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Highlights of ABOR Meeting: In-depth Review of UA Operations, Approval of Capital Requests, and New Data on Graduate Wages, College Preparedness, University Enrollment and More

Following are news briefs from the Arizona Board of Regents November 2016 board meeting. The full board materials are available [here](#).

New Report: High School Grads Entering Arizona Universities More Prepared Than Ever Before

The Arizona Board of Regents's 2016 [High School Report Card](#), an annual report that documents the performance of the previous year's Arizona high school graduates during their first year in Arizona's public university system, was among items discussed and approved at the board meeting.

Highlights include:

- The Arizona University System recorded an increase of 847 (6.4 percent) in the number of Arizona high school graduates who enrolled in the fall semester immediately following their senior year. That group totaled 13,987 in fall 2015 and places enrollment of that group at a level that is higher than any previous year. It also marks a 69 percent increase since the 1999-2000 academic year.
- The academic preparedness of this class was better than in previous years. Approximately 87 percent of students attending an Arizona public university were admitted without academic deficiencies; that compares to 84 percent in fall 2014 and 80 percent in fall 2011.
- The first-year GPAs among first-year university students were slightly higher as well, averaging 3.0 for the 2015-16 college freshman class compared to 2.9 for each freshman class in the past five years.

Rises in Enrollment and Degrees Shed Further Light on the Value of Arizona Universities

New reports also demonstrate an increase in both undergraduate and graduate enrollment in each of Arizona's three public universities.

[According to the 2016 Fall Enrollment Report](#), between fall 2015 and fall 2016:

- Headcount enrollment in the Arizona university system rose 5.3 percent.

- Arizona State University reported an increase of 7.5 percent, Northern Arizona University reported a 4.4 percent increase, and the University of Arizona reported a 1.2 percent increase.
- Total enrollment is at a record level of 171,791 – an increase of 8,608 and among the largest one year increases ever recorded.
 - Undergraduate enrollment at 139,725 is at a record level as well as graduate enrollment at 32,066.

The full enrollment report can be viewed [here](#).

Bachelor’s and graduate degrees are on the rise

In 2015-16, the Arizona university system awarded 27,472 bachelor’s degrees and 10,995 graduate degrees, according to the [ABOR 2015-16 Degrees and Majors Report](#). This is an increase of 838 (3.1 percent) in bachelor’s degrees and an increase of 773 (7.6 percent) in graduate degrees compared to the prior academic year.

Compared to 10 years ago, the universities have increased the number of bachelor degrees awarded by 9,076 (49.3 percent) and the number of graduate degrees by 3,637 (49.4 percent).

The greatest increases in undergraduate majors were in business, health, engineering, biological/biomedical sciences and social sciences. For graduate students, the top majors were engineering, health, business, and computer and information services.

Financial Aid Reports Show Universities Making Affordability, Attainment a Priority

The board released its [2016 Financial Aid Report](#) which documents trends in financial aid, student debt and cost-of-attendance trends at the enterprise level and at each university. The report is an important tool for the Arizona Board of Regents to analyze financial aid trends and address higher education access issues.

The Arizona public university system is the primary entity awarding post-secondary degrees to Arizona residents and fulfills a critical role in preparing the state’s future workforce. As the governing body for the system, ABOR is committed to ensuring affordable access to Arizona’s public universities.

The report presented to the board describes the amount of financial aid awarded during the previous academic year and projects anticipated financial aid for the current and ensuing fiscal years. It also examines changes in funding levels over the last five years, reports on the average distribution of aid across different income levels and tracks student debt at graduation.

Highlights include:

- Over the last six years, system wide financial aid from all sources has increased from \$1.5 billion to \$2.4 billion.
- The total number of students receiving some form of financial aid increased almost 40 percent since academic year 2010. Over that same period, enrollment increased 29 percent.
- Average need awards for undergraduates continued to increase and is now up 28 percent since academic year 2010.
- Despite the increase in financial aid, since academic year 2010, the net cost of attendance increased more than 75 percent.
- Fifty-eight percent of students graduated with some level of debt. This is slightly lower than the 2014 peak of 60 percent.

- At graduation, average debt for all undergraduates was \$13,814 and \$26,056 for all graduate students.

Financial Aid Fast Facts – ASU:

- In FY 2016, \$1,370,826,706 in financial aid was provided to 87,684 students.
- For resident first-time freshmen, 69.2 percent received need or need/merit awards.
- For all students showing need, 53.2 percent of need was met.
- ASU provided \$337,839,450 in institutional aid.

Financial Aid Fast Facts – NAU:

- In FY 2016, \$358,582,813 was given out in financial aid to 25,015 students.
- Fifty percent of resident freshmen first-time received need or need/merit awards.
- NAU provided \$101,913,900 in institutional aid; 57.5 percent of need was met for all students showing need.

Financial Fast Facts – UA:

- In FY 2016, \$665,149,277 was given out in Financial Aid to 37,779 students.
- For resident first-time freshmen, 56.6 percent received need or need/merit awards.
- For all students showing need, 53.9 percent of need was met.
- UofA provided \$182,520,970 in institutional aid.

