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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CENTER FOR THE FUTURE OF ARIZONA LAUNCHES ARIZONA DROPOUT INITIATIVE
Initiative includes Latino education study to be conducted by the Morrison Institute

PHOENIX, Oct. 2, 2003 – The Center for the Future of Arizona (Center), today announced a new initiative aimed at tackling the problems that have kept Arizona’s high school dropout rate one of the highest in the nation. This 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 changes that must take place to improve dropout levels
- Develop a five-year coordinated plan to build on best practices and achieve measurable results.

In addition, 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. 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.

“From every measure we are able to find, Arizona’s high school completion rate is among the worst in the nation,” said Lattie Coor, chairman and CEO of the Center. “We must develop a statewide agenda to ensure that substantially more young 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.”

Arizona also 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. Therefore, the Center will work with the Morrison Institute 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. The common threads of “best practices” that run through these high performing schools will be the basis for Latino education policy recommendations.

Diane Halle, president of the Bruce T. Halle Family Foundation said, “The social and economic consequences for our state of an increasing Latino population, plus an increasing dropout rate amongst these people are immense, and we must take decisive action to improve the rate of graduation for these students. We are very pleased to be a part of this initiative and to focus additional attention on the needs of Arizona’s Latino students.”

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HIGH SCHOOL DROUPOUT INITIATIVE/2-2-2

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't*. Collins is a former faculty member at the Stanford University Graduate School of Business, and now operates a management research laboratory serving both corporate and social sectors. In *Good to Great*, Collins analyzes eleven companies that made the leap from good to great results and sustained those results for at least fifteen years. His book outlines the "key determinants of greatness," and details what management strategies are needed to achieve and sustain it.

Collins said, "The notion of using matched pairs--schools that went from good to great in serving Latino children versus those that did not make that leap -- provides a path to understanding the key variables at work. I'm delighted to see the Center make use of our research methods and concepts in tackling this very important social question for the state of Arizona."

The Center is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization funded through the donations of philanthropic individuals and organizations dedicated to Arizona's future well-being. Dr. Sybil Francis serves as the organization's executive director, and Dr. Lattie Coor serves as chairman and CEO. In addition, the Center is governed by a board of directors comprised of distinguished community leaders committed to improving the lives of Arizonans. For more information, visit the Center's Web site at www.ArizonaFuture.org or call (480) 727-5005.

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