

College Ready AZ

Creating a data-driven communication platform to impact educational attainment in Arizona

Sarah Harper
Vice President, Strategic Engagement
Arizona Board of Regents

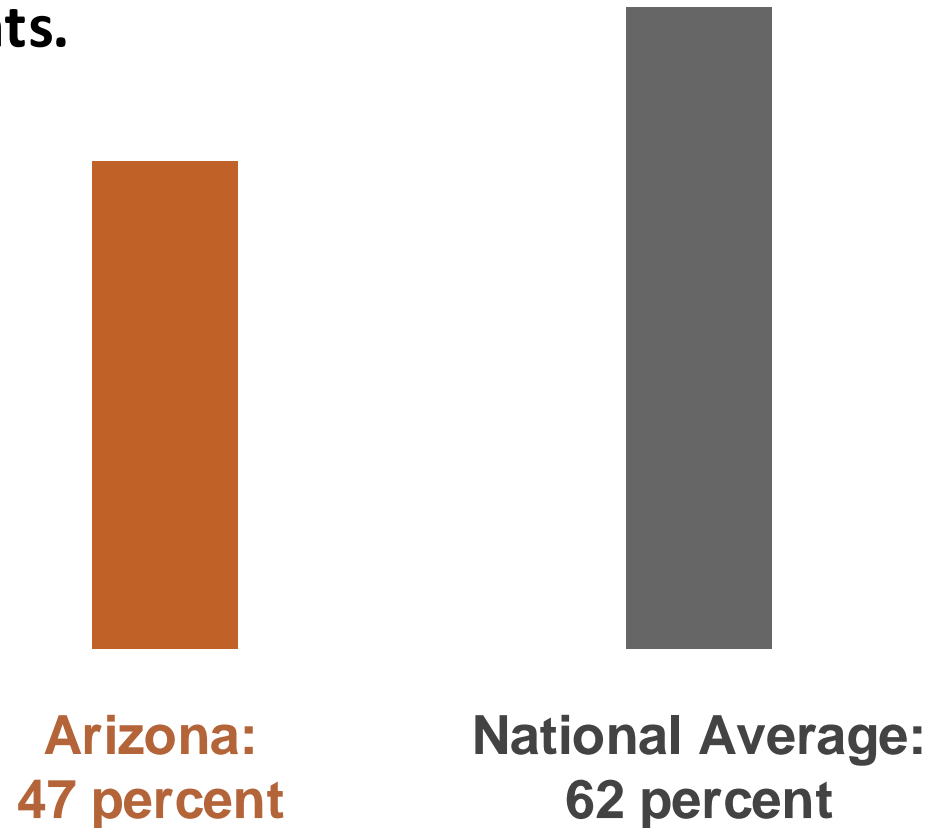
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Overview

- **State of attainment in AZ**
- **Research – Assumptions and initial research**
- **Digging in:**
 - Motivations
 - College planning
 - Perceptions of college
 - Getting to college
 - Barriers
- **Launching College Ready AZ**

Educational Attainment in Arizona

- Less than half of Arizona high school graduates enroll in some form of postsecondary education.
- Arizona consistently trails the national college going rate by **15 percentage points**.



Arizona Four-Year Degree Attainment

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| 9 th Graders | 100 |
| High School Graduates | 81 |
| Four-Year College Enrollments | 24 |
| Bachelor's Degree Completions | 18 |

Only 30.3% of AZ high school graduates successfully complete any postsecondary education.

Projected Arizona Annual Degree Shortfalls

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Annual Demand for Bachelor's Degrees | 68,000 |
| - Bachelor's Degrees from recent graduates | 22,500 |
| - Bachelor's Degrees from in-migration | 19,200 |
| Annual Shortage of Degrees | 26,300 |

Simply by reaching the U.S. average for educational attainment, Arizona would benefit by nearly \$5 billion in additional state and local tax revenues over ten years. Furthermore, fully resolving the bachelor's degree shortage would result in a 10-year cumulative state and local fiscal impact of \$8 billion.

