

**The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education (ACPE)  
2004 Annual Report**

***Expanding Access and Increasing Success in Postsecondary  
Education for Arizona Citizens***

Submitted December 28, 2004  
Dr. April L. Osborn, Executive Director

**Introduction**

In 2004 the 16 Commissioners appointed by the Governor to the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education (ACPE) initiated a strategic planning process. A roster of the current ACPE Commissioners follows this introduction. The purpose of developing a plan was to focus the activity of this small agency and its five staff members in order to increase productivity and impact in the areas of its statutory authority. The mission and goals were accepted by Commissioners in October of 2004 and the staff was asked to develop an action plan, including performance measures, for review by the Commissioners at the first ACPE meeting in 2005. The plan will be revised each year through 2009.

The Commissioners examined the ACPE statutes and identified a mission of *expanding access and increasing success in postsecondary education for Arizona citizens*. Three goals were named to achieve this mission: (1) increase available student financial resources, (2) implement strategies to help students and their families plan, enter, and succeed in postsecondary education, and (3) provide a forum for all sectors of higher education to dialogue, partner, and problem solve issues of mutual interest. The third goal is to be supported through policy analysis and research, as well as collaborative action taken by task forces.

The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education staff has identified efficient and effective administration of the financial assistance programs under their management as the primary strategy to achieve Goal 1. Strategies employed to achieve Goals 2 and 3 include developing opportunities through partnerships, grants, and collaborative efforts to leverage ACPE resources in order to forward its mission.

The strategies of efficient and effective administration and leveraging resources through collaboration and partnerships are born of necessity, as the agency receives less than \$20,000 of state general funds for agency operations. Program administration fees, donations, and grants fund the operational budget of the agency.

This ACPE annual report is organized in three sections, each section describes the activities and services related to each of the three goals. The conclusion summarizes how the agency focuses its work on the defined mission.

# Commissioners 2004

## Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education

Michael R. Rooney, Chair  
Attorney at Law  
Sacks Tierney, P.A.

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Dean, College of Education  
Arizona State University

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Associate Provost for Student Affairs  
Northern Arizona University

Dr. Karen A. Nicodemus  
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Cochise College

Charles Blagg  
Director  
United States Truck Driving School, Inc.

Michael A. Smith  
Executive Director  
Toni & Guy Academy

Teri Candelaria  
Executive Director  
Arizona Board for Private Postsecondary Education

Joel Sideman  
Executive Director  
Arizona Board of Regents

## Commission Staff

Dr. April L. Osborn  
Executive Director

Toni Fleisher  
Program Specialist

Mila Zaporteza  
Business & Student Financial Assistance Manager

Michael Smith  
Student Financial Assistance Specialist

Jessica Sloan  
Communications Specialist

## Goal 1: Increasing available student financial resources

Core responsibilities of the ACPE are related to postsecondary student financial assistance programs. These responsibilities include (1) administration of Leveraging Education Partnership (LEAP), (2) administration of the Private Postsecondary Financial Assistance Program (PFAP), (3) management of grant repayment programs, (4) oversight of the state student loan guarantor, and (5) management of the Arizona Family College Savings Program. In addition, the reader will find a description of a state wide collaborative effort led by the ACPE to seek additional sources of student financial assistance through the work of the Need Based Financial Aid Task Force in the Goal 3 section of the report.

### 1.1 Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP)

The LEAP program, formerly known as the State Student Incentive Grant or SSIG program, has been in existence in Arizona since 1972. The LEAP program is a grant that assists eligible students with substantial financial need, enabling them to pursue higher education goals. The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education administers the program, ensuring adherence to all federal regulations and the Arizona Administrative Code.

The U.S. Department of Education assigns allotments based on a state's 1976 postsecondary education enrollment figures; each state, in turn, must match this allotment through appropriated state funds. Eligible postsecondary institutions then provide funds to match those appropriated by the state. Public and private institutions are eligible to apply to be reviewed by the ACPE for eligibility to receive these funds.

Federal guidelines require that the total LEAP award to a student may not be more than \$2,500 or less than \$100 for each program year. If the student withdraws, is expelled, or is reduced below half time status, the institution is to collect the award and return it to the Commission. The Commission then issues a credit to the institution's LEAP fund account.

A table follows titled Six Year Summary of LEAP Awards. It illustrates the changes in the state LEAP program over time.

**Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP)**  
**Six Year Summary of LEAP Awards**  
**F/Y 1998-2004**

<u>LEAP Awards Distributed:</u>	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Total Funds Awarded	\$2,731,119	\$2,727,078	\$2,990,497	\$2,811,845	\$2,838,854	\$2,864,937
Number of Awards Distributed	4,189	3,784	4,595	3,805	3,700	4,357
Average Award Amount	\$652	\$721	\$651	\$739	\$767	\$658

The state of Arizona LEAP administration is decentralized; therefore, the Commission delegates certain functions to participating institutions. The ACPE establishes eligibility and determines a proportional distribution of funds (based on the number of students) to institutions. LEAP recipients are selected by the institutions on the basis of substantial financial need established through federal and state statute.

Therefore, the changes in the size of the award and the number of grants given are partially determined by each postsecondary institution according to their enrollment plan. Decisions by the institution, within federal parameters, on how best to use the money to assist students works for both students and institutions. This decentralized system has been successful for the 40+ institutions participating each year.

On-site LEAP program compliance audits are performed every two years by ACPE staff. The last compliance audits started in May and will be finished in early 2005.

In 2004 more than 4,000 Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP) awards were provided to 43 postsecondary institutions totaling \$2.9 million in leveraged financial aid (state, federal, and institutional) to financially needy students. Institutional distribution of LEAP awards in 2004 resulted in the following distribution percentages: 33% to public universities, 51% to community colleges, 14% to proprietary schools, and 2% to private colleges.

Annual performance measures collected through anonymous surveys from institutional financial aid administrators have consistently indicated 95% or greater satisfaction with administration of this program by the ACPE.

## **1.2 Private Postsecondary Education Student Financial Assistance (PFAP)**

The Arizona Private Postsecondary Education Student Financial Assistance (PFAP) program was initiated in the Spring of 1997. This program was designed to encourage community college graduates to enroll in and graduate from baccalaureate degree granting private postsecondary institutions; thereby realizing a savings to the State of Arizona.

By statute (ARS 15-1852) and Arizona Administrative Code rules (R7-3-401 through R7-3-405), the PFAP program provides up to \$1,500 per fiscal year to eligible Arizona community college graduates (i.e., Associate Degrees) who prove financial need and who enroll as a full-time student in a baccalaureate degree program at an accredited, baccalaureate degree-granting private postsecondary educational institution in Arizona.

The PFAP program funding was reduced in 2003 from \$318,000 to \$170,500, resulting in fewer students receiving the grant. In response to the limited funding, a pilot program has been instituted. This pilot program limits the maximum grant to \$1,000 and requires reapplication for a second year grant. These changes are being tested in order to make grants available to more students to meet the original intent of the PFAP program.

Approximately 1,000 students have benefited from the PFAP program since the program inception. The current program graduation rate is 90.7%, and the current percentage of students from whom repayment is sought is 9.3%. The students from whom repayment is sought received the grant, but did not complete a bachelors degree.

Annual performance measures collected through anonymous surveys from postsecondary institution administrators of the PFAP program have consistently indicated 95% or greater satisfaction with administration of this program by the ACPE.

### **1.3 Student Financial Assistance Repayment Programs**

The Commission administers repayment programs for the Private Postsecondary Education Student Financial Assistance Program (PFAP), the Paul Douglas Teacher Scholarship (PDTs), and the Arizona Teacher Incentive Program (ATIP). All former financial assistance program participants are provided three opportunities to comply with the repayment demands placed on them by federal or state guidelines. The Office of the Attorney General is used for collections only as a last resort when all other efforts have been exhausted. A brief summary of each of these repayment programs follows.

There have been 1,034 students awarded the PFAP grant. Of those, 618 recipients have fulfilled their obligation by receiving their bachelor's degree in the three year allotted time frame. There are currently 63 former recipients in repayment status. Of those, 28 are actively making payments to the Commission; 34 have been referred to the Office of the Attorney General, and 1 loan was forgiven. All others are presently enrolled and are pursuing their bachelors degree.

Of the 245 former PDTs recipients, 17 are currently in repayment, 2 are in deferment, and 3 are making payments through the Office of the Attorney General. All others have completed their obligation by fulfilling the teaching requirements of the program, or by repaying their loan in full. Of the 101 former ATIP recipients, 2 are currently in repayment, and 1 has been referred to the Office of the Attorney General. All others have completed their obligation by fulfilling the teaching requirements of the program, or by repaying their loan in full.

