• THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23,2003 VIEWPOINTS

Solving Arizona's B|Q problems

The Center for the Future of Arizona

is a 'do tank' - poised to tackle our

most difficult challenges by combining diverse talents into a concerted effort

t~t!c^^ leads

A

s Arizona's leaders
struggle with the
daunting fiscal prob-
lems facing our state, we
must not lose sight of the fact
that we can have as bright
and promising a future as any
place in America—if only we
will think carefully about the
kind of Ari-

An educated^izelfy
crucial to our success to an agenda of action

Lattie
Coor

Chairman, CEO
Center for
the Future
of Arizona

of Arizona, a

zona we

want in the
years
ahead, and
work to-
gether to
achieve it.
To assist
in that proc-
ess, we
have estab-
lished the
Center for
the Future
privately
funded "do tank" dedicated to
pursuing an action-oriented
agenda that tackles the im-
portant issues facing Ari-
zona.

Committed to engaging
civic and political leadership
as agents for positive change,
the Center will take on no
more than three major proj-
ects at a time, staying with
each chosen project for three
to five years. Our primary ob-
jective is to accomplish clear,
bold and measurable goals
over the life of each project.
My colleague, Dr. Sybil
Francis, in a companion piece
in today's Viewpoints, de-
scribes a process the center
will soon undertake to help
provide a focus for the fu-
ture. I will comment on the
other major project we have
chosen, that of tackling Ari-
zona's alarmingly high stu-
dent dropout rate.
As we reviewed the issues
that are central to an evolving
Arizona (such as our econo-
my, water, transportation, air
quality, the environment,
health and education), it be-
came clear to us that a well-
educated citizenry is an es-
sential feature of a high-qual-
ity future for Arizona.
With almost one-third of
our young people failing to
complete high school, giving
us one of the lowest school-
completion rates in the na-
tion, we concluded this was
such a serious problem that
we had to put it at the top of
the Center's agenda.
A high school education is
the minimum education level
to function in the modern
economy. Men who don't
complete high school earn, on

average, almost $8,000 a year
less than those who do.
Society benefits from an
educated workforce through
a stronger economy and a
healthier revenue base for
the state. Arizona loses an es-
timated $47.8 million in an-
nual tax revenues as a result
of the low wages of non-high
school graduates. In addition,
school dropouts constitute a
high proportion of our prison
population, representing a
costly drain on state revenue.
A low high school comple-
tion rate also translates into a
low college continuation rate.
Even with our fine commu-
nity college and university
systems, Arizona's college-
going rate is one of the lowest
in the nation. Disturbingly,
the already low college con-
tinuation rate of Arizona's 19-
year-olds declined markedly
from 1988 to 1998. As the na-
tion's college-going rate in-
creased 4.1 percent over that
decade, Arizona's rate de-
creased by 9.4 percent, the
sharpest drop of any state.
It is our belief that all of
Arizona would benefit if, to-
gether, we would establish
clear, widely publicized goals
to improve our high school
completion rate over the next
several years. The Center for
the Future of Arizona is com-
mitted to working with all in-
terested parties on multiple
fronts, searching for the
most promising areas for in-
tervention and developing
collaborative programs to
improve the success rate of
our students. I believe we can
materially improve the likeli-
hood that our young people
will successfully complete
high school. I also believe this
effort will be a tangible first
step in building a better Ari-
zona.

Dr. Lattie Coor is chairman and
CEO of the Center for the
Future of Arizona. You
send him your comments
at Lattie.Coor@Arizona
Future.org. Additional
information about
the center may be
obtained at www.
Arizona
Future.org.

D

uring these times of
great social and eco-
nomic change, the de-
cisions we make today will af-
fect Arizona for years to
come. It is important that
these decisions reflect our
values as a community. The
newly created Center for the
Future of

Sybil
Francis

Center
for the Future
of Arizona

"\gsgg§

Arizona will
respond to
this chal-
lenge by
tackling the
most funda-
mental
questions of
all: What is
our vision
for the fu-
ture of Ari-
zona, and how do we get
there?

The center proposes to fo-
cus on Arizona's future by
structuring a community-
wide discussion to arrive at a
shared vision, developing an
action agenda aimed at the
most critical issues facing
the state, and then monitor-
ing the progress achieved.
Dr. Lattie Coor, the center's
chairman and CEO, and I are
asking for the community's
input in this process, and
strongly encourage civic and
political leaders to partici-
pate. This is vital to the out-
come and success of discus-
sions about Arizona's future.
The Center for the Future
of Arizona will facilitate such
discussions, offer an open
place for dialogue and the ex-
change of ideas, and seek in-
put from across the political
spectrum.
The center will work on
two levels: First, we will draw
on the creative energy and
collective wisdom presented
in previous research, dis-
tilling the reports and rec-
ommendations of Town
Halls, community
groups, as well as
policy institute
reports and rec-
ommenda-
tions. We will
then publish
a summary
of our
findings.
In con-

junction
with our

ongoing research, we will ac-
tively engage community and
political leaders, individuals
and corporate leaders, as we
seek to formulate a consen-
sus vision for the future of
Arizona.

We offer the following six
points to describe the attrib-
utes we know we should
strive for, based on our pre-
liminary analysis of existing
literature:
A diversified and com-
petitive knowledge-based
economy to create more and
better jobs for Arizonans;
a state that attracts and
retains its most creative and
talented people who can as-
sist in the transformation of
the economy;
an educational and social
infrastructure that provides
full opportunities for all and
rewards hard work;
a state that maintains
and enhances the quality of
life for its inhabitants, even
as the population grows;
an investment philoso-
phy that generates adequate
resources, public and pri-
vate, to accomplish collective
goals;
and civic and political
leadership models appropri-
ate for a modern, complex so-
ciety.
An agreed-upon vision for
Arizona's future is a good
first step. However, the real
work will be to create strate-
gies that move us to fulfill
that vision. The Center for
the Future of Arizona stands
ready to assist in the creation
of a public and private action
agenda, to help us achieve
success and to assess our
progress along the way.
Now is the time for leaders
from all sectors to set a bold
vision for Arizona's economy,
its educational system, its so-
cial and physical infrastruc-
ture and its natural environ-
ment. The Center for the Fu-
ture of Arizona is committed
to working on that agenda
and to move it forward in col-
laboration with others — the
"do" part of our mission.
Please join us in this impor-
tant endeavor.

Dr. Sybil Francis is executive
director of the Center for the
Future of Arizona. You may send
her your comments at
Sybil.Francis@ArizonaFuture.org.
Additional information about the
center may be obtained at
www.ArizonaFuture.org.

• %*&.

Illustration by Tony Bustos/The Arizona Republic