Source: Advancing Arizona's Economy-Investment in Workforce Development, Spring 2022; Rounds Consulting Group, Inc.

Attainment Solutions

1. AZ Promise Program
2. Dual Enrollment
3. AZ Transfer
4. On-Line Access
5. Message Collaboration
6. FAFSA Completions
7. ECAP Curriculum
8. College Ready AZ





Assumptions and Research

Assumptions

- Need for an efficient way to communicate about value of college and to address key issues facing students and families.
- Need for a platform to also assist counselors and teachers in helping students consider, plan for college.
- Cost, value and debt are key concerns facing students and families.
- How do we develop the right messages and platform to help Arizona students and families?
- Essential to gauge attitudes, perceptions and barriers influencing college degree attainment

Initial Research Take-aways

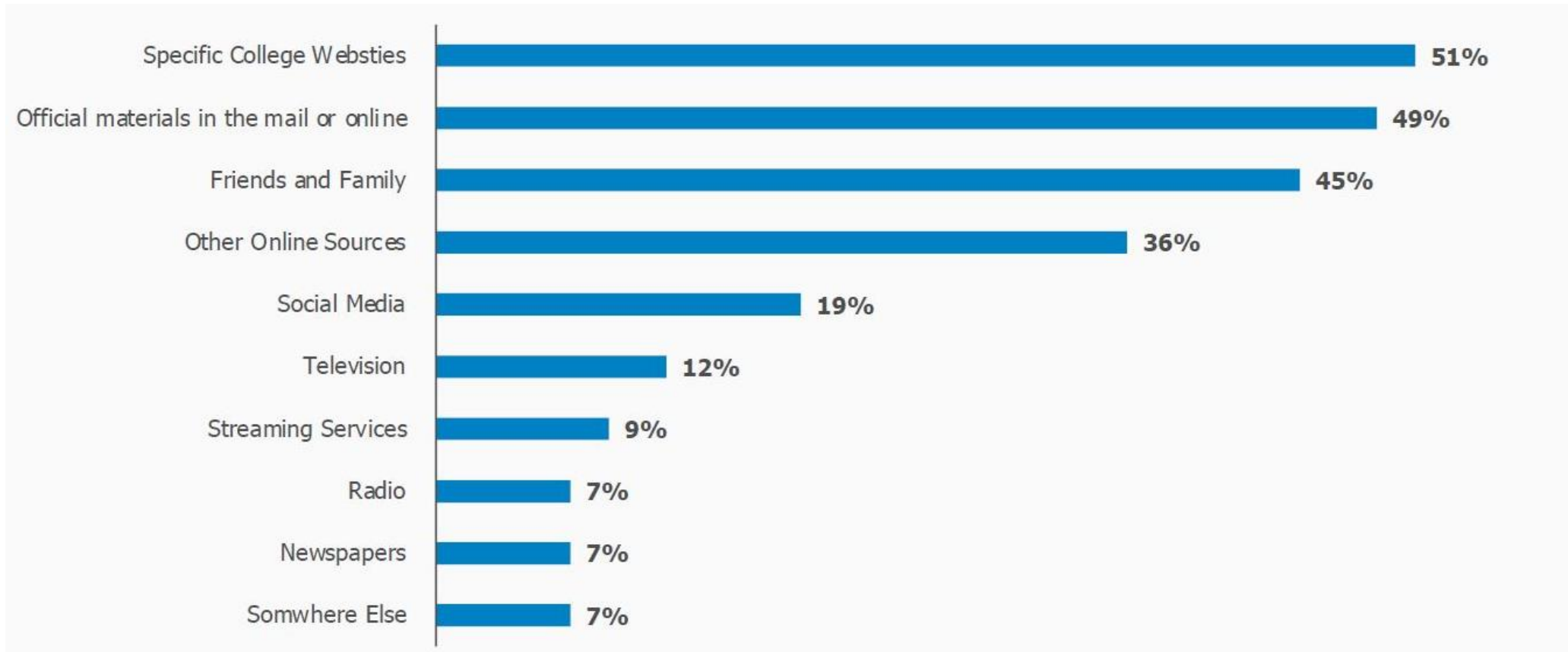
- Over half of graduates (57%) reported having a desire to go to college while in high school; over two-thirds of first-generation graduates reported the same
- Although 60% of Hispanic/Latino HS graduates expressed the desire to go to college, 71% did not apply
- HS graduates were more likely to hear about the benefits of college than about how to get into college
- Among those who say they have been spoken to about college benefits, respondents report counselors and teachers have communicated the benefits most often
- Lower-income households received more information about the benefits of college

