



## ACTION PLANNING WORKSHEET

### **Tucson's Action Plan to Help More of its Young People Graduate High School, Ready for College, Work & Life**

Name of Summit State or Community: Tucson, Arizona

Date and Location of Summit: November 13, 2008

Geographical Area Covered by Action Plan: Pima County, Arizona  
(i.e. which county(ies), school district(s), etc.)

Date Submitted: January 20, 2009

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#### **I. Building Knowledge: Understanding Your State's or Community's Dropout & College-Readiness Challenges**

*(See Part 2 of Grad Nation, pp. 20-38, for help with this area of planning.)*

1. What is your state's or community's current graduation rate? (please cite the source and methodology)  
Arizona's 2007 graduation rate was 73.7 %, Tucson's was 69.97%, reported from the Arizona Department of Education from the average measured by gender and ethnicity. Data was obtained through direct reporting from the schools. As is typical with communities across the nation there are various ways that the graduation rate is determined. In Tucson, the rate has been reported as high as 84.7% (Tucson Regional Economic Opportunities, 2008 Report Card) and as low as 67.3% (Arizona Indicators, 2008). As is stated by Arizona Indicators "The graduation rate calculation is greatly hampered by difficulty in tracking individual students over time. A high proportion of those shown as not graduating in reality are in the "status unknown" category. For example, a student who moves to another state without notifying his Arizona school is shown as not graduating" (2008). Additionally those students who return to Mexico who may be continuing their education there are not tracked and therefore are listed as a dropout.
2. What does both national and local data indicate about your state's or community's graduation and college-going rates over the last few years (e.g. over the last 2, 5 and 10 years)? Have the schools' rates been improving or getting worse? How do your local statistics compare with your state and the nation as a whole?  
The graduation rates in both Arizona and Tucson have remained relatively stable over the last ten years. There have been years (2003) where there was a slight increase but on average the rates have

only varied by a couple of percentage points. Tucson's graduation rate is consistently below that of the state but almost the same as that of the national average.

Tucson is a diverse community both economically and educationally and that is reflected in the varying graduation and college-going rates across the community. Of most concern are our high poverty districts where the transition from high school to college is very low. The graduation rates in these areas remain higher than the college transition rates, but are still the lowest in our metropolitan area.

The college going rates in the high poverty areas have been negatively impacted by Proposition 300, which limits access to adult education to those who cannot document legal status. In comparison to the state rates, the Tucson metropolitan area ranks below the state in both graduation and college going rates.

3. Please describe what efforts have or will be taken to better understand the issues from key perspectives, such as parents and young people themselves. Explain what data analysis, surveys, interviews or other efforts have or will be implemented to build your knowledge base of who drops out, from which schools, when, and why. What is known, and what do you still seek to learn?

The information from our student surveys taken at the summit is in the process of being analyzed and compiled by the University of Arizona. This data will assist us with our committee work in creating our strategic plan for presentations to local and state government.

We have scheduled three focus group meetings with students to delve deeper into the five promises. The outcome of these focus groups will be to create specific, realistic goals for the school districts to implement that will have significant effect on the drop out rate.

Surveys are being prepared to send to the adult summit attendees to obtain their insight into the issues facing students as they pertain to the five promises.

In 2007 at the Tucson Regional Town Hall, one theme kept emerging as a common thread through every discussion and recommendation. A strong K-12 education system was viewed as the single most critical component to the success of virtually every other regional priority. It is clear that if our community is to continue to thrive and progress socially, culturally and economically, our education system must be effective. To that end on October 1, 2008, Governor Napolitano, held in Tucson, The State of Education: A Community Conversation on Education. It was attended by over 500 education, business, government and community leaders. At this meeting there was the announcement of the organization, Tucson Values Teachers, an initiative that recognizes the critical role of teachers in our region, and works to transform how every citizen values and supports our K-12 teachers. At its heart is a comprehensive public outreach campaign to engender a spirit of collaboration, optimism and support for teachers. But Tucson Values Teachers is much more than a publicity campaign. It includes significant support for every K-12 teacher in our region. These actions are critical and there is a role for everyone to be part of the transformation. From these and other groups in the Tucson region we will be able to access the information that will be critical in developing a cohesive master plan to address the graduation rate and significantly decrease our dropout rate.

