

A night cityscape with a digital network overlay. The background shows a city skyline at night with mountains in the distance. Overlaid on the city is a complex network of glowing blue lines and nodes, representing a digital or technological theme.

The Future of Arizona

2026 Annual Report

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About this report

The Arizona Board of Regents' Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Report highlights the innovation and progress at Arizona's public universities — Arizona State University, Northern Arizon University and the University of Arizona — and the board's role in advancing education, research and economic prosperity. Filed in accordance with A.R.S. §15-1629, the report outlines key initiatives such as the AZ Opportunity initiative, along with milestones in enrollment, research funding and workforce development. It also celebrates the universities' contributions to addressing Arizona's critical needs, including healthcare and economic growth.

THE BOARD'S PROMISE TO ARIZONA

To increase postsecondary access and attainment for Arizona students, seek solutions to societal challenges, and do both while improving quality, affordability and efficiency. The Arizona Board of Regents is committed to promoting the discovery, application and dissemination of new knowledge, extending the benefits of university activities to Arizona's citizens outside the university, and maximizing the benefits derived from the state's investment in education.

REGENTS

- Doug Goodyear, Chair
- Jessica Pacheco, Chair Elect
- Gregg Brewster, Secretary
- Cecilia Mata, Treasurer
- Michele Halyard, M.D.
- James McCain
- Steve Peru
- Lee Stein
- Jadyn Fisher, Student Regent, Assistant Treasurer
- Felipe Garcia, Student Regent
- Gov. Katie Hobbs, Ex-Officio
- Superintendent Tom Horne, Ex-Officio

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- Chad Sampson

Arizona has plenty of challenges. We're finding solutions.

That's where Arizona's public universities come in. As stewards of Arizona's public university system, the Arizona Board of Regents is committed to ensuring these institutions remain accountable, transparent and focused on delivering value for students, families, employers and taxpayers. Through strong governance, strategic oversight and trusted leadership, the board guides one of Arizona's most valuable public assets toward serving the state's long-term needs, and finding solutions to its most pressing challenges.

With that support and oversight, these institutions – Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University and the University of Arizona – are advancing work that strengthens communities and expands opportunity across the state.

Their work includes:

- Driving innovation in microelectronics and semiconductors.
- Using drone systems to help fight forest fires.
- Developing solutions to the state's concerns about future water resource availability.

This is just a small sample of what's happening every day across our public university enterprise as dedicated faculty, researchers and students work to make a difference in the lives of Arizonans and exemplify the board's driving focus: AZ Opportunity.

More than an initiative, AZ Opportunity is a road map. It recognizes that public higher education remains the best single investment Arizona can make in its own future; prioritizes affordable access to quality public higher education to qualified, Arizona resident students; and highlights the role of ASU, NAU and the U of A in building a workforce for our state's highest-demand fields and occupations.

Arizona's public universities are comprised of over 250,000 students - Sun Devils, Lumberjacks and Wildcats. They are each on their own educational journey, and the Arizona Board of Regents exists to help serve and support them, as well as prospective students and families across our state. We are dedicated to this responsibility and are committed to overseeing these institutions in a manner worthy of the public's trust.

It would be impossible to capture everything happening within our public universities. But, the board invites you to explore this 2026 Annual Report and discover highlights of some of the ways the board and universities are improving the lives of Arizonans.

Recognizing service



REGENT LARRY PENLEY, Ph.D., completed his term in February after more than a decade of contributions to Arizona’s public higher education system. A tireless champion of higher education, Regent Penley was appointed to the board by former Governor Doug Ducey in October 2015 and served two consecutive terms as board chair from 2019 to 2021. Regent Penley guided the board and the universities through the COVID-19 pandemic and led the development of the board’s New Economy Initiative, a campaign that helped unite Arizona businesses and higher education leadership in preparing for opportunities of the new economy. A tireless champion of educational attainment, he represented the board each year at the All-Arizona Academic Team Scholarship ceremony, recognizing community college students in their pursuit of higher education at public universities.



REGENT FRED DuVAL completed his second term on the board and was recognized for his leadership and service to Arizona. One of the few regents to be appointed by a governor of both parties, Regent DuVal emphasized the university system’s vital role in the development of Arizona’s economy and workforce. He was the visionary and leader behind the Arizona Teachers Academy, a statewide effort that addresses teacher shortages by investing directly in the educators who serve Arizona’s students. His belief in innovation and economic progress led to the launch of the Regents’ Research and Community Grants program and the AZ Healthy Tomorrow initiative, increasing collaboration between Arizona’s public universities and the broader public to address critical needs across the state.



REGENT JADYN FISHER concluded her two-year term as a student regent, marked by advocacy for student mental health and collaboration with student leadership. Regent Fisher led listening sessions on mental health and substance misuse at all three universities and served as the assistant treasurer for the board. In May 2026, Regent Fisher graduated from NAU with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education with minors in communications and history.



REGENT JAMES MCCAIN was unanimously confirmed to the board by the Arizona Senate in February 2026. The youngest son of the late U.S. Senator John McCain and his wife, Cindy McCain, Regent McCain enlisted in the U.S. Marines at age 17. After serving four years and two deployments, he served two additional deployments in the U.S. Army National Guard and was later commissioned as a first lieutenant in the Army as an intelligence officer. Regent McCain serves the community through his positions on various boards across the state. He has bachelor’s and master’s degrees from ASU, a second master’s degree from Trinity College Dublin and is currently pursuing his doctorate in education with a focus on healthcare outcomes for Native American veterans.