Initial Research Take-aways

- Over half, 56 percent of high schoolers received information about how to get into college. Importantly, 36 percent did not.
- Respondents in the \$150k to \$249k income range receive the most information regarding how to get into college
- Over half of HS graduate respondents expressed that affordability is their top factor when making the decision not to attend college.
- A majority agree that the top values of a university degree are its benefits for employment opportunities and its ROI
- Across ethnicities, friends and family whose kids went to college was the number one source of college information.

Research

Parents receive information about sending their kids to college from...





Research – Motivations



Focus Group: Life Goals

Focus group of teens across Arizona asked about goals, how teens would feel about reaching their goals, and what it would take to reach the goals:

Feelings:

“I would feel proud and happy for myself.”

“I would feel very happy and accomplished.”

Requirements:

“Save money, work hard.”

“Find a husband, and study more on art to be able to have those skills.”

“Start college, get engaged, find work.”

“The steps I’m going to take my GED maybe thinking about going to college to learn about it more.”



Mixed-mode Survey: Motivation Key Findings

- “Happiness” is the critical goal for teens. College-likely teens are more likely to believe they can achieve happiness through work.
- The less college-likely teen appears to want more “balance.” Adjusting to a younger generation’s definition of happiness is required.
- Teens planning on college do prioritize success at work as something they value highly.

Mixed-mode Survey: Motivation

Parents and students well aligned on goals for the future.

%Very Important

“How important is each of the following to your/your child’s life?”

| | Teens | Parents |
|--|-------|---------|
| Having a happy family life | 76% | 86% |
| Being able to find steady work | 70% | 82% |
| Having free time to enjoy my/his/her own interests | 69% | 60% |
| Getting a good education | 69% | 68% |
| Being successful in my/his/her line of work | 67% | 68% |
| Having strong friendships | 67% | 65% |
| Finding the right person to marry | 64% | 61% |
| Becoming an expert in my/his/her field of work | 50% | 42% |
| Having lots of money | 44% | 19% |
| Helping other people in my/his/her community | 42% | 44% |
| Having children | 31% | 18% |

(Very Important/Somewhat Important/Not Too Important/Not At All Important)

Thinking About the Future: Some gender differences in life objectives.

| | %Very Important | |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|
| | Male Teens (49%) | Female Teens (48%) |
| Having a happy family life | 77% | 76% |
| Being able to find steady work | 72% | 68% |
| Having free time to enjoy my/his/her own interests | 66% | 72% |
| Getting a good education | 62% | 78% |
| Being successful in my/his/her line of work | 63% | 72% |
| Having strong friendships | 59% | 73% |
| Finding the right person to marry | 57% | 74% |
| Becoming an expert in my/his/her field of work | 49% | 55% |
| Having lots of money | 50% | 39% |
| Helping other people in my/his/her community | 37% | 49% |
| Having children | 36% | 27% |

Thinking About the Future: Also some modest differences by ethnicity.

