

ARIZONA
COMMUNITY
COLLEGES:
STRATEGIC
VISION FOR
2030



OUR VISION

Arizona's community colleges, through a collaborative effort with education, business, and community partners, will **expand access** to postsecondary credentials, **increase transfer and completion** of associate degrees and certificates, and **improve alignment** between college programs and workforce needs.

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INTRODUCTION

A Framework for Economic Vitality and Higher Educational Attainment

The Arizona community colleges present this Strategic Vision for 2030 as a framework for improving the economic strength of our state and quality of life for Arizonans. The Strategic Vision builds upon the colleges' previous long-term plan, published in 2011, and outlines how Arizona's ten community college districts will continue to improve student outcomes, as well as how the districts contribute to Arizona's broader economic and educational goals.

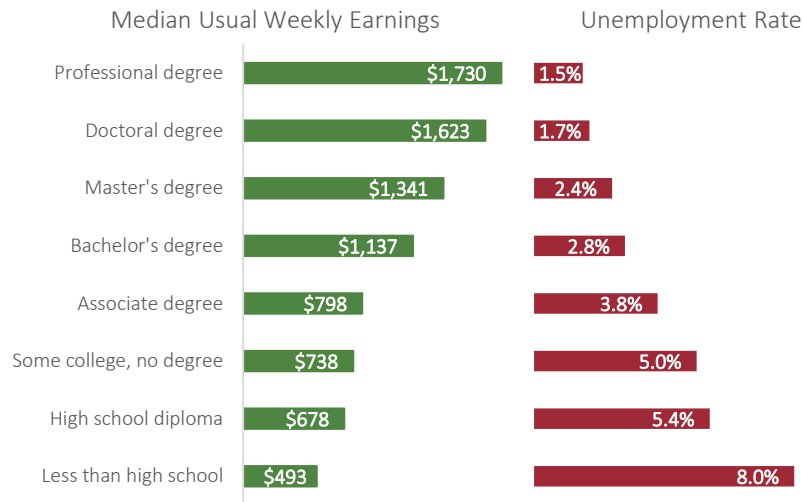
The Strategic Vision for 2030 is organized around three critical goals: expanding access to postsecondary education; increasing transfer and completion of associate degrees and certificates; and improving alignment between college programs and workforce needs. Within each goal, this plan identifies strategies for achieving excellence, as well as key metrics for assessing progress.

In recognition of the fact that by 2020, 68% of all jobs in Arizona will require higher education,¹ the Strategic Vision for 2030 also creates a framework for how the community colleges will work with the Arizona Board of Regents and other entities in the state to reach the Achieve60AZ goal that by 2030, 60% of the Arizona working-age population will hold a postsecondary credential. In 2016, an estimated 43.7% of residents age 25-64 held a workforce certificate, associate degree, or bachelor's or higher degree. Arizona's community colleges—as well as the state's public universities and other institutions of higher education—are working together to meet the 60% target, in recognition that common goals and shared strategies are essential to the betterment of Arizona's economy, workforce, and overall quality of life.

Benefits of an Educated Populace

The benefits of an educated populace are clear, and accrue both to the individuals attaining college credentials and to society at large. **As the figure on this page illustrates, earnings increase and unemployment decreases as educational attainment rises.²**

Earnings and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment



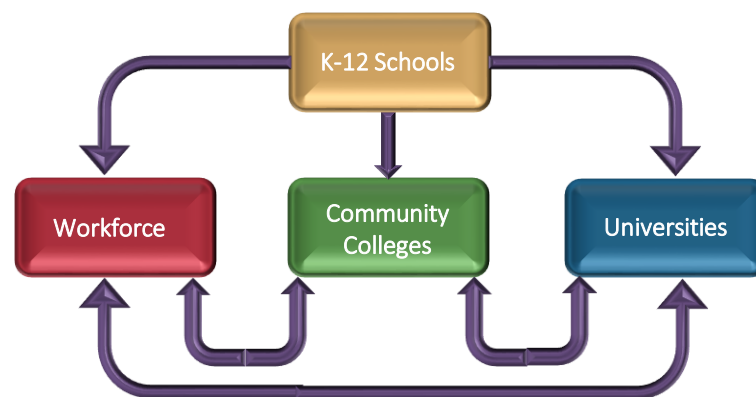
For individuals, attending college and earning credentials increases their chances of moving up the socioeconomic ladder and translates directly into higher wages. On a societal level, a more educated populace leads to lower poverty, unemployment, and crime rates; reduced dependence on welfare and other social safety-net programs; a greater ability to meet workforce demands for skilled workers; and increased tax revenues.³

Indeed, projections by ASU's Seidman Research Institute show that meeting the Achieve60AZ goal for 2030 would result in at least \$500 million additional tax dollars into the state general fund each year, without raising taxes.⁴ These individual and societal benefits are essential to the future of Arizona.