REGENT MICHELE HALYARD, M.D., was appointed to the board in March 2026. A nationally recognized radiation oncologist, Regent Halyard has more than 30 years of experience in healthcare practice, medical education, research and strategy. Regent Halyard served on the Mayo Clinic staff until her retirement in June 2023, most notably as the Suzanne Hanson Poole vice dean of the Mayo Clinic Alix School of Medicine and the inaugural dean of the school’s Arizona campus. In addition to her clinical leadership, she serves on the Arizona Community Foundation Board of Directors. Regent Halyard earned her bachelor’s and medical degrees from Howard University and completed her residency in radiation oncology, followed by a fellowship at the Mayo School of Graduate Medical Education.



REGENT STEVE PERU was appointed to the board in March 2026. A dedicated public servant with more than three decades of experience in Arizona local government, education and nonprofit leadership, Regent Peru served Coconino County in roles such as elections director and county manager. In addition, he held leadership roles in the nonprofit and education sectors, including serving as president and chief executive officer of the United Way of Northern Arizona, and chief external affairs officer for Coconino Community College. Regent Peru graduated from NAU with a bachelor’s degree in applied sociology with an emphasis in social work, and later a master’s degree in public administration. He also completed the Senior Executives in State and Local Government Program at Harvard University.



REGENT AYDIN-KANE VO was appointed to the board as a student regent in April 2026. Vo is pursuing a Master of Science and Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering at ASU, from which he earned a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Engineering and graduated summa cum laude. As an undergraduate student, he served as senator and chairman of government operations for ASU's Student Government and currently serves as a graduate research and training fellow at ASU's Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering. A dedicated student leader, Regent Vo is engaged in research focused on healthcare applications of engineering.



CHRISTINE WILKINSON, Ph.D., was awarded the Regents Medal in June 2026, in recognition of her more than five decades of leadership at ASU. The Regents' Medal honors extraordinary contributions to higher education in Arizona, a distinction she has earned through roles spanning student affairs, enrollment management, alumni engagement and executive leadership. Over her tenure, she has helped position ASU as a model for innovation and public impact in higher education.

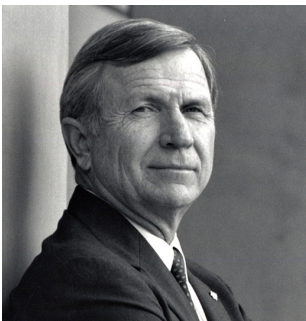
In memoriam



FORMER U OF A PRESIDENT EUGENE G. SANDER passed away in February 2026. The 20th president of the University of Arizona, Sander served the university for more than two decades in several leadership roles, including vice provost and dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. During his tenure as dean, the college grew its research activity, strengthened its academic programs and earned broader national recognition. A dedicated academic, researcher and proud Wildcat, Sander devoted his career to improving the lives of people in Arizona and beyond.



FORMER REGENT FRED T. BOICE, who served on the board from 2002 to 2010, passed away in May 2026. Regent Boice was a lifelong champion of higher education, a dedicated Tucson resident and was the first regent to serve two consecutive terms as board president. Former Regent Boice was deeply committed to Arizona students and expanding access to higher education, and he leaves behind a legacy of public service.



FORMER ASU PRESIDENT LATTIE COOR passed away in July 2026. The 15th president of ASU, he led the campus to achieve Research 1 status from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. During his 12-year tenure, President Coor aided in the development of ASU as a multi-campus institution and strengthened philanthropic support for students. He is remembered as a passionate advocate and visionary for Arizona and its universities.

By the numbers

Economic impact

\$1.8 billion

TOTAL STATE TAXES PAID BY
UNIVERSITY ALUMNI

Source: FY 2024 Alumni Wages Report

30,000

TOTAL EMPLOYEES WORKING AT ARIZONA'S
PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Source: FY 2026 Personnel Report

\$25,948

WAGE GAP IN ARIZONA FOR THOSE WITH
A BACHELOR'S DEGREE COMPARED TO
SOMEONE WITH A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Source: FY 2024 Alumni Wages Report

244

PATENTS EARNED BY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
AND FACULTY

Source: FY 2026 Technology and Research Initiative
Fund Report

21

STARTUP COMPANIES FORMED BY
UNIVERSITIES STUDENTS AND FACULTY

Source: FY 2026 Technology and Research Initiative
Fund Report

Enrollment

241,000

STUDENTS ENROLLED AT ARIZONA'S
PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Source: 2026 Fall Enrollment Report

54,000

BACHELOR'S AND GRADUATE
DEGREES AWARDED BY ARIZONA'S
PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Source: 2024 College Completion Report

96,000

ONLINE STUDENTS ENROLLED AT ARIZONA'S
PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Source: 2026 Fall Enrollment Report

01

Impacting the future

AZ Opportunity expands the conversation about Arizona's future

Arizona's future is being shaped today in classrooms, research labs, healthcare settings, innovation hubs and communities across the state. Through AZ Opportunity, the Arizona Board of Regents continues to elevate the role Arizona's public universities play in preparing talent, strengthening the economy and addressing the state's most pressing challenges.

Since its launch, AZ Opportunity has evolved into a statewide initiative that connects policymakers, business leaders, educators and community stakeholders around a shared goal: ensuring Arizona remains competitive, prosperous and prepared for the future.

At the heart of the initiative are five strategic priorities that align university investments with Arizona's workforce and economic needs. The updated pillars focus on strengthening Arizona's healthcare workforce, retaining the state's talent pipeline, securing prosperity while protecting natural resources, fueling talent for high-demand careers and preserving the state's capital investments. Together, these priorities reflect the critical role Arizona's public universities play in developing the workforce and innovations that power the state's continued growth.

