Mary Lou Fulton College for Teaching and Learning Innovation
Arizona State University

Staying in the Sunshine

Developing a Talent Stickiness Index for the college graduates of Arizona

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AGENDA

What we'll cover

01

PURPOSE

THE PURPOSE OF THE WORK

Why graduate retention is a state question

A state's return on its investment in higher education depends not just on how many graduates it produces, but on how many it keeps.

RQ1 How well do AZ public higher education institutions (and the state) retain graduates in the state where they earned their degree — right after graduation and over time? Compared to public universities in other states?

RQ2 Does retention (Talent Stickiness) differ across institutions within a state system?

RQ3 How does retention differ across industries?

THE STAKES IN ARIZONA

+454,167

new jobs projected in Arizona by 2034 — growth of 1.2% a year, roughly four times the U.S. rate.

That growth only pays off if the talent Arizona educates stays to fill those jobs.

Source: Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity (2025); TSI Report (2026).

02

METHOD

HOW WE LEVERAGED PSEO

Building the Talent Stickiness Index

TSI = graduates employed in AZ ÷ graduates employed in any state

Computed at 1, 5, and 10 years after graduation. Higher means stickier.

The data	U.S. Census Bureau PSEO links graduates to jobs through state unemployment-insurance and federal earnings records — disaggregated by institution, degree field, cohort, employer industry, and geography.
The sample	Bachelor's graduates from public universities in Arizona, across six three-year cohorts (2004–2019), tracked at Year 1, Year 5, and Year 10 — with Arizona OEO projections for demand context.
The lens	Five nested levels: statewide, by institution, by industry (2-digit NAICS), by region, and by cohort. Descriptive by design — transparent, replicable, and re-runnable with each PSEO release.

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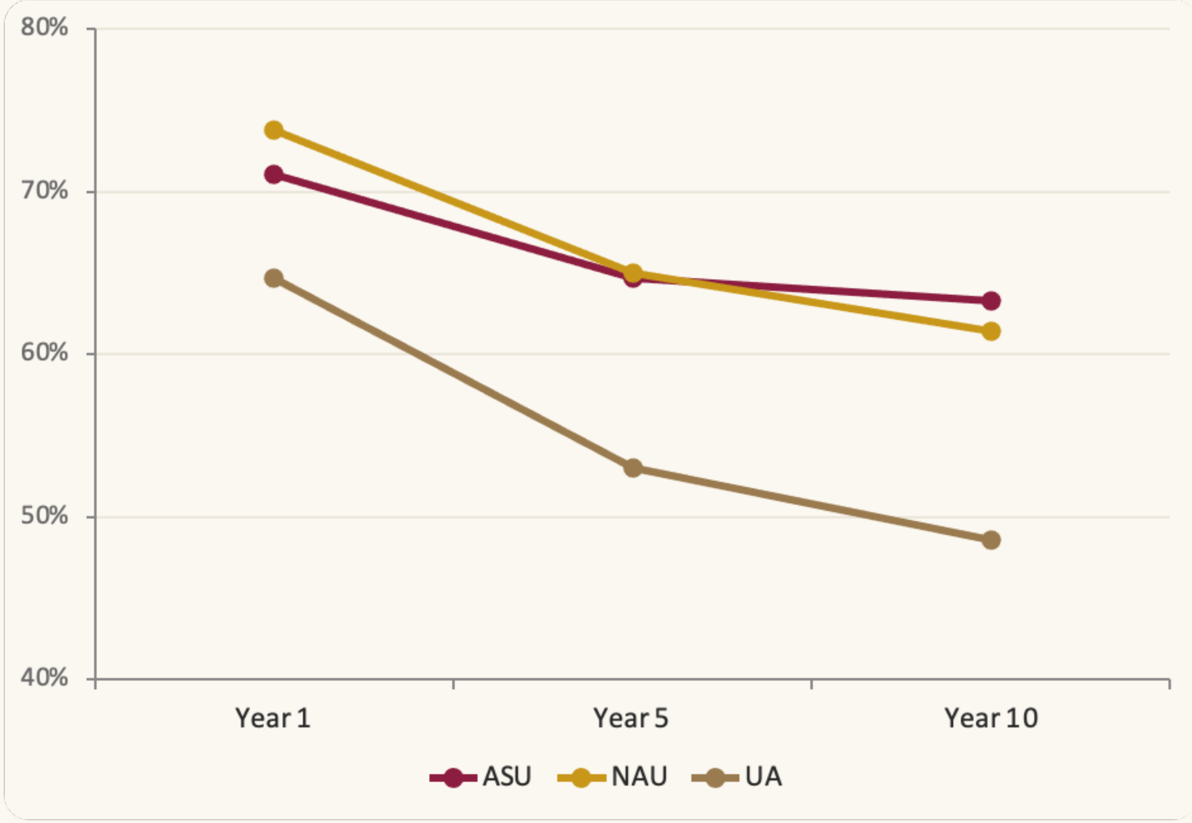
Source: U.S. Census Bureau PSEO. Fredericks, Murphy & Pivovarova (2026).

