



## Achieve60AZ Directors Announce Project Manager

*Long-time Valley education professional to join attainment initiative*

Phoenix, AZ (Feb. 16, 2017) – Christine Thompson, a long-time education advocate in Arizona, has been appointed as the new project manager for Achieve60AZ.

“The Achieve60AZ coalition is committed to propelling opportunity for Arizonans through education. Greater educational achievement will also advance Arizona’s economy and attractiveness for employers,” said Eileen Klein, Arizona Board of Regents president. “Ms. Thompson’s extensive background in education and her policy expertise will be a tremendous asset as we connect more Arizonans to the education they need for the workforce,” Ms. Klein serves as one of four fiduciaries for Achieve60AZ, in addition to Rich Nickel, College Success Arizona president and CEO; Maria Harper-Marinick, Maricopa Community Colleges chancellor; and Vince Yanez, Helios Education Foundation vice president, Arizona Latino Student Success Initiatives.

“This next step for Arizona’s attainment initiative will help solidify efforts to reach our goal through project planning, execution and management to increase the number of people in Arizona with a college degree or certificate to 60 percent by 2030,” Harper-Marinick said. “It’s imperative to boost education in our state for the future when the majority of jobs will require some type of higher education.”

Thompson has worked in public policy and education in Arizona for more than two decades. Most recently, she served as executive director of the Arizona State Board of Education that is charged with the responsibility of regulating the conduct of the public school system. She has served as associate vice president for government affairs for the Arizona Board of Regents and as director of government relations for the State Bar of Arizona.

“On the heels of the announcement of a \$100,000 grant from Helios Education Foundation, Achieve60AZ continues to gain momentum with the addition of a project manager,” Harper-Marinick said. “This is crucial in Arizona where we must continue to increase access to higher education and ensure that students succeed. Our community colleges play a vital role in educating Arizona students and I look forward to working with Christine to take the next steps in our drive to improve lives through education.”

The Helios Education Foundation grant funds are to be directed toward capacity building, fundraising and other efforts that will help support the alliance in its mission to boost postsecondary attainment and workforce training among Arizonans. Achieve60AZ is a grassroots initiative that was endorsed by Gov. Doug Ducey and is supported by a statewide coalition of more than 60 community, business, philanthropic, education and other organizations.

Thompson, who will work closely with Achieve60AZ directors in her new role, has previous experience in communications, development and alumni relations, and management of a nonprofit involved with higher education advocacy. She currently serves as University of Arizona College of Law Association Board of Directors vice president and has served as a member of the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education Board of Directors, Kids Voting Arizona chair, Soroptomist International of Phoenix treasurer, and was appointed a student regent for the Arizona Board of Regents by Gov. Jane Hull. A proud product of Arizona's public education system, she attended K-12 in Arizona public schools, and received her bachelor's and Juris Doctor degrees from the University of Arizona.

"Achieve60AZ is fortunate to have an individual with the educational background that Christine brings to the position," Nickel said. "We know that the fiscal and social impact of increased attainment is immense. Boosting attainment to align with Arizona's future workforce needs would produce economic and social gains of more than \$7.5 billion. Increased attainment doesn't just lead to more personal income and tax revenue, but it also is beneficial with less social services utilized, less unemployment and a lower poverty rate."

"We look forward to working with Christine in her new role," Yanez said. "Our future is predicated on education and Latinos will make up an increasing number of our qualified workforce in the future. It's incumbent upon us to ensure that the achievement gap for Latinos is addressed and educational opportunity is available for all."

Thompson is looking forward to her new role and ultimately helping Arizona residents reach their potential through educational resources.

"I am excited to work with the education, business and philanthropic leaders throughout Arizona on this transformational project," Thompson said. "It's important to build more support and awareness of Achieve60AZ as we work to boost educational opportunity across the spectrum for Arizona residents."

### **About Achieve60AZ**

More than 60 organizations in Arizona form Achieve60AZ that is fueled by a community-based effort to ensure Arizona remains competitive through the power of education. Their collective goal is to generate greater awareness of the importance of increasing Arizona's level of educational attainment while building support to improve college entry and completion; boost adult education and training; and fuel a pipeline of competitive talent for Arizona's employers. Achieve60AZ promotes support for the long-term steps needed in college entry and completion, adult education and training, and identifying and closing skills gaps to better prepare our workforce and our state for the future when the majority of jobs in Arizona will require some type of higher education.