



METROPOLITAN  
EDUCATION  
COMMISSION

OUR VOICE • OUR COMMUNITY • OUR FUTURE

**OUR VOICE, OUR COMMUNITY, OUR FUTURE.**



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2021-2022

## **Our Voice, Our Community, Our Future**

**History:** The Metropolitan Education Commission was established by the City of Tucson and Pima County in 1990 as a joint Commission for educational and advocacy purposes. The Commission's primary functions are to advise, make recommendations, and serve as an advocate in all the areas as they affect the educational welfare of the citizens of Tucson and Pima County.

**Mission:** To advocate for a quality and affordable education from preschool to post-secondary for all residents of the City of Tucson and Pima County.

**Vision:** Students of all ages and backgrounds will be academically prepared, successfully graduate, and pursue a post-secondary pathway and career of their choice.

*Our work is informed by the following goals:*

**Our Voice-** To equip students, families, educators, business and community leaders with information that will empower them to advocate for the educational welfare of the citizens of the City of Tucson and Pima County.

**Our Community-** To form strategic collaborations with individuals and organizations to advocate for all levels of education, pre-kindergarten to post-secondary. To engage youth and families in advocating for education. To recognize individuals and groups within the community who demonstrate exemplary service to students and to education.

**Our Future-** To promote graduation from high school as a first step toward an enriched future for students and a realistic sense of their place within the community. To guide students through various pathways to higher education and prepare them to contribute to a dynamic, highly skilled workforce.

**Our Programs-** To offer programs that prepare students for their future:

- Youth Advisory Council
- Regional College Access Center
- Teen Town Hall
- Keys to Employment

*Land Acknowledgement adopted on February 16, 2022*

*We honor the tribal nations who have served as caretakers of this land from time immemorial and respectfully acknowledge the ancestral homelands of the Tohono O'odham Nation and the multi-millennial presence of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe within Pima County. Consistent with Pima County's commitment to diversity and inclusion, we strive toward building equal-partner relationships with Arizona's tribal nations.*

## 2021-2022 Accomplishments

### Regional College Access Center (RCAC)

Established in 2008, the RCAC remains the original community-based college access center in Pima County. The purpose is to reach low-income, first-generation students and their families to assist with the search and application processes to any post-secondary pathway, i.e. certificate, vocational, technical programs, community college or university.

This year the RCAC has continued to be impacted by COVID-19 and continued to work through Zoom meetings and virtual communication. However, since the academic school year operated mostly in person throughout Pima County and the City of Tucson, the RCAC occasionally had in person meetings or training.



Commissioner Karen Tam and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Officer, Hilda Ladner, of Pima Community College, engage in a conversation with Peer Coaches about their careers and lessons learned along their journey.

Much gratitude to Mark Hanna for stepping up to keep the RCAC operations afloat during much of the Fall 2021 semester.



And, special thanks to Chelsea Forer, RCAC Program Coordinator, for her dedication, creativity, fortitude, and diligence in advancing postsecondary attainment and career readiness for youth in Pima County and the City of Tucson.

## Regional College Access Center Data

High School Counselor Support: RCAC Network Meetings and Professional Development Workshops	4 RCAC Network Meetings Sept, Dec, Mar, Apr
Peer Coach Program Participants: Number of high school students who served as a career and college readiness Peer Coach (Arizona Serve)	17
Peer Coach Program School Sites: Number of high schools who implemented the Peer Coach Program	9
Resources Through Technology: Use of Website & Social Media Technology, unique website visits, # of social media followers	61 mec_rcac Instagram followers 37 RCAC website forms
Advising Appointments: Number of individual unduplicated career and college advising appointments with students and/or parents.	304 <i>Conducted by RCAC Program Coordinator and 21-22 Peer Coaches</i>
College Admission: Number of individual students who received assistance with completing a college admissions application	4805 <i>PChip Output Goal: 5000</i>
FAFSA Completion & Verification: Number of individual students who received assistance with the completion and verification process	
# of participants receiving workforce training	5
# of participants receiving mental health resources (ie. Youth Champion Summit)	51
Teen Town Hall	38
<b>TOTAL STUDENTS SERVED IN FY22</b>	<b>4899</b>
<b>Enrollment Outcomes: How many seniors from the graduating class of AY2021-2022 enrolled in a post-secondary institution in summer or fall 2022 (NATIONAL CLEARING HOUSE REPORT)</b>	N/A – NCH data needed for FY22.

