ARIZONA COLLEGE APPLICATION CAMPAIGN

SITE COORDINATOR TOOLKIT

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WELCOME

While applying to college can seem overwhelming, providing support to navigate the college application process encourages students to pursue postsecondary education. By hosting an Arizona College Application Campaign (AzCAC) event, your school can ensure that every senior receives hands-on assistance as they take their first steps toward continuing their education after high school.

The AzCAC is a statewide effort to increase the number of first-generation and low-income students who pursue a postsecondary education. Schools like yours that host AzCAC events are providing important support to graduating seniors as they navigate the admissions process and fill out college applications.

The Arizona Board of Regents is providing this toolkit for schools to plan and execute an AzCAC event. We hope you discover inspiration for ideas that will work best for your school, students and creating a college going culture within your student body.

In addition to AzCAC, schools are highly encouraged to participate in the Arizona FAFSA Challenge and Arizona Decision Day to help support students as they transition from high school to postsecondary education. These programs open doors of opportunity for students by encouraging them to take significant steps toward college in their senior year and ultimately ensure that every student has a chance to reach their potential and bring Arizona closer to 60 percent postsecondary attainment by 2030.

If you have questions about AzCAC, FAFSA Challenge or Decision Day events, please feel free to contact us and we will be happy to assist you.

Thank you for participating in the Arizona College Application Campaign. We wish you much success during your event!

Warmest regards,

Roxanne Murphy

Roxanne Murphy
Director, Postsecondary Attainment
Arizona Board of Regents
roxanne.murphy@azregents.edu

Julie Sainz

Julie Sainz
Director, FAFSA and College Access Initiatives
Arizona Board of Regents
julie.sainz@azregents.edu

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ARIZONA COLLEGE APPLICATION CAMPAIGN EVENTS

Help seniors apply for college by hosting an event that guides students through the application process. Using school computers and resources, volunteers can aid students in applying to at least one college during your AzCAC event. Depending on the size of the senior class, the event may take more than one day. The goal is to build a school and district-wide college going culture to help students on their postsecondary education path.

GETTING STARTED

Following the recommendations can help you make the most of your AzCAC program and ensure that the event runs smoothly and with maximum impact.

Identify a site coordinator. This could be a counselor, community liaison, college and career advisor or another staff member who will be responsible for planning and implementing the event. It is also recommended that there is a back-up or co-coordinator designated.

Register your event. Use the QR code or visit the AzCAC webpage at AZRegents.edu/ AzCAC and follow the link to register the event and submit contact information for the site coordinator. Registered schools will have exclusive access to free promotional materials, training opportunities and the latest news shared by the Arizona Board of Regents and other program partners. **The first 100 schools that register to participate in the AzCAC, Arizona FAFSA Challenge and Arizona Decision day will receive a toolkit that includes campaign posters, stickers, folders and pins.**

Form your team. Create a school planning committee and recruit counselors, teachers and other staff to assist with planning and implementing the event. Forming a team shares the work across multiple individuals and helps ensure the entire school is supportive of the event. Based on feedback from previous AzCAC campaigns, the schools with the most success during the campaign had strong support and buy-in from the campus adminstration and school district.

Key topics for the school team to discuss are:

- What will your AzCAC event look like?
- Identify event date(s) and determine how to include the entire school in the effort.
- Develop a communication strategy: students, families, school staff, volunteers and the community.
- Discuss how to prepare students for the event well before it happens.
- Brainstorm how to create or enhance a college going culture that is visible in the school during the weeks leading up to the event.
- Create a process for evaluation and data collection.
- Design a plan to follow-up with students on on college and financial aid applications.

Encourage district and school-wide involvement. Spread excitement about the event throughout the entire district and school since it's never too early to begin thinking about college. Encourage all students and staff to participate in activities like wearing college shirts, sharing college stories or decorating classroom doors with college logos, photos and other mementos. Find more event ideas below.

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Choose your event date(s) and reserve your event location. Make sure the location is equipped with enough networked computers and printers well in advance of the event. Typical event locations include the school's media center, computer labs or classrooms with computers.

- Ensure enough computers are available to allow adequate time for each student to apply for college. Typically, each student requires 30-45 minutes to successfully complete a college application. Consider reserving computer lab space for multiple days, depending on the size of the senior class.
- Work with technology support staff to ensure school internet firewalls or other access restrictions will not prevent students from accessing online applications the day of the event.

Promote the event early and often. Consider any or all of these opportunities.

