THE DATA STORIES

Associate's Degrees and Certificates

As in-demand careers continue to evolve and require additional skills, community colleges provide opportunities for Arizona students to earn college credit and certifications, obtain technical skills, and seek the training needed to make career changes. By 2018, almost two-thirds of jobs in Arizona will require some post-secondary education or training.

Focused on creating a brighter future for our students, Arizona Ready has implemented measurable goals that hold our students, teachers, administrators, and schools accountable to higher standards in order to achieve improved results. As part of its education reform plan, Arizona has set the goal of increasing the number of community college students earning associate degrees and/or certificates to 44,000 by 2020. Additionally, Arizona has set the goal of increasing the number of in-state university transfers to 12,500 by 2020.

CERTIFICATES AND DEGREES STATEWIDE (FIGURE 4.1)

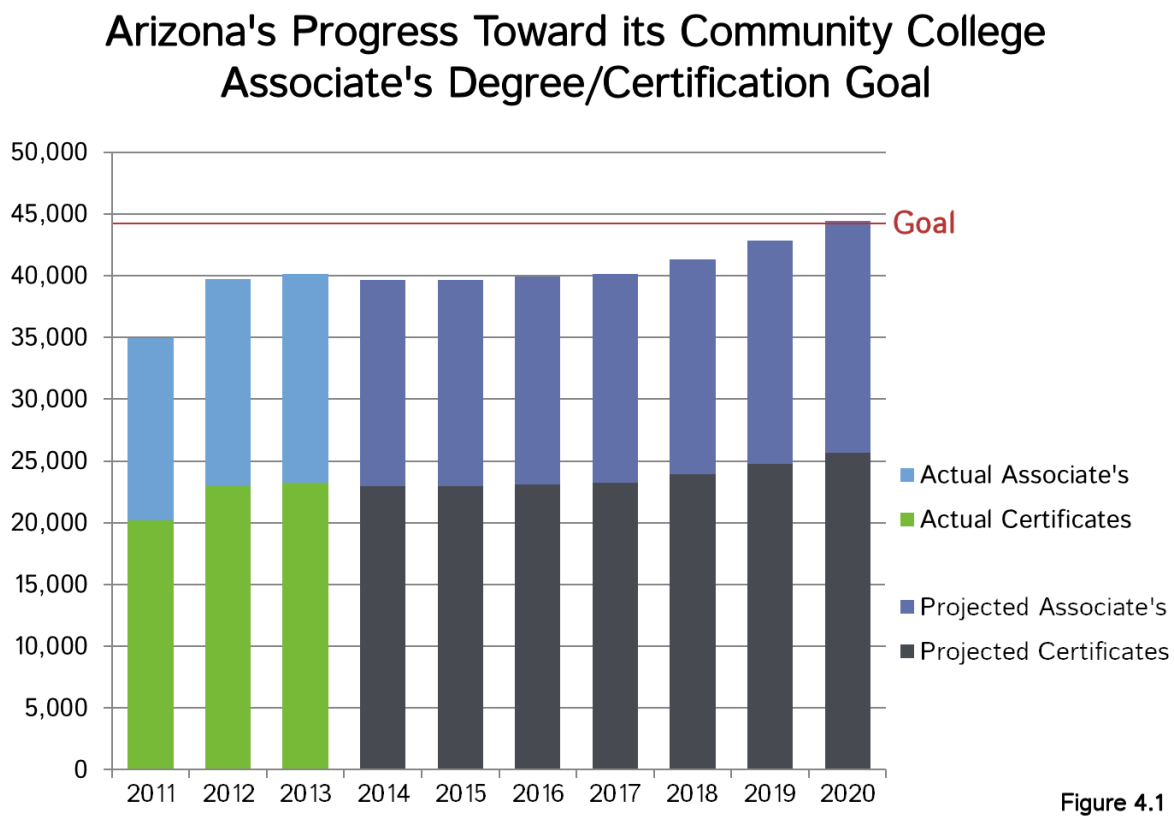

Figure 4.1

Statewide, the number of degrees and certificates awarded by Arizona's community colleges showed a 15% increase from 2011 to 2013. It is important to note that this trend is unlikely to continue. Over the next four years, numbers are expected to remain the same based on lower-enrollment projections due to the improving economy. However, the gains expected from 2017 onward show that Arizona is on-track to reach its goal of 44,000 associate degrees and/or certificates awarded per year by 2020.

