



Yes, college is still a worthwhile investment.

This spring, Arizona’s three public universities, community colleges, tribal colleges, and private colleges and universities have awarded more than 80,000 two- and four-year college degrees and thousands of professional certificates. Those numbers continue to hover near pre-pandemic levels at a time when Arizona needs more people with college degrees and certificates than ever before.

Arizona faces a severe shortage of college-educated adults. Just under half of Arizonans between the ages of 25 and 64 have earned a bachelor’s or associate degree or a professional credential or certificate. We’re well below our own statewide goal of ensuring that at least 60 percent of Arizona’s adults have a postsecondary degree or credential by the end of the decade. And, in fact, we have one of the lowest postsecondary attainment rates in the nation.

The consequences of these shortages? Entire communities, municipalities, and regions—and Arizona as a whole—are all missing out on the extraordinary benefits that result from having a more educated populace. We need thousands more high school graduates to earn degrees or certificates. Investing as a state to make this happen will pay dividends for individuals, communities, and Arizona for generations to come.

This year’s four-year and community-college graduates will become an essential part of Arizona’s workforce and contributing members to communities throughout our state. They will use their degrees to become creators, engineers, scientists, business leaders, or will support some of our most thriving sectors, using their certifications to improve Arizona’s growing healthcare, manufacturing, building trades, and technology sectors. Their degrees and certificates will improve the rest of their lives—and our own.

State and national research provides conclusive evidence of the value of education after high school. A college graduate increases their lifetime earnings by \$1.2 million compared to what they would earn if their education stopped after high school. Further, a recent statewide study by Helios Education Foundation and Education Forward Arizona showed that the benefits of education after high school go far beyond graduates; by increasing postsecondary enrollment by 20 percent, Arizona stands to benefit from more than \$5 billion in annual gains attributable to factors like higher lifetime earnings, improved health, and increased workforce productivity.

There’s a lot of talk about whether education after high school is valuable. Nearly three-quarters of Americans still believe that a college education is equally or more important today than 20 years ago, and the numbers clearly answer YES! to the question, “Should I pursue education after high school?” We must do all we can to rapidly ensure that more Arizona families and students come to that same conclusion.

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on the multiple learning options offered by Arizona colleges and universities.