

Chapter Four
Arizona's P-20 Council

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Arizona is a young, vibrant and diverse state with great potential. We enjoy a spirit of optimism, a beautiful physical environment and a dynamic population. More than most states—indeed more than most nations—Arizona is poised to thrive in the fast-paced 21st century. But to get there, we will need an education system that . . . ensures that all of our children and youth succeed in school and are prepared to succeed in life.

—*Educating Arizona*, 2008, p. 3

Optimism in the face of huge challenges characterizes *Educating Arizona*, a report published in 2008 by the Arizona Community Foundation. The report describes substantial demographic challenges in Arizona and poor statewide rankings on numerous indicators of educational performance, but concludes that “the good news is that we can fix these conditions” (Arizona Community Foundation 2008). According to the report, one of the promising signs that the state is starting to address its challenges can be found in the work of the Governor’s P-20 Council of Arizona. Our case study of the council affirms the community foundation’s finding. Although the council was only three years old at the time of our study, it had already mobilized stakeholders across the state behind a common agenda of raising educational attainment and improving the state’s economic position in the face of unprecedented challenges.¹

In this chapter, I begin with descriptive information about the state policy context for the P-20 Council, including the council’s origins, operations, and priorities. The chapter then offers an analysis of the value and challenges of this council in terms of

¹ The research for this case study was conducted by a team of four individuals, under the leadership of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. The team interviewed 13 individuals in a site visit conducted March 19–20, 2008. Interviewees included Governor’s Office staff, college and university chancellors and presidents, leaders of regional foundations and businesses, and council members. The case study author, a member of the team, supplemented interview data with an extensive review of available reports and documents. The information reflects a snapshot in time. Except as otherwise noted, all information and activities are presented as of the time of the research. It is important to note that Janet Napolitano, a Democrat, was governor when the study was conducted but was subsequently appointed by President Obama to his administration and was replaced by Republican Jan Brewer.

supporting a statewide agenda to align high school and postsecondary education and meet the state's policy priorities for educating Arizonans.

STATE POLICY CONTEXT

Arizona's educational system is facing rapid population growth, particularly among low-income individuals and non-English speaking residents—the very students whose academic achievement has lagged statewide averages. Meanwhile, the state is seeking to address these challenges while experiencing fiscal constraints that are more severe than in many states. For example, Arizona has a political culture and history of anti-tax sentiment and low public investment in education. In addition, ballot initiatives have been used to limit the power of the Legislature in addressing public priorities. Funding per student in both K–12 and postsecondary education is well below national averages.

Arizona suffers from poor performance on most of the indicators that have become commonly used to compare educational performance among states. Since the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education began issuing its 50-state report card, *Measuring Up*, in 2000, Arizona has consistently been among the lowest performers in preparing students for college. For example, it is one of the poorest-performing states in the percentage of young people completing a high school credential. In addition, Arizona eighth graders score very poorly on national assessments, especially in mathematics. There is reportedly a weak college-going culture in the state—evidenced in part by the importance given among many Arizonans to celebrating eighth grade graduations.

Like most states, Arizona has a complicated governing structure for public education that has evolved over time and resulted in diffused decision-making authority and accountability. Arizona is one of eleven states in which voters elect a statewide superintendent who must work with a state board appointed by the governor. The superintendent serves four-year terms, oversees the Arizona Department of Education, and serves as an executive member of the State Board of Education. The Board of Education sets policy for all public schools and the Department of Education is charged with implementing that policy. Among the policies established by the Board are the minimum course of study, requirements for high school graduation, and competency tests. There are 219 school districts with locally elected boards that operate within the policy framework adopted by the State Board (Arizona Community Foundation 2008, p. 46).

In the postsecondary arena, college participation patterns do not produce sufficient levels of educational attainment to meet state priorities and needs. Comparatively few high school students in Arizona enroll directly in college, and this pattern of college-going tends to be associated with lower degree-completion rates. Arizona has relatively high rates of adult enrollment in community colleges, but

completion rates are low for these students. The combined effect of these patterns is baccalaureate production well below state needs in today's competitive global economy.

Contributing to these low completion rates for bachelor's degrees is a university system that is, by all accounts, undersized for the state's growing population and not readily accessible to rural populations. Arizona has over six million people but only three public universities. In keeping what some describe as a "wild west" culture, the state's higher education enterprise has operated without a clear design for differentiating among the missions of the universities and the ten community colleges. All three universities are research institutions without, until recently, a strong focus on accommodating undergraduate education demand. One effect of limiting access to four-year public institutions has been the development of a very large community college system. Within the public sector, 63% of enrollments are in community colleges, a rate which is fourth highest in the nation and well above the national average of 47% (NCES 2007). The high use of the community colleges is less the result of design, as in California for example, and more the result of limited access to four-year universities.

Another aspect of higher education governance that presents challenges for educational planning and reform in Arizona is the lack of a central oversight body or system for the state's community colleges. The system office was eliminated by the Legislature in 2002 due to concerns that system priorities were interfering with local priorities.

Financial challenges also loom large among the factors contributing to the low production of bachelor's degrees in Arizona. The state has been slow to provide student financial aid, yet tuition has risen precipitously, as it has in most states. Arizona has received failing grades in the *Measuring Up* report card series for the "affordability" of higher education, as families must devote unsustainable amounts of their incomes to pay for tuition, room, board, and other fees (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education 2008).

Financial challenges, however, have also provided some impetus for action in the state. In 2002–03, when many states were raising tuition and Arizona general fund resources were stagnant, the State Board of Regents, which oversees the three public universities, rejected its staff recommendation to increase tuition. The pressure of growing enrollment demand at a time when budgets were held flat led the state to apply for participation in a national project called "Changing Direction." Managed by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), the project aimed to help states coordinate their finance policies so as to improve higher education access and outcomes. This proved to be one of several efforts by the state's political and educational leaders to draw upon national experts to help align Arizona's educational system with its policy priorities.