New ABOR Report: Graduate Wages Point to Value of Arizona College Degree

A new report highlighting the earning power of Arizona public university graduates was a key focus of the ABOR meeting in Tucson this week.

According to the [2016 Wages of Graduates Report](#), Arizonans with an undergraduate degree earn a median wage that's approximately \$20,000 more each year than their peers with a high school diploma alone. The contrast is even stronger among those with an Arizona graduate's degree, whose median annual earnings are approximately \$33,000 more than individuals with no college education.

This ABOR study examined included 271,197 individuals who received a degree from one of Arizona's three public universities in the last 25 years.

University Economists Provide State and National Economic Outlooks

Economists from the universities updated the board on the economic outlook in Arizona and the nation.

The outlook for 2017 in Arizona includes 80,000 new jobs, an unemployment rate that continues to decline at 5.3 percent (5.6 percent, 2016), and the state ranking fifth in private job creation. Job growth is occurring in fields such as information, finance and health care. However, mining and manufacturing are weak, said ASU Professor Lee McPheters Arizona is also below average in terms of employment compared to population based on the national average and is below the national average on measures of economic prosperity.

The nation's outlook includes inflation pressure that is mounting as employment and wages rise as well as expected interest rate increases, McPheters added Also notable in the data is that the recovery has favored workers with skills and education.

University of Arizona director of the Economic and Business Research Center George Hammond presented data on Arizona's economic outlook, including Arizona's job growth that trends above the national average. Areas of high job growth in the state that he cited are education and health services; trade, transportation and utilities; and professional and business services as well as leisure and hospitality.

In personal income, Arizona's earned \$36,422 per capita in 2014 compared to \$42,207 in the nation with notable wage gaps in information, financial activities and professional and business services. Hammond also detailed educational attainment in Arizona for bachelor's degrees or better with the state outpacing the nation in 1940, but behind the nation in 2014 when 27.6 percent of Arizonans have a bachelor's degree or more compared to 31.5 nationally.

Board Approves Capital Requests

Capital development plans and additional items on the consent agenda were approved by the board. Agenda items include:

- The UA South Stadium Parking Structure project was approved. The structure is a 282,000 gross square foot, \$22 million project that will be funded through a combination of parking and transportation funds and the university's cash reserves.
- The board also approved the property acquisition for the UA at 1700 E. Broadway Blvd., Tucson. The property will be used for health sciences functions.
- Arizona State University's request to enter into agreements for a ground lease to develop approximately 1.6 acres at Mill Avenue and University Drive was approved. The project will house a privately-operated hotel with the option to permit Omni Corporation to acquire the land and improvements at the end of the ground lease term.
- Also approved was a request from ASU to enter into agreements to ground lease approximately five acres of property located at Rural and Terrace roads to American Campus Communities or affiliates for development of third-party student housing, and the right to lease all or a portion of the facility at an annual cost exceeding \$500,000.

UA Operational and Financial Review Report: A Strong Plan for a Strong Future

The UA presented its operational and financial review to the board. This annual in-depth review designed to provide the board with a clear understanding of the university's plans and progress of the university's against the goals assigned in the ABOR strategic plan, as well as strategic updates to the university's Never Settle academic, business and strategic plan released in 2014.

Included in the report was a review of UA's mission, vision and values; academic, business and strategic initiatives; current performance levels; financial model; key priorities, partnerships and opportunities; strengths and weaknesses, and more.

[Click here to view UA's OFR report in full.](#)

UA Presidential Search Committee Meets to Discuss Opportunities, Challenges

The UA Presidential Search Committee met this week and received an update from the search consultant, Bill Funk. Mr. Funk shared that he has "the active interest of a significant number of outstanding prospects" regarding the presidential role. He stated that he has sent more than 600 letters to leaders in higher education and has also placed ads in higher education journals, including the Chronical for Higher Education and Inside Higher Ed. He said that the search is on track and going well. The committee also heard a strategic update from UA senior administrators which will be used to

further refine the key leadership characteristics and competencies that will be sought in the new president.

Regent Ron Shoopman, co-chair of the search committee, asked members to share feedback they have received in the community regarding priorities for the next president. Members shared that constituents have shared a desire for prioritization on research, development on community and business partnerships, and more. Details for the next meeting will be posted on the board's website, azregents.edu.

Board Welcomes New Regent Lyndel Manson

The board welcomed new Regent [Lyndel Manson](#) to her first board meeting. Regent Manson brings to the board a record of success in education through her experience serving on the board of directors for Northland Preparatory Academy in Flagstaff as president and treasurer. During her tenure on the academy's board, the school consistently achieved a top 100 rank among U.S. high schools and enrollment increased by 88 percent. Regent Manson has dedicated herself to Arizona's children and their success through her service on the Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation Board of Directors where her actions directly contributed to the self-esteem of foster children while enriching their social, athletic and educational opportunities.