| | %Very Important | | |
|--|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | White Teens (45%) | Hispanic Teens (36%) | Teens of Color (55%) |
| Having a happy family life | 81% | 72% | 73% |
| Being able to find steady work | 70% | 74% | 71% |
| Having free time to enjoy my/his/her own interests | 64% | 75% | 73% |
| Getting a good education | 62% | 69% | 75% |
| Being successful in my/his/her line of work | 63% | 65% | 71% |
| Having strong friendships | 60% | 66% | 72% |
| Finding the right person to marry | 59% | 66% | 68% |
| Becoming an expert in my/his/her field of work | 49% | 49% | 51% |
| Having lots of money | 42% | 48% | 46% |
| Helping other people in my/his/her community | 37% | 37% | 47% |
| Having children | 38% | 25% | 26% |

Those who plan on going to college prioritize work life.

| <i>Among Teens</i> | %Very Important | | |
|--|-----------------------|------------------|--------------|
| | Plan on College (65%) | Other Plan (23%) | Unsure (12%) |
| Having a happy family life | 79% | 69% | 75% |
| Being able to find steady work | 76% | 50% | 79% |
| Having free time to enjoy my/his/her own interests | 66% | 70% | 86% |
| Getting a good education | 77% | 55% | 56% |
| Being successful in my/his/her line of work | 71% | 56% | 67% |
| Having strong friendships | 69% | 74% | 42% |
| Finding the right person to marry | 67% | 65% | 47% |
| Becoming an expert in my/his/her field of work | 53% | 50% | 36% |
| Having lots of money | 46% | 48% | 27% |
| Helping other people in my/his/her community | 49% | 36% | 20% |
| Having children | 39% | 16% | 20% |



College Planning

College Planning Key Findings

- Males, lower income respondents, and kids of color are all less likely to say that college is part of their future plan.
- Females and white respondents are most likely to say they will attend a 4-year college.
- A large percentage of teens (36%) plan to take time off before going to college. They are at odds with their parents on this issue. Does this raise a concern about re-engaging them after time off? Fewer males and teens of color plan to attend college immediately after high school.
- As teens get older, they are more likely to consider a 2-year college.
- Interestingly, parents are more likely than teens to consider the 2-year college.

Source: Public Opinion Strategies. (2024, April). ABOR College Motivation Survey.

Post Graduation Expectations: About two-thirds in our teen universe envision themselves going to college.

“After you/your child graduate high school, what do you expect (him/her) to do next:”

| | Teens | Parents |
|---|------------|------------|
| Go to college | 65% | 60% |
| Work a full-time job | 14% | 9% |
| Attend a trade or technical school | 8% | 12% |
| Join the military | 1% | 3% |
| Are you not sure | 12% | 17% |

The differentiator among parents is the grades of their child; little differences between likelihood of two- or four-years among other groups.

| <i>Among Parents</i> | Mean Score | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | 2-Year College | 4-Year College |
| Overall | 6.1 | 6.5 |
| Dads (45%) | 6.1 | 6.9 |
| Moms (55%) | 6.2 | 6.1 |
| White (47%) | 6.1 | 6.5 |
| Hispanic (39%) | 6.4 | 6.5 |
| Total Parents of Color (53%) | 6.2 | 6.5 |
| Grades: Mostly A's (24%) | 5.9 | 8.1 |
| Grades: Mix of A's/B's (37%) | 6.6 | 7.0 |
| Grades: Mostly B's (13%) | 6.6 | 6.3 |
| Grades: Mix of B's/C's (14%) | 6.1 | 5.0 |
| Grades: Lower (12%) | 4.7 | 3.6 |
| Family Income: <\$65K (39%) | 5.8 | 6.0 |
| Family Income: \$65K+ (59%) | 6.4 | 6.8 |

Teens are more certain than parents on a four-year plan.

