



JIM ZAHARIS

Distinguished Service Award



Award Biography

The recipient of ACTEAZ's Distinguished Service Award is Dr. Jim Zaharis. As the executive vice president of the Arizona Business and Education Coalition (ABEC), Dr. Zaharis collaborates closely with CTE stakeholders, including members of ACTEAZ, to drive forward statewide CTE initiatives.

Dr. Zaharis assumed the role of co-chair for the Education Leadership Group (ELG), a collaborative endeavor aimed at tackling obstacles to student career readiness in Arizona. The resulting report, published in 2021, emphasizes the urgent need to reimagine career development for all students, ensuring the ongoing vitality of the future workforce. Moreover, this report served as the impetus for the establishment of a statewide career development system, My Future AZ, extending its benefits to students across Arizona.

Dr. Zaharis stands as a beacon of dedication and leadership in CTE throughout his distinguished 43-year career. With an extensive tenure of in the Mesa Unified School District, encompassing roles as a teacher, coach, and district administrator, Dr. Zaharis has consistently championed CTE programs, acknowledging their fundamental role in equipping students for the demands of the workforce. Dr. Zaharis' efforts catalyzed the proliferation of CTE opportunities across Arizona, with the state now boasting 14 Career and Technical Education Districts, thereby extending high-quality CTE pathways to students across both urban and rural communities.

Dr. Zaharis has been a supporter and advocate of the Association for Career and Technical Education AZ (ACTEAZ). During his tenure as Vice President for Education at Greater Phoenix Leadership (GPL) spanning 17 years, Dr. Zaharis played a central role in fostering synergies between the business community and the education sector, underscoring the pivotal role of CTE in fueling economic prosperity and workforce development.