THRIVING FUTURES COLLABORATIVE

MEET THE CO-CHAIRS

Jessica Howe

Director of My Future AZ

Pipeline Connects

Tom Wilson

Co-Director of Workforce: Strategy

SciTech Institute

UNITED WAY Tucson and Southern Arizona

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Anchored at United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona

SCITECH INSTITUTE

Pipeline Connects

Why is it important for Pima County leaders to come together around postsecondary outcomes?

"After 16 years in the classroom, I know that a child's path doesn't start at graduation. It starts in kindergarten and gets shaped by every adult and system they touch along the way. No one organization can carry that alone, so when we come together, students stop falling through the cracks between us."

Jessica Howe

"By coming together they can gain a better understanding of what each has to offer and from this create a unified plan of action to strengthen the pipeline from high school to postsecondary education, and from postsecondary graduation into workforce."

Tom Wilson

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What has the Thriving Futures Collaborative been able to accomplish by bringing leaders from different sectors to the same table?

“We’ve gotten people who usually work side by side, but rarely together, into real conversation. That has built trust and shared language, and it has helped us see where our work overlaps and where youth are still being missed.”

Jessica Howe

“Identify + Transparency = Alignment. The Collaborative, by bringing stakeholders from multiple sectors together, has promoted awareness of the strengths, challenges, and expectations for each sector, and from this awareness comes the opportunity to build capacity across sectors.”

Tom Wilson

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How has the addition of the Outcomes Cohort moved the Thriving Futures Collaborative forward?

“The Outcomes Cohort has moved us toward designing solutions as a community, leaning on each other’s strengths instead of working in silos. In the end, I’d love to see every young person in Pima County leave high school with a real plan and a trusted adult who helped them build it.”

Jessica Howe

“The Outcomes Cohort has brought a specific observable and measurable outcome to the Collaborative, and once the data has been collected this can not only be scaled up, but it can offer evidence of regional impact.”

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What can we gain by bringing young people's perspectives into conversations about postsecondary outcomes?

"Young people tell us the truth about what's getting in their way, and it's often not what we assume. When we design with them instead of for them, our solutions actually fit their lives."

Jessica Howe

"Their perspectives are important to gain an understanding of the real or envisioned barriers and challenges they face. Conversely, engaging in these conversations offers them the opportunity to learn from multiple perspectives and gain more awareness of the resources they can access to achieve success."

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What do you envision for the future of postsecondary success in Pima County?

"I see a county where students start exploring careers in middle school, see real local opportunities in their own communities, and know there's more than one path to a good life. Every path, whether college, training, apprenticeship, or straight into work, should be respected and supported."

Jessica Howe

"Postsecondary success is much more than just completion rates and awarded degrees. Having a postsecondary degree may get you that job interview, but having the skills that are in demand by employers gets you the job. It's very important not to lose sight of that. For postsecondary success to occur it's critical that curriculum by informed by input from employers, not just what faculty imagines it to be."

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“It’s important to remember that admission into a college or university is not the only path that a high school graduate can take. In fact, many of the jobs they can get are less vulnerable to AI replacement—including construction, electrical work, and plumbing—than those they are eligible for with an Associates or Bachelors degree.”

Tom Wilson

“I’m honored to co-chair this work and grateful for every partner I get to work with. This is what it looks like when a community decides its young people are everyone’s responsibility.”

Jessica Howe

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