Community College to In-State University Transfer Rates (Figure 4.2)

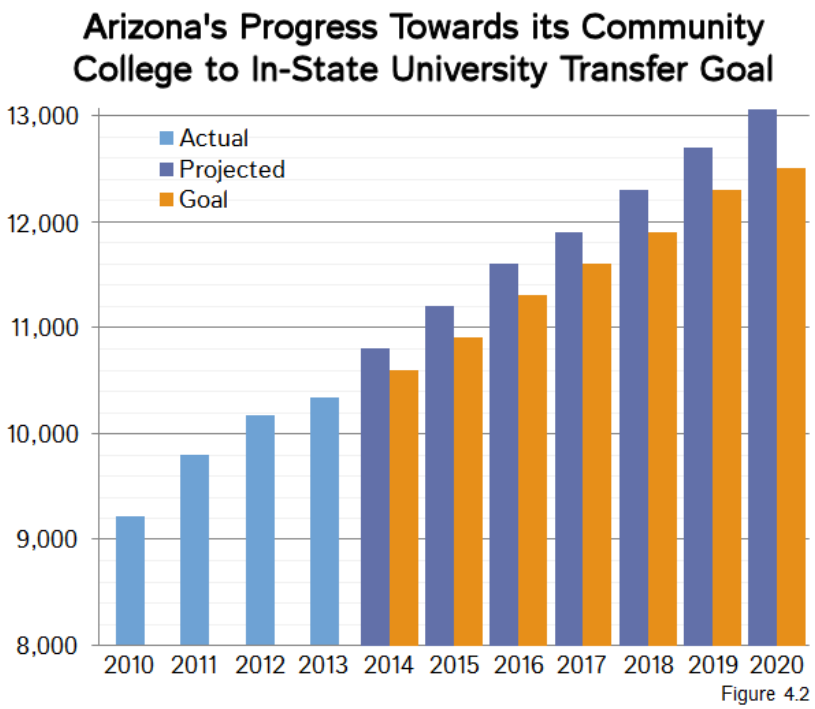

Figure 4.2

The number of in-state university transfers increased by 12% from 2010 to 2013. At this rate, Arizona is on track to exceed its goal of 12,500 community college to in-state university transfers by 2020. However, just as with Arizona's associate's degrees and/or certificates goal, it is important to note that this linear trend is unlikely to continue as projected. Community college enrollment is decreasing and, while the number of community college to in-state university transfers has continued to grow, the rate of growth has decreased from year to year. In 2011, there were 572 more transfers than in 2010. In 2012, there were 373 additional transfers, and in 2013, only 166 more students transferred to an in-state university.

Enrollment by Community College District (Figure 4.3)

Community college enrollment across Arizona has decreased since 2011, when enrollment peaked at 145,470 full time students or equivalent (FTSE). Overall, a majority of Arizona's community college districts exhibited similar trends, with numbers rising steadily from 2009 to 2011 and then falling from 2011 to 2013. When enrollment peaked in 2011, the number of community college FTSE had increased by nearly 22,000. Just two years later, total FTSE had dropped by almost 10,000. This decrease in enrollment from 2011 to 2013 has lowered the average rate of increase over the last five years significantly.