“Are you/your child more likely to go to a two-year college or a four-year college?”

| | Teens | Parents |
|--|-------------|------------|
| Much more likely to go to a four-year college | 37% | 26% |
| Somewhat more likely to go to a four-year college | 19% | 19% |
| Total Four-Year College | 56% | 45% |
| Total Two-Year College | 31%^ | 38% |
| Somewhat more likely to go to a two-year college | 12% | 18% |
| Much more likely to go to a two-year college | 18% | 20% |

^Denotes rounding



Perceptions of College

Perceptions of College Key Findings

The Necessity of College Education: Teens and parents are not sold on college value.

| | Teens | Parents |
|---|-------|---------|
| <i>“A college education is necessary for a person to be successful in today’s work world”</i> | 44% | 40% |
| <i>...or...</i> | | |
| <i>“There are many ways to succeed in today’s work world without a college education”</i> | 46% | 49% |

The Necessity of College Education: Male teens in particular are more circumspect about college value.

Teens

| | Total Education is Necessary | Total Ways to Succeed Without Education |
|---|------------------------------|---|
| Overall | 44% | 46% |
| Male (49%) | 44% | 49% |
| Female (48%) | 47% | 40% |
| White Males (25%) | 49% | 48% |
| White Females (18%) | 58% | 34% |
| Male Teens of Color (24%) | 39% | 51% |
| Female Teens of Color (30%) | 40% | 44% |
| Plans After High School: College (65%) | 57% | 33% |
| Plans After High School: Other (23%) | 16% | 72% |
| Plans After High School: Unsure (12%) | 25% | 71% |

The Necessity of College Education: Even college educated parents are divided on college value to success.

Parents

| | Total Education is Necessary | Total Ways to Succeed Without Education |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Overall | 40% | 49% |
| White Dads (23%) | 48% | 43% |
| White Moms (24%) | 28% | 60% |
| Dads of Color (22%) | 36% | 54% |
| Moms of Color (31%) | 48% | 41% |
| Family Income: <\$65K (39%) | 40% | 50% |
| Family Income: \$65K+ (59%) | 40% | 49% |
| High School or Less (25%) | 44% | 39% |
| Some College (40%) | 29% | 60% |
| College+ (35%) | 51% | 43% |



Getting to College



Getting to College Key Findings

- Teens feel like they have someone to trust to communicate with about college.
- Parents feel their children communicate with them well about their future plans.
- School resources fall down the list of important trusted resources in providing college information. But they are more likely sources than parents for first-generation students, and these students feel more encouraged to go to college by a counselor or teacher.
- Parents who have not attended college feel slightly less confident in their approach to college for their student but are still proactive in the process.
- Parents generally say they are proactive in the college decision process.

Family and friends are most important resources for teens.

“Do you feel like you have someone you trust to talk to about your plans for after graduation?”

Yes 93%

“Who do you talk to about your plans for after graduation? Please select all that apply.”

| | Teens |
|--|-------|
| Your parent(s) | 77% |
| Your friends | 48% |
| Another family member | 34% |
| A teacher | 33% |
| A high school counselor | 24% |
| A coach or scout | 8% |
| Your employer | 4% |
| A counselor hired by your family to help you prepare for college admission | 3% |
| A military recruiter | 1% |

Teens that do talk to someone at school have found it helpful.

“Have you talked to a school counselor or teacher about the possibility of going to college?”

Yes 60%

No 40%

“Were they helpful to you?”

| <i>Among Have Talked (N=166)</i> | Teens |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Very Helpful | 55% |
| Somewhat Helpful | 35% |
| Total Helpful | 90% |
| Total Not Helpful | 10% |
| Not Too Helpful | 9% |
| Not Helpful At All | 1% |

Parents attach less importance to college right after high school than counselors.

“What do the following people think is the most important thing for you to do right after high school?”

| <i>By %Should Go to College</i> | Teens |
|--|------------|
| Your mother | 43% |
| Your father | 39% |
| A school counselor or teacher you trust | 50% |



Parents do not hesitate to be proactive.