## II. **Rallying Your State or Community: Getting Buy-In to Address the Crisis**

*(See Part 1 of Grad Nation, pp. 7-19, for help with this area of planning.)*

1. What key data and message points have you developed around the issue to secure commitment from your community's and state's leaders? What's the impact of the crisis on your economy, state or city budget, social services, employers, post-secondary institutions, etc? If you don't yet have these data and message points, what are your plans to obtain them?

Obviously with a national ranking of 49<sup>th</sup> in education, the state of Arizona faces tremendous challenges in meeting the educational needs of its young people. Because of this a number of initiatives, both local and statewide, mentioned earlier, have been implemented.

The Governor has put education as her top priority and has created the P-20 council focusing on educational excellence. Many groups have been created over the last two years to address the issues facing our community. Several of these groups focus specifically on the graduation rate such as the Regional College Access Center, Project Graduation: Digital Advantage, Goal One: Graduate/Meta Numero Uno: Graduar! and Pima/Santa Cruz Tech Prep Consortium. These committees are working together in partnership to address the issues surrounding keeping youth in school, ensuring they graduate, and assisting them in pursuing higher education. Both the City of Tucson and Pima County support each of these groups, both financially and personally.

In 2006 voters of Pima County approved the formation of the Joint Technological Education District which is a community wide collaborative effort that focuses on enhancing career and technical education which is a key factor in keeping students in school. This collaborative effort further ignited excitement about business and education partnership and the potential for successful experiences for more students.

A new community wide initiative, Tucson Loves Teachers, was just created to facilitate the support of our local teachers in addition to assisting with recruitment of new teachers. The program offers support, incentives and recognition to our teachers and educational institutions.

We have requested data pertaining to the economic impact of graduation and college going rates from Tucson Regional Economic Opportunities.

2. Who is serving or can serve as your state's or community's champion and chief spokesperson around the high school dropout issue? If multiple spokespeople are needed, which leaders – elected officials, business leaders, other local influentials – will be recruited?

Mayor Robert E. Walkup, Tucson, Metropolitan Education Commission, Senator Tim Bee, Representative David Bradley, Pima County School Superintendent Linda Arzoumanian, Pima County Board of Supervisors Chairman Richard Elias, U.S. Representative Raul Grijalva, U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords, University of Arizona ex-President, Peter Likins, Local businessman Jim Click have all committed to education as their highest priority and are very active in local and state events.

3. What is your state's or community's vision statement for your young people, related to their successful completion of high school and preparation for college and/or work? What is your quantifiable long-term goal (e.g. 5-year) for your dropout and college-readiness challenges?

The Tucson Region's education promise to its children is to provide each child with the lifelong opportunity to become a literate, functioning member of the local community, as well as society at large, and to ensure that our children all have an opportunity to obtain the academic, cultural and social skills that will allow their desired achievement and encourage them to become good citizens who are engaged in their communities and who fully participate in voting and other civic duties. The promise of education must include a promise that each person who wants an education can obtain it. This requires having access to a superlative education where all students are taught how to learn. The community as a whole is committed to education as a priority. We will strive to inspire, reach and teach each child and ensure that they will be prepared to participate in the global community.

### **III. Identifying Solutions: Considering and Prioritizing Potential Solutions to Comprehensively Address Your Local Dropout Challenge**

The Alliance advocates four focus areas that we believe to be key in addressing the dropout issue at the state and local levels: **transforming schools** including through increasing curricular rigor and relevance, **supporting young people** through wraparound services, **developing effective policies**, and **employing data systems** as a dropout prevention tool.

1. Please identify your highest-priority strategies and/or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* that your state or community will pursue in order to **transform the schools** that the majority of your local

dropouts attend. For each priority, what would you need to do in the next 6-12 months to advance it? Is anything already underway locally to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress?