Finally, state politics also affects education planning and reform. Political battles have been shaped by the tension between a conservative Legislature and elected state

school superintendents who have sought to address the needs of a growing immigrant population with its need for language learning and its general lack of preparation for school success. These battles play out both in spending decisions and in educational policy. A protracted battle occurred in the first part of this century over new testing requirements for the awarding of high school diplomas—one of a planned series of actions to increase requirements for graduation. Low passage rates on the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) test, especially in mathematics, prompted concerns among teachers and parents about whether the test was reasonable, whether schools had had enough time to implement a standards-based curriculum, and whether students had had enough opportunity to learn the material on which they were tested. The superintendent responded to these pressures by relaxing the timeline for the new standards, even as she emphasized that the standards would be a fixture of the educational policy landscape. In terms of the AIMS test, the upshot of the battle was a lowering of the passing score and a delay in including the test as a requirement for high school graduation.

State politics also affects attitudes toward the public universities and the level of support that the state is willing to provide. As one influential community member observed, “some of our legislators are not warm and fuzzy about what they think is taught in our universities.” Those feelings might predispose legislators to argue that the private benefits of higher education make it a lower priority than K–12 schools for public investment.

Governor Janet Napolitano, a Democrat, was first elected in 2002 and reelected in 2006.² She enjoys substantial support in an otherwise strongly conservative state, in part because of her ability to unite Arizonans behind her education agenda and link it solidly to the state’s economic future. The business community is a strong supporter of this education agenda, and is an important factor in preserving the bipartisan support for the governor’s agenda to reinvent Arizona through increased educational attainment.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE P–20 COUNCIL

Governor Napolitano created the state’s P–20 Council by executive order in August 2005 (see Appendix A to this chapter), but the council had its roots in the business community.³ The Greater Phoenix Leadership (GPL), a member organization of leading private sector and civic chief executives, spearheaded an effort to draw attention to the

² Governor Napolitano has since been named U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security and has resigned as governor.

³ The governor issued a superseding Executive Order in 2008 that slightly altered the membership of the council and changed the wording so that the strategies to be considered by the council are more like intermediate outcomes. The new order calls for the status of the council to be reviewed no later than December 31, 2010.

serious underperformance of the state’s educational system. The mission of GPL is to engage the broader business community with the public and nonprofit sectors around policy issues for the betterment of the state. In its educational reform efforts, GPL enlisted the support of two other business leadership groups: the Southern Arizona Leadership Council and the Flagstaff Forty.

By 2003, members of Greater Phoenix Leadership became convinced that individual efforts to improve early childhood education, K–12 schools, and postsecondary education would fail if they were not integrated. That year, the GPL published *P–20: An Approach to Integrated Learning*, a report that, in effect, began the P–20 dialog statewide by clearly describing the P–20 concept through diagrams, benchmarks, and a statement of rationale:

“In recent years, there have been many significant efforts to improve our institutions of learning and address some root causes of student failure. There have been task force reports, blue ribbon committees, grass-root efforts at places of learning, but the effort remains disjointed, with diffused authority and lack of total commitment to a common goal that speaks with a clear articulated plan for education. K–12 education must be linked seamlessly with preschool and postsecondary education. These linkages between the stages of educational development must be better defined and smoothed out for the learner. P–20 offers an approach to achieving such an integrated learning system.”

According to Jim Zaharis, vice president of GPL, an additional goal at the time was to cultivate good civic stewards outside of the education system who would come to understand the key role that education plays in areas of their own self-interest as Arizonans. GPL sought common ground to accommodate the business community, which always seemed to be calling for reform, and the education community, which always seemed to “trump” the reform. “My task,” said Zaharis, “was to try to find a way to get a bigger tent.” GPL, under Zaharis’ guidance, marketed the P–20 concept to incoming Governor Napolitano, who “picked it up and ran with it.”

COUNCIL STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

The P–20 Council is large and highly structured. All 40 members are appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of, the governor. Members include the elected superintendent of public instruction, one member of the Board of Regents, the presidents of the three public universities, four community college representatives, four K–12 education representatives, four ex-officio members of the Arizona Legislature, a tribal representative, and representatives of parent and community organizations, workforce

and economic development, early education, career technical education, youth, the business community, and philanthropy.

At the time of our visit, the council was chaired by Governor Napolitano and co-chaired by Rufus Glasper, the chancellor of Maricopa Community Colleges. There are six standing and two ad hoc committees, the names of which indicate the council's priority areas:

- Education and Workforce Pathways
- Data and Graduation
- Teachers
- Education Alignment and Assessment
- Literacy
- Communications
- Early Education (ad hoc)
- Higher Education (ad hoc)

It is notable that, with the exception of the ad hoc committees, the structure is thematic rather than institutional—signaling a commitment to avoid recreating the silos that the council is intended to connect. Each committee has a designated chair and receives staff support from the governor's office. Committee membership can include those who are not members of the council.

A steering committee chaired by Chancellor Glasper consists of the chairs of the eight committees. Its charge is to make recommendations to the P-20 Council regarding priorities and strategies that will support the council in achieving its stated purpose to improve education in Arizona. The steering committee receives updates from all committees and makes sure their efforts are coordinated before presenting a committee's work to the full council. Although the executive order establishing the council declared that it meet at least quarterly, the council meets monthly, as do the steering committee and most of the other committees. The executive order also states that members may not send designees to represent them at meetings. Full meetings of the council are scheduled for two hours and are reportedly well attended by members and observers. Participation is balanced, with good engagement across the membership. One interviewee observed that despite the generally good and widespread participation, the "driving forces" are the universities, business, and the governor's office, adding that "if you have not gotten those three lined up, you have no hope of moving an agenda forward."

The council has a designated staff in the governor's office. Staff consists of an executive director and a second staff person, who is nearly full-time. In addition, the governor's two chief advisors for K-12 and higher education dedicate considerable portions of their time to the operation of the council. Staff time is spent organizing and staffing the council and its many committees, arranging for agenda items, developing

committee work plans, and following up on the many initiative and action items emanating from the council and its committees.

The council has a formal identity, captured in a logo and a set of brochures and other materials. There is a well-developed website for the council, with minutes and agendas posted for the council and committee meetings (see www.azgovernor.gov/P20/).

COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The published vision statement for the P–20 Council is that “every graduating student will be prepared for work and postsecondary education in the 21st century.” The stated goal is that “every young person who graduates from Arizona’s schools is truly prepared for a world of competition and innovation.” From the language of the executive order, it is clear the creation of the council was motivated by the need:

- To accommodate a population that is growing at twice the national average,
- To increase the college-going rate and bachelor’s degree production,
- To increase alignment and rigor across the educational spectrum to produce highly qualified workers for high-value jobs, and
- To achieve a more efficient and equitable education pipeline that keeps students on track at each stage.

In December 2006, the year following the creation of the council, a two-day strategic planning retreat was held for all council members. The retreat produced 32 recommendations which have become the agenda for the council. The recommendations emanated from the committees and most are detailed and multifaceted. Some of the recommendations address funding priorities and the creation of incentives, some suggest legislative action, and some call for further assessment or research. A final set of 35 recommendations was adopted by the council in June 2008. The full list can be found on the council website (www.azgovernor.gov/P20/).

Some of the key priorities, as expressed by interviewees during the case study visit, include:

- **Alignment.** Align high school standards and graduation requirements with postsecondary and workforce expectations, with a special emphasis on adopting a more rigorous standard for high school math and science.
- **Assessment.** Review methods of assessment, including the AIMS test and end-of-course exams, as a means of improving alignment across the education pipeline; achieve agreement about what constitutes college readiness—at community colleges and universities—and align assessments to those readiness standards.

- **Baccalaureate Production.** Study the demand for associate and baccalaureate degrees and the capacity to meet the demand, with attention to the transferability of credits across institutions and the prospects for expanding transfer pathways.
- **Career Technical Pathways.** Expand and improve alternative high school pathways by which students can obtain the skills needed for the workforce.
- **Teacher Quality.** Attract and retain high quality teachers through appropriate compensation and support, with special emphasis on increasing the supply of math and science teachers. (This recommendation references another governor’s committee—the Committee on Teacher Quality and Support—which has done considerable work on the topics assigned to the Teachers Committee of the P–20 Council).
- **Data System.** Continue to build a linked data system in accordance with National Data Quality Campaign standards, including the addition of the teacher identification component.
- **Communications.** Create and execute a communications plan, in partnership with foundation and business leaders, to build public awareness of the importance of education and coalesce public will for P–20 reform.

The communications plan warrants further discussion, since it is a very high priority of this council, which is not common among these kinds of councils across the country. The business and foundation leaders who serve on and support the council have been key supporters of the need for a strong public awareness campaign. Among these and other council members, there was a perceived need to change the culture surrounding education in the state. This applies both to families, who were perceived to be insufficiently inclined toward college, and to the business community, which has relied substantially on importing educated workers into the state. The public relations campaign was proposed as a means to communicate the new dimensions of the education challenge in Arizona and the urgency of improving the pipeline for educating the state’s own residents. In view of the state’s fiscally conservative political approach, the campaign was not-so-subtly aimed at ultimately increasing the state’s investment in education.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE COUNCIL

A full list of self-reported accomplishments appears on the council website and is included as Appendix B of this chapter. This section concentrates on those major accomplishments that were repeatedly cited by interviewees.

One accomplishment of the P–16 Council can be found in the state’s participation in the America Diploma Project (ADP), a national initiative operated by Achieve, Inc. The purpose of the America Diploma Project is to ensure that high school graduates are

prepared for work and postsecondary education by increasing high school class rigor and aligning curricula and standards. Although a council mechanism is not required for a state to participate in this project, respondents said that the council's support was crucial in convincing the state to join.

A second major accomplishment, cited by everyone interviewed, was the adoption of new high school graduation requirements by the Board of Education in December 2007. When the council was created, earning a high school diploma required just two years of science and two years of mathematics. Students in the class of 2013 will be required to take three years of science and four years of math. The minimum math requirement for high school graduation will increase from geometry to algebra II. Enacting this change was controversial due to concerns that it would increase high school dropout rates in an era of heightened accountability and that it would require school districts to hire more teachers in math and science at a time of severe budget constraints.

This council action is especially noteworthy because it says something about the power and structure of the body. When the item appeared before the council, there was only one opposition vote but it was a strong one—the elected superintendent of schools Tom Horne. Horne, a Republican and a former legislator, is said to be interested in a run for governor when his second term expires in 2010. Some believe that Governor Napolitano created the council, or at least has used it, as a way to have more influence over the K–12 agenda than is provided for under existing governance structures with an elected superintendent. A smaller council with less allegiance to the governor and fewer countervailing votes may not have prevailed over a powerful legislator.

A third accomplishment, cited by many, was the acquisition of substantial outside funds to develop and implement a public relations campaign. The campaign, under the name “Expect More Arizona,” was scheduled to begin in fall 2008. When the committee structure was first formed, the charge given to the Communications Committee was to communicate the work of the other committees. But, said Paul Luna, chair of the Communications Committee and executive director of the Helios Foundation:

“What started to become clearer to us was that at some level we have to educate the state to what the P–20 Council is and who we are and what we’re trying to do . . . and that our work was actually going to be a little more difficult than what was initially presented. Because P–20 is not really a term that everybody’s familiar with.”

Luna met with the governor's staff to convince them that the charge involved more “heavy lifting,” and got their endorsement of his effort to reach out to the foundation community for support. Four foundations each contributed \$50,000, and a professional firm was retained to build a communications strategy and a plan to implement it. The effort involves statewide media messages and an interactive website—

all aimed at motivating the public to change their own behaviors in seeking higher education and to build support for the P–20 agenda.

Another major accomplishment within the postsecondary sector, but aided by the P–20 framework, has been a redesign of higher education to increase access to the baccalaureate degree. This has involved better delineation of the missions of the three universities, alternative modes of delivery of upper division coursework to better match capacity with demand, and introduction of a 3-plus-1 pathway, whereby students complete their first three years of coursework at a community college and finish their final year at a university.