All funds recouped for the PDTs program are forwarded to the U.S. Department of Education in June of each year, and any monies received for the ATIP program are deposited into the State general fund. PFAP repayment funds received are put back into the PFAP grant fund. Any funds recouped by the Arizona Office of the Attorney General are returned to the Commission less their 35% recovery fee.

### **1.4 Arizona Oversight of State Student Loan Guarantor**

Through the US Department of Education financial institutions are named and then approved by the Governor to be designated as the state student loan guarantor. In 2004, USA Funds was re-designated to serve as the Arizona State Student Loan Guarantor. The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education is named through statute to provide oversight of the designated entity.

As the Arizona State Guarantor for student loans, USA Funds guaranteed \$632 million in new educational loans granted to 68,000 students and 4,900 parents in FY 2003. Due to the increasing costs of postsecondary education, loans are becoming a significant source of funding to which students and families turn for higher education costs.

### **1.5 Arizona Family College Savings Program (AFCSP)**

The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education administers the Arizona Family College Savings Program (AFCSP). The AFCSP was established as Arizona's qualified tuition program under section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code (also referred to as a QTP or Qualified Tuition Program) in 1997. The AFCSP began accepting accounts in 1999.

The purpose of a section 529 plan is to provide to families a tax benefit for saving money for the higher education of their child or other family members. The earnings on these savings are tax free when used for qualified educational expenses. Qualified expenses include tuition, supplies, equipment, books, room, and board at any accredited public or private college/university, community college, proprietary or vocational/career/technical postsecondary educational institution in the United States.

The Arizona Family College Savings Program has undergone significant changes in the past year. HB 2593 established the AFCSP trust fund, revised the membership of the AFCSP Oversight Committee, revised definitions of terms, and exempted the process for selection of the AFCSP financial institutions from the state procurement code requirements of Title 41, Chapter 23. In addition, an increase of \$60,000 was appropriated for administration of the growing program. Revenues to administer the AFCSP are received from one-time fees of \$13.00 per each new account.

The number of annual new accounts opened in the AFCSP during 2004 (through November) was 14,715. As of November of 2004 the number of AFCSP accounts totals 44,145: and the assets under management are more than \$231 million. A report of the New Accounts by Year and Dollars Under Management is included at the end of this section of the report.

An Oversight Committee comprised of 10 members is responsible for review of the program rules, statute language revisions, and selection and oversight of financial providers for the AFCSP. The Oversight Committee makes recommendations to the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education for the management of the AFCSP. In the 2004 legislative session a revision of the membership of the AFCSP Oversight Committee was undertaken and members with specific credentials were named including a certified financial planner, a certified public accountant, and an attorney certified in estates and trusts. A current roster of the AFCSP Oversight Committee follows.

**Oversight Committee  
Arizona Family College Savings Program**

Dale Walters, Chair  
Public Member - Financial Planner  
Keats, Connelly & Associates, Inc.

John P. Garcia  
CPA  
Dial Corporation

Roger D. Curley  
Attorney at Law  
Curley & Allison LLP

Laura Palmer Noone  
State Board - Private Postsecondary Ed  
President, University of Phoenix

E. Blaine Vance  
Deputy Treasurer  
State Treasurers Office

Pamela Chan  
Public Member  
Sr. Vice President & CFO - Choice Bank

Michael McCartney  
Public Member – Financial Planner

Phillip Hofling  
Arizona Corporation Commission  
Asst. Director – Securities Division

Certified Financial Planner  
(Pending Appointment)

President or Chancellor of C.C. District  
(Pending Appointment)

Current financial providers for the AFCSP were selected through the State Procurement Office Request for Proposals (RFP) process in 2003, using a Selection Committee comprised of Oversight Committee members. Both the AFCSP Oversight Committee and the ACPE approved these selections. The five providers named in the fall of 2003 RFP are listed below.

- The College Savings Bank (offers a CD, only)
- Securities Management & Research, Inc. (offers mutual funds)
- Waddell & Reed Financial Services (offers mutual funds)
- Pacific Life (offers mutual funds)
- Fidelity Investments (pending finalization of management contract)

Fidelity Investments, the newest financial institution, is currently in management contract negotiations with the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education and product development is expected to be undertaken in early 2005.

