

Discussion Question 3:

What are your thoughts on the partnership between Arizona State University and Starbucks in launching the College Achievement Plan? How does this partnership reflect Arizona Board of Regent's charge and future external partnership trends and innovation in higher education? As a higher education leader, please describe the unique assets, innovative skills and new ways of finding solutions that you can bring to US universities, colleges or public or private organizations that partner with higher education. Please elaborate.

I'm truly impressed with Starbucks as they launch their College Achievement Plan with ASU. The plan that was "first introduced in June 2014, will now offer 100 percent tuition coverage for every eligible U.S. Starbucks partner (employee)" (Starbucks Newsroom, 2015). Starbucks has partnered with ASU to create this opportunity, which was originally only for juniors and seniors in colleges around the U.S., but is now available for all part-time and full-time Starbucks employees attending ASU, no matter their grade level. This is a great opportunity for students attending ASU and will greatly contribute to our state as a whole.

Based on a few videos I watched about this program, it appears it will be changing many lives for the better. This includes a lot of younger students who can't afford to pay for college tuition. Howard Shultz, President and CEO of Starbucks stated that "the unfortunate reality is that too many Americans can no longer afford a college degree, particularly disadvantaged young people, and others are saddled with burdensome education debt" (Starbucks Coffee, 2015). I think it's a great thing that companies like Starbucks are taking the initiative to offer tuition reimbursement. Although many other companies offer tuition reimbursement to their employees, most of them do not cover 100 percent of tuition.

I think it's fantastic that Starbucks' goal with this program is to decrease the amount of debt that students are accumulating, providing better access to a college education to their employees, and to "serve our people as well as we serve our customer" (Starbucks Coffee, 2015). They are already making a huge impact on the state of Arizona, and over the next three years they are committed to hiring 10,000 "opportunity youth" between the ages of 16 and 24 who need employment and are not

currently attending school. Their hope is to “create a sustainable future for these young Americans” (Starbucks Newsroom, 2015).

According to the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR), “by 2018, 61 percent of all jobs in Arizona will require some postsecondary education” (AZ Regents, 2015). With this information, we need to recognize that students accessing higher education that is affordable is key to ensuring students can get good jobs and contribute to our great state of Arizona. ABOR “has directed each university to create new and innovative pathways for students to obtain a degree” (AZ Regents, 2015). This mandates that ASU, UoA, and NAU develop and expand their partnerships to increase their affordability and convenience of completing a degree. “We are increasing access and educational attainment through new, lower cost tuition options, expanded online offerings, community college partnerships and broader admission standards at select campuses” (AZ Regents, 2015). It’s great to hear that Arizona is doing its part to make sure our state is on the right track for the future.

As a leader of higher education, I hope to find new and innovative ways to help students pay for college (like ASU did with Starbucks). Scholarships, tuition reimbursement, and financial aid are good ways to help students pay for college, but I believe there is always another new idea waiting to be implemented.

In my current position at NAU, I am constantly required come up with more innovative ways of perfecting our business processes to make things are more efficient and better for our students. Since I’m in charge of a fairly new program, I collaborate with a team once a week to go over new ideas and things we can offer students to make our program more exciting and affordable. More recently, we came up with a new way of rewarding students for making academic progress through their degree by giving them a “surprise” University Grant. We’ve heard a lot of positive feedback from this new implementation because it rewards students who are exceling through their program and has also decreased the amount of student loan debt students are accumulating. If I were in charge of coming up with a new way to help students fund their tuition, I would partake in a lot of internal and external outreach to learn about different ideas and meet with a team who is dedicated to making these goals a reality. It’s important that every idea be reviewed because that idea just might be a Starbuck and ASU partnership that helps thousands of students. I’ll leave it at this... “A degree is an opportunity” (Fox 10 Phoenix, 2015).

References:

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[Starbucks Coffee] (2014, June 15). *Starbucks College Achievement Plan: A Lifetime of Opportunity*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9_BKHzgV6c on September 18, 2015. [[This includes direct quotes from Howard Shultz]]