Community Colleges as Part of a Symbiotic System

Our vision for the future includes substantial increases in the number and percent of Arizonans entering college, transferring to four-year colleges or universities, earning degrees and certificates, and succeeding in the workforce. Our ability to achieve this vision is largely dependent upon community college actions, but will also be heavily influenced by external support for community colleges; how well we work with K-12 schools and universities to provide seamless and well-articulated educational and career pathways; and how aligned our programs are with workforce needs. **Community colleges in Arizona are part of a symbiotic system in which shifts in one area—reductions in state support, changes to university articulation agreements, industry growth or decline—can have drastic effects on the community colleges' ability to achieve their goals.**

The metrics used to assess progress toward our goals reflects this symbiosis. In our annual statewide and district-level reports, we differentiate between short-term, mid-range, and long-term metrics for which the community colleges and their students are primarily responsible for learner outcomes, and follow-up measures—such as success after transfer, or wage growth of occupational learners—where university actions or economic forces greatly affect outcomes.



Core Metrics and Baseline 2017 Data

302,594: Students enrolled in Arizona community colleges

35%: Percent of recent high school graduates enrolling in a community college

15%: Cost of attendance as a percentage of Arizona median household income

78%: Fall-to-fall retention rate

43,877: Degrees and certificates awarded

30%: Graduation (degree/certificate completion) rate

10,821: Transfers to in-state, public universities

30%: Transfer rate

60%: Percent of learners achieving a successful outcome

69%: Percent of full-time transfers to Arizona public universities earning a bachelor's degree

89%: Percent of occupational learners earning an industry-recognized credential

44%: Estimated percent of the Arizona working-age population with a postsecondary credential



GOALS AND METRICS

A photograph of a modern architectural structure featuring a long, covered walkway with a dark, grid-patterned floor. The walkway is supported by a series of angled wooden beams that form a slatted roof. To the left, a green lawn is visible. In the background, a building with large glass windows and doors is partially visible. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. The text "GOALS AND METRICS" is overlaid in a large, white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.



EXPAND ACCESS

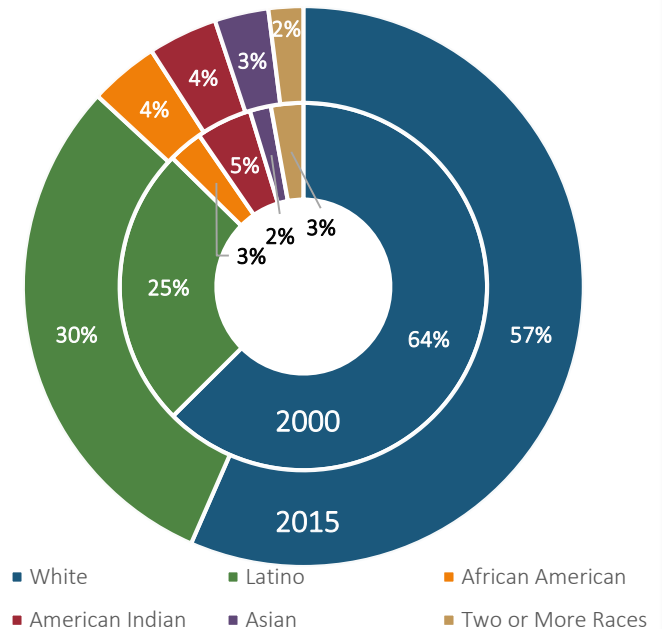
Background: A Diverse, Growing and Underprepared Population

Arizona's population increased nearly 20% between 2000 and 2015, with much of that growth coming from racial and ethnic groups that have historically been less likely to enter college or complete credentials. Furthermore, 27% of Arizona's population speaks a language other than English at home (3 out of 4 of these speak Spanish).⁵

These demographic data underscore both the challenges that community colleges face in recruiting and serving a diverse and growing population, as well as the opportunities that exist to build programs, partnerships, and support structures around the unique needs and abilities of these students.