The recent changes in the Arizona Family College Savings Program (AFCSP) statutes accomplishes three goals: (1) clearly defines the oversight role of the state, (2) strengthens the Oversight Committee through defined expertise of members, and (3) exempts solicitation of financial institutions from the procurement code restrictions. The increased appropriation has allowed a nationally recognized legal firm with expertise in securities law to be contracted, in consultation with the Arizona Attorney General's Office, to guide the implementation of the statute revisions named in HB 2593.

A report titled New Accounts and Dollars Under Management Chart follows.

**Arizona Family College Savings Program**  
**New Accounts Opened and Dollars Under Management**  
**FY 1999/2000 through November 30, 2004**

	FY 1999/2000	FY 2000/2001	CY 2002	CY 2003	Jan 1 - Nov 30, 2004	TOTAL
<b>Financial Institution Number of Accounts:</b>						
College Savings Bank	112	222	1,495	798	747	3,374
Securities Management & Research	215	383	756	368	1,014	2,736
Waddell & Reed	0	0	13,946	10,172	11,081	35,199
Pacific Life	0	0	0	963	1,873	2,836
<b>Total Number of Accounts by Year:</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>16,197</b>	<b>12,301</b>	<b>14,715</b>	<b>44,145</b>

**Dollars Under Management:**

College Savings Bank	\$65,205,517
Securities Management & Research	\$7,138,983
Waddell & Reed	\$143,119,390
Pacific Life	\$16,342,142
<b>Total Dollars Invested as of 11/30/04:</b>	<b>\$231,806,032</b>

**Average Account Contribution Amount:**

College Savings Bank	\$24,821.28
Securities Management & Research	\$2,609.27
Waddell & Reed	\$4,118.66
Pacific Life	\$5,762.39



## **Goal 2: Implement strategies to help students and families plan, enroll, and succeed in postsecondary education**

The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education endeavors to expand access and success in postsecondary education for Arizona families. Providing information for decision-making, initiating programs to assist students and families access financial assistance, and supporting similar efforts are strategies used to assist Arizona families, adults and K-12 students. Almost every parent holds the dream of college attendance for their child. The ACPE enters into programs and partnerships to assist parents and students as they plan for their dream. It is realistic planning with appropriate and accurate information that will assure the child is academically ready, the family financially prepared, and the student expectations are in line with the realities of postsecondary education. Adult and returning students are included in program planning as well.

### **2.1 Arizona College and Career Guide (ACCG)**

The Arizona College & Career Guide (ACCG) lists all Arizona public and private postsecondary institutions including proprietary, vocational, and career schools. Each school listing includes course offerings, length of study, costs to attend, and financial aid programs available. This document is the single source of this information for the state and is widely used by K-12 counselors, high school students, higher education institutions, and the information seeking public. The ACPE has compiled and disseminated the publication since 1975.

This year 10,000 copies of the ACCG were printed for free distribution to public schools, libraries, state agencies, prisons, and higher education institutions. In addition, the ACCG is available online at the ACPE Web site, [www.azhighered.org](http://www.azhighered.org). Publication and distribution cost of the ACCG (\$21,390) are financed through paid advertising in the publication and per individual book fees (\$5 each or \$3 for ten copies or more).

### **2.2 Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education (ACPE) Website**

The ACPE website serves as a resource for links to information about educational agencies and institutions, financial aid, savings programs, and a myriad of local and national resources for parents, students, and the public-at-large seeking resources regarding higher education. The ACPE web site can be viewed at [www.azhighered.org](http://www.azhighered.org). The ACPE Web Site received 34,409 hits in 2004, exceeding the ACPE goal of 28,000.

### **2.3 College Goal Sunday (CGS)**

The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education hosts an important annual event titled College Goal Sunday. College Goal Sunday has been organized for the past eight

years by the ACPE, and plans are well underway for the 9<sup>th</sup> Arizona College Goal Sunday event.

The goal is to provide assistance to high school seniors (or adults entering postsecondary education) and their families in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. The main purpose is to help students and families, especially first generation college applicants, understand the importance of applying for student financial aid, take the important first step of completing the FAFSA, and ultimately access postsecondary education.

The event is offered in partnership with the Arizona Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (AASFAA). In 2004 College Goal Sunday was held in 21 Arizona communities on February 6. On this Sunday afternoon, more than 250 volunteer financial aid professionals from Arizona's colleges/universities, as well as high school counselors, mobilized to assist high school seniors and their families in completing the FAFSA form. In 2004 two thousand eight hundred and thirty students and parents attended. Since 1997 more than 18,000 students and their families have been helped by this event.