VALUE ADDED BY THE COUNCIL

An important purpose of this study of P–16 and P–20 councils is to understand if and how the council mechanism adds value to the work that would occur whether or not the council existed. This is a key question, because these councils are typically superimposed on existing agency structures and do not themselves hold the power to legislate or even to implement legislative or executive directives. The power of the Governor’s P–20 Council of Arizona, and similar councils of which we are aware, comes from its ability to influence the agenda of existing agencies and other organizations. The council has no ultimate authority, but is an advisory body that issues recommendations to the governor. As a result, the following question, as stated succinctly by Helios Foundation Director Paul Luna, becomes crucial in understanding the efficacy of the council mechanism: “If a council is purely advisory, can it really champion and sustain change over time?”

Although it is always speculative to consider whether or not a result or outcome would have occurred in the absence of the council, we heard a resounding consensus that the council has added considerable value to ongoing efforts to improve education policy in the state. This section describes the nature of the value added and offers some examples that were provided by respondents.

The Council Engages People Across Organizations and Sectors

Several people suggested that the council adds value by having “the right people at the right table.” (Some did offer, however, that the legislative involvement in council activities is not as strong as it could be and that some groups, like labor, have not yet been included.) With the large membership, people are able to share information across all education sectors as well as other stakeholder communities. One member noted that with 80% of the state’s population in the Phoenix/Tucson regions, the other parts of the state have traditionally been excluded from these kinds of conversations, but that the council has successfully involved rural communities. Another pointed to the benefits of monthly gatherings in that members can discuss other mutual business beyond what is on the formal agenda.

In describing the benefits of sharing information across organizational boundaries, Karen Nicodemus, president of Cochise College, said: “I am a much better college president for being on the State Board of Education and being engaged with the P–20 Council.” She added that by bringing people together, the council has been able to build alliances that can then help to move agendas forward. As an example, she cited work on the alignment of math standards, for which her Alignment Committee brought together community college faculty, university faculty, and representatives from the Department of Education and the business community to work with partners from Achieve. Roy Flores, chancellor of Pima Community College District, stated the benefits as follows: “Once you get those folks together and give them a clear direction and constraints and time lines, good things are going to happen.”

The Council Raises Public Expectations

Chancellor Flores made a key distinction, however, between the P–20 Council of Arizona and other state P–16 forums with which he is familiar. He said that the real value of the council derives not just from bringing people together but from building expectations based on their meetings. Getting together “might make you feel good,” he said, but by itself it does not accomplish anything that cannot be achieved with a phone call. He indicated that the P–20 Council of Arizona is different because, as a public forum, it brings expectations for action. This is what council members hear, he said:

“ ‘These are the problems, this is what the data show, these are the things that you want to work on, these are my expectations . . . and I’m taking some of these to the Legislature, and I’m sending a letter to the state superintendent and the board, saying these are my expectations, and I’m calling a press conference.’ ”

He added that “it’s one thing for two people to get together and have a good idea” but it’s another to hear “this is what the Legislature or the governor is expecting.”

Other members had similar views. Michael Crow, president of Arizona State University, said the authority of the council derives from its being a public forum—which makes it more effective than if it had more formal authority but less public presence. President Nicodemus said that when, as a member, you publicly support an action, there is an assumption that you have agreed to take it back to your decision-making body and try to move it forward. Because there is regular staff follow-up in meetings, it is likely that members will be called upon to report back to the council on their own follow-up.

The Council Fosters the Development of Common Agendas

The council can accomplish its goals and priorities only if the participating agencies take actions through their own regular channels to support the council’s objectives. The council is not a state agency and cannot directly implement educational policy. Yet all

interviewees agreed that the council is directly responsible for much of the movement that is occurring in the improvement of educational policy in the state.

Many respondents attributed this progress to having so many council members communicating with and learning from one another. Jim Zaharis of Greater Phoenix Leadership has observed “people who did not used to talk to each other about these topics” coming together around a common agenda, beginning to know each other face to face, and then “coming to a common identification of the issues and the problem” and “rowing the boat in the same direction.” President Crow provided an example, noting that “we would not be at the point we are in understanding the connection between high school graduation requirements and university admission requirements without the council.” With the involvement of council members representing so many organizations, he said, the council “gives us a whole different set of dynamics that doesn’t exist in any other forum.”

Several respondents noted that the increase in high school graduation requirements would not have occurred without the council. John Haeger, President of Northern Arizona University, said that the business groups on the council were instrumental in “tempering reactions” of local communities against raising the graduation standards. Were it left up to the Department of Education and the usual political forces, he said, the change would not have happened.

These comments suggest that the council has helped to create a dynamic that appears similar to a tipping point, where peer pressure acts to sustain momentum for change and improvement. President Haeger noted that there have been times when someone could have spoken up to kill an idea but no one has taken that step—probably because “the council has a lot of support and momentum and they don’t want to be the one responsible for derailing it.”

The development of common agendas across institutions can translate into real influence, even in a body that lacks formal power. For example, the council does not lobby the Legislature as a council, but to the extent that the individual agencies are on the same page, their individual lobbying can be more effective. As another example, Luna pointed to the council’s role in framing education around a common agenda. He suggested that competing messages can often lead to public confusion and disengagement. By assisting in eliminating some competing messages, the council has the potential to change public attitudes about education.

The Council Enhances the Impact of its Members

Respondents offered several examples of the council’s ability to expand its impact beyond the reach of its own members and participating agencies. One example is the council’s success in engaging philanthropy in assisting it to reach its goals. In terms of philanthropic investment in education, Zaharis said that Arizona had received far less than many other states, particularly compared with states in the Eastern United States.

The last few years, however, have seen a substantial increase to the point where “philanthropy has become the angel investors for education.” The Arizona Community Foundation—a statewide partnership of donors and nonprofit organizations—has picked up the mantle of education reform. In *Educating Arizona* (2008), the foundation referenced and built upon many of the council’s recommendations.

On a smaller scale, President Crow credited the council with enhancing his ability to advance his goals within his institution, because, as a result of the existence of the council, “I can say ‘we’re doing this’ and it’s not debatable.” Susie DePrez, the parent representative on the P–20 Council, provided an example of how the council has added value by transforming many local initiatives into broader statewide policy initiatives. Local partnerships can work for years on small-scale projects and grants, she suggested. Through the statewide efforts of the council, however, many local initiatives receive the boost that they need to have broader impact.