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Arizona's public universities are leading work that directly serves the state's priorities,

**ABOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CHAD SAMPSON**

The impact of those priorities could be seen throughout fiscal year 2026 across Arizona's public universities:

Strengthening Arizona's health care workforce remained a focus in fiscal year 2026. Arizona State University broke ground on the John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering, which will prepare physician-engineers through an innovative curriculum when it opens in fall 2028. Northern Arizona University renamed its College of Nursing following a transformational gift from longtime supporters Maria and Steve Sanghi, expanding support for students and faculty as Arizona works to address nursing shortages. The University of Arizona, in partnership with Onvida Health, launched Arizona's first rural regional medical school branch to help meet physician workforce needs in rural communities.

Fueling talent for high-demand careers remained a priority in fiscal year 2026 as Arizona's public universities expanded workforce pathways from high school through college and into the workplace. The University of Arizona partnered with the Chandler Unified School District and the East Valley Institute of Technology to launch the nation's first high school career and technical education program in semiconductor manufacturing. At Northern Arizona University, a new Bachelor of Professional Studies in Engineering Technology prepares students for microelectronics and advanced manufacturing careers, while a new Process Technician Apprenticeship Program combines classroom instruction with paid training at TSMC Arizona's North Phoenix facility. Arizona State University and TSMC Arizona launched a no-cost technician training program with flexible learning options and guaranteed

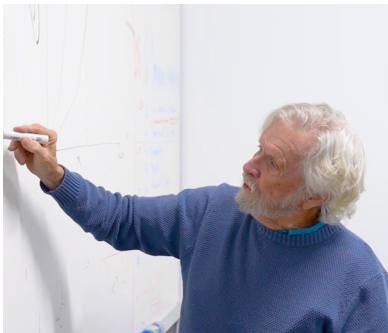
interviews for more than 100 equipment technician positions. ASU also expanded access to semiconductor and AI education globally through the SEMI University platform. Meanwhile, the University of Arizona joined a 46-member national coalition as a Southwest hub for microelectronics workforce training, expanding cleanroom education, connecting educators statewide through its SemiSphere platform and formalizing a partnership with Taiwan's National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University to strengthen Arizona's talent and innovation pipeline.

Securing Arizona's prosperity while protecting its natural resources advanced through research and collaboration. The Arizona Tri-University Recharge and Water Reliability Project, funded by the Arizona Board of Regents at the request of the Arizona Department of Water Resources, brought together 40 faculty members, postdoctoral researchers and students from all three universities to profile all 51 groundwater basins and identify practical recharge strategies for water managers. The board extended that collaborative model through its Future of AZ series, convening leaders from government, industry and agriculture to address challenges related to grassland fire management, sustainable agriculture, and long-term land and water stewardship. These efforts reinforced the universities' role in helping Arizona address some of its most important economic and natural resource challenges.

As Arizona continues to experience rapid population growth and economic expansion, AZ Opportunity remains focused on a simple but powerful premise: Investing in higher education is one of the most effective ways to strengthen communities, grow the workforce and secure the state's long-term success. ●

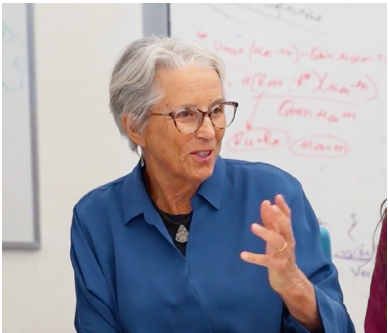
Regents Professors designation reflects highest honor among faculty

The board named four distinguished faculty members as Regents Professors for their contributions to research and education during the past year. The title "Regents Professor" is reserved for faculty members with exceptional achievements that have brought them national or international distinction. The title serves as recognition of the highest merit and unusual contributions to the quality of the individual's university.



REGENTS PROFESSOR ROBERT BOYD
ASU SCHOOL OF HUMAN EVOLUTION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Professor Boyd is a research scientist with the Institute of Human Origins and a pioneer in the field of cultural evolution. His work has transformed the understanding of human evolution through research that showcased the role of cultural processes in shaping human behavior and social structures.



REGENTS PROFESSOR STEPHANIE FORREST
ASU SCHOOL OF COMPUTING AND AUGMENTED INTELLIGENCE

Professor Forrest is the director of the Biodesign Center for Biocomputing, Security and Society and her research has shaped the fields of computational immunology and computer security. She has developed groundbreaking models and systems in software repair, intrusion detection and other vital cybersecurity problems.



REGENTS PROFESSOR DANIELLE S. McNAMARA
ASU DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Professor McNamara serves as the executive director of the Learning Engineering Institute and as the director of the Science of Learning and Educational Technology Lab at ASU. Her interdisciplinary research focuses on cognition, reading comprehension, writing and educational technology, and has helped shape how educators and researchers think about learning.



REGENTS PROFESSOR DONALD S. SIEGEL
ASU SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Alongside his role as Foundation Professor of Public Policy and Management in the School of Public Affairs, Dr. Siegel is the co-executive director of the Global Center for Technology Transfer at ASU. He is a leader in studies and research of technology transfer, entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility.

Universities’ innovation in action

“When university research meets forward-thinking industry, magic happens. Arizona has the assets, and by aligning education with industry needs, we can grow innovation and drive economic opportunity.

