

## Support PCC



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Pima Community College is an incredible economic driver in Southern Arizona when it is functioning well. Happily, after some bumps, it is returning to the asset we've come to rely on.

In the last year under new Chancellor Lee Lambert, we've seen a renewed emphasis on adult education and literacy, a healthy turnover in the administration and a continued commitment to immigrant youth (i.e., in-state tuition for those who have work permits under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program).

There is now a willingness to engage with the community, including meetings the chancellor has been having with groups around town to report on progress in addressing the concerns of the Higher Learning Commission.

Lambert recently made a presentation to a group of leaders from the Pima County Interfaith Council (PCIC). In discussing his presentation among ourselves afterward, what struck people was his commitment to those at the bottom of the educational ladder who were generally discouraged from attending Pima for a while.

Literacy Connects has worked closely with PCC Adult Education for many years in an effort to create options for adult students at all levels with varying needs. Making sure that students don't get lost between programs has been a shared major goal. The former administration treated this stellar PCC program as an afterthought. Lambert has recognized what a gem the adult education program is and is incorporating its work very holistically into the entire college. This move will increase open access for all students with a desire to learn.

Although we'd like all our young people to have the chance to go to the University of Arizona or another four-year school, that's not the route for everyone. Some students start at Pima and transfer to the UA, while others study for the many good-paying jobs and careers available to students with an associate's degree from Pima.

For more than 15 years, JobPath, a program initiated and guided by the business community and PCIC, has been graduating nurses, aircraft technicians, dental

assistants, truck drivers, etc., who are now earning living-wage salaries with their associate's degrees. The vast majority of these 1,200+ students moved from poverty and government assistance to become middle-class workers and taxpayers thanks to hard work, JobPath and PCC.

PCIC and Literacy Connects are joining with the UA College of Education to present an Education Accountability Session on Sept. 28. There, you can learn about the PCC board candidates, Michael Duran and Mark Hanna, and other state candidates.

As a community, we all have the opportunity to support Pima in several ways. The accreditor is here this week checking on PCC's progress. Write a letter to the editor and/or directly to the Higher Learning Commission at [info@hlcommission.org](mailto:info@hlcommission.org) And vote in the contested PCC Governing Board election in November.

When we as a community pay attention, support education financially, vote, and hold PCC and its leadership accountable, we can again make the college an economic driver and a pathway out of poverty for our community.

### **Hear the candidates**

PCC Board candidates, Michael Duran and Mark Hanna, and other state office-seekers will appear Sept. 28 at Sept. 28, at 4 p.m., at Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church, 1300 N. Greasewood Road. The event is co-sponsored by PCIC, Literacy Connects and the UA College of Education.

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