Co-chair Glasper provided a useful summary of the views of many interviewees concerning the value that the council has brought to the educational landscape in Arizona. He pointed out that the council has worked diligently to emphasize a statewide approach to educational reform and improvement—rather than deferring to the various interests of the individual institutions. That is one of the key educational challenges that faces most states today, where the sum of the individual interests of institutions is unlikely to match the pressing educational and economic needs of residents across the state.

BARRIERS TO GREATER SUCCESS

Despite these many endorsements of the value added by the P–20 Council, many interviewees set the bar for measuring the ultimate success of the council far higher than the achievements reached to date. Paul Luna said he would judge success by whether the state culture for education changes such that Arizonans’ votes and the state’s funding patterns improve support for public education. According to Michael Crow, success will also require that people understand that public education includes pre-kindergarten through graduate work (P–20), not just kindergarten through high school (K–12). Several others observed that it was too soon to judge the success of the council because change is happening, but at a slow pace.

When asked about the barriers that were interfering with the council’s work, interviewees had much less to say than they did about its accomplishments. The barriers cited fell into the five areas identified below.

The Difficulty of the Task

Improving educational outcomes in the face of budget limitations, a growing student body underprepared for college, and complex governance structures is no small task. The collection of 32 recommendations generated by the eight committees (now up to 35 as

adopted by the council) is as overwhelming as it is ambitious. In terms of K–12 education, the state has been among the lowest performers for a long time, and council members realize that it will not be easy to reverse this trend—or to convert high rates of college participation into high rates of degree completion. Adding to the difficulty of the task are political tensions within a complex educational governance structure. With an elected superintendent of public instruction sometimes holding different viewpoints than the governor, the council can become a venue for political as well as educational battles, as was the case in increasing high school graduation requirements.

Lack of Public Support

Achieving success in reaching the council’s goals will require a full-scale culture change in Arizona regarding public support for education. According to interviewees, families need to become more aware of the economic and other benefits of high school and college completion. In addition, the public at large needs to understand the benefits of increased investments in education for all Arizonans at a time of increasing diversification of the population. Legislators need to value the *public* as well as *private* benefits of higher education. Council members are aware that, in spite of its inclusion of so many stakeholders, the council is still not well known—even, for example, among local school superintendents. One member spoke of the need for the council to travel the state and hold town hall meetings to increase public awareness of the council and support for its agenda.

Insufficient Resources

Surprisingly, there was not widespread pessimism among interviewees about the impact of severe budget constraints on the ability of the council to continue its work. Budget constraints were mentioned by several people but not in relation to preventing the council from making progress. One issue that was mentioned frequently involved the budget challenges facing schools as they sought to hire additional math and science teachers to meet the new high school graduation requirements. As the new requirements were universally viewed as a major accomplishment of the council, it is understandable that lack of funds to implement them would be viewed as a serious barrier. In addition, funds are also needed to implement a variety of the council’s recommended initiatives—and the challenges of working within existing funding constraints were cited by some respondents as making the council’s work more difficult. One member suggested that the problem is not only a lack of resources but also a lack of knowledge or ability in determining how best to use available resources.

Too Many Priorities

Several council members cited, as a barrier to success, a perceived overabundance of good ideas and a lack of focus on top priorities. One member referred to a “laundry list”

of initiatives and suggested that the governor does not want to set priorities because that would make some people unhappy. He said that although these kinds of groups generally do not like to make anyone unhappy, this needs to happen if the council is to articulate what Arizona's higher educational system should look like five to ten years from now—or “do we want to continue to have the same discussion, which we had,” he said, “since I have been in the state?” He said the governor could push forward the conversation, even though it might make some people unhappy. He added, however, “If I was governor, I don't think I would want to do that. She is in a tough spot.”

SUSTAINABILITY

The last and probably largest barrier facing the council that was discussed during the case study interviews concerned how to sustain the P-20 council after the expiration of the governor's term; this issue was on everyone's minds during our interviews.⁴ Since this is a major issue that warrants its own discussion, it is addressed here in detail. Several of the key participants were concerned that the momentum that the council has built could be in jeopardy after 2010. Others were more hopeful, citing the strong support that the council enjoys from a broad base of stakeholders as a force for sustainability. Respondents discussed the following three models for addressing the sustainability of the council.

Continue under Executive Order

One option discussed was to wait for a new governor and hope that the executive order would be renewed. The existing executive order calls for a review of the status of the council no later than December 31, 2010. Some advocates of the council agenda perceived this as a viable strategy. One member said, “If the new governor didn't emphasize it, council members would push for it.” Others said this was risky because they view Governor Napolitano's strong commitment as critical to the council's effectiveness. For these individuals, it was questionable whether the council could maintain its stature and impact under a governor who was less than fully committed to the current arrangement. As one member noted, “you can't force a governor to care about something.” Several members voiced the opinion that at some point the council needs to be seen as Arizona's agenda—not the governor's.

Put the Council in Statute

Several interviewees discussed the possibility of authorizing the council through statute, but there were variants of this idea, primarily having to do with the degree of authority a

⁴ The situation has now changed significantly with a new governor in place, but the concerns that prevailed during our case study remain relevant to the question of the sustainability of all such councils.

new entity would have with respect to existing agencies, such as the Department of Education, the Board of Regents, and individual colleges and universities. No one appeared to support the idea of a “super-board” agency as a workable solution. Some interviewees pointed to Florida’s failed experiment with a P–20 governing structure as proof. Others noted that politically, a super board would not be feasible, given the existing statutory and, in the case of the Board of Regents, constitutional authority of existing entities. Another respondent said that if the council were a state agency, it would be viewed with suspicion and less respect than it now has.