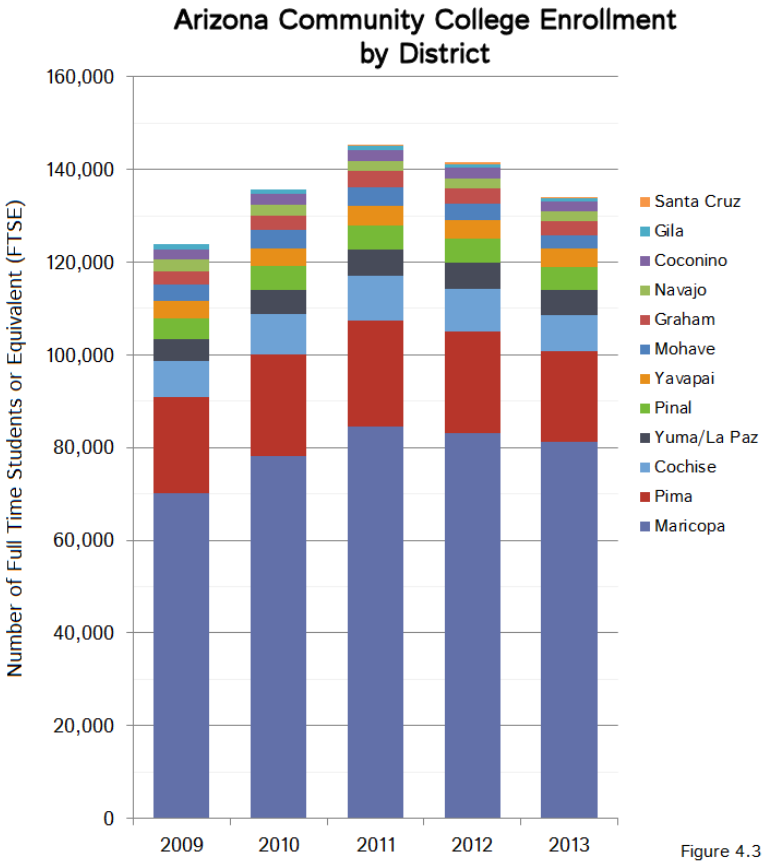

Figure 4.3

Enrollment Changes by Community College District (Figure 4.4)

When enrollment comparisons are broken out by community college district, it is clear that enrollment changes are not uniform across Arizona. In 2013, six Arizona community college districts (Coconino, Pima, Mohave, Santa Cruz, Navajo, and Gila) exhibited enrollment numbers lower than those in 2009. From 2012 to 2013, only Yavapai community college district showed positive growth. By 2013, only two community college districts in Arizona, Graham and Maricopa, had enrollment that was more than 10% higher than enrollment in 2009.