- Promote activities in and around the school through banners, posters (provided FREE to the first 100 registered schools), emails, letters, one-on-one conversations, school announcements, school newsletters, school calendar and social media.
- Add messages of encouragement for seniors applying to college on exterior school signs. Ask local businesses to do the same.
- Invite local media representatives to cover your event. Encourage newspapers, radio and television stations to attend to fuel student excitement. Let ABOR know if you receive any media coverage so it can be shared statewide via social media.

Contact local businesses. Businesses in your community may be interested in donating snacks for participating students and volunteers or even lunch. Finding a local business willing to provide a pizza lunch or ice cream for participating students can be a fun way to wrap up a week of applying to college. Providing lunch for participating volunteers is a nice way to say "thank you" for their assistance.

Keep parents in the loop. Include information about your event in newsletters or other parent communications such as texts, the school's automated call service, emails or social media messaging. Include tips on how parents can support their students through the college application process.

Recruit volunteers. Ask school and community leaders to help with the event. Invite educational and community leaders. They can volunteer to help with applications or speak to students prior to the event about the importance of attending college. Examples of volunteers include:

- School board members, school superintendent or principal.
- Current students who have already completed the application process.
- Local university representatives and students.
- Local politicians such as your mayor, council members or state lawmakers.
- Local chamber of commerce, business leaders or community organizations.
- Previous graduates of your high school who have gone on to college.
- Local library, family resource or youth service center staff.
- Parents/PTA.

Provide ALL seniors access to the event. Develop a schedule for your event that provides all seniors the opportunity to participate and helps students make the most of their AzCAC experience. Meet with seniors early in the school year to allow adequate time for students to complete appropriate college research. See information on student preparation below.

STUDENT PREPARATION

Student preparation is the key to a successful AzCAC event. Make students aware of why you are having an application event and what they will be doing so they are ready to complete applications when they arrive at the computer lab.

Encourage students to complete college research prior to the event. Students will need to research colleges prior to the application event so they know where they would like to apply, and have a strong base of knowledge about that school and the admissions requirements. To help ensure students are able to make the most of their AzCAC experience, students should arrive to the event with a list of colleges that they've determined are a good match and to which they would like to apply. When researching colleges, students can attend a college fair in the area. Counselors can encourage students to utilize their Education and Career Action Plans (ECAPs) tools to make the most of their online college research.

Build folders. Students can begin gathering materials to aid in application submissions – biographical information, college resumes, essays, transcript, test score reports, payment information, etc.

Make use of the student activities provided on the [ACT – How to Choose a College webpage](#). There are a variety of activities to help students with the college research and selection process as well as documents to help ensure they have information needed to complete an application for college admission. Common information that students should be encouraged to gather includes the following:

- Student's full legal name.
- Social Security number.
- Citizenship status.
- Residency information (such as date they moved to the state, state to which parent(s) filed taxes, driver license and vehicle registration information, etc.).

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- Test information such as SAT/ACT test dates and scores.
- Class rank.
- Expected graduation date.
- College essays and/or personal statements if required by the college.
- Letters of recommendation if required by the college.

Encourage teachers to incorporate college essay assignments into their curriculum. This will help students applying to colleges that require essays. Even if a student doesn't need an essay, writing one will help them think about their college goals. Consider having students save their essays and personal statements in a Google drive or something similar so they can quickly and easily upload it or copy and paste it into the admission application during the event.

Encourage students to become familiar with application fee payment options prior to the event. If the colleges where they plan to apply require an application fee:

- Students can meet with their school counselor to determine if they are eligible for a fee waiver. Eligible students can investigate whether the chosen colleges accept fee waivers and how to go about providing that waiver with the application.
- Students not eligible for a fee waiver can conduct research to find the application fees for the colleges where they plan to apply. They should also investigate payment methods accepted (credit card, online check, mailed check, etc.).
- For colleges requiring online payment information to complete the application process, students should be made aware of the following options:
  o Save the application and submit it at home later when they have access to a payment method.
  o Purchase a prepaid credit card for the amount of the application fee so credit card information can be entered into the online application.
  o Students may bring the appropriate payment information to the event.
- Fee waiver Information:
  o ACT fee waiver – ACT provides a college application fee waiver in their ACT User Handbook for Educators publication. Students who are eligible for a fee waiver to the ACT college entrance exam are also eligible for a college application fee waiver. School counselors need only print out the number of fee waivers needed and sign-off on student eligibility. Students must also sign the form.
  o College Board fee waiver – The College Board states that students who have received a College Board fee waiver for the SAT or the SAT subject tests may also be eligible for college application fee waivers. Students should receive their college application fee waivers at the beginning of their senior year through their SAT accounts. College Board fee waivers no longer require school counselor approval. More information on the College Board fee waiver can be found here. The College Board also provides additional information, including a link to colleges that accept the College Board application fee waiver that can be accessed here.
  o National Association of College Admission Counseling (NACAC) fee waiver – This college application fee waiver can be downloaded from NACAC's website - nacacnet.org. Instructions for submission are on the NACAC website, including a list of eligibility requirements. NACAC recommends students receive no more than four fee waivers for the college application process.