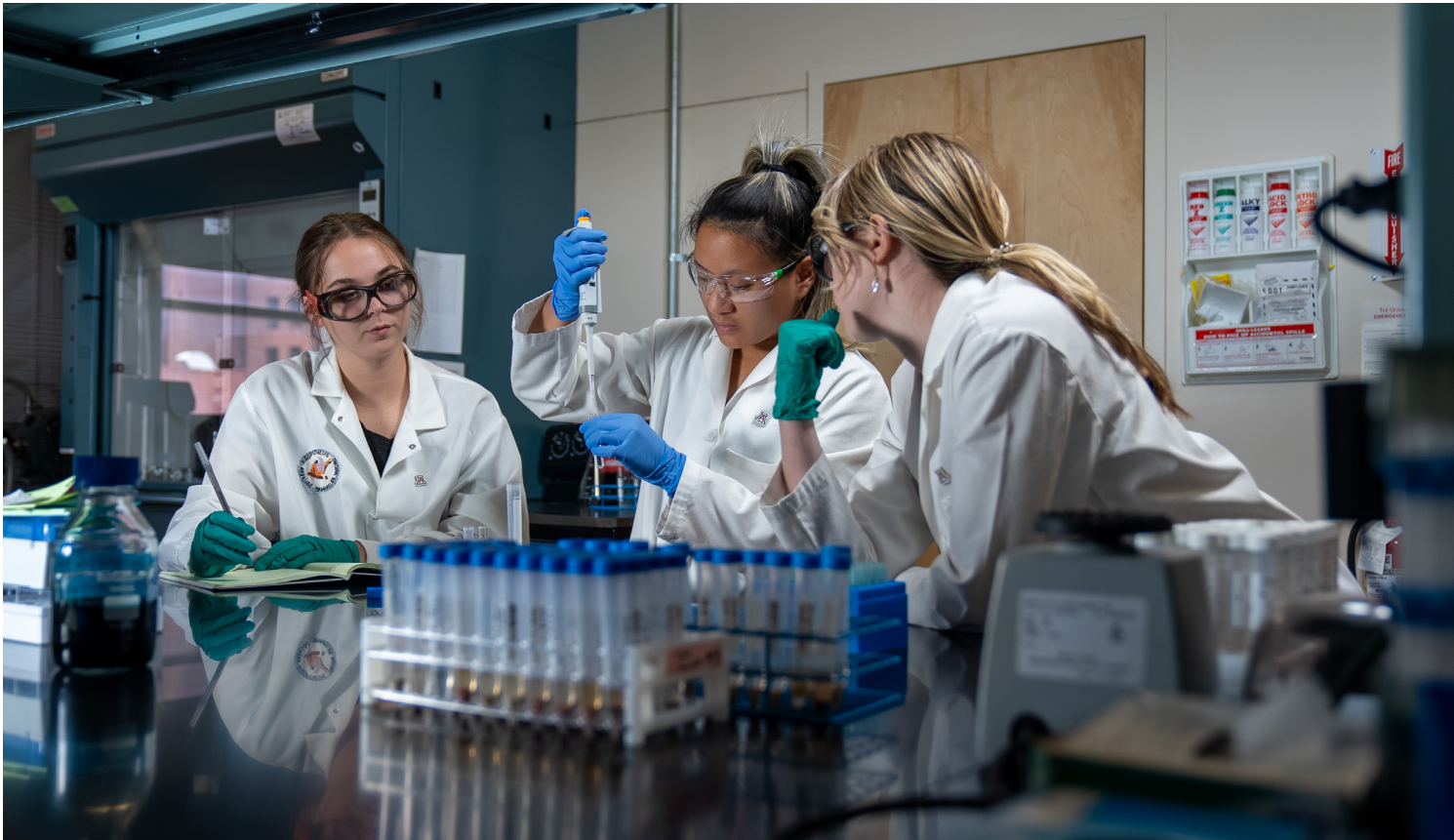
REGENT FRED DUVAL

Arizona's public universities are helping shape the industries that will drive the state's future economy. Through research, technology transfer, entrepreneurship and commercialization, ASU, NAU and the U of A are transforming discoveries into new companies, products and solutions that create jobs and strengthen Arizona's competitive position.

This innovation ecosystem spans the journey from laboratory discovery to market impact. At ASU, research expenditures have grown to nearly \$1 billion annually, helping fuel advances in areas including advanced technology, health, sustainability, national security and space exploration. The university ranks among the nation's leaders in patents, startup formation and technology transfer, with ASU-affiliated entrepreneurs launching more than 230 companies and attracting more than \$1.3 billion in outside investment. For the fifth time, Arizona State University ranked in the top 10 universities worldwide for U.S. utility patents on the National Academy of Inventors' annual Top 100 Worldwide Universities list. The university secured 185 U.S. utility patents in calendar year 2025.

NAU advanced innovation across public health, technology and environmental science. Researchers strengthened infectious disease surveillance through Pathogen Genomics and expanded community-based health initiatives that addressed cancer prevention, chronic disease and health disparities in Native communities. The university also grew Arizona's semiconductor ecosystem through the \$13 million Microelectronics Processing and Characterization Testing Lab. Additional research advanced remote sensing technologies, wildfire science and environmental monitoring, supporting discovery and economic growth across the state.

At the U of A, Tech Launch Arizona moves university discoveries into the marketplace, connecting researchers, entrepreneurs and industry partners to accelerate commercialization. In fiscal year 2025, the university's office for commercialization and innovation generated \$459.7 million in economic output and supported 3,070 jobs statewide. Research investments also contributed to 59 patents and four startups,



helping advance breakthroughs and discoveries in fields ranging from health care and agriculture to engineering and emerging technologies.

This culture of innovation was on display throughout the year. During SEMICON West 2025, that was hosted in Arizona for the first time, the universities showcased the research partnerships, talent pipelines and infrastructure that has helped attract more than \$210 billion in semiconductor investments and 25,000 projected jobs statewide since 2020, more than any other state.

