for career changers and those who already have bachelor's degrees in other fields. UA's one-year master's-level certification will allow nontraditional students and career changers to become teachers.

"Talented people who have always dreamed of teaching can now take advantage of these programs and realize their aspirations," said Robert C. Robbins, University of Arizona president. "Our graduates will go to schools where they are needed and where they can make the most difference in students' lives."

Community colleges will play a pivotal role in the success of the Arizona Teachers Academy through partnerships with the universities and will help meet the needs of hiring authorities.

"Maricopa Community Colleges are the affordable solution to the critical shortage of teachers," said Maria Harper-Marinick, Maricopa Community Colleges chancellor. "We have established very effective transfer pathway models for our students into the state universities, and today, I am proud to announce Maricopa's partnership with NAU to build a stronger and larger pipeline of teachers for Arizona students. Phoenix College and South Mountain Community College will be at the forefront of this partnership and work with NAU to create the Arizona Teacher Academy and impact generations of students and our community."

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Facts regarding Arizona's teacher shortage:

- A recent report from the Morrison Center at ASU reflects the following data:
    - Seventy-four percent of Arizona school administrators surveyed said their campuses are experiencing a shortage of teachers.
    - Forty-two percent of Arizona teachers who were hired in 2013 left the profession within three years.

    - When adjusted for cost of living, Arizona elementary school teacher pay is the lowest in the nation. High school teacher pay in Arizona ranks 48th of the 50 states.
- Evidence suggests that without intervention, Arizona's teacher shortage will continue to worsen. In a 2015 report, the Arizona Department of Education projected 26,122 of Arizona's 108,840 active public school employees (24 percent) will be eligible to retire by June 30, 2018.