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ARIZONA NEWS

# An East Valley program is providing free tuition to adult learners

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From left to right: Rich Nickel, Education Forward Arizona CEO, Mesa Mayor John Giles, MCC President Kimberly Britt and Kate Franko with Google. (City of Mesa photo)

**BY COLTON KROLAK**

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PHOENIX — The Mesa College Promise program will now provide free Mesa Community College tuition for adult learners aged 24 and

older.

Officials launched the program in 2021 with help from public and private partnerships. They wanted to help Mesa residents who struggled to afford higher education. Originally, the program only supported new high school graduates.

The decision to offer free community college tuition to older students will help Arizona achieve its education goals, according to Education Forward Arizona CEO Rich Nickel.

“Right now, only 48%, less than half, of Arizonans have a post-secondary degree or that (workforce) certification,” Nickel said during a press conference on Monday.

Arizona has a statewide postsecondary education attainment goal of 60% by 2030.

The goal, called [Achieve60AZ](#), is a long way off, according to Nickel.

## How does this education program benefit the East Valley?

“Education is the solution,” Nickel said. “It provides tremendous benefits, both financial and social, not only to the students but to their communities, their families and indeed the entire state.”

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Mesa Mayor John Giles echoed those sentiments at the press conference. He said education is vital to the city's economic future because attracting more students to the area will also bring in more big businesses.

"If we're going to continue to be competitive in that area, we've got to be known as a college town," Giles said. "We've got to be known as a city that prioritizes education."

Expanding the Mesa College Program will further the state's educational goals, he added.

"This institution is the best tool in our toolbox for achieving that Achieve60AZ goal," Giles said. "The key that unlocks that toolbox is the Mesa College Promise."

### **How will the Mesa College Program help students?**

The program offers more than free tuition.

Students also receive a \$250 stipend for books and transportation, an advisor and access to various programs to help make them successful in school.

Students have to meet certain criteria to be eligible:

- They must demonstrate financial need through the FAFSA.
- Students must have earned a high school diploma or GED.
- They can't have a college degree already.
- They must enroll in at least six credits' worth of classes.

Those who want to apply can visit the [Mesa Community College's website](#).



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