

DIGITAL PATHWAYS

Arizona's thriving EdTech ecosystem

Arizona is home to one of the most robust education technology ecosystems in the country. Companies and educational institutions have become leaders in creating a wide range of technology platforms for learning, training, collaboration, credentialing and financial aid. Arizona's focus on advancing cutting-edge technologies has led to innovations in the emerging sector across the state. This cluster of EdTech companies was thriving in the state, even pre COVID-19.

Today, online learning has become the new normal, and Arizona EdTech entrepreneurs have responded in kind. They're showcasing how students, educators and academic institutions are adapting—and even thriving—amid a global pandemic. Arizona's EdTech companies have pioneered new pathways to learning beyond the traditional classrooms, expanding access to students and families and unlocking technology solutions for educators and institutions.

Chandler-based [Prenda Schools](#) is a fast-growing EdTech company that helped invent the category of “microschools”—a combination of homeschooling and traditional school. The company is experiencing explosive growth as parents struggle to find educational options or look for smaller learning environments for their kids during COVID-19.

Prenda Schools have between 5 and 10 students and combine online instruction with project-based and peer-to-peer learning.

Scottsdale-based [K16 Solutions](#), recently secured \$3.5 million in new funding to bolster its growth and product development. K16 helps universities transition data-heavy coursework between content-management systems. The cloud-based tool saves time and money for faculty.

The increasing reliance on online learning has resulted in strong [venture capital investments](#) in EdTech firms across the U.S. and here in Arizona.

Just last month, Chandler-based [CampusLogic](#), an industry leader in financial aid tools for higher-ed institutions, closed a \$120 million funding round, making it the [second-largest venture capital investment](#) in a U.S. EdTech firm this year.

In February, Parchment, a Scottsdale-based software firm that digitizes and distributes academic records, [announced a merger](#) with Illinois-based Credential Solutions. The merger allows Parchment to serve more than 13,000 schools and organizations. Parchment had already raised at least \$66 million before the merger.

EdTech innovations are also being driven by the state through unique public-private partnerships.

In addition, Gov. Ducey, the Arizona Department of Education, Helios Education Foundation and Arizona State University announced a new, \$7.5 million partnership to help the state's K-12 teachers adopt new digital instructional practices. The [Arizona Virtual Teacher Institute](#) is powered by an online learning platform that provides training and professional development for every teacher in Arizona.

Arizona is also among the first states in the nation to participate in the [Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative](#), which provides unemployed workers with free access to all 3,800 courses and professional certifications offered by the leading online learning platform.

These innovators are just a few that make up a hub of more than 50 EdTech companies in Arizona that are making a difference by changing the way we learn.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made online learning a necessity, but this real-world need has brought EdTech innovations to the forefront. Arizona is positioned as a leader in a dynamic environment where talented, homegrown entrepreneurs are making a difference for students, teachers, families and universities—at home and in the classroom. ■