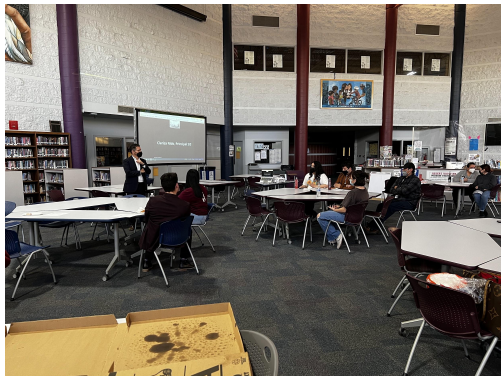




## Youth Advisory Council (YAC) Program

Established in 1992, the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) has attracted more than 1,000 students from across greater Tucson. In 2021-2022, YAC meetings occurred virtually and in-person. Students from Santa Rita High School, Cholla High School, Desert View High School, and Innovation Tech High School participated in YAC meetings. Special thanks to Alexa Kingman, Clarisa Nido, and Jon Lansa for keeping the efforts alive.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
September	Virtual meeting	9
October	Virtual meeting	6
November	Pima Community College, Downtown Campus	12
February	Desert View High School	14
March	Innovation Tech High School	8
April	MEC- Santa Rosa meeting room	0
May	MEC- Santa Rosa meeting room	3



The photo to the left featured Superintendent Steve Holmes speaking at a YAC meeting held at Desert View High School. Student engagement was higher when YAC meetings were held at individual high schools. However, students from other high schools did not attend. The MEC attempted to host YAC meetings on-site at the Santa Rosa Recreation Center which seemed to be a viable, centralized location to draw students. Unfortunately, student presence was dismal.

Notably, the level of student engagement and participation within the Youth Advisory Council was significantly lower than previous years. Lack of early focused attention and organization contributed to low participation.

One of the goals for the 2022-2023 academic year is to begin student recruitment during the summer, organize and schedule a calendar of meetings, and elect a YAC student board. The YAC is a vital and critical component of the MEC and more focused attention will be given to the YAC. Focused strategies will include school visits to promote the YAC, Teen Town Hall, Youth Summit, and Civic Engagement Day.

## Teen Town Hall

The Teen Town Hall was held virtually on April 8, 2022, and made possible by the Metropolitan Education Commission's (MEC) Youth Advisory Council/Tucson Teen Congress, and sponsored by the City of Tucson and Pima County, which attracts students from across Tucson and Pima County. The event created the opportunity for students to voice concerns directly with their community leaders, including MEC Commissioners, teachers, and elected officials.

The schools that participated: Cienega High School, Cholla High School, Desert View High School, Empire High School, Sabino High School, Sahuarita High School, Star Academic, Sunnyside High School, Tanque Verde High School, Tucson High School, and Walden Grove High School.

The Center for Community Dialogue & Training, a program of Our Family Services, conducted eight virtual Dialogue Circles. Each Dialogue Circle focused on one specific topic of interest chosen by the Youth Advisory Council. The topics included: College Access, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation, Leadership, Mental Health, Race and Racism, Youth Suicide.

Each Dialogue Circle had an opportunity to discuss their selected topic and brainstorm recommendations on addressing each area. Here are a few student suggestions:

- Explain the resources that are available to students via social media page or easy to access media so students don't get discouraged;
- Have everyone in every high school visit a university for free. Give people, especially lower-income people help to go to and see colleges;
- More opportunities for lower-income communities would be helpful for those communities. Online platform for education for higher-income and lower-income populations to all get the needed information;
- Encourage more folks to vote in order to counter the vocal minority opposing transgender rights;
- Make awareness, empathy & non-judgmental listening training widely available to adults, family members, and school staff and faculty; additional training opportunities for students; and
- Adopt a Community schools model, example Higher Ground program, where trained professionals support students' socio-emotional learning.

Following the dialogue circles, students had an opportunity to speak with three different elected officials, Supervisor Adelita Grijalva, Supervisor Rex Scott, and Superintendent Dustin Williams. Overwhelmingly students noted "more time with elected officials".

\*For a full copy of the Teen Town Hall report, please email [admin@metedu.org](mailto:admin@metedu.org) and request a copy.

## Youth Champion Summit



The MEC partnered with the City of Tucson's Community Safety, Health & Wellness department and SAAHEC, Southern Arizona Health Education Commission, to co-host our first in person MEC youth event focused on community, health, and safety. The Youth Champion Summit occurred on June 30, 2022 at the Tucson Convention Center, and 51 middle school, high school and college students participated.

The Youth Champion Summit consisted of Dialogue Circles, Mini Training Sessions, and Community Resource Fair. Mini Training Sessions topics included:

### *Let's Talk Mental Health*

With so many complex feelings and emotions, it can be difficult talking about it with friends, family members, or even yourself! Join this group to brainstorm ideas for helping teens and their parents know that it's ok to talk about their feelings, and that mental health is important.

### *Wellness Strategies: Breathing Techniques and Mindful Movements*

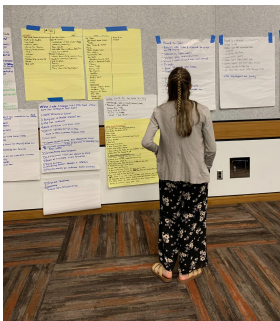
Inhale calm, exhale stress. Come learn about stress, what it does to your body, how it feels and how to identify it. MOST importantly, learn how to release it with some gentle breathing exercises and some easy to do Yoga poses and stretches.

### *Naloxone Training: Overdose Intervention Demonstration*

Join us to learn about current overdose trends in Pima County and how to identify and respond to an opiate overdose using the lifesaving medication Narcan.

