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CFA Introduces the Inaugural Greater Phoenix Workforce Leadership Academy Fellows

Local leaders selected for the program in partnership with the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program

Center for the Future of Arizona

The Center for the Future of Arizona (CFA) introduces the inaugural class of the Greater Phoenix Workforce Leadership Academy Fellows who are participating in a new program designed to improve local economic mobility and workforce development efforts and create innovative solutions to the challenges faced by workers and businesses.

The Greater Phoenix Workforce Leadership Academy, a 10-month fellowship developed through a partnership between CFA and the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program, is designed to strengthen the local network of non-profit, government, academic, and business leaders through a series of retreats and workshops that enable collaboration on solutions to common challenges.

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The Greater Phoenix Workforce Leadership Academy is the latest in a series of Workforce Leadership Academies hosted in communities across the United States and Canada. It is the first in Arizona, launched this year with the generous support of Walmart.

The 24 Fellows selected for the Greater Phoenix Workforce Leadership Academy Class of 2021-2022 represent a range of nonprofit organizations, business associations, institutes of higher education, training organizations, and public agencies. The program launches May 11-13 and will culminate with a collaborative capstone project presentation in February 2022. Fellows in the inaugural class are:

- **Audrey Bell-Jenkins**, Workforce Development Manager, U MOM New Day Centers
- **Katie Belous**, Research Analyst, Pipeline AZ
- **Colleen Bivona**, Associate Director, Grants Development and Management, Maricopa Community Colleges
- **Miguel Fernandez**, Professor, Chandler Gilbert Community College
- **Eileana Gudiño**, Community Development Director, Valley of the Sun United Way
- **Allie Halbert**, Programs Director, Arizona Sustainability Alliance
- **Kimberly Hanes**, Regional Manager, Maricopa County, University of Arizona
- **Jerry McPherson**, Director of Economic Empowerment, Greater Phoenix Urban League
- **Jennifer McChristian**, Site Director, YearUp – Arizona
- **James Montoya**, Workforce Project Manager, City of Phoenix
- **Steve Navis**, On-The-Job Training Supportive Services / Workforce Development Program Manager, Arizona Department of Transportation
- **Christine Niven**, Director – Adult Education and Family Literacy Programs, Mesa Public Schools
- **Leah Palmer**, Executive Director, Arizona Advanced Manufacturing Institute (AzAMI), Mesa Community College
- **Jose Patino**, Director Education & External Affairs, Aliento Education Fund
- **Terence 'Dee' Pinkston**, Deputy Director of Workforce Solutions, Chicanos Por La Causa
- **Alison J. Rapping**, CEO, Arouet Foundation
- **Nathan Smith**, Chief Program Officer, Phoenix Rescue Mission
- **Mariana Torres**, Assistant Program Officer, LISC
- **Cathy Turley**, Department Manager – Adult Education, Friendly House, Inc.
- **Terrell Welch**, Employment Coordinator, Arizona Department of Economic Security/EEA
- **Andre Whittington**, CEO & Principal Consultant, Opemia Consulting
- **Ashley Wilhelm**, Workforce Arizona Council Manager, Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity, Arizona Commerce Authority
- **Richard Wilkie**, Economic Development Director – Pinal County Local Workforce Board member, City of Casa Grande
- **Steven Zylstra**, President & CEO, Arizona Technology Council

"CFA is pleased to partner with the Aspen Institute to bring this significant program to the Greater Phoenix area because a competitive workforce is key for Arizona to thrive in the 21st century. Sustainable economies rely on the creation and retention of jobs filled by a vibrant and robust talent pool," said Sybil Francis, Ph.D., president & CEO

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of CFA. "With COVID-19 impacting our state's workforce systems, there's never been a better time to strengthen the leadership pipeline, deepen collaborative relationships locally, and invest in developing professionals who lead our workforce organizations."

According to CFA's 2020 Gallup Arizona Survey, Arizonans want more good-paying jobs and the education and training to fully participate in a vibrant economy. Strengthening the workforce development system leaders through the Greater Phoenix Workforce Leadership Academy contributes to the development of quality jobs and the related education and training necessary to access quality jobs and develop meaningful careers.

The Greater Phoenix Workforce Leadership Academy will create and support a peer-learning community of workforce leaders with a 10-month long educational and networking experience to help them manage the challenges they face in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis, and address changes in technology, business norms, and policy. These senior-level workforce Fellows will work with leading practitioners from around the U.S., learn about practical planning tools, and collaborate to reflect on and develop effective strategies to strengthen the local workforce system. Alumni of the Academies become part of the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunity Fellows Network.

"Collaboration grows at the speed of trust, and today's workforce development leaders are increasingly being asked to create solutions through collaboration," said Sheila Maguire, senior fellow at the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program and director of the local network of Workforce Leadership Academies. "This Academy is a rare opportunity for these local leaders to step back with colleagues from Phoenix, reflect on their own organizational challenges, hear from leading practitioners from around the country, and develop the network and trust so essential for success."

"Walmart is delighted to support the inaugural Greater Phoenix Workforce Leadership Academy," said Gayatri Agnew, senior director of opportunity at Walmart. "This collaboration is a great example of how workforce professionals can come together to support their community and build equitable workforce systems that foster mobility."

The Greater Phoenix Workforce Leadership Academy will be led locally by Holly Kurtz, workforce development director, and Orlando Cazarez, senior program manager with CFA, and a local Advisory Council.

Biographical information on the Academy Fellows is available [here](#) and a roster of the Advisory Council members is available [here](#).

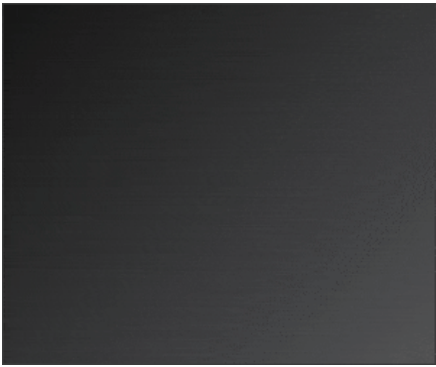
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