April 10, 2013

Dear Senate President Biggs and House Speaker Tobin,

As members of the Governing Board that oversees Pima Community College, we are writing you to express our strong support for full and adequate funding of adult education in Arizona. We believe that investing in adult education represents a wise use of limited taxpayer dollars and will help lay a solid foundation for future economic prosperity.

Adult education represents a proven gateway to strengthening Arizona’s economy. At Pima we have seen how our adult education students have gone on to become productive members of our community. By helping individuals and families become self-sufficient, adult education plays a direct role in promoting business growth and increasing taxable revenues.

Adult education provides the only entry-point into immediate employment and job training for more than 22,000 Arizonans each year. In a state where more than 800,000 adults lack a high school diploma, we believe that adult education pathways help our state attract new businesses by ensuring we have a properly trained workforce.

The bottom line is clear and straightforward: adult education makes economic sense for Arizona.

One of your former colleagues, John Huppenthal, now the Superintendent of Public Instruction, wrote in a March 27 letter to members of the Legislature that “there is no better opportunity to jumpstart our state’s workforce development effort than Arizona’s Adult Education Program”

An equally important reason to support full and adequate funding for adult education is its solid track record. Arizona’s adult education program was recently ranked as one of the top four in the nation. The hard work of many made this success possible. We believe that full and adequate funding is critical to maintaining the program.

Our state’s adult education programs, as well as similarly successful programs in family literacy, citizenship, GED, and English language learning, enable thousands of motivated but under-educated adults to realize their dreams of a better life. Their accomplishments include:

- Achieving employment and promotions
- Enrolling in college and post-secondary training programs
- Enlisting in the armed forces
- Getting off public assistance
- Encouraging students to become civically engaged
- Becoming United States citizens
We ask that you keep the tangible successes of adult education in mind as you finalize Arizona’s next budget. We appreciate the fact that the demands upon you are great. But we also firmly believe that great rewards are possible if adult education receives the support it deserves.

Superintendent Huppenthal has noted that, without state support, Arizona could very well lose $12 million in matching federal funds. More importantly, the state will lose a valuable educational system that serves thousands of Arizonans. As he put in his letter to you, ‘the failure to appropriate a state match – at some level - for the coming fiscal year will lead to serious reductions in service and force us to confront the question of whether or not the statewide program can continue.’

The Arizona Department of Education also recently issued a county by county list of the potential repercussions if the Adult Education system is not in the budget again. In Pima County, the anticipated repercussions to services if state funding is not fully restored could be devastating:

- The closure of one of three large learning centers, effectively cutting off services to students in one area of town
- The loss of services to between 1,000 and 1,200 students due to decreased capacity
- The layoffs of approximately 10 – 12 full-time staff, including instructors, managers and coordinators

We urge you to consider the Superintendent’s request to protect the only basic education system we have for our Arizona workforce. We understand that the legislature has hard decisions to make but believe that adult education has broad support from state leadership, including Governor Brewer. The effects of sequestration have made it even more imperative that you prioritize the restoration of state funds for adult education.

Thank you.

Members of the Pima Community College Board of Governors

Brenda Even, Chair

David Longoria, Secretary

Sylvia Lee

Marty Cortez

Scott Stewart