**For Immediate Release**

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**Greater Phoenix Leadership Vice President of Education to Retire**

After 17 years of service Jim Zaharis will retire this summer

PHOENIX, AZ, April 20, 2018 - Greater Phoenix Leadership (GPL) announces the retirement of Jim Zaharis who has served as Vice President of Education since 2001. Zaharis came to GPL seventeen years ago to build partnerships between the business community and the education community. Holding steadfast to the belief that a well-educated workforce attracts business and new job opportunities across industries, GPL developed a cohesive strategy to have members serve on the boards of education groups and developed a plan for an integrated P-20 education model and a Governor’s P-20 Council. GPL also supported and helped in the creation of the Arizona Business Education Coalition, Expect More Arizona, Global Pathways Institute, the Arizona Education Progress Meter and in putting together Achieve60AZ, an initiative to increase the number of Arizonan’s with a certificate or degree to 60 percent by 2030.

“There are few people who have the perspective that Jim Zaharis has when it comes to Arizona’s education and business communities,” said Jim Swanson, president and CEO of Kitchell Corporation and co-chair of the Governor’s Classrooms First Initiative Council. “His legacy and impact as a true advocate for Arizona’s children will extend for many years. Although he is leaving his post at GPL, I have no doubt that we will continue to see his influence as we - as business leaders - work toward building a world-class education system.”

“The State of Arizona, the entire Phoenix Metro area and Greater Phoenix Leadership have been blessed by the intellect and leadership of Jim in the education arena,” said John Graham, president and CEO of Sunbelt Holdings and former GPL board chair. “I have personally been blessed to call Jim a friend and a mentor. I wish him much happiness in retirement, but I am confident that he will remain the champion of education that he has been his entire professional life.”

Prior to his service at GPL, Zaharis served as the Superintendent of Mesa Unified School District No. 4 in Mesa and 35 years in the district as a teacher, coach and district administrator. For his contributions to education, Zaharis was named top 100 for “The Valley’s Most Influential Business Leaders” in Education by the Phoenix Business Journal, Arizona State Superintendent of the Year, Teach For America’s Homeroom Hero award winner, and a member of Northern Arizona University’s Hall of Fame.

“Thanks to Jim’s leadership, GPL has become a trusted leader in education policy,” said Neil Giuliano, president and CEO of GPL. “We are a stronger advocate because of Jim’s knowledge and are grateful for his years of service.”

“It has been an honor and a privilege to advocate for the improvement of the full spectrum of the education system alongside many great business, education and philanthropic leaders,” said Zaharis.  “Education remains one of the most important and powerful forces for good in our nation.  Much work remains and I stand ready to help in the continuation of this effort.”

During Zaharis’ tenure, GPL members supported bonding for infrastructure and research facilities at Arizona universities, supported the passage of Prop 301 and Prop 123 to bring much needed dollars to public education, led the business efforts to pass new laws to master 3rd grade reading and worked with partners to restore funding to Career Technical Education and Joint Technical Education Districts.

Zaharis will remain at GPL through June.

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**About Greater Phoenix Leadership**

Greater Phoenix Leadership is an organization of leading CEO’s aligning leadership and resources at the intersection of the business, education, philanthropy and public policy sectors to improve economic vitality and quality of life. The mission of GPL is to improve the greater Phoenix area and the State of Arizona by bringing together talent, resources, and leadership to create action on priority issues. More information is available at [www.gplinc.org](http://www.gplinc.org)