Provide students with information about the Common Application. Make sure they know if a college they are considering accepts or requires the Common Application instead of a school specific application. If students plan on completing the Common Application during the event, they will need to do their research and prepare for it ahead of time, as it is typically longer and more detailed than other applications. For more information, visit commonapp.org.

Encourage students to attend a regional college fair in the area. You may even consider making arrangements for them to attend if your school does not already do this. This will be a great opportunity for students to gather information and do some preliminary research. For more information, visit the Tri-University Events webpage.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATION

Never underestimate students' need for help. Volunteer support is crucial to holding an event that will positively impact students. Having enthusiastic, trained volunteers to assist students in applying to college during the event will make both the planning and the implementation process go much smoother. Below are a few ideas for recruiting and designating a volunteer team.

Consider setting up an online volunteer registration form. This is particularly helpful if the senior class is large and if organizers will need to recruit volunteers outside of the school. Many free online survey tools are available to help with this. Suggested information to collect on the volunteer registration form includes:

- Volunteer name.
- Email.
- Phone number.
- Affiliation (name of postsecondary institution, company, nonprofit or government agency).
- Area of expertise.
- Hours they are available.
- If they are bilingual.

Follow your school's security policy. Once volunteer sign-ups are set, remember to allow enough time to conduct any necessary background checks if school policy requires this.

Enlist students and other school leadership as volunteers for the event.
- School planning team: Student ambassadors from all grade levels can share ideas, distribute materials, decorate the school and promote the AzCAC to their peers through Facebook, Twitter and other social media outlets.
- School leadership: Involve school administrators and counselors, Family Resource Center personnel, and PTA/PTO members in the planning and logistical details.
- Peer mentors: Consider involving seniors who have already completed the college application process to assist other students during the event.
- AmeriCorps Members: If your school hosts a near-peer college advisor through programs like Next Steps or AdviseAZ, utilize their resources.

Enlist teachers. They can volunteer during a planning period, and/or dedicate class time for college related activities such as writing college essays or conducting college or career research.

Identify contacts in the community. Civic groups and community organizations may be interested in helping make the event a success by either donating time and/or resources. Examples include: school alumni; students' parents and families; PTA members; AmeriCorps members; senior citizens; church groups; college students; college representatives; business, community and political leaders; and youth organizations such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, 4H, Boy/Girl Scouts of America, etc. Be sure to use any press releases or publicity to promote the need for volunteers.

Have plenty of volunteers. Plan to have one volunteer for every eight to 10 computers in use during the event. Volunteers may also be needed to assist with sign-in, printers, etc. and to provide the opportunity for other volunteers to take breaks.

Communicate with volunteers early and often. Create a system such as an email distribution list or send regular updates via text message using a free platform like Remind. Be sure to contact all volunteers ahead of time to provide them with specifics such as parking, what time to arrive, where the event will be held, options for lunch and other logistical details.

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Assign each volunteer a specific responsibility. Take into account areas of expertise (i.e. greeting students, helping students complete their application, congratulating students, tracking how many students complete applications and encouraging students to share their experience on social media, etc.) Consider collecting areas of expertise during the volunteer registration process to facilitate making assignments.Provide volunteers with a printed schedule. Include lunch times and breaks when no students will be in the lab/media center/classroom.

Follow up with a thank-you letter. Contact all participating volunteers, thanking them for their dedication and support in making the event a success. This is a great way to leave volunteers with a positive feeling toward the event and to increase the chances that they will volunteer again in the future.

ADDITIONAL EVENT IDEAS

Below are ideas to consider using when planning an AzACA event. The event may be scheduled over a day, week, or even longer depending on the needs of students and the flexibility of the school's schedule.

Have a door decoration contest among teachers, especially those with senior students. Teachers can select a college (alma mater, local college or any other Arizona college) and decorate their doors in celebration of that institution. During the actual application days, college representatives and other volunteers can judge for best door decorations. Prizes could include college gear or goodies donated by college representatives, or a pizza party for the winning classroom.

Incorporate college planning activities in the classroom. Consider having teachers conduct writing workshops in English classes to work on personal statements and admission or scholarship essays. Invite guest speakers from institutions or university departments that may require an essay. ABOR can provide a list of sample college essay questions.