A parallel challenge relates to the extent of developmental education required by incoming students. In 2015 only 78% of Arizona high school students graduated within four years, and graduation rates were substantially lower among African Americans (74%), Latinos (72%), American Indians (66%), the economically disadvantaged (73%), and those with limited English proficiency (25%).⁶ Even among high school graduates, many are not prepared for college-level work. Statewide, 40% of all incoming community college students enroll in at least one developmental math course, and 30% take at least one pre-college course in English or reading. **Programs and partnerships that support learners in attaining college readiness is key to expanding access to college credentials among the educationally and economically disadvantaged.**

Arizona Population by Race, 2000 and 2015



Goal One: Expand Access to Postsecondary Credentials

To reach this goal, Arizona's community colleges will need to:



Close access gaps among underserved populations

Strengthen education pathways among schools, community colleges, universities, and other organizations

Optimize programs and partnerships leading to college readiness and success

Deliver high-quality education, training, and student support at times and places that are convenient for learners

Expand Access: Strategies for Excellence

More specific strategies for expanding access to credentials include:

Providing outreach and increasing enrollment among populations emerging from current demographic trends, as well as those historically underserved in higher education. These include immigrants and their children, males, Latinos, African Americans, American Indians, English language learners, the economically disadvantaged, displaced workers, and adults seeking job training.

Strengthening and developing new partnerships with K-12 schools, universities, and social service agencies to communicate the need for postsecondary credentials; provide collaborative pathways to college; and align curricula to college-ready standards.

Implementing innovative approaches to developmental education including alternative and skills-based delivery models, short-term or concurrent courses where students can complete developmental sequences in math and English while earning college credits in other subjects; and guided pathways that utilize highly structured academic plans and support services.

Delivering courses and services at times and places that are convenient for learners who work, live far from campus, or have family or other obligations. This includes offering courses and student support at night, on the weekends, online, and at off-campus locations such as outreach or skills centers.

Expand Access: Short-Term Metrics



- Total annual enrollment in community colleges
- Full-time student equivalent (FTSE) enrollment in community colleges
 - Enrollment of Adult Basic Education / General Educational Development learners
 - Enrollment of high school students for dual credit
- Enrollment of underserved populations (historically underserved racial/ethnic groups, adult learners, Pell-grant recipients)
- Percent of student credit hours earned via alternative delivery methods and/or at alternative times and places
- Percent of Arizona high school graduates who enroll in a community college within one year (community college-going rate)
- Cost of attendance as a percentage of Arizona median household income

Expand Access: Mid-Range Metrics

- Developmental English/reading course success rate
- Developmental math course success rate
- Percent of developmental math learners who successfully complete a college-level course in math within 6 years
- Percent of developmental English/reading learners who successfully complete a college-level course in English within 6 years



A group of graduates in red caps and gowns standing outdoors. The graduates are wearing red caps and gowns with yellow stoles. Some are holding diplomas. The background shows green trees and a clear sky. The text "INCREASE TRANSFER AND COMPLETION" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

INCREASE TRANSFER
AND COMPLETION

Background: Providing Support to Improve Persistence

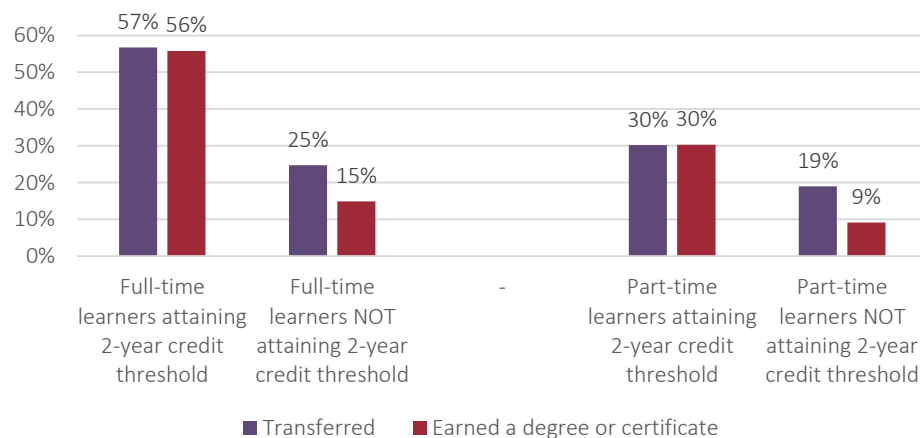
Student retention is often a challenge in community colleges, as learners attend for multiple reasons, not all of them academic; swirl among multiple institutions; stop-out frequently; and because many must work full- or part-time, care for children, and/or contribute to the support of their families.