Arizona's innovation economy extends beyond microelectronics. At the 2025 Algae Biomass Summit, researchers, industry leaders and policymakers convened at ASU to explore breakthroughs in biotechnology, sustainable agriculture and clean energy. Regent Jessica Pacheco delivered the event's keynote address, highlighting how university-led algae research is advancing carbon capture, water efficiency, climate resilience and the state's growing bioeconomy.

Student innovators are also turning ideas into enterprises. At the second annual Inferno Invitational

Startup Cup, student entrepreneurs from all three public universities competed at ASU's SkySong campus for funding to launch market-ready ventures focused on healthcare, artificial intelligence, sustainability and emerging technologies. Regent Gregg Brewster served as a competition judge, helping evaluate ventures for their scalability and real-world impact. The event showcased the strength of Arizona's entrepreneurial ecosystem and the growing pipeline of student-founded companies emerging from the universities.

Together, these efforts demonstrate how Arizona's public universities are fueling economic growth, advancing research breakthroughs and preparing the next generation of innovators. From semiconductor manufacturing and sustainable biotechnology to startup creation and commercialization, Arizona's public universities continue to transform research and talent into opportunities that strengthen the state's future. ●



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The board is doing so much to improve the higher education experience and show Arizona students there are options and possibilities.

REGENT JADYN FISHER

Expanding access through the Arizona Promise Program and Teachers Academy

The Arizona Board of Regents continued to build on its commitment to college access, affordability and workforce development in FY 2025 through significant investments in the Arizona Promise Program and Arizona Teachers Academy. Together, the initiatives are helping more Arizonans pursue higher education, complete college credentials and enter high-demand careers while creating a stronger, more connected postsecondary system statewide.

Beginning in fall 2025, both programs expanded to include Arizona's 10 community college districts, extending state-supported financial aid opportunities beyond Arizona's public universities for the first time. The expansion created a more seamless pathway for students who begin their education at a community college and continue toward a bachelor's degree, while providing additional support for those pursuing careers in education and other in-demand fields.

The Arizona Teachers Academy remains a key strategy for addressing the state's teacher shortage. The program offers pathways through all three public universities, including undergraduate, graduate and certification programs designed to prepare teachers for Arizona classrooms and support high-need districts and subject areas. The expansion to community colleges broadens the pipeline even further, allowing eligible students pursuing teacher certification to access academy benefits earlier in their educational journey.

At ASU, the Arizona Teachers Academy offers bachelor's, master's and non-degree certification programs through the Mary Lou Fulton College for Teaching and Learning Innovation. NAU offers bachelor's, post-baccalaureate and master's degrees leading to certification in Flagstaff, at statewide sites and online, including traditional, transfer and “Grow Your Own” pathways built with local communities. Signature programs — the Arizona Teachers Residency, Preparing Indigenous Teachers for Arizona Schools and the NAU West Valley Pathways to Teaching — target high-need districts and high-need fields, with induction support delivered through the Arizona K12 Center.

At the U of A, the academy supports nearly 20 teacher certification programs, from math and special education to indigenous teacher education, agricultural education and the fine arts, along



with statewide programs like the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Humanizing and Culturally Affirming Teacher programs.

At the same time, the Arizona Promise Program continues to remove financial barriers to higher education. The program guarantees that eligible Arizona residents attending ASU, NAU and the U of A have tuition and fees covered after all other financial aid is applied. In 2025, the program's impact was recognized nationally when it received the National Impact Award from College Promise for its success in expanding college access, affordability and student success across Arizona.

State investment in both initiatives continued to grow. Fiscal year 2026 funding included approximately \$2 million for the Arizona Teachers Academy expansion alongside a \$54 million investment in the Arizona Promise Program and an additional \$3 million to launch the Arizona Community College Promise Program. These investments support students at every stage of their postsecondary journey while helping Arizona develop the talent needed to meet the state's workforce demands.

Together, the Arizona Promise Program and Arizona Teachers Academy demonstrate how coordinated investments in affordability and workforce preparation can expand opportunity for students while strengthening Arizona's economic future. ●





ASU President Michael Crow, Phoenix City Council Member Laura Pastor and Regent DuVal participate in a groundbreaking ceremony for the future ASU Health headquarters in downtown Phoenix.

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Academic medicine gives students hands-on experience at the cutting edge of healthcare, advances fundamental discovery and clinical research, and enables the best quality clinical care. Together, we’re equipping future health leaders with the skills and adaptability they’ll need to thrive in a rapidly evolving field and meeting the needs of patients in Arizona and beyond.”

U OF A PRESIDENT
SURESH GARIMELLA

Advancing healthcare for Arizona

Through the AZ Healthy Tomorrow initiative, Arizona’s public universities are working together to improve health outcomes, expand access to care, strengthen the healthcare workforce and accelerate medical innovation across the state. By aligning education, research and strategic partnerships, ASU, NAU and the U of A are helping to build a healthier future for all Arizonans.

ASU reached a major milestone with the launch of ASU Health, a first-of-its-kind initiative designed to reimagine how healthcare is delivered, studied and taught. At its center is the new John Schufeldt School of Medicine and Advanced Medical Engineering, which combines medical education with engineering, technology and data science to accelerate innovations in patient care. By bringing together education, research, clinical partnerships and industry collaborations under one framework, ASU Health is expanding degree programs, advancing medical discovery and preparing a new generation of health professionals equipped to address Arizona’s workforce needs and improve health outcomes statewide.

NAU further strengthened Arizona’s healthcare workforce with the naming of the Maria and Steve Sanghi College of Nursing, elevating one



NAU celebrates the 2026 graduates from the Maria and Steve Sanghi College of Nursing.

of the state’s largest nursing programs into a stand-alone college. The new college expands opportunities to educate nurses at every stage of their careers, strengthens research and community partnerships, and increases the university’s ability to address critical nursing shortages, particularly in rural, tribal and underserved communities across Arizona.