Tucson currently offers many programs such as Digital Advantage, Schools Plus Work, Regional College Access Center, and we have established early warning systems such as LINKS. Arizona recently increased requirements for graduation which correlate more closely with college entrance requirements. Tucson has workforce readiness programs in place and in our lowest income area, Sunnyside school district offers parent computer classes so that they are better able to assist their children with their school work.

Education must be transformed to meet 21<sup>st</sup> Century productivity and leadership needs. Concurrently, our community must become more informed, knowledgeable and engaged in how that delivery system looks. Education must be made tougher and more robust. The curriculum will need to improve, and testing must be more meaningful. For example, the AIMS test is not required for college, does not measure many proficiencies required for college, and does not preclude the attainment of a general education diploma (GED). Testing must truly measure competency so that we can accurately rate and improve the education being provided. Students' educational opportunities, especially at the secondary level (grades 6-12), must include more relevance to real-world connections. This necessitates closer collaboration between businesses and schools and support for programs such as junior achievement, job shadowing, internships and the newly formed JTED. Successes with current innovative secondary education programs need to be more widely disseminated to spark further innovation and increased academic success for all students.

2. Please identify your highest-priority strategies, programs, policies, and/or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* that your state or community will pursue in order to **support young people**. How will more young people, particularly those most in need, receive wraparound supports in and out of school, such as tutoring, afterschool programs, mentors, social services, health care and others? For each priority, what would you need to do in the next 6-12 months to advance it? Is anything already underway locally to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress?

Gear Up is one of our programs that has been extremely successful in giving students the ability to access the support they need to be successful.

The conversation around college needs to be a focus in the highest risk areas. College needs to be a possibility for all students. Potential needs to be real and the benefit of the degree needs to be taught through mentors and concerned adults.

We need to require student accountability. Access to education is a right. Achievement is a responsibility. Students and families must take personal responsibility for individual success. In turn, we will address teacher quality issues to ensure that effective teachers are kept, developing teachers are supported in their growth and ineffective teachers are removed. We will strive to attract and retain the best teachers and pay them accordingly. The teacher shortage in the Tucson Region will be cured. We will work toward greater parental participation in the education system and hold parents more accountable in the success of their children's education. We will create opportunities for children to get involved and empowered to make community change, and encourage participation in the arts and humanities as part of the curriculum to improve student creativity and the overall learning experience. The Tucson Region will pay attention to the conditions and activities affecting students after school and outside of school. Creative energy shall be dedicated to the development and funding of after school and extra-curricular programs, such as nonprofit athletic and other after school clubs, that contribute to student success inside and outside the classroom. The Region shall become aware of the social problems that affect student performance in the classroom, and attention also shall be devoted to supporting teachers and creating classroom conditions that are conducive to learning.

3. Please identify your highest-priority policies or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* that your state or community will pursue in order to **develop effective policies** at the local or state level that encourage

high school completion and college readiness. For each, what would you need to do in the next 6-12 months to advance this priority? Is anything already underway locally to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress?

Arizona needs to increase the minimum drop out age to 18 and continue state funding for all day kindergarten. There must be continued support for career and technical education and authentic workforce education in high school. Encouragement of career and technical education as college entrance requirements needs to be part of the policy discussion.

Degree granting institutions must cooperate to provide increased access to 4-year degrees in areas of unmet needs. Special attention must be paid to the needs of non-traditional students. The UA mission should allow access and affordability for all students prepared to succeed, importantly including those transitioning from PCC. The UA should continue to develop 2+2 and 3+2 programs.

While some are more directly involved than others, the ultimate responsibility for implementing the promises identified rests with all of the Tucson Region. Entire communities must be involved in the formal process of education. The Legislature must be lobbied to provide more funding. As a region, we should consider seeking authority from the state legislature to establish a Tucson Regional Taxing Authority that could provide the additional funding necessary to support the educational enhancements and betterments identified and adopted by the Tucson Region. Citizens have a responsibility for communicating their priorities to the Legislature. We need to be prepared to either raise taxes or restructure our priorities to meet education funding.

It also is critical to make funding available to encourage education, staying in school, and taking advantage of higher education opportunities. Students should be given assistance in obtaining funds to go to college. Schooling should be expanded with an extended school day and year and expansion of after school programs. This expanded schooling would provide for increased curriculum that can be taught to students and development of additional learning opportunities. It also will allow students to be exposed to a more diverse set of experiences, including “soft skills” (community service, arts and music).