“Which describes your role better in providing guidance to your child for their plans after high school?”

You wait for them to approach you with their plans.

18%

You proactively provide advice and suggestions for what they should consider.

78%

You have not yet discussed these plans with your child.

5%

There is slightly less confidence among lower income parents, but they are still proactive in their approach.

| | Parents | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------------|
| | %Proactive | %Total Confident |
| Overall | 78% | 82% |
| Family Income: <\$65K (39%) | 79% | 73% |
| Family Income: \$65K+ (59%) | 78% | 87% |
| Family Attended College (68%) | 76% | 89% |
| Family No College (30%) | 82% | 70% |



Barriers



Key Findings

- Parents and teens are most likely to agree in higher numbers with the statement that “getting a college degree is a large time commitment.” They are more likely to agree with this statement than they are with statements about getting into an enjoyable career or earning higher pay.
- They also are more likely to agree that “college is expensive and not sure how to pay for it.” This is particularly true among teens of color, first-generation students, and lower income teens.
- Male teens and first-generation students are more likely to say they need to make money rather than go to school and question their social/emotional preparedness for college.
- The most important thing parents and teens feel they need to understand about college are ways to pay for it.
- After ways to pay for it, there are some gender and college experience (household) variations in what teens feel would be the most valuable information to them.
- A large percentage of teens (72%) and parents (79%) say they would view the College Ready AZ website.

Teens of color, first-generation, lower income express higher agreement about college expense uncertainty.

“College is expensive and I am not sure how I would pay for it.”

| <i>By %Total Agree (4-5)</i> | Teens |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Overall | 58% |
| White (45%) | 56% |
| Hispanic (36%) | 69% |
| Total Teens of Color (55%) | 60% |
| Family Attended College (45%) | 44% |
| Family No College (40%) | 76% |
| Family Income: <\$65K (30%) | 65% |
| Family Income: \$65K+ (38%) | 48% |

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1

2

3

4

5

Attributes Where Teens and Parents Disagree With Each Other

| <i>Ranked by Mean Among Teens</i> | Teens | | Parents | |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Mean | %4-5 | Mean | %4-5 |
| I need to help support my family. | 3.5 | 51% | 1.9 | 17% |
| I would rather/prefer that my child work and make money than go to school. | 3.3 | 43% | 2.2 | 13% |
| I am not sure I am prepared socially and emotionally to go to college. | 3.1 | 43% | 2.6 | 27% |

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1

2

3

4

5

Attributes Where Students and Parents Are More Likely to Agree to Disagree

| <i>Ranked by Mean Among Teens</i> | Teens | | Parents | |
|--|-------|------|---------|------|
| | Mean | %4-5 | Mean | %4-5 |
| I do not know what I want to do in life so college may not be right for me. | 2.9 | 36% | 2.7 | 27% |
| I am not sure I am prepared academically to go to college and be successful. | 2.9 | 32% | 2.5 | 24% |
| College is not necessary for the job I want to have. | 2.7 | 26% | 2.6 | 21% |

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1

2

3

4

5

Ways to Pay: It crosses all subgroups.

“Ways to pay for college, including scholarship information, grant information, and financial aid.”

| | Mean Score | |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|
| | Teens | Parents |
| Overall | 8.2 | 8.1 |
| White | 8.1 | 8.0 |
| Hispanic | 8.2 | 8.3 |
| Total People of Color | 8.2 | 8.3 |
| Family Income: <\$65K | 8.3 | 8.1 |
| Family Income: \$65K+ | 8.3 | 8.0 |
| Family Attended College | 8.3 | 8.1 |
| Family No College | 8.1 | 8.2 |

Not At All Important Neutral Very Important
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

