

*Helios Education Foundation believes education changes lives and strengthens communities. As a result, we strategically partner and invest our knowledge, expertise and resources to create opportunities for individuals in Arizona and Florida to succeed in postsecondary education. By fostering a college-going culture and advancing the academic preparedness of all students beginning in early childhood, the Foundation seeks to increase the number of young adults graduating from high school ready for college and career, as well as entering and completing postsecondary education.*



As a gateway to intellectual growth and diverse careers, postsecondary education, including certificates, licenses and degrees, opens the door to opportunities. Studies show that individuals who attain a higher level of education tend to have higher incomes, pay more taxes, are less likely to be unemployed, require fewer state supported services, save more for retirement and in general live longer.<sup>1</sup> In addition, postsecondary education provides the kind of skills and knowledge that are vital to success in today's global economy, including the ability to create, innovate and think critically to solve complex challenges. A skilled and knowledgeable populace is also critical to attracting diverse industries and fueling long-term economic growth and prosperity.<sup>2</sup>

**Our Theory:** If Helios Education Foundation strengthens student supports critical to persistence and aligns pathways to relevant, high-demand careers, then increasing numbers of traditionally underserved students in Arizona and Florida will attain a high-quality postsecondary certificate or degree.

## THE CHALLENGE

Despite the clear benefits of postsecondary education, large numbers of full-time students who intend to achieve a postsecondary credential never do. In Arizona, only 14% of full-time students earn a two-year degree within three years, and less than 60% complete a four-year degree from a public institution within six years.<sup>3</sup> In Florida, 30% of full-time students complete a two-year degree within three years, and 64% complete a four-year degree within six years.<sup>4</sup> In addition, too many Arizona and Florida students require remediation, 59% and 54% respectively, upon entry into college—a leading deterrent to postsecondary completion.<sup>5</sup> In Arizona, only 13% of students complete developmental and related college-level courses within two years.<sup>6</sup> In Florida, only 22% of students in developmental courses go on to complete related college-level content.<sup>7</sup>

By 2020, more than 65% of jobs and the majority of the fastest-growing occupations will require some form of postsecondary education.<sup>8</sup> Current trends show high demand for STEM-related certificates and degrees as well as the associated skills they cultivate.<sup>9</sup> Young adults in Arizona and Florida with certificates and degrees will be best positioned to compete effectively for the opportunities ahead. Thus, helping students see the relevancy of their education to their future and motivating them to postsecondary completion is increasingly important.

Too often, critical student supports, such as academic advising and scholarships, are disconnected from a coherent program of study that leads to a degree and meaningful career advancement.<sup>10</sup> As result, Helios Education Foundation seeks to remove the barriers to success for every student, helping them to prepare for, enroll in and complete postsecondary education by focusing on support for students who need it most (i.e., those requiring remediation); linking postsecondary studies to career aspirations and opportunities in order to inspire student motivation and persistence; and seeking out partnerships and approaches that lead to systemic change, ultimately impacting the lives of more students within postsecondary institutions and programs.

## OUR FOCUS

Although Helios Education Foundation is invested in the success of all students, our emphasis is on helping traditionally underserved populations (first-generation, low-income and rural students, and students of color) to earn a high-quality postsecondary certificate or degree leading to meaningful career opportunities and the ability to contribute to the long-term prosperity of the communities and states we serve. By providing students with academic supports critical to persistence, and aligning supports and systems leading to careers, Helios Education Foundation believes an increased number of traditionally underserved students will attain a high-quality postsecondary certificate or degree. The Foundation is committed to providing clear pathways and critical supports to students working toward degree completion. Building on our lessons learned and research from the field, we will continue providing scholarships for underserved populations, but we will link scholarships to completion and student supports along the way. Our postsecondary investments are informed by research-based strategies and practices to accelerate learning for students who require remediation and provide supports that facilitate the completion of high-quality degrees leading to meaningful and prosperous career opportunities. Helios Education Foundation's priority is to partner strategically and invest our knowledge, expertise and resources to:

- **Construct Scholarships to Support Persistence and Completion** – We support innovative scholarship structures and designs with the potential to improve persistence and completion.
- **Structure Supports to Facilitate Successful Transition to Credit-Bearing Courses** – We work to help students complete developmental education and successfully transition to credit-bearing college coursework through structured supports that enable them to “catch up” while pursuing a certificate or degree.
- **Focus Supports and Guidance on Certificate and Degree Pathways** – We focus supports and guidance on certificate and degree pathways leading to meaningful and prosperous careers so that the path of study is directly tied to career opportunities.

## MEASURING OUR IMPACT

Helios Education Foundation measures its impact within our *Postsecondary Completion* reform priority based on a number of short- and long-term indicators. When we are successful, as defined by our theory of change, we anticipate more Arizona and Florida students will attain a high-quality postsecondary certificate or degree. Internal and external expertise, best practices, practical experience, research and evaluation all inform our work and guide our investment of time, money and talent. To achieve the greatest impact, we work with local and national partners, including public and private institutions, businesses, nonprofits and other foundations. In addition to demonstrating results within our priorities we also seek to add value to our partners, improve systems, shape discussions and lead meaningful change within education in Arizona and Florida.

Note: The terms remediation and developmental education are used interchangeably.

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Note: Sources last accessed July 22, 2015.

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