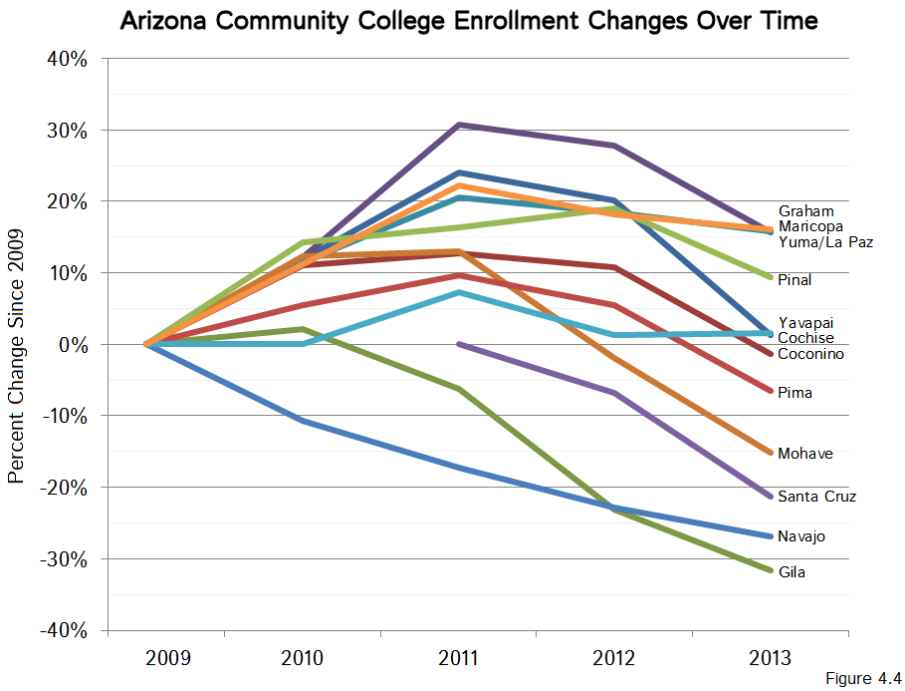

Figure 4.4

Degrees Awarded Post Transfer (Figure 4.5)

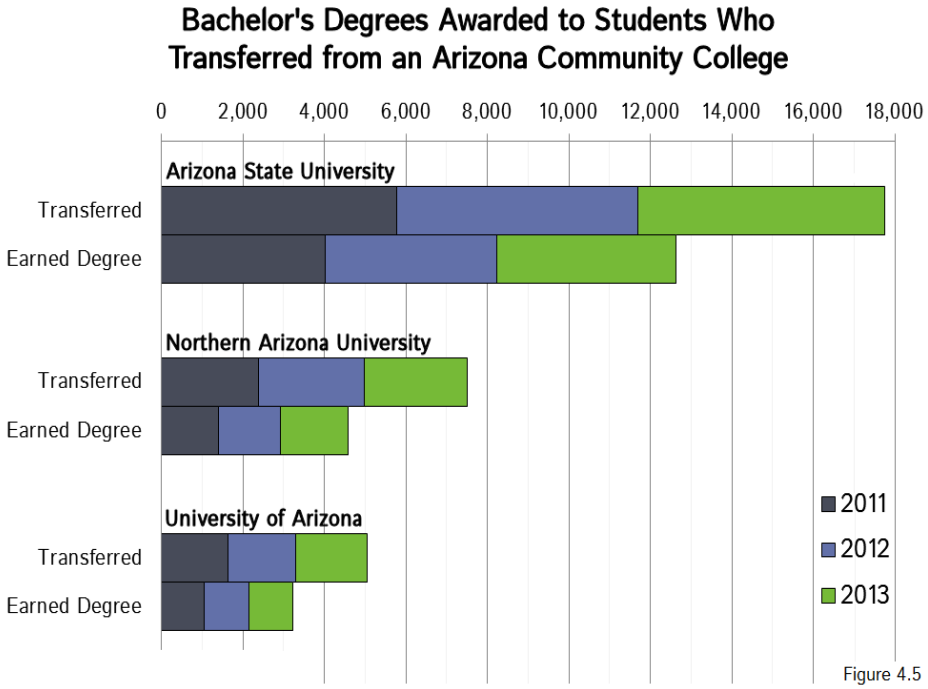

Figure 4.5

On average, 70% of students who transfer from an Arizona community college to an in-state university earn a bachelor's degree within four years. In 2013, 73% of the students who had transferred from an Arizona community college graduated with a bachelor's degree within four years of transferring. Likewise, 65% of the Arizona community college students who transferred to Northern Arizona University were awarded a bachelor's degree within four years. Only 61% of Arizona community college students who transferred to the University of Arizona earned a bachelor's degree within four years.

High School through Post-Secondary Outcomes (Figure 4.6)