In 2025, the Banner–University Medicine partnership celebrated its 10-year anniversary, marking a decade of collaboration that has generated an estimated \$59 billion in economic impact for Arizona. Since 2015, Banner Health and the U of A have invested more than \$2.4 billion to modernize facilities, expand specialty care, advance clinical research and create innovative learning environments for future physicians, nurses, pharmacists and public health professionals. More than 22.6 million patient engagements and thousands of graduates who now practice across Arizona demonstrate the partnership’s lasting impact on communities throughout the state.

The U of A College of Medicine - Phoenix also partnered with Onvida Health to launch Arizona’s first rural regional medical school. Designed to



Dr. Robert J. Trenchel, president and chief executive officer of Onvida Health, and U of A President Suresh Garimella take part in the official ribbon cutting to celebrate the launch of Arizona’s first rural regional medical school.

address the state’s growing shortage of primary care physicians, particularly in rural communities, the program will offer a three-year accelerated M.D. pathway focused on primary care, with students completing foundational coursework in Phoenix and clinical training in Yuma. During the first three years, up to 45 students committed to careers in family medicine, internal medicine and pediatrics will receive full-tuition scholarships funded by Onvida Health. The health system is investing nearly \$33 million over eight years to support the program, which will strengthen Arizona’s pipeline of rural physicians, expand clinical training opportunities and improve long-term access to health care in underserved communities.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate how Arizona’s public universities are working collaboratively to build a healthier future for the state. Through strategic partnerships, expanded academic programs and investments in research and workforce development, they are improving access to high-quality care, driving medical innovation and ensuring Arizona is prepared to meet the healthcare needs of a rapidly growing population. ●

Future of Arizona: Convening leaders to advance statewide solutions

Over the past year, ABOR's Future of Arizona series convened state agencies, university researchers and industry leaders in focused working sessions. These gatherings are designed to define problems, align expertise and identify practical paths forward. Building on the series' earlier convenings focused on agriculture and technology transfer, the latest discussions addressed issues critical to Arizona's future, from strengthening wildfire resilience to advancing energy planning. By bringing together leaders from across sectors and university research experts, the series connects research with decision-making and translates shared knowledge into actionable strategies for Arizona.

The wildfire resilience convening, held at the U of A's Biosphere 2 facility, brought together experts from the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management, federal land agencies, tribal partners, university researchers and fire professionals to examine Arizona's changing fire landscape. Discussions centered on fuel management, early detection and community protection, with university experts sharing research on fire behavior, forest health and environmental patterns. The session focused on developing a coordinated strategy grounded in science and shaped by those responsible for managing wildfire risk across the state.

A separate convening on energy resilience, hosted in Tempe in partnership with the Arizona Commerce Authority, brought together utility executives, renewable energy leaders and researchers from Arizona's public universities. Conversations addressed rising energy demand tied to population growth, data centers and emerging technologies, along with the infrastructure needed to sustain that growth. Leaders identified specific areas where university research can support near-term solutions related to reliability, capacity and resource management.

Across both convenings, the approach remained consistent. The board assembled the right partners, defined the challenge and connected it to the research strengths of the universities. These sessions function as practical think tanks, where collaboration leads to defined priorities, aligned strategies and opportunities for targeted research investment.

By connecting expertise with the needs of state agencies and industry leaders, the Future of Arizona series continues to translate discussion into direction. The work positions Arizona's public universities as a resource not only for generating knowledge, but for helping the state act on it. ●

Senior energy executives including Erik Bakken, president of Tucson Electric Power; Will Mitchell, chief commercial officer at Elevate Renewables (above); Rob Taylor, associate general manager and chief public affairs and corporate services executive at Salt River Project (above); and Jacob Tetlow, executive vice president of operations at Arizona Public Service, joined Regent Pacheco and Executive Director Sampson for a panel discussion on the challenges facing utility and infrastructure providers.



TOP 5 STORIES
University of Arizona

1 | Asteroid Bennu is a time capsule of materials bearing witness to its origin and transformation over billions of years

Asteroid Bennu, the target of NASA’s OSIRIS-REx sample return mission led by the University of Arizona, is a time capsule containing material from across – and even beyond – our solar system. Findings from three studies published in August 2025 show that Bennu’s diverse composition has been shaped over billions of years by water and the harsh environment of space, providing new insights into the origins and evolution of the solar system. The mission continues as OSIRIS-APEX travels to rendezvous with the asteroid Apophis in 2029.

2 | University of Arizona receives \$20 million gift commitment from the Garcia Family Foundation to expand access to study abroad

The University of Arizona received a \$20 million gift commitment from the Garcia Family Foundation to expand access to credit-bearing study abroad programs for students with financial need. The largest investment in the university’s study abroad program, the gift will help make global learning a defining feature of the U of A student experience. The commitment builds on additional philanthropic support for study abroad, including a \$1 million gift from alumni Steve and Margot Kerr to benefit students in the College of Humanities.