College Information: Teens by Gender

| <u>Mean Score</u> | Teens | |
|--|----------------|------------------|
| | Males (49%) | Females (48%) |
| Areas of study at Arizona colleges and universities. | 7.2 | 7.2 |
| Social life, friendships, and making connections at Arizona colleges and universities. | 7.4 | 6.8 |
| The college application process including someone to ask specific questions. | 7.1 | 7.3 |
| The college application process and timelines. | 6.8 | 7.3 |
| Loan programs to help pay for college. | 7.0 | 6.8 |
| Information about the colleges and universities in Arizona and what makes them unique. | 7.2 | 6.8 |
| How college graduates are helping their communities. | 6.4 | 6.8 |

Not At All Important

Neutral

Very Important

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10



Launching College Ready AZ

Key Takeaways

- Happiness (76% teen / 86% parent) and getting a good education (69% teen/ 68% parent) scored higher than having lots of money (44% teen / 19% parent).
- HS graduates receive more information about benefits of college than about **how to get into college**
- Counselors are key pathway for getting information for college
- Parents and teens have different ideas – we need to communicate differently with both
- Affordability is a key factor in deciding NOT to go to college
- A large percentage of teens (72%) and parents (79%) say they would view the College Ready AZ website.

Source: Public Opinion Strategies. (2024, April). ABOR College Motivation Survey.

College Ready AZ Goal + Guiding Philosophy

- Increase knowledge of college readiness and planning among students and families and encourage a college going culture to drive educational attainment in AZ.
 - Create a one-stop shop website (English/Spanish) that provides content to help Arizonans gain the knowledge needed for college readiness at AZ public universities
 - Use a data-driven approach to understand barriers to and motivations for going to college and to inform: site content, useability, user experience, communications, marketing and outreach.
 - Develop a platform that becomes a hub and brand for statewide attainment initiatives.
 - Utilize the website to leverage partnerships and third-party communication channels.

College Ready AZ Audiences

- Primary - Arizona students (7th - 12th graders) and their families who need knowledge about all aspects of college preparation in order to understand that they can qualify, afford and succeed at an ABOR university.
- Secondary 1 - All Arizona students (8th - 12th graders) and their families already ready for college to encourage in-state enrollment at ABOR universities.
- Secondary 2 - High school teachers, guidance counselors and community partners working to advance degree attainment in Arizona.



College Ready AZ Tone/Personality/Visual Identity

- Adopt a welcoming tone and convey positive, motivational and inspirational messaging.
- Simplify messaging and eliminate “overwhelming” feeling when approaching the website.
- Tailor content for audiences – from students and families just starting their planning journey, to educators and counselors -- The Basics, Get Ready, Next Steps
-





[Why College Matters](#)

[Plan](#) ▾

[Afford](#) ▾

[Apply](#) ▾

[Attend](#) ▾

[AZ Universities](#) ▾

[Request Information](#)

Arizona, let's get ready for college!

College Ready AZ makes it easy to plan and apply for college at Arizona's public universities. Use this website to find all the information you need to help create the future you deserve.



Sharing the message

- Social media
- College Ready AZ ambassadors
- Outreach
- Marketing
- Counselor curriculum
- Mental health awareness
- Third-party partnerships
 - Cactus League Partnership
 - Department of Economic Security
 - AHCCCS



Source: Public Opinion Strategies. (2024, April). ABOR College Motivation Survey.

Reach and Engagement: College Ready AZ

- 530K views since launch.
- 8k requests for information.
- Supports Arizona Promise Program marketing – 100+M impressions
- FAFSA completion efforts – 16M impressions
- Most visited: AZ Promise, FAFSA, tuition, admission

Next Steps

- Qualitative testing utilizing long-format, synchronous website interviews to gauge user experience, including middle/high school students, parents and a guidance counselor.
- Quantitative testing of the website, via a surveying of AZ high school students and their parents. Capture overall communication preferences of parents and students will be captured.
- Overhaul content to ensure responsive to research, engage community colleges
- Enhance email journey for RFI submitters
- Expand partnerships
- Create pages specifically for parents and counselors/educators
- Launch marketing campaign