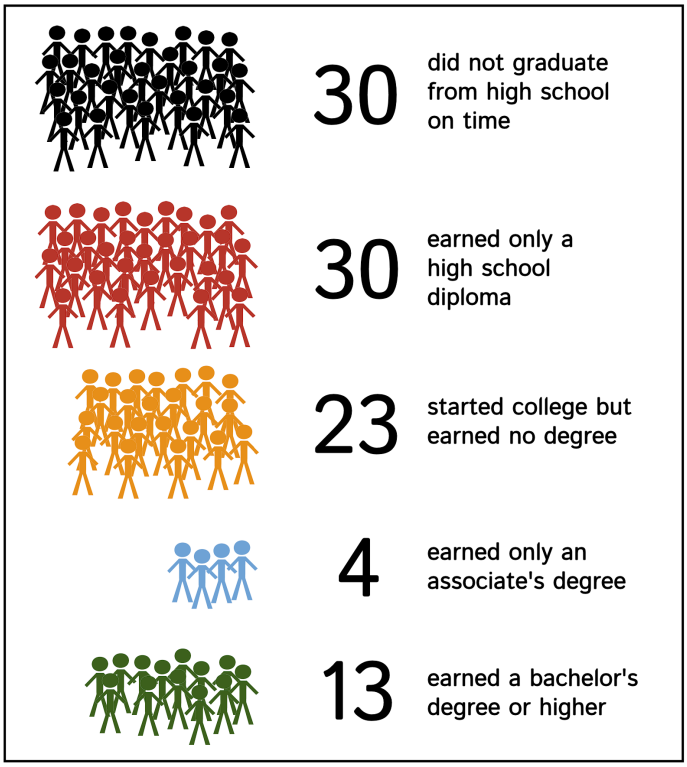

Figure 4.6

To get a sense of the proportion of Arizona's high school students moving on to post-secondary educational success, it is helpful to look at a cohort of high school students over time. A decade after entering high school, only 17% of the 2002 high school freshman class in Arizona had earned a post-secondary degree by 2012 — 13% earned a bachelor's degree or higher, and 4% earned an associate's degree. Thirty percent of students who entered high school in 2002 did not graduate on time and 30% earned a high school diploma but did not seek any post-secondary education. Twenty-three percent went on to post-secondary education but did not earn a degree.

Actions at the State and Local Level

At the local level, a number of programs exist to increase the college-going rate of Arizona's high school graduates. These programs have made strides in assisting high school students with the college application and financial aid process.

Efforts have also been made to raise the number of high school students taking college entrance examinations. In addition, Arizona's community colleges have expanded pathways programs across Arizona, paving the way for students to seamlessly transfer from a community college to a university without losing credits or time.

At the state level, the Arizona State Board of Education adopted Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards in 2010 in order to ensure that Arizona K-12 students are prepared to succeed beyond high school. The goal of these standards is to ensure that students graduating from high school do not require remediation in order to take entry-level classes in higher education. Starting in 2014, new assessments will indicate student readiness for entry-level, post-secondary courses.

Additional Actions to Consider

In order to enable continued growth in the number of community college degrees and certificates awarded, Arizona can focus improvement efforts on the following fronts: recruitment, remediation, retention, and re-entry. Recruitment efforts can focus on increasing the number of students completing financial aid applications, applying

to higher education institutions, and taking the ACT or SAT examinations. These improvements will break down many of the psychological barriers students face when considering post-secondary education. To improve remediation and retention rates, community colleges can consider changing student requirements to lessen the barriers students encounter when looking to take college-credit bearing courses. Finally, the state can increase re-entry rates by incentivizing and rewarding colleges who have a proven track record of successful student outcomes, especially among adults who have some college education but do not yet have a degree or credential.

Sourcing

Figure 4.1: Arizona Community Colleges - Student Progress and Outcomes Report (2014)

Figure 4.2: Arizona Board of Regents - Academic and Student Affairs Enterprise Metrics Project Report (April 2, 2014)

Figure 4.3: Arizona Auditor General - Full-Time Equivalent Student Enrollment Report (2009-2013)

Figure 4.4: Arizona Auditor General - Full-Time Equivalent Student Enrollment Report (2009-2013)

Figure 4.5: Arizona Board of Regents - Academic and Student Affairs Enterprise Metrics Project Report (April 2, 2014)

Figure 4.6: Arizona Department of Education - 4 Year Graduation Rate (2006); and
Arizona Board of Regents - Post-Secondary Outcomes after 6 Years (2005, 2006)