>ber 9, 2003

Arizon a

Hispani c Page 3

Saving Our Future

From Page 1

Saving Our Future:
Research Center Launches Latino Initiative

to Improve Graduation Rates.

By Ruben Hernandez

The Center for the Future of Arizona is

launching a new initiative to attack obstacles that
have kept Arizona's Latino high school dropout
rate dne of the highest in the nation.
"Addressing the Latino dropout issue will
give Arizona a chance for greatness," said Lattie
Coor, Chairman and CEO of the Center and
former president of ASU. "If this issue is not
taken on seriously, we will have defaulted in our
responsibility."
The initiative includes a special Latino
education study to be conducted by the Morrison
Institute and funded by the Bruce T. Halle Family
Foundation, ASU, Valley of the Sun United Way
and the City of Phoenix. The largest funding
amount — $1.15 million over the next five years
- comes from Bruce and Diane Halle. Bruce
Halle owners of Discount Tire Co.
The Center initiative will work to:

• Develop consistent and measurable data
throughout the state;
• Analyze successful programs to address
problem areas;
• Build a statewide consensus on the

Lattle Coor, Dr. Sybil Francis and Mary Jo
Waits of the Center for the Future of Arizona.

changes that must take place to improve dropout
levels;
• Develop a five-year coordinated plan to
build on best practices and achieve measurable
results.

See Saving Page 3

Other aspects include hiring
a full-time director to manage
the project and utilizing the
resources of Jim Collins, a
national management

consultant and bestselling
author.
According to Coor and Dr.
Sybil Francis, the Center's
Executive Director, a coalition
of education, business, policy,
and non-profit leaders has been
built to address the dropout
problem. Coalition partners
include the Greater Phoenix
Economic Council, the Phoenix
Chamber of Commerce, the
state Department of Education,
the Arizona Center for Public
Policy, Arizona State
University, and the Governor's
Office.

"From every measure we
are able to find, Arizona's high
school completion rate is
among the worst in the nation,"
said Coor. "We must develop a
statewide agenda to ensure that
substantially more yourig
people receive the education
they need to build successful
lives. Their economic well-
being, and our state's future,
depend on it."
The first major effort will
be to establish a consensus
definition of What a "dropout"
actually is, and to begin to
develop reliable dropout data
from all schools in Arizona.
Coor said, "The data is
calculated many different ways
around the state, and until we
achieve some consistency in
our basic documentation, we
will never be able to
successfully measure our
progress."

The Center is working with
Latino education experts Dr.
Eugene Garcia, ASU Vice
President for the
Univers i ty/Scho o 1 s
Partnership; Dr. Teresa Huerta
of ASU, who recently
completed a policy study
calling for the overhaul of how
dropout is measured, and David
Garcia of the Arizona Center
for Public Policy.
The Center initiative staff
will join educators, Governor
Janet Napolitano and key state
leaders at "The State Forum on
Enhancing School Completion
in Arizona," an invitation-only
symposium Nov. 6-7 to form
strategies to seriously address
dropout.
Arizona appears to have
one of the highest dropout rates
for Latinos among states that
border Mexico, and the Center
believes special emphasis is
needed to address this
population.

The Center will work with

Mary Jo Waits of the Morrison
Institute for Public Policy to
conduct a new Latino education

study to determine what is
different among high
performing schools that enroll
high numbers of poor and
Latino children. Waits was the

author of the ground-breaking
2001 policy study, "Five Shoes
Waiting to Drop," which
opened the eyes of many to the
dire economic consequences of
continuing high rates of Latino
dropout.
The Center will coordinate
the development of a five-year
plan, paying particular
attention to:
• The identifying
characteristics of Arizona
students who drop out each
year;
• Drawing on the research
and experiences from other
states about the most promising
methods for improving
success;
• The role, of alternative
high schools;
• Parental involvement,
especially among newly-
arrived immigrants;
• Re-entry programs for
students who have already
dropped out;
• Best practices for
strengthening high school
completion among Arizona's'
minority student populations;
• Ways to develop job-
related educational
opportunities for interested
students.
The common threads of
"best practices" that run
through these high performing
schools will be the basis for
Latino education policy
recommendations.
The study will utilize some
of the research methods and
concepts developed by Jim
Collins, author of the national
bestseller, "Good to Great:
Why Some Companies Make
the Leap...and Others Don If."
Collins is a former faculty
member at the Stanford

University Graduate School of
Business.

One concept coming from
Collins is the initiative's idea of
using matched pairs— schools
that went from good to great in
serving Latino children versus
those that did not make that
leap - to proyide a path to
understanding the key variables
of Latino dropout.

(The Center is a 501 (c)(3)
non-profit organization. For
more information, visit the
Center's Web site at
www.ArizonaFuture.org or call
(480) 727-5005.)