This event is very successful. The 2004 College Goal Sunday survey reported that 34% of the seniors in attendance indicated that they would be the first member of their family to attend college. In addition, almost 48% of the participants indicated they had completed the FAFSA form at their College Goal Sunday site for immediate submission.

As host of this event, the ACPE seeks grants to fund the activities and provides the leadership to implement the event. Grants have been secured for the 2005 event from Waddell and Reed, USA Funds, and Lumina Foundation.

#### **2.4 "Count Down to College" Sunday Insert**

In 2004 a 12 page Sunday insert, entitled "Countdown to College" was published in the Arizona Republic and distributed to 465,000 households the Sunday before College Goal Sunday. USA Funds underwrote the basic publication cost of this insert and additional pages were paid for with purchased advertising by higher education stake holders through the newspaper sales staff and letters of introduction from the ACPE. Articles in the insert included Arizona & Federal financial aid information, early awareness for higher education, information for families on how to prepare for college, as well as promotion of the College Goal Sunday statewide events. This publication is scheduled again in 2005 and will be distributed as a special insert in Phoenix, Tucson, and outlying areas to nearly 800,000 households.

#### **2.5 Think College Publications**

The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education is dedicated to strengthening the commitment of children and youth to obtain a higher education. Toward this end, a

general education awareness and information campaign for students and their parents titled *Think College* has been developed to emphasize the importance of staying in school, raising expectations, and creating a positive attitude among students and their parents about postsecondary education possibilities. Three publications were developed with two financial partners: (1) USA Funds sponsors *Measuring Your Child's Progress: Preparing Your Child for Higher Education* for middle school through high school parents and (2) Ed Funds sponsors *Carlton Q. Cat: Cool Cats Stay in School* for third and fourth grade students and *Future 5: The Power of Your Mind* for seventh and eighth grade students. Thanks to the generosity of these partners, these publications are provided to the schools free of charge.

In 2000/2001 copies of the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade publications were mailed directly to every elementary school in the state. However, due to limited funds for distributing the *Think College* publications, the ACPE partnered in both 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 with the Arizona Department of Education's Mega Conference and distributed almost 20,000 copies of the three publications (English & Spanish) at the November 2003 Mega Conference. In 2004 the sponsor not only provided printing of the publications but also distributed sample copies to every 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade classroom in the state and followed up on requests received by the ACPE for additional copies.

## **2.6 The STAY in School Initiative**

The public interest resulting from policy analysis and research publications regarding drop out prevention led the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary to develop the *STAY in School Initiative*. This Initiative has a final two components for 2005 consisting of a community development pilot project in the Tucson Sunnyside School District and a series of regional capacity building workshops. In 2005 the ACPE will continue to partner with the Az Department of Education and the Center for the Future of Arizona as they provide leadership in dropout prevention.

Community development consultants have worked with the Sunnyside School District and their *Stay in School Community Task Force* to identify teams of four: one student, teacher, parent and community member from each of the Sunnyside District middle and high schools to participate in a *Leadership for Learning Academy* throughout the 2004-05 academic year. Beginning with a period of research and analysis the Academy will be able to explain the primary causes of school dropout in each of the representative schools. With the support of the Community Task Force the Academy will coordinate, develop, and implement programs and strategies designed to address the underlying causes of student dropout in Sunnyside District. The result will be a long-term action plan to address their problems from a community based, systemic-change model.

In order to build leadership for dropout prevention across the state, the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education will contract with a community development consultant to present a series of capacity building workshops in three or four regions of the state. The goal of this series is to build on the learning from the pilot project and equip community leaders to address the dropout issue in ways that are consistent with the values and realities of their school district, town, or region.

Both components of the *Stay in School Initiative* have received funding from private sector sources. The ACPE will continue to participate in collaborations to increase graduation rates in Arizona

## **2.7 Pathways to Education Conference**

In 2004 the former Best Practices in Education Conference Task Force revised its focus to more closely align the Conference with the expanding access and increasing success in postsecondary education mission of the ACPE. The Conference was renamed the Pathways to Education Conference and the mission revised *to showcase and recognize outstanding efforts to guide and support youth into higher education*. The purpose of the 2004 Conference was to *foster and encourage efforts to transition students to high school and into higher education*.

