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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 6, 2008

Arizona's Children To Benefit from Tools for Success

Phoenix – On Thursday, the Arizona Board of Regents and members of the State Board of Education met to identify tools for success that reflect the new high school graduation requirements recently adopted by the State Board of Education. These tools will focus on the production of more math and science teachers.

Fred Boice, President of the Board of Regents, expressed his appreciation to the representatives of the State Board for recognizing how critical it is to help all students to succeed. "Make no mistake, Arizona's economic prosperity and our children's future literally depend upon our ability to ramp up the number of high school students who enroll in college and earn a degree," Boice said.

This session was the first formal meeting of the Board of Regents and representatives of the Board of Education since the State Board of Education approved new high school graduation requirements. The Boards and the Governor's P-20 Council all agree that universities and Arizona's K-12 education leaders must work together to achieve a new level of rigor in the classrooms and equip students to successfully complete their college degrees.

Governor Janet Napolitano commented, "This work supports my priority to double the number of bachelor's degrees by 2020 and my P-20 Council's work in promoting collaboration throughout the education spectrum. I look forward to hearing how our continued coordinated efforts improve education in Arizona."

The education leaders discussed the criticality of increasing math competencies of Arizona's youth. University of Arizona's Bill McCallum, University Distinguished Professor of Mathematics and Director, Institute for Mathematics and Education, told the members that more than 1,000 Arizona university students would be administered a pilot Algebra II test this spring, hoping the results will provide valuable information regarding college readiness.

He said, "Arizona's pilot test could put Arizona in the national forefront on this important effort."

The Regents will be voting on Friday to provide financial support to this study.

President of the State Board of Education, Vicki Balentine, said, “Increases in student achievement and degree attainment are goals we share with the Board of Regents. As a result, dialogue between the State Board of Education and the Board of Regents can go a long way to improve educational expectations and alignment, from pre-kindergarten through post-secondary education in Arizona.”

Dr. Balentine is superintendent of the Amphitheater School District in Tucson.

“For the past several months,” Boice said, “the Board of Regents has been focusing on increasing public awareness of a looming crisis that threatens the prosperity of our state and nation. Arizona lags the rest of the nation in college completion and other key measures of educational performance, and it is through education that we will be able to reposition this state to be competitive in a global economy.”

Boice also commented that the U.S. ranks 21st in high school graduation rates and 15th in college completion when compared to counterpart industrialized countries and that Arizona ranks 43rd in the nation in the percentage of high school graduates who go to college. He called these rankings “unacceptable” if we want our children and grandchildren to have a bright future.

Boice and Balentine expressed their deep appreciation for Governor Napolitano’s leadership and the efforts of her P-20 Council. “The initiatives we are discussing today directly correspond to the work of the P-20 Council,” they said.

The education leaders indicated their support for developing measurable goals and working on a plan that includes multiple pathways for entering college and the workforce.

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