Despite these challenges, 78% of credential-seeking students at Arizona's community colleges (excluding those who successfully transfer or earn a degree or certificate) persist from the first to year to the next, indicating that the colleges successfully retain the vast majority of students who intend to transfer or complete a credential.

Nonetheless, providing support to improve student persistence—especially among African Americans, Latinos, American Indians, part-time learners, and low-income students—is a clear priority for Arizona's community colleges.

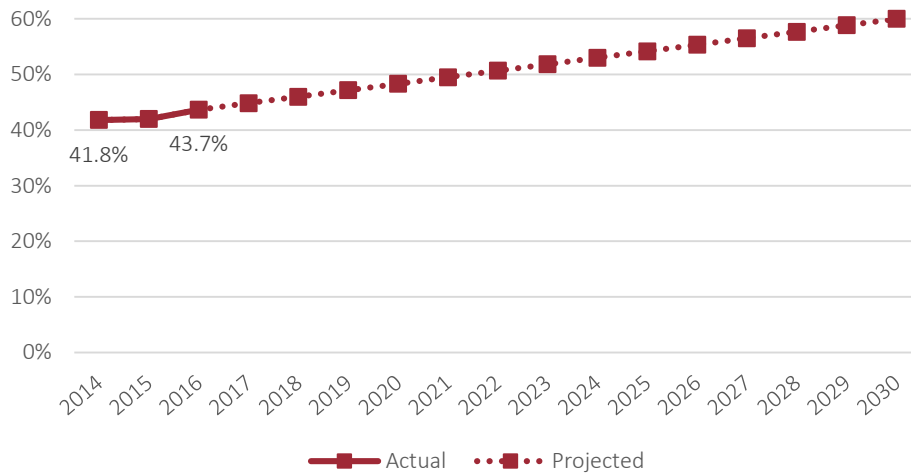
Researchers have identified numerous approaches to improving student persistence (and, ultimately, completion), including highly structured academic pathways, intrusive advising, learning communities, raising the quality and availability of support services, and greater engagement with faculty, staff, and other students. Scholars have also shown that learners who attain 2-year credit thresholds are more likely to persist and complete a credential.⁷ Data from Arizona's 10 community college districts underscore this finding. **As the figure above illustrates, learners who attain 2-year credit thresholds (42 credits for full-time students and 24 credits for part-timers) are much more likely than those who do not to transfer or earn a degree or certificate within 6 years.** Arizona's community colleges must continue to provide support to help students reach these 2-year credit thresholds.

Transfer and Completion by Attainment of 2-Year Credit Thresholds



Background: Transfer and Credential Completion

Progress Toward Achieve60AZ Goal



“Strong economies are characterized by an abundance of well-paying jobs; and overwhelmingly, well-paying jobs are held by individuals who have knowledge and skills obtained through education beyond high school.”⁸

This statement underscores both the Arizona community colleges’ and the nation’s focus on increasing transfer and credential completion. State and national completion initiatives are framed not only by a desire to retain the United States’ economic competitiveness in a global marketplace,

but also by an acknowledgement that community colleges and other institutions of higher education can do better in terms of transfer and degree/certificate attainment. **Nationally, one-quarter of community college students complete a degree or certificate within 6 years⁹ and 25% transfer to a four-year college or university.¹⁰ At Arizona’s community colleges, 30% of credential-seeking students complete a credential within 6 years, and 30% transfer.** While these are not one-to-one comparisons (the national numbers are not limited to credential-seekers), they indicate that Arizona’s transfer and completion rates are at least on par with national averages.

Nonetheless, as the figure above illustrates, if Arizona is to reach the Achieve60AZ goal that 60% of the working-age population will hold a postsecondary credential by 2030, the state’s community colleges and universities must substantially increase transfer and degree/certificate completion in the coming years.