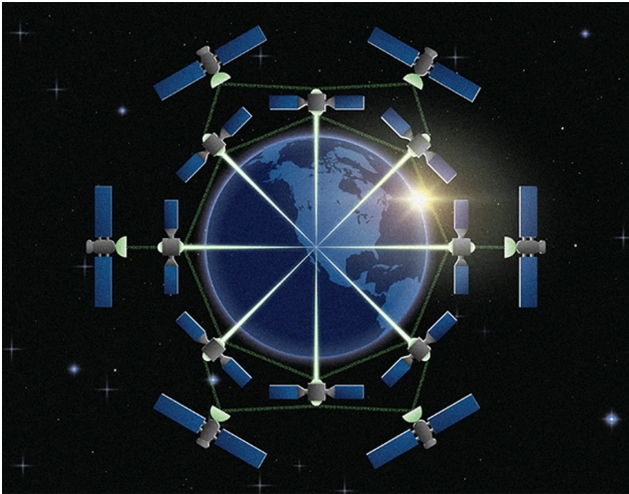
3 | Researchers convene at U of A to tackle ‘forever chemicals’ at National PFAS Conference

The University of Arizona reinforced its leadership in PFAS research by hosting the 2026 National PFAS Conference, one of the nation’s few conferences devoted exclusively to “forever chemicals.” The event convened researchers, policymakers and affected communities while highlighting U of A research estimating that PFAS contamination in drinking water imposes at least \$8 billion annually in health-related social costs across the contiguous United States.



4 | Big Idea Challenge powers orbital data center development

A University of Arizona research team is advancing the next generation of computing working to develop orbital data centers that could reduce the environmental impact of terrestrial facilities and improve security and performance. The project, AZSCI, received \$250,000 through the Office of Research and Partnerships’ inaugural Big Idea Challenge, which supports bold, interdisciplinary solutions to society’s most pressing challenges.



5 | U of A College of Medicine – Phoenix and Onvida Health announce groundbreaking rural health partnership

The University of Arizona College of Medicine – Phoenix and Onvida Health announced Arizona’s first rural regional medical school branch, an innovative partnership designed to strengthen the physician workforce in underserved communities. The program includes a three-year Primary Care Accelerated Pathway leading to an M.D. degree, with all clinical training conducted at Onvida Health in Yuma.



02

Growing the talent pipeline

Expanding postsecondary access across Arizona

Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid is one of the clearest predictors of whether a high school senior goes on to college — and closing that gap has become a board-wide priority. Over the past year, the Arizona Board of Regents has driven a coordinated push to increase FAFSA completion statewide, combining recognition, incentives and direct support through the AZ FAFSA Challenge, the 50 by Fall campaign, the FAFSA Peer Coach Program and, new this year, the College Ready AZ FAFSA Scholarship.

In November 2025, the board launched the College Ready AZ FAFSA Scholarship, a statewide initiative encouraging high school seniors and their families to complete the FAFSA and pursue higher education. Supported by the Arizona Community Foundation, Helios Education Foundation and Valley of the Sun United Way, the \$50,000 fund awarded one-time \$2,000 scholarships to 25 Arizona seniors who completed the 2026–27 FAFSA, applied through College Ready AZ, and planned to enroll at an Arizona public university or community college immediately after graduation.

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Filling out the FAFSA isn't just about financial aid — it's about opening doors to college and opportunity.

ABOR CHAIR DOUG GOODYEAR



The board's FAFSA Peer Coach program expanded to 50 schools across Maricopa and Pima counties in FY 2026.

In January 2026, the board announced the results of the 50 by Fall campaign, which invited Title I and eligible public high schools to pledge to reach a 50% FAFSA completion rate by Dec. 31 or demonstrate at least a 10% increase in FAFSA completions during the first three months of the cycle compared to last year. Schools that met these goals earned tiered financial incentives, which were used to fund FAFSA workshops, family outreach and college-readiness activities in the spring semester. In total, the campaign supported more than 56,000 Arizona high school seniors in completing the 2026-27 FAFSA with \$161,000 awarded to 73 schools across Arizona.

That momentum culminated in May, when the board recognized 19 high schools from across the state at

the 2025-26 AZ FAFSA Challenge Awards Ceremony, honoring exceptional leadership in FAFSA completion and postsecondary access. The Challenge recognizes schools in two categories — highest completion rate and most improved completion rate — with first-place winners receiving a trophy and a laptop for an outstanding student, courtesy of Cox Communications, and runners-up receiving college-readiness prize bags from the Be a Leader Foundation. All winning schools received a certificate signed by Gov. Katie Hobbs and ABOR Chair Doug Goodyear.

Together, these efforts reflect the board's broader commitment: making sure that completing a form is never the reason an Arizona student doesn't make it to college. ●

Arizona joins Complete College America Alliance

Arizona formally joined the Complete College America Alliance, aligning the state with a national network focused on improving student outcomes and increasing college completion.

The effort follows Gov. Katie Hobbs' commitment to formally align Arizona with the national initiative and brings together the state's public universities, community colleges, state agencies and partners around a shared approach to expanding access and helping more students earn degrees and credentials.

Through the Alliance, Arizona will work with peer states and national partners to advance data-informed strategies aimed at moving more students from enrollment to completion and addressing long-standing attainment gaps. Initial priorities include expanding access for students, strengthening workforce-aligned credential pathways and building on existing statewide efforts focused on reengaging adult learners and improving outcomes.

Participation in the alliance establishes a coordinated framework for these efforts, aligning institutions and partners around shared goals and a consistent approach to improving completion across the state. ●



Chair Goodyear and Regent Garcia celebrated Arizona joining the CCA alongside the Governor's Office and higher education leaders.



WICHE expands opportunities, strengthens Arizona's workforce

Arizona's partnership with the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) is creating new pathways to opportunity for students while helping meet the state's workforce needs. Through WICHE's Student Access Programs, students saved \$34.1 million in tuition costs during the 2025-2026 academic year. Through the Professional Student Exchange Program, 134 Arizona students received reduced tuition to pursue degrees in high-demand fields such as dentistry, optometry and occupational therapy at partner institutions across the West, then bring their skills back to communities throughout the state.

