

Why College Attainment Matters for Arizona

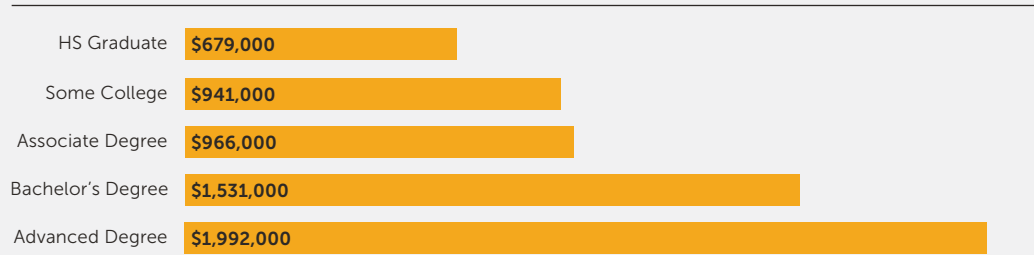
Education after high school is key to a better living and a better life. Arizonans who've gone to college and completed a degree program can expect to earn more, enjoy better health, and benefit from greater access to opportunities. This individual prosperity translates to substantial economic returns. Increasing the number of Arizonans with a college education can yield gains that run into the billions.

Efforts and funding that support increased attainment represent an investment in the present and future of our state. Arizona must make getting to and through college a reality for more students, especially Hispanic/Latino students and students from low-income backgrounds.

Arizona Has Billions to Gain

Increasing college enrollment and completion would benefit Arizona immensely. Based on economic models for the high school class of 2022, the charts below highlight the substantial gains that come from enabling more students to participate and succeed in college.

Lifetime Earnings, by Highest Education Level



College education almost certainly causes higher earnings and labor-market trends show that college-educated workers are better positioned to prosper in all sectors and regions of the Arizona economy.

Arizonans with a bachelor's degree contribute \$982,680 more in lifetime social gains (i.e., gains related to earnings, health, welfare, and workforce productivity) than a high school graduate.

Social Gains Per Cohort From Increasing College Enrollment and Completion (\$ billions)



Fiscal Gains Per Cohort From Increasing College Enrollment and Completion (\$ billions)



The fiscal gains—like higher tax revenues and decreased public spending—from increasing college enrollment by 20 percent would be more than double what Arizona allocated for its public universities in the 2022 General Fund budget.

Present values at age 18; discount rate 3.5%. 2022 dollars.

What We Can Do

Increasing college participation and completion rates—and ensuring that Arizona achieves its 60% college attainment goal by 2030—will require bold action by educators, policymakers, and business and community leaders. Key areas of focus include:

- Strengthening the pipeline to college, such as by expanding investment in [dual enrollment](#)
- Tackling barriers to getting to and through college, through efforts like the [EXCEL Program](#)
- Making college more affordable, for example, by expanding [Arizona Promise](#)

Read more in Helios Education Foundation and Education Forward Arizona's full report, *Billions to Gain*.