Another statutory approach would be to codify the council as an advisory body rather than as a state agency, which would continue its current mode of operation but with a statutory guarantee beyond 2010. This option might avoid the pitfalls of creating a new agency, but it would still require the passage of new legislation, which many interviewees doubted would occur, because of the partisan divide between the Legislature and Governor Napolitano. One member noted that the split between branches of state government was not only motivated by partisanship but also by resentment over the governor’s power and public approval on education issues. According to this individual, the governor had “co-opted” the economic development agenda normally pushed by Republicans and business to the point where “business thinks the governor has the best ideas.” This has led to resentment in the Republican-controlled Legislature to the point where “we worry that the Legislature will want to dismantle the council.”

Establish the Council Outside of Government

According to interviewees, the Greater Phoenix Leadership, which was one of the primary supporters in creating the council, was considering options to establish the council as a nongovernmental entity. Under this plan, which was still under development and consideration, the existing entities with constitutional or statutory authority—the Board of Regents and the Board of Education—would need to agree on an agenda for the council and “in essence give their authority” for the council to pursue that agenda. Whether this would be feasible and how it would work was not yet determined. What was clear, however, was that the Greater Phoenix Leadership was exploring ways to sustain the work of the council without seeking the approval of the Legislature. What was also clear from the discussions was that the state faces difficult choices in preserving the council mechanism across a gubernatorial transition.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section offers observations about the ability of the Governor’s P–20 Council of Arizona to promote educational alignment and a reform agenda, and suggests some of the key policy themes that emerged from this study. The observations are based on a review of summary information collected on P–16 and P–20 councils across the country by the

Education Commission of the States (ECS) and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. They are also based on the experience gained from the other two in-depth case studies completed for this project, which examined P-16 and P-20 councils in Kentucky and Rhode Island.

Especially given its relative youth, the P-20 Council of Arizona—having been in existence just three years—provides some hopeful lessons for the design of such councils. There appear to be several factors, in particular, that have supported its effectiveness.

Leadership

Everyone we spoke with agreed that strong and consistent support from the governor, who chaired the council, was important to its gaining stature and influence. There were some disadvantages to the council being so heavily identified with one elected official, but the experience clearly demonstrated the value of strong leadership from a high position of authority. Since these councils are almost certain to be advisory rather than policymaking bodies, it appears that they must provide advice *to someone in a position of authority* for their recommendations to be taken seriously by stakeholders.

Staffing

Based on our conversations, it appears that the council in Arizona enjoys an extraordinary level of staff support compared with other councils. It is difficult to distinguish this staff support from the support of the governor, since the four professionals staffing the council were assigned from the governor's office. Nevertheless, it appears that the level of staffing helped to explain why this council was able to meet frequently, manage a diverse agenda and large number of participants, and, most importantly, follow up on recommendations and assignments so that participating agencies felt accountable for taking actions based on council recommendations. Co-chair Glasper described the staff as being able to “connect the dots” due to their participation in pertinent committee meetings, community meetings, foundation meetings, and educational board meetings. The staff, for example, helped to keep the council focused on the big picture concerning how each sector's actions affected another's. This level of engagement could not have occurred with more limited staffing.

Structure and Composition

On balance, the large size of the council, *in conjunction with a tight structure*, appears to be a strength of the Arizona approach. If there were fewer staff members and less extensive commitments by key individuals to staff and operate the many constituent committees, the large membership could be dysfunctional. As it is organized, however, with university presidents and business CEOs leading the committees, and with the steering committee helping to manage council priorities, the large membership brings

significant strength to the process by expanding stakeholder engagement and commitment. Although legislative participation on the council is not as extensive as many would like, the council appears to benefit from involving both branches of state government. As an advisory group, the council has to find champions to move its agenda forward—and support from the governor’s office has been crucial, as well as support from state agencies and institutions represented on the council. When legislation is needed, legislative participation on the council can help to increase buy-in and support of the council’s agenda in the Legislature. For example, legislators who are on the council can help to prevent council members who may have been outvoted on an issue from lobbying effectively against the majority council opinion.

Business and Philanthropy

It would be difficult to visit the state and study the council without being impressed by the amount of support that the business and philanthropic communities have offered to the council. In addition to financial support, these groups provide a high level of intellectual and moral support, which is crucial in contributing to the council’s achievements. After seeing this, it is difficult to imagine a state council that could be effective without engaging these groups deeply.

Data and Policy Knowledge

Arizona may well set the gold standard for a state’s use of available resources from national educational policy organizations. Its participation in special studies with and use of data from the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), and Achieve have been important factors in the council’s ability to set forth a clear agenda—albeit perhaps an overly ambitious one. Specifically, the council has been guided by the philosophy that its educational agenda is best accomplished by clearly articulating the needs of the state and the roles of the various educational institutions in meeting those needs. This can be seen in the cross-cutting (as opposed to institutional) designation of committees and in the commitment to data-driven decision making, in which data are used to help council members understand *statewide* patterns of supply and demand for education.

Use of Policy Levers to Close the Divide

In *The Governance Divide*, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education described the deep divisions between the K–12 and higher education systems in the states, as well as some of their effects on educational attainment (Venezia et al. 2005). In a follow-up report, *Claiming Common Ground*, the National Center identified four policy levers that states can use to close the divide between K–12 and higher education, and thereby achieve better educational outcomes (Callan et al. 2006). These policy levers

include: alignment of curricula and assessments; fiscal incentives; linked data systems; and accountability that reaches across sectors. A central purpose of this study is to determine whether P–16 and P–20 council mechanisms are, or can be, effective means of bridging the divide, applying these policy tools, and otherwise carrying out this agenda.

The Arizona case suggests that even among the more successful P–16 councils, it may be some time before we see effective use of all four policy levers. Of the four levers, alignment of curricula and assessments has been the chief focus in Arizona. Even in this area, however, the largest accomplishment was in raising high school graduation requirements, which is only a first step in a complex alignment process. The council has taken another step for mathematics in its work to align high school standards with college readiness standards. In addition, the council has plans to extend this work to the English curriculum. Nonetheless, the substantial work of aligning assessments to the standards and standardizing them across institutions has not occurred. Like many states, Arizona has not determined how to use the various types of assessments—high school exit, end of course, college entrance—in ways that support the standards that are being aligned across sectors.

