



News Release
Feb. 12, 2020
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Sarah Harper, (602) 402-1341, sarah.k.harper@azregents.edu
Julie Newberg, (602) 686-1803, julie.newberg@azregents.edu

Valley Voices: Presidents Advocate for New Economy Initiative

(Tempe, Ariz.) – Preparing Arizona’s future workforce is a critical challenge in a New Economy driven by increased technology, automation and a declining employee base.

Arizona State University President Michael Crow, Northern Arizona University President Rita Cheng and University of Arizona President Robert Robbins recently discussed Arizona’s evolving economy and the intrinsic link of the universities to Arizona’s success during “Valley Voices: The State of Higher Education” at the Musical Instrument Museum in Phoenix.

To maintain Arizona’s economic prosperity in the New Economy, the universities are shaping the workforce for future growth. The Arizona Board of Regents’ [New Economy Initiative](#) is a strategic plan to grow the state’s next generation of workforce talent and ensure economic opportunity is available to every Arizona family and community.

“Our universities are primary economic drivers in Arizona. In the New Economy, their roles will expand and become increasingly important as more jobs are driven by technology. The board’s New Economy Initiative provides a blueprint for Arizona in key areas to drive the economy forward,” said Arizona Board of Regents Chair Larry E. Penley.

The New Economy Initiative would enhance Arizona’s economy, thereby retaining highly skilled labor; bring more teachers to K-12 classrooms; increase the number of college graduates throughout the state; and provide economic support to more students through financial aid so they can graduate from college and contribute to Arizona’s highly-skilled labor force.

Through the New Economy Initiative, the universities will:

- Arizona State University - Design and launch the largest center for engineering education and research in the United States, growing enrollments to 25,000+ and making metro Phoenix the leading center for engineer talent production in America.
- Northern Arizona University - Prepare a robust talent pipeline in high demand fields with an emphasis on health care, including mental and behavioral health.
- University of Arizona - Expand research to enable new discoveries in personalized medicine and tackle pressing health care issues facing Arizona; strengthen UA’s position as a leader in space exploration, planetary defense, national security and asteroid exploitation.

To improve education across the spectrum in Arizona, the presidents also called for increasing college graduation rates, providing more opportunity for students living in rural areas, focusing on early childhood development, educating lifelong learners, increasing technical training, breaking down barriers to education and reducing the high school drop-out rate as some of the areas that need to be addressed.

The presidents also discussed the need to advance education in Arizona at all levels through a seamless and efficient P-20 system that provides opportunity for all students to earn education past high school that jobs in Arizona increasingly demand.

Through the [Arizona Teachers Academy](#), the universities are helping to address the state's teacher shortage through year-for-year scholarship programs for students who commit to teaching in the state's public schools. Gov. Doug Ducey called on the Arizona Board of Regents and the state's universities in 2017 to build the academy at each of the universities while an infusion of \$15 million in the fiscal 2020 budget allowed the institutions to increase enrollment.

"NAU has over 800 students now enrolled in the Teachers Academy on the Flagstaff mountain campus, but also at sites throughout Arizona in collaboration with community colleges and school districts. That's going to have an impact on Arizona," said President Cheng. Total enrollment in the Arizona Teachers Academy at all of the universities is approaching 2,000 students.

###