4. Please identify your highest-priority strategies, programs, policies, and/or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* that your state or community will pursue in order to **employ data systems** that identify those young people most at-risk for dropping out and drive appropriate supports and services. For each, what would you need to do in the next 6-12 months to advance this priority? Is anything already underway locally to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress?

Tucson Regional Economic Opportunities, Tucson Values Teachers and the Tucson Regional Town Halls along with organizations involved in educational excellence will provide the data necessary to determine next steps. We need to expand our implementation of special high risk counselors within the school who identify at risk students and work with them to keep them in school and assist them in continuing to higher education through a variety of programs.

#### **IV. Organizing for Long-Term Success: Getting the Right People on Board, Committing to Action, Ensuring Accountability, Securing Resources, and Tracking Progress over Time**

*(See Part 4 of Grad Nation, pp. 72-86, for help with this area of planning.)*

1. What group or committee will coordinate and sustain the work outlined in this action plan? What leaders does it have from various sectors – business, education, nonprofit, government, faith, etc.? (Please submit group’s roster along with this plan.) Who else is needed? Who convenes the group, how often, and what sub-groups or committees does your effort need?

The Tucson Regional Town Hall outcomes stated that a group would be organized to address the educational issues developed at the State of Education luncheon. This committee is in the process of being finalized and a full roster of the members will be provided as it is confirmed. The original members of the America’s Promise Summit committee have committed to continuing the work.

2. What financial, human, and other resources are needed in order to begin acting on this plan? What resources are currently available, what will potentially need to be blended, and what new resources will need to be sought to do this work? Who might help secure additional resources to fill the gaps, and/or what funders (or others) may be approached? Are you setting a resource goal along with the outcome goal?

Many organizations have committed to supporting educational excellence in the Tucson Region. The Chamber of Commerce, The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, The Black Chamber of Commerce, Tucson Regional Economic Opportunities, City of Tucson, Pima County and many local businesses. Currently we are fighting to keep educational funding from being cut severely at the State level as a way to balance the budget. There are two events planned by Solutions to Higher Education to solicit support from the legislature for not making \$600 million in cuts to local universities.

3. How will your community or state evaluate its dropout prevention efforts to ensure it is making a difference? What is the plan to monitor and track the progress being made on its developed goals? How will you maintain visibility around the local dropout prevention issue by reporting to the public on the progress being made?

The graduation rates and college going rates are being tracked through our Regional College Access Center in cooperation with the high schools, community colleges and universities.

#### **V. Staying Connected to the America's Promise Alliance: Identifying Long-term Interests, Priorities, and Points of Alignment**

1. Across its work, the Alliance has committed to paying special attention to certain strategic priorities. Together, we are always looking for states and communities that share similar interests and that may provide effective models for policy and practice, investment opportunities and other points of alignment. Please describe if your action plan has strategies specific to:
  - a. Focusing on the middle school years, especially providing service-learning and career exploration opportunities in and out of school YES
  - b. Improving young people's access to quality health care, including promotion of SCHIP and Medicaid public health insurance programs YES
  - c. Creating community hubs (e.g. schools, afterschool programs, community centers) where coordinated wraparound supports are available to young people and their families YES
  - d. Engaging parents and caregivers to increase graduation and college readiness rates YES
  - e. Supporting young people in foster care so they graduate from high school prepared for college, work and life YES
  - f. Developing young people's financial literacy YES

If your plan does not include any of the above but your state or community has strong interest in developing one or more of these strategies, please note accordingly.

2. How can the America's Promise Alliance best support your state or community with the implementation of this dropout prevention plan? The Alliance is interested in hearing how we can best assist you in your dropout prevention efforts, including resources we can provide, relationships we can facilitate, and any other needs your community may have. *Please be as expansive and forthright as you can. We will use your feedback to ensure that the most useful resources are provided to our Dropout Summit states and communities through the website, training & technical assistance, and other means.*

Sharing best practices and offering research and support for initiatives.