There has been less attention focused on the use of fiscal incentives to encourage the development of more efficient transitions for students as they advance from one institution to another along their educational path. One key accomplishment was the enactment of legislation (SB 1069 in 2007) that established the early graduation scholarship program, which provided \$2,000 of financial aid to students who graduated early from high school and moved promptly into a postsecondary institution. On a grander scale, there is the assumption, expressed by council Co-chair Glasper, that the council will eventually develop a funding model that better aligns financial incentives with the goals that have been set for the state.

The council has made good use of aggregated data to understand the condition of education in the state and to identify unmet needs, including those in the workforce. However, the development of a linked data system has not been a focus of the council.

Accountability for results across sectors has been addressed indirectly through the council. There has been no movement toward building a formal structure of data-driven accountability for P–20 education. However, representatives from K–12 schools and colleges and universities appear to be held accountable publicly for their pursuit of the council’s agenda. As in other states, the distinctions between *institutional* accountability and *student* accountability have not been sorted out clearly. The political disagreements around using the results of the state AIMS (Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards) test as a high school graduation requirement illustrate this issue. In opposing the high-stakes use of the test, parents and teachers feared that students would be held accountable for failing the exam when accountability appropriately belongs with the institutions, or more broadly with the state, for not providing sufficient resources or appropriate curricula that could enable the students to succeed.

The ability of the Governor’s P–20 Council in Arizona to adopt these four policy levers is limited because their authority is limited. Just as they can only advise the governor about her agenda, they can only advise the governor about *how* to accomplish it. It may be too soon to conclude whether the council will be able to move beyond the “what” of determining the agenda to the “how” of implementing it—especially until its sustainability is settled.

Appendix A to Chapter Four

EXECUTIVE ORDER 2005-26
ESTABLISHING THE GOVERNOR'S P-20 COUNCIL OF ARIZONA
(Amending and Superseding Executive Order 2005-19)

WHEREAS, a healthy economy and individual earning potential depends on the quality and availability of education from preschool through adulthood; and

WHEREAS, Arizona's population continues to grow at nearly double the national average, placing greater demand on the state's public elementary, secondary and post-secondary institutions; and

WHEREAS, Arizona employers and educators alike recognize the importance of well-aligned, rigorous educational opportunities to create a workforce that is qualified for high-value jobs that can sustain Arizona's economy and fast-growing service needs into the future; and

WHEREAS, currently only one-third of all college age Arizonans enroll in two or four-year post-secondary institutions, only 50% of those enrolled complete a Bachelors degree, and these statistics place Arizona well below the national average; and

WHEREAS, improved access to and completion of higher education may require new, affordable and more flexible ways of delivering degree programs among and between community colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS, communities, employers and educators across Arizona have begun looking at new ways to address educational rigor and preparation for post-secondary training and college; and

WHEREAS, enhanced student achievement in elementary, secondary and post-secondary institutions, as well as in the workplace, requires a comprehensive, statewide approach to education that ensures opportunities for individual success from pre-school through post-secondary education;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Janet Napolitano, Governor of the State of Arizona, by virtue of the power vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of this State, do hereby create the Governor's P-20 Council of Arizona (the "P-20 Council") and order as follows:

(1) The P-20 Council shall consist of an appropriate number of members to represent the education and workplace communities. The Governor or her designee shall Chair the P-20 Council and appoint all members who shall serve without compensation. Membership shall include but not be limited to the following:

- Not more than four members of the Arizona State Legislature who will serve as ex-officio members;
- The Superintendent of Public Instruction or his designee;
- A Member of the Arizona Board of Regents who is a member of the Joint Conference Committee (JCC);
- Arizona's three State University Presidents;

- Not more than four Community College Representatives, of which at least one shall be a member of the JCC, one shall be a rural community college representative, and one shall be an urban community college representative.
 - Two Superintendents of a Joint Technological Education District, of which at least one shall be a representative of a rural district and one shall be a representative of an urban district;
 - Three P–12 Education representatives, of which at least one shall represent a middle school or junior high school, one shall represent a high school, and one shall represent a charter school;
 - A Member of the Arizona State Board of Education;
 - A Representative of a four-year, private post-secondary institution;
 - A Representative of the Governor’s Council on Innovation and Technology;
 - A Representative of the Governor’s Council on Workforce Policy;
 - Not more than eight members of the public representing parent groups, business and industry;
 - A Representative of the Governor’s School Readiness Board;
 - A Representative actively engaged in high school dropout prevention programs or policy;
 - A Student Representative of a high school or post-secondary institution;
 - A Tribal Representative;
 - Not more than two locally elected officials.
- (2) The P–20 Council shall explore ways Arizona can achieve a more effective, efficient and equitable education pipeline through some or all of the following strategies:
- Aligning high school, college, and work expectations to meet industry-specific skill sets in high growth, high-skill occupations that will bring economic prosperity and diversity to Arizona.
 - Helping students at all levels meet higher standards and prepare for formal education and workforce training beyond high school.
 - Giving all students the excellent teachers and leaders that they need, particularly in the areas of math, science and literacy.
 - Strengthening high school and postsecondary accountability systems to better prepare students for college and increase enrollment and completion rates.
 - Improving middle school and elementary school standards to ensure high school preparedness for math and science.
 - Ensuring clear pathways for all students to obtain college degrees, regardless of point of entry.
 - Assessing the need to expand four-year degree programs at post-secondary institutions.
- (3) Members shall serve for staggered terms of one or two years. Members shall not serve more than two consecutive terms.

- (4) Members, unless otherwise indicated, may not send designees to represent them at the Council meetings. Members who miss more than three consecutive council meetings are subject to replacement at the sole discretion of the Governor.
- (5) The Chairperson may form an executive committee or other committees as necessary.
- (6) The Council shall meet to conduct its affairs at least four times each year at various locations across the state.
- (7) The status of the Council shall be reviewed no later than December 31, 2006 to determine appropriate action for its continuance, modification or termination.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of Arizona.

Janet Napolitano
Governor

Done at the Capitol in Phoenix on this 5th day of October in the Year Two Thousand and Five and of the Independence of the United States of America the Two Hundred and Thirtieth.