Additional WICHE programs, including the Western Undergraduate Exchange and Western Regional Graduate Program, make higher education more affordable by providing reduced tuition opportunities at participating colleges and universities. Together, these programs expand access to in-demand careers, strengthen regional talent pipelines and help ensure Arizona has the skilled workforce needed for the future. ●

FAFSA Peer Coach Program expands to Pima County

The ABOR FAFSA Peer Coach Program continued to expand for the fourth year in a row, now reaching more than 3,000 additional students in Pima County. In September, training events were held in Phoenix and Tucson to prepare 225 student peer coaches to help other students navigate the Free Application for Federal Student Aid process. Since its inception in 2022, the program has grown from 24 pilot schools to 50 schools across Maricopa and Pima counties.

Increasing FAFSA completion rates illustrate the success of the program. During the 2025-26 school year, schools participating in the Peer Coach Program averaged a 12% higher FAFSA completion rate than the state average. Arizona’s peer-to-peer FAFSA Coach model continues to serve as a national example of innovation in college access. The program’s success has attracted interest from states including Florida, Maryland, South Dakota and Wyoming, which are exploring how to adapt Arizona’s model to strengthen FAFSA completion efforts and student support in their own communities. This national recognition highlights Arizona’s leadership in developing scalable, student-centered strategies that improve postsecondary access. ●

“By empowering students to support one another, we’re building a culture of college-going and financial readiness that reaches into every community.”

ABOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CHAD SAMPSON



More than 350 high school counselors and college access professionals gathered at ASU for the third annual FAFSA and College Readiness Symposium.

FAFSA Symposium focuses statewide effort on expanding college access

Nearly 400 counselors and college access professionals gathered at Arizona State University for the 2025 FAFSA and College Readiness Symposium, to prepare for the start of the 2026–27 FAFSA cycle.

The symposium focused on the rollout of the redesigned Free Application for Federal Student Aid, providing attendees with updates on key changes to the application ahead of its October 1 launch. During the convening, Gov. Katie Hobbs announced via video a statewide goal of 48% FAFSA completion for the Arizona high school senior Class of 2026. The goal builds on the previous cycle, when Arizona met its 40% target and ranked sixth nationally in year-over-year improvement.

Attendees participated in 22 sessions and breakout discussions covering FAFSA updates, scholarship

strategies and tools to support students and families. Sessions also brought together counselors, university representatives and national college access partners to share approaches and coordinate outreach across schools.

The symposium also highlighted statewide resources, including College Ready AZ, Arizona College Connect and the FAFSA Peer Coach Program, which provide guidance, tracking tools and peer support for students completing the application.

The convening aligned schools and partners around a common target at the start of the FAFSA cycle, providing a shared framework to increase completion rates and expand access to financial aid.





Students earned free tickets to Arizona Diamondbacks, Cactus League and Valley Suns games for completing their FAFSA.

Game on: how Arizona’s pro sports teams helped fuel a statewide FAFSA surge

This year, the Arizona Board of Regents partnered with the Cactus League, the Valley Suns and the Arizona Diamondbacks, turning completed financial aid applications into game-day experiences while also leading the nation in shaping the very form students were filling out.

For the fourth consecutive year, the board partnered with the Cactus League, offering up to four free spring training tickets to any Arizona high school senior who completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The program has become a reliable seasonal ritual pairing baseball season with financial aid season. This year, 622 students completed the FAFSA and claimed tickets through the initiative.

The board expanded on that model by teaming up with the Valley Suns, the NBA G League affiliate of the Phoenix Suns. Class of 2026 seniors who completed the FAFSA and met promotion guidelines could earn up to four free tickets to a Valley Suns game at Mullett

Arena. Nearly 1,000 students participated, resulting in nearly 4,000 tickets awarded.

A third partnership added even more weight to Arizona’s FAFSA push. The U.S. Department of Education selected the Arizona Board of Regents to lead national beta testing of the FAFSA, joining four other states and Washington, D.C., in testing updates ahead of the form’s nationwide release. More than 350 Arizona seniors and their families tested the updated form in a statewide workshop to provide direct feedback to federal officials, feedback that served as a final validation step before the 2026-27 FAFSA launch. The Arizona Diamondbacks supported the effort by providing 1,600 tickets to participating students and families, reinforcing the same incentive model that powered the Cactus League and Valley Suns partnerships.

The valuable partnerships helped more students take a concrete step toward college and career training. ●

Inaugural ABOR Golf Classic raises funds for FAFSA scholarship

The Arizona Board of Regents held the inaugural ABOR Golf Classic at Papago Golf Club in Phoenix in April 2026. Through the support of local business leaders, community partners and the university athletic departments, ABOR raised more than \$90,000 to support the College Ready AZ FAFSA Scholarship, helping Arizona high school seniors who fill out the FAFSA and plan to enroll at one of Arizona’s public universities or community colleges.

The event featured remarks from the athletic directors of Arizona’s three public universities: Graham Rossini of ASU, Beth Vechinski of NAU and Desireé Reed-Francois of the U of A. They were joined by head coaches Kenny Dillingham of ASU football, Willie Bloomquist of ASU baseball, Brent Brennan of U of A football and Chip Hale of U of A baseball. Attendees also heard from Amelia Ray, a recipient of the College Ready AZ FAFSA Scholarship who plans to major in medical studies at ASU this fall.

Over 90 golfers enjoyed the home course of Arizona State University’s golf teams for a day of expanding college access and supporting the board’s mission of increasing educational attainment. ●



ASU football coach Kenny Dillingham fired golfers up ahead of the board’s inaugural golf tournament.



Former Gov. Ducey showed his support for the board’s FAFSA scholarship.



Regent Brewster, regent advisor for the tournament, celebrated the winning team.



Amelia Ray, a FAFSA scholarship recipient, shared her plans to study medical sciences at ASU.



Bringing Arizonans back to finish what