03

FINDINGS

FINDING ONE

The first five years are the critical window



STATEWIDE RETENTION

70% → 61% → 58%

at Year 1, Year 5, and Year 10.

- The Year 1–Year 5 drop is two-to-three times steeper than Year 5–Year 10.
- Graduates who stay through Year 5 tend to stay for the long term.
- NAU is most stable; ASU keeps the most graduates; UA trails at every horizon (−16 pp by Year 10).

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Source: Fredericks, Murphy & Pivovarova (2026), Talent Stickiness Index.

03

FINDINGS

FINDING TWO

The retention–demand mismatch

Arizona's stickiest industries are not the ones it most needs to grow — and the sectors adding the most jobs are losing talent over time.

Sticky — but low growth High retention, weak projected demand	
Utilities (Year 1)	85–88%
Education (Year 1)	78–85%
Educational Services growth	+0.3%/yr
Information (net jobs by 2034)	+18

In demand — but high-attrition Strong projected demand, eroding retention	
Health Care (Year 1 → Year 10)	77% → 55%
Health Care jobs by 2034	+113,466
Food & Hospitality UA (Y1 → Y10)	65% → 34%
Hospitality share of workforce	11%

Source: Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity (2025); TSI Report (2026).

VALUE AT THE STATE LEVEL

How a state system can put the TSI to work

The TSI turns the question — “are we keeping our talent?” — into a specific, actionable map of where and when graduates leave.

01	**Target scarce dollars**	Direct retention funding to the Year 1–5 window and the critical sectors, instead of spreading it thin — the data shows exactly where a dollar does the most.
02	**Benchmark institutions fairly**	Compare ASU, NAU, and UA on the same footing, accounting for nonresident enrollment as an example so conversations rest on evidence, not anecdote.
03	**Align higher ed with workforce plans**	Set the TSI beside OEO demand projections to see where degree production and labor-market need actually meet — and where they don’t.
04	**Compare across states**	This method can be replicated across any state, so states can see whether a retention gap is an Arizona problem or a regional one.

Source: Fredericks, Murphy & Pivovarova (2026), Talent Stickiness Index.

05

CONSIDERATIONS

READING THE DATA HONESTLY

What PSEO can — and can't — tell us

The index documents where graduates work; it does not explain why they stay or leave.

Keep in mind

- Covered employment only. PSEO omits the self-employed, independent contractors, federal workers, and anyone employed outside the U.S.
- Broad industries. Reported at the 2-digit NAICS level — "Health Care" spans a nurse and a hospital administrator alike.
- Small cells suppressed. Privacy protections hide the smallest programs.
- Year-10 rests on three cohorts. Only 2004, 2007, and 2010 are old enough to observe at ten years.
- Geographic, not occupational. Staying in Arizona is not the same as staying in the field.

Why it still holds up

- Population-scale. PSEO covers the vast majority of graduates — not a survey sample with response bias.
- Actual employment. Built from real UI and earnings records, not self-reported intentions.
- Identical across states. The same definition makes comparisons fair.
- Transparent & re-runnable. Descriptive by design, so it refreshes with each PSEO release.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau PSEO. Fredericks, Murphy & Pivovarova (2026).

05

WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

Next steps for the work

01	**Target the first five years**	Concentrate retention efforts on employer partnerships, loan repayment, structured early-career pathways where the drop-off is steepest.
02	**Ground findings in the literature**	Situate results in the research on why graduates stay or leave both industry -specific, institutional context and state context to move from what we see to possible reasons why.
03	**Add PSEO earnings flows**	Use PSEO earnings data to compare wages in the stickiest sectors (Education, Utilities) against the most critical ones (Health Care, Food & Hospitality). Does pay play a role in whether graduates stay?
04	**Re-run and expand**	Refresh the TSI with each PSEO release to test whether interventions move the needle; deepen to more states.

WHAT'S NEXT

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LIVE DEMONSTRATION

Explore the Arizona Talent Stickiness Dashboard

Filter the index live by institution, industry, cohort, and time horizon — the same PSEO data, open to every researcher and practitioner here.

talentstickiness.org

Interested in how we can help your state? Fill out the interest form below.

links.asu.edu/tsi-interest