ATTEST:

Janice K. Brewer
Secretary of State

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE P–20 COUNCIL

Governor Napolitano and her P–20 Council have been the impetus for planning and garnering support for many policy changes in the state’s education system. The following accomplishments were drawn from the council’s website.

Education Alignment and Assessment

- Recommended that the Arizona State Board of Education (SBE) increase high school graduation requirements from two years of mathematics to four, and from two years of science to three. In following the council’s recommendations, the SBE increased the number of mathematics and science credits needed for graduation. In mathematics, Arizona high school students were required to reach the level of geometry previously; under the new requirements, all Arizona high school graduates will be required to reach the level of algebra II.
- Provided recommendations to increase the rigor of the mathematics standard, which included developing new language for 11th to 12th grades and a bridge to college-level academic work. The P–20 Council is working to develop recommendations for Arizona’s English language arts standard.
- Working to implement the algebra II end of course assessment by May 2008. The first administration of this exam was expected to occur in many of the 15 partner states by that time.
- Commissioned the report, *From Education to Work: Is Arizona Prepared? The Alignment Project Report*, in 2006. This report provided baseline data for many of the council’s recommendations.
- Facilitated discussions and meetings with and between the Arizona Board of Regents and the State Board of Education to address alignment of K–12 curriculum, assessments, and graduation requirements in order to better prepare students for postsecondary education and the workforce.
- Engaged education policy boards in the work of the P–20 Council. Representatives from First Things First (Arizona’s early childhood board), the State Board of Education (K–12) and the Arizona Board of Regents (public higher education) are members of the P–20 Council. Each group provides an update at each P–20 Council meeting.

Teachers

- Completed the report, *Strengthening Teacher Quality and Support: Next Steps for Arizona*, and integrated its recommendations into its work (2007). Following up on the report’s recommendations, Governor Napolitano included teacher pay raises—\$100 million and \$46 million, respectively—in her fiscal year 2006 and 2007 budgets.

- Governor Napolitano's fiscal year 2008 budget included \$4.75 million in grants for STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) teachers and related activities. The State Board of Education received \$2.5 million to promote improved student achievement in math or science by providing supplemental funding for innovative programs. The Arizona Board of Regents received \$2.25 million for scholarships to attract, graduate and retain more teachers in STEM disciplines.
- The governor was expected to build and fund a new, centrally located STEM center that would improve and align STEM education in Arizona to ensure that all Arizona students are prepared to meet the demands of the 21st Century. The STEM center will provide innovative programs, research, training, and communications to assist the state in its STEM education and teaching reform efforts.

Education and Workforce Pathways

- Recommended that the Arizona Department of Education and the State Board of Education implement personalized graduation plans for students. SBE adopted Education and Career Action Plans (ECAPS), which were expected to be required for the entering freshmen of 2009.
- Partnered in hosting the state's first summit on 21st Century skills in October 2007.
- Working to enhance the academic content within Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs of study, in partnership with the Arizona Department of Education. It was expected that the CTE and mathematics standards would be aligned beginning in spring 2008.
- The Legislature created an early college scholarship program that provides grants for students graduating early to attend a postsecondary institution (2007).

Literacy

- Provided scholarships ranging from \$1,500 to \$2,000 for teachers to attain the state Reading Endorsement.
- Created and distributed literacy toolkits for Arizona 4th, 5th and 6th grade teachers through the support of a National Governors Association grant (2008).
- Hosted three regional Adolescent Literacy Forums through the support of a National Governors Association grant (2007).
- Worked with the Alliance for Excellence in Education in the preparation and presentation of the report, *Improving Adolescent Literacy in Arizona* (2005). The report provided a baseline for the work of the Literacy Committee.

Data and Graduation

- Recommended that the Arizona Department of Education and the State Board of Education (SBE) implement personalized graduation plans. SBE has adopted Education and Career Action Plans (ECAPS), which were expected to be required for the entering freshmen of 2009.
- In 2005 the governor signed the National Governors Association's Compact on State High School Graduation Data. The compact committed the state to taking steps to implement a

standard definition for a four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. The Arizona Department of Education has implemented this definition.

- Working to ensure implementation of the 10 Essential Elements of a Longitudinal Data System.⁵ Elements 1, 2, 3, 8, 10 have been implemented. Elements 4, 7, and 9 were in the process of being implemented or the state had the ability to implement them. The committee was working aggressively to effect the implementation of elements 5 and 6.
- Adopted a goal to increase the graduation rate by 12% by the year 2012.

Higher Education

- Commissioned *A Feasibility and Demand Study for the State of Arizona* to identify gaps in access to degrees in all parts of the state. This work has resulted in several collaborative planning efforts, including Arizona Board of Regents, the Arizona Legislature and the P–20 Council.
- Governor Napolitano’s final budget (2007) included an increase in the state contribution to the Arizona Financial Aid Trust.
- Governor Napolitano’s final budget (2007) included increased funding for the private postsecondary grant program.

Communications

- Working to launch a public awareness campaign in fall 2008. This effort was expected to include major foundations, agencies and stakeholders in a coordinated campaign to raise public awareness of the importance of increasing educational alignment and attainment in making Arizona more globally competitive. The campaign, named “Expect More Arizona,” was expected to have a significant paid and free media presence across the state. It was also expected to include an interactive website integrating diverse educational information through one portal.

P–20 Council–Related Legislation

- SB 1512 (signed by governor in 2006) provided \$2.5 million additional funding for the Arizona Department of Education to continue development of Arizona’s data system.
- SB 1045 (signed by governor in 2006) required integration of K–12 student identifier numbers at public universities and community colleges.
- HB 2206 (bill stalled but language included in final budget, 2007). A \$2.25 million teacher student loan program was created to encourage more teachers to enter the fields of mathematics, science and special education.
- SB 1069 (signed by governor in 2007) established the early graduation scholarship program, which was designed to provide an incentive (financial aid of up to \$2,000) for students to graduate early from high school and promptly move into postsecondary education.

⁵ See <http://dataqualitycampaign.org/survey/elements>.