The October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2004 conference was held at the Phoenix Preparatory Academy. Conference attendees had the opportunity to participate in two morning sessions of workshops focused on successful college preparatory approaches such as:

- Innovative Approaches from High School to Postsecondary Education: Jobs for Arizona's Graduates (JAG)
- Early Strategies for College Awareness: The University of Arizona's Early Recruitment Unit – Bridging the College Access Disparity
- A business panel – Business Creating an Arizona Economy by Supporting Students
- Federal, Business and Community-Based Pathways to Student Success: Arizona Quest for Kids and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR Up)
- Achieving a College Education (ACE): A Proven Path to Success in High School and College and the Genesis Academy
- How to Do College Early: Northland Pioneer College's Northern Az Vocational Institute of Technology (N.A.V.I.T.), and Gateway's Early College High School
- Character Education: Positive Support for Success in Education

After a sponsor-hosted luncheon, conference participants heard a youth panel consisting of youth who experienced an Arizona program such as Project Challenge, the Hispanic Mother Daughter Program, and Jobs for Arizona's Graduates, these students described the benefits of the programs offered and how they helped them overcome the barriers to postsecondary education.

The final segment of the Conference was the awards ceremony. This year there were 23 honorable mentions and winners in four categories were recognized with a check and prizes. The four award winners by category included:

Community – Arizona Quest for Kids  
Business – Raytheon Scholars Program  
Postsecondary – Achieving a College Education (ACE)  
K-12 – Nogales High School Senior Project

More than 150 participants attended and benefited from the workshops, networking, and first-hand knowledge of outstanding Arizona practices focused on supporting youth in their transitions into higher education.

### **Goal 3: Problem solving across all sectors of postsecondary Education**

The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education provides a unique statewide forum for senior level representatives from universities, community colleges, independent colleges, and private training and career colleges to identify mutual opportunities and problems in postsecondary education. In addition, two superintendents of large districts and a CEO of a charter school provide insight about transition into, preparation for, and awareness of postsecondary education opportunities from the K-12 perspective.

Issues arise from discussion among Commissioners that need further investigation and policy analysis. In addition, Commissioners have established a standing Postsecondary Needs Committee that is called upon to identify opportunities for collaborative action. Issues that have been identified as important through these processes include: access to and success in postsecondary education of minority populations and low-income families, low high school completion rate, student advancement through the segments of Arizona's higher education system toward a baccalaureate degree, and reduction or elimination of the financial barrier experienced by low income students and their families to postsecondary education.

Two strategies have been identified to meet Goal 3. The first is to raise awareness and develop a knowledge base for solutions through policy analysis and commissioned research studies. And the second strategy is to establish collaborative action groups or task forces, informed by research, to plan strategies to seize opportunities or solve problems identified by the Commission.

#### **3.1 Arizona Minority Education Policy Analysis Center (AMEPAC)**

The mission of the Arizona Minority Education Policy Analysis Center (AMEPAC) is to stimulate through studies, statewide discussion, and debate constructive improvement of Arizona minority students' early awareness, access and achievement throughout all sectors of education. AMEPAC is funded through donations from postsecondary institutions committed to its mission. Since 1996, AMEPAC has addressed numerous issues effecting minority access to and achievement in higher education. Results of this policy analysis are both published research papers and the initiation of forums or roundtable discussions on pressing issues related to the mission.

A recent and important policy analysis study was the 2002 publication titled Dropping Out of Arizona's Schools: The Scope, the Costs, and Successful Strategies to Address the Crisis. AMEPAC commissioned this study to the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) and it contributed significantly to the current statewide focus on improving graduation rates.

To disseminate this information and encourage local efforts to increase high school graduation rates a series of forums were initiated by AMEPAC. In early 2003 AMEPAC developed the *Stem the Tide Campaign* to disseminate research study findings, heighten the awareness of the local dropout problem, and encourage local action. Six Stem the Tide Workshops were held in 2003/2004.

In addition to the aforementioned dropout study, AMEPAC commissioned a new report titled Arizona Minority Student Success Report and authored in 2003 by Tonya M. Drake and Christine A. Forester. An updated report will be available in March of 2005. This research serves as an important benchmark for progress in postsecondary access for Arizona by compiling existing data into a comprehensive resource guide.

Finally, this year AMEPAC has commissioned a study from the University of Arizona's Latina/o Policy Research Initiative. This study is to be completed in early 2005 and focuses on the policy implications of experiences of minority students as they transition into higher education.