### *Text, Talk, Act! Text Messaging Activity*

You'll need your phone for this one! Using our free text messaging platform, you will talk about mental health, discuss how to build resiliency and try out new self-care strategies designed to help you cope with challenges in your life. You'll also receive cool resources in case you want to take the next step in your mental health journey.



The Youth Champion Summit concluded with youth signing up to participate in a diverse spectrum of community engagement activities, including YAC, Civic Engagement Day, as well as Pima County and City of Tucson opportunities.

## Crystal Apple Awards

One of our traditions is the Crystal Apple Awards Luncheon where the MEC brings together our community in a very special way to honor distinguished contributions to educational excellence.

This year due to the continued restraints of COVID19, the MEC chose to not hold a virtual ceremony or in-person awards luncheon. Another approach was implemented where the individual recipients were honored in-person at his/her/their respective institutions.

### **2021 Honorees:**



*Outstanding Youth- Amber Hammerquist,  
Sahuarita Middle School (featured in photo)*

*Outstanding Student Leader(s)- Audrey Alameda,  
Innovation Academy;  
Yamileth Rodriguez, San Miguel High School*



*Outstanding Counselor- Tanisha Tatum, Pima JTED  
(featured in photo, wearing green)*

*Outstanding Community College/University  
Advocate- Dr. Kasey Urquidez, UA*

*Outstanding Education Advocate- Dr. Matt Matera*

*Outstanding Corporate Award- Junior Achievement*

*Outstanding Teacher(s)- Kelly Strayer,  
Copper View Elementary (featured in photo,  
wearing green shirt and blue hat);  
Sabina Vaswani, Innovation Academy*

*Crystal Apple Lifetime Achievement Award,  
Chuck Huckleberry*

*Dr. June Webb-Vignery Education Advocate  
Award- Mayor Romero and Council,  
Pima County Supervisors*



It is recommended that the MEC continue to present the awards at the recipient's respective institutions. Each presentation was very meaningful to the recipient and included their school community.



## MEC Data for 2021-2022

<b>Higher Education Pathways: Regional College Access Center Activities</b>	
<u>High School Counselor Support</u> : RCAC Network Meetings and Professional Development Workshops/Trainings	4
<u>Peer Coach Program Participants</u> : Number of high school students who serve as a career and college readiness Peer Coach (Arizona Serve)	17
<u>Peer Coach Program School Sites</u> : Number of high schools who agree to implement the Peer Coach Program	9
<u>Resources Through Technology</u> : Use of Website & Social Media Technology, unique website visits, # of social media followers	98
<u>Advising Appointments</u> : Number of individual unduplicated career and college advising appointments with students and/or parents.	304
<u>FAFSA Completion &amp; Verification</u> : Number of individual students who received assistance with the completion and verification process	4805
<u>Workforce Training</u> : Number of students	5
<b>Total number of students served in 2021-2022</b>	<b>4899</b>
<b>Youth Program Functions</b>	
Youth Advisory Council (YAC) meetings: Number of students involved	33
Youth Advisory Council (YAC) meetings: Number of schools involved	4
Youth Advisory Council (YAC): Number of community leaders involved	12
Teen Town Hall- virtual: Number of students who participated	38
Teen Town Hall- virtual: Number of community leaders who participated	19
Teen Town Hall- virtual: Number of schools that participated	11
Youth Champion Summit- in person: Number of students who participated	51
Youth Champion Summit- in person: Number of community leaders and educators who participated	18
Career Readiness: Individual advising	5
Civic Engagement Day: Number of students who participated in the event	0
Civic Engagement Day: Number of topics addressed with AZ State Legislators	0
Civic Engagement Day: Number of meetings conducted with AZ State Legislators	0
<b>Total number of students served in 2021-2022</b>	<b>127</b>

<b>Total number of community leaders who participated in 2021-2022</b>	
<b>Community Engagement</b>	
<b>Crystal Apple Awards</b>	
# of participating school districts	3
# of participating elected officials	8
# of awards presented	12
<b>Leveraged Funds</b>	
Value of other federal, state, county, city, private, foundation funds and in-kind donations secured for the year	~\$1400

<b>Commissioner Engagement</b>	
Number of Commissioner meetings	9
Average Number of Commissioners who attended MEC meetings	20
Number of Commissioners who served on Executive Board	6
Number of Commissioners who participated in MEC fundraiser	8
Number of Commissioners who participated in MEC activities	28
Number of Education Advocacy I. activities led/co-led by MEC	2
Number of Education Advocacy Collaborations with State, City, County & Community Organizations	1

*Much gratitude to the MEC Commissioners, Executive Board, and MEC staff for your individual and collective support, contributions, and encouragement during 2021-2022, especially during unstable moments and unexpected challenges throughout the year.*

*My deepest gratitude to the MEC staff, Chelsea Forer, Kyle Hetherington, Alexa Kingman, Hannah Lansa, and Donna Wertman, who have been instrumental and integral players in the MEC's accomplishments. Thank you for your patience, compassion, diligence, and efforts as we moved forward with our services, always striving for effectiveness, greater stability, and excellence in all that we do!*