Use morning/afternoon announcements. Each day, a college admission tip or fact can be presented during morning and afternoon announcements.Seniors could also be reminded and encouraged to attend the activities. Consider adding a trivia question to make it into a contest for a prize at the end of the week.

Wear college apparel. Encourage all faculty, staff and students to wear college apparel in the days and weeks leading up to the event and during the event. Encourage students to ask faculty and staff about their college experiences. **The first 100 registered schools receive FREE pins for staff that encourage students to ask about why they went to college.**

Host a pep rally or presentation for seniors. Whether schools decide to do a senior pep rally or a presentation in the auditorium or cafeteria, the kickoff event informs students of the week's activities, encourages participation and builds enthusiasm. Consider inviting all grade levels to enhance the school-wide college going culture.

Provide presentations on Paying for College 101/FAFSA. Consider asking AmeriCorps members or the local College Access Center to provide senior students with information to successfully navigate the career exploration, college preparation and financial aid processes. Schools can provide students and parents with detailed information needed to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Students can learn about the financial aid process, and discover when and how to apply for scholarships like the Arizona Promise Program and federal funds.

Host a professional mixer for students. Invite professionals from the community to mix and mingle with seniors who may be interested in their career field. Students are encouraged to dress in professional attire and practice professional networking during the event.

Provide a collegiate sports information night. Invite athletic directors and/or compliance officers from local colleges for a panel discussion on NCAA and/or NAIA athletics. Student athletes can attend and learn more about eligibility rules and procedures.

Consider alternate activities for students planning to join the military. Provide students a variety of postsecondary opportunities. Consider inviting a military recruiter to set up a table while students are filling out applications.

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EVENT DAY

Below are tips to make the AzCAC event successful and special.

Make sure students are prepared. Students should be aware of what they are doing and what the College Application Campaign event is about before sitting down at a computer to complete their application(s). Follow suggestions in the Student Preparation section to make sure students arrive with everything they need to apply.

Welcome each volunteer. Thank volunteers for their participation and share the agenda for the day, including volunteers' room assignments, schedule and where students can go for technical support if needed.

Welcome each group of students and explain events for the day. Share with students the importance of applying to college and explain that the goal for the day is to complete and submit at least one application for admission. Let students know that they can feel free to request assistance from volunteers if they need help or if they have any questions.

Provide proper oversight. High school staff can ensure students stay on task.

Don't forget the survey! Before closing out the event, please plan on the site coordinator completing the program survey here. The survey is very brief and provides valuable program information to the Arizona Board of Regents. Schools who complete the survey have a chance to win prizes.

Follow up. Check with students after the event to be sure they take necessary steps to complete the admission process:

- Assist students who were unable to submit their application during the event.
- Ensure students send the appropriate supporting documentation to the college:
  - Fee waiver forms.
  - High school transcripts.
  - Official test scores.

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POST-EVENT ACTIONS

Below are several actions to track the success of the event and to continue the college going conversation with students.

Complete the Site Coordinator Survey. The Arizona Board of Regents created a short online survey that we ask all site coordinators to complete to track the number of seniors that completed and submitted applications. All data shared will be reported on an aggregate basis only, and no school specific data will be shown. To complete the survey, coordinators can collect the following information during your event using sign-out sheets or another method such as a student's ECAP platform:

• Total number of students who completed at least one application.
• Total number of admission applications submitted by participating students.
• Schools to which students applied (optional).

Conduct a program review. After the AzCAC event, it's a good idea to meet and debrief on the successes and challenges of the current year's initiative. By quickly assessing what worked and what areas need improvement, the team can get a jump start on planning for next year's program, and create an action plan to follow-up with participating students who need to complete their college application and begin the financial aid process.

Follow up using ECAP. School counselors can ask students after the AzCAC event to enter the colleges that they applied to in their ECAP plans. This will give school counselors an opportunity to continue personalized conversations about college costs and financial aid estimates for each institution.

Arizona's public universities are available to help. If students have questions about their college applications to Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University or University of Arizona, encourage them to reach out to their regional university representative at visit.asu.edu/tri-university.

Make sure students complete the FAFSA form. All students are encouraged to fill out the FAFSA. This form provides pathways to financial aid and scholarships. Depending on the timing of your College Application Campaign event, it may make sense for students to complete the FAFSA at the same time they complete admission applications or before. Find out more information about the FAFSA timeline and ways to help students complete their FAFSA at azregents.edu/fafsa.

Celebrate students who applied to college after the event. After your AzCAC event, schools can consider hosting a pizza party, ice cream social or other celebratory event for students who completed at least one college application to celebrate their future.