### **3.2 Postsecondary Articulation/Transfer Initiative**

Charged with identifying potential areas for articulation and encouraging articulation possibilities among postsecondary institutions this Task Force underwent a transformation in 2004. The individual members of this ACPE Task Force attest to creating a minimum of ten new articulation agreements in the year 2003. This work was the major focus of the Task Force.

A new agenda was developed in 2004 for the Postsecondary Articulation/Transfer Task Force through a revised mission of *ensuring access to the baccalaureate at all Arizona institutions*. The work of the group was determined to best focus on policy issues. To achieve this goal the membership is being augmented and connections are being established with existing state articulation efforts. It was further agreed, that the individual work of creating articulation agreements is important and will continue on an individual basis.

The members set five long-term goals for the group including (1) educating others regarding articulation/transfer issues, (2) examining trends in other states, (3) recommending guidelines/principles for articulation agreements, (4) recommending the addition of accountability/outcome measures for transfer students, and (5) establishing a "clearinghouse" for dissemination of information. The Task Force is still identifying new members and will undoubtedly continue to refine its mission and goals in 2005.

### **3.3 Need Based Financial Aid Initiative**

The Need Based Financial Aid Task Force was developed by recommendation from the Postsecondary Needs Committee. When charged by the Commission in 2003 to identify issues important to the future of postsecondary education statewide, the

Committee identified the status of need based financial aid in Arizona as the single, over-riding issue to be addressed.

The Need Based Financial Aid Task Force was established and charged with addressing the issue. Commissioner James Dugan was appointed to serve as Chair of the Task Force. Beginning work in early 2004, the Initiative began in partnership with the Arizona Community Foundation 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholarship Committee. Later the two initiatives combined into the ACPE Need Based Task Force in March of 2004. A mission of *raising the awareness of and support for solutions to financial barriers to postsecondary education access and attainment for low-income students* was established.

The Task Force identified the need for state specific research related to the issue similar to a national report titled Investing in America's Future. The ACPE requested a similar report for the State of Arizona from USA Funds, sponsor of the national study. USA funds generously agreed to fund a similar study. This study is being undertaken by Dr. Jamie P. Merisotis of the Institute for Higher Education Policy and Dr. Jose Luis Santos of the University of Arizona Latina/o Research Initiative. The study is expected to be completed in early March.

A Task Force membership of committed individuals from all sectors of higher education, business, and philanthropy continues to develop strategies to increase awareness and identify targeted solutions to financial barriers to access for low income students to be implemented in 2005 through 2007.

## **Conclusion**

The year of 2004 saw the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education identify goals of increasing available student financial resources, implementing strategies to help students and families, and problem solving across all sectors of postsecondary education for the benefit of Arizona citizens. The ACPE staff has begun to implement strategies to accomplish these.

First, the ACPE has committed to efficient and effective administration of the core financial assistance programs assigned to the Commission by statute. These administrative procedures will continue to be reviewed and streamlined annually to ensure every dollar is available to students and their families for postsecondary attendance when it is needed.

Second, the staff continues to develop skills to leverage the limited financial and human resources available to the ACPE in order to help Arizona citizens access postsecondary education. Through development and nurturance of partnerships, access to grant funds and donations, and initiation and participation in collaborative activities the ACPE will be able to continue to offer programs such as College Goal Sunday, the STAY in School Initiative, and the Pathways to Higher Education Conference. Similar strategies will allow the ACPE to continue to provide information to citizens through Think College

publications, the Arizona College and Career Guide, and Countdown to College Sunday insert, and the ACPE website.

Finally, the forum provided by the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education promotes dialogue and identification of common issues among all sectors of higher education. The ACPE is then able to initiate collaborative groups comprised of all stakeholders that can investigate these opportunities and problems. Three papers will be published this year contributing to the knowledge base of access to higher education in Arizona. In addition, the ACPE is currently leading efforts to (1) raise awareness and seek solutions that will provide more financial assistance to students and (2) identify and promote policies that will assist students in moving toward a baccalaureate degree, certificate, or other postsecondary training.

The Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education through a planning process has identified a mission for the next four years of *expanding access and increasing success in postsecondary education for Arizona citizens*. The ACPE continues to seek avenues for partnerships and/or collaboration that contribute to its mission. The goals are in place and the Commissioners and staff will continue to measure all activity against the identified goals and mission.