



May 15, 2010

The Honorable Jan Brewer
Governor of Arizona
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Reference: Support letter for Arizona Race to the Top Phase II Application

Dear Governor Brewer:

Science Foundation Arizona is pleased to support the reform plan proposed in the referenced Race to the Top proposal and recognizes the earnest and compelling need to do all that is possible to invest in the future of our state through education, and particularly science, technology, engineering and mathematics "STEM" education.

The connection between STEM education and an innovation economy is critical and has been well understood by leaders in Arizona who, in 2006, created Science Foundation Arizona (SFAz) as a unique public/private 501(c)3 organization with the purpose of diversifying Arizona's economy into renewable energy, biosciences and communications. SFAz is accomplishing this by forging partnerships that leverage the research strengths of universities, research laboratories and industries in the state to attack critical technology problems of local and global significance. Funded by the state and supported operationally by Arizona's three CEO business organizations, SFAz demonstrates a broad commitment to expand Arizona's 21st century capacity and economic opportunity.

This commitment not only includes investments in advancements in research but also investments in STEM education that sets the foundation for developing the talent to support an innovation-inspired economy. In the spring of 2008, the SFAz board established the STEM Initiative (SFAz STEM). A first-rate, modern education system must be grounded in science and mathematics to reinforce the logic and critical thinking required of so many professions in today's marketplace. With the backing of private industry and community partnership support SFAz STEM is committed to enhancing Arizona's capacity and achievement in science, technology, engineering and mathematics for all students and serves as a vital bridge between business and those working to advance education in our state by enhancing relevant and effective education.

Arizonans want a strong economy, a good education system, and the availability of high-quality, high-paying jobs.
Science Foundation Arizona was formed as a public/private partnership to help with exactly that.

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Through its global relationships, SFAz STEM strives to educate about the current and future needs of employers as well as identify opportunities to better align, integrate and embed STEM principles and practices at all levels of Arizona's education system. These objectives are tied to an overarching vision that will create "STEM pathways" throughout Arizona to increase quality, pre-college STEM education experiences in the classroom and through extra-curricular activities. Impacting over 1,200 teachers and an estimated 65,000 students statewide SFAz STEM has initiated a series of pilot pathway programs that builds on past successes, leverages and expands current investments and infuses new ideas and programs throughout the P-20 continuum in teaching and learning. These efforts and investments are reflected in Arizona's Race to the Top Phase II Application.

SFAz STEM supports the STEM education activities that are proposed in the Race to the Top Phase II Application. These programs collectively stress appropriate levels of rigor to maximize success in college and careers and are also project-based, giving students the ability to solve complex problems and apply the fundamental academic concepts in a real world context.

SFAz is committed to the future of Arizona and understands the critical role that a sound investment in education has on that future. You can count on our commitment to achieving this end. SFAz will support your effort fully.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Darcy Renfro". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Darcy Renfro
Vice President and Executive Director, STEM Initiative

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