Goal Two: Increase Transfer and Completion

To reach this goal, Arizona's community colleges will need to:

Utilize highly structured academic plans to help students attain 2-year credit thresholds and complete degree or certificate programs

Deliver a broad array of educational and student support services

Strengthen career and transfer pathways that link developmental, academic, and occupational programs

Optimize guaranteed admission and joint bachelor's degree programs with in-state universities



Increase Completion: Strategies for Excellence

More specific strategies for increasing transfer and completion include:

Developing and utilizing highly structured academic plans in which curricular programs and student support services are heavily coordinated to help learners attain 2-year credit thresholds and complete degree and certificate programs with maximum efficiency. Involving faculty and tailoring structured academic plans to allow for part-time and swirling attendance patterns will be key.

Providing and promoting a broad array of easily accessible support services, including tutoring, mentoring and counseling; mandatory orientation; intrusive advising; learning communities; childcare and transportation assistance; and early identification and just-in-time support for at-risk learners.

Strengthening career and transfer pathways that both improve learners' technical skills and incorporate elements of developmental, general education, and academic major coursework so that learners can prepare for career advancement while still accruing credits toward an associate degree and/or transfer to a university.

Developing new and optimizing existing guaranteed admission, co-located, and joint bachelor's degree programs to provide students in multiple academic and occupational degree programs—as well as rural and place-bound learners—with a clear path to the baccalaureate.

Increase Completion: Mid-Range Metrics

- College-level course success rate
- Percent of first college-level math and English credit hours successfully completed
- Percent of full-time learners completing 42 credits within 2 years
- Percent of part-time learners completing 24 credits within 2 years
- Fall-to-next-term persistence rate
- Fall-to-fall persistence rate



Increase Completion: Long-Term Metrics



- Number of degrees and certificates awarded
 - Graduation (degree/certificate completion) rate
 - Number of Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC) certificates awarded
 - AGEC completion rate
 - Number of in-state university transfers
 - Percent of in-state transfers with an AGEC and/or degree at time of transfer
-
- In-state university transfer rate
 - Overall transfer rate
 - Percent of learners achieving a successful outcome within 6 years (earning a degree, transferring to another institution, or remaining enrolled)

Increase Completion: Follow-Up Metrics

- Percent of full-time transfers to Arizona public universities who earn a bachelor's degree within 4 years
- Percent of all university transfers who earn a bachelor's degree within 4 years
- Estimated percent of the Arizona working-age population with a workforce certificate, associate degree, or bachelor's or higher degree
- Progress toward the Achieve60AZ goal (60% of working-age Arizonans with a postsecondary credential by 2030)



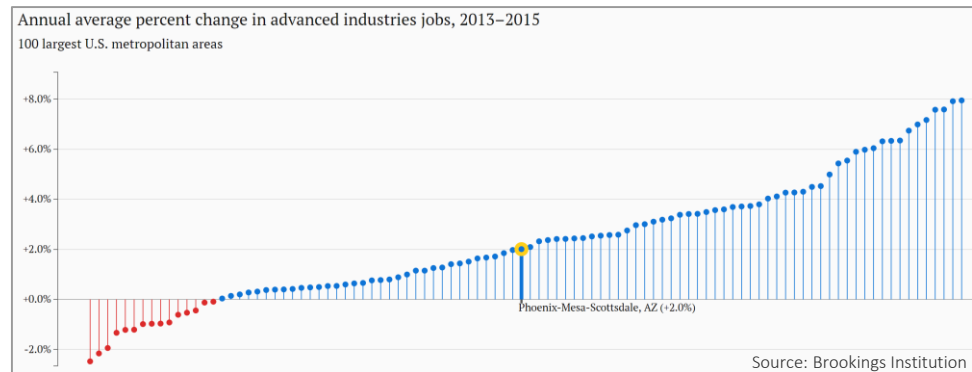


DO NOT CUT OFF THE TABS ON
RECEPTICLES.
SPLIT-RECEPTICLES ARE MARKED WITH
A BLACK DOT.
IF SOMETHING BREAKS, TELL US NOW
OR STOP WORK ONCE.
DO NOT TAKE FROM ANY OTHER BOX.
ASK THE STAFF
CLEAN AND ORG TOOL BOXES & WORK
AREA PRIOR TO LEAVING.

IMPROVE ALIGNMENT

Background: Meeting the Needs of an Evolving Workforce

For Arizona to remain competitive in the global economy, it must build and maintain a robust regional workforce and attract what the Brookings Institution calls *advanced industries*—those associated with technology, research, development, and innovation, and which are characterized by high-skilled jobs and high wages.¹¹



Arizona's community colleges are central to this task, as associate degrees and workforce certificates are crucial to staffing advanced industries.¹² In particular, jobs for which some higher education less than a bachelor's degree is required are booming in industry sectors such as manufacturing, health and wellness, environmental technology and sustainability, advanced business and customer services, communications and information systems, public services, and education—all areas where Arizona's community colleges offer degree and certificate programs.

However, demand for workers in these and other industries differs substantially across the state, and these variations are reflected in community college course catalogs and institutional emphases. To substantially improve higher education attainment across the state, and to produce highly-skilled workers for jobs in both urban and rural areas, Arizona's community colleges will need to work closely with business and industry leaders, as well as workforce advisory groups, to align degree and certificate programs with workforce needs. The colleges will also need to work collaboratively with one another and the state's universities to create career and technical pathways through which learners can move seamlessly through college and into careers.

Goal Three: Improve Alignment with Workforce Needs

To reach this goal, Arizona's community colleges will need to:



Strengthen engagement with business and industry leaders

Optimize degree and certificate programs for employment in advanced industries

Expand occupational pathways and direct training programs linking community colleges to universities and careers

Build capacity based on future workforce trends and emerging industry sectors

Improve Alignment: Strategies for Excellence

More specific strategies for expanding access to credentials include:

Strengthening engagement with business and industry representatives, workforce advisory boards, economic modeling specialists, and community leaders to better understand local and statewide workforce needs.

Optimizing degree and certificate programs for employment in advanced industries important to Arizona's economic future, including manufacturing, health and wellness, environmental technology and sustainability, advanced business and customer services, communications and information systems, public services, and education.

Expanding occupational pathways and direct training programs that link associate degree and certificate programs with bachelor's and applied bachelor's programs at universities and/or prepare learners for employment or advancement within a specific business or industry.

Building institutional capacity based on future workforce trends and emerging industry sectors. This will entail working with economic modeling specialists to project future job openings, conducting gap analyses to identify how many more workers with some postsecondary education less than a bachelor's degree will be required in various industry sectors, and targeting human and financial resources to the areas with the biggest gaps between production and demand for trained workers.

Improve Alignment: Short-Term & Follow-Up Metrics



- Full-time student equivalent (FTSE) enrollment in occupational courses
 - Percent of highest-demand occupations requiring more than a high school diploma (but less than a bachelor's degree) for which the Arizona community colleges offer certificate or degree programs
 - Percent of occupational learners passing a licensing exam or earning an industry-recognized credential within 1 year
- Wage growth of occupational learners

Strategic Vision Data: Sources and Attributions

All data not explicitly cited in this plan were provided by the Arizona community colleges.

¹Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N., & Strohl, F. (2013). *Recovery: Job growth and educational requirements through 2020. State report*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce.

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⁴Arizona State University, W. P. Carey School of Business, L. William Seidman Research Institute. (2015). *The economic benefits of enhanced educational attainment of Arizona's workforce*. Phoenix, AZ: Author.

⁵U.S. Bureau of the Census. (2016). *American Community Survey, 2011-15 5-year estimates*. Washington, DC: Author.

⁶Arizona Department of Education. (2017). *Cohort 2015 four year grad rate data*. Phoenix: Author.

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⁸NCHEMS. (2007). *The emerging policy triangle: Economic development, workforce development, and education*. Boulder, CO: Author.

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¹⁰Community College Research Center, Teacher's College, Columbia University. (2015). *What we know about transfer. Research overview*. New York: Author.

¹¹Brookings Institution. (2015, Feb. 3). America's advanced industries: What they are, where they are, and why they matter. Washington, DC: Author.

¹²Irish, L. (2016, Feb. 23). How will AZ community colleges meet 2025 workforce demand? *AZEdNews*. <http://azednews.com/how-will-az-community-colleges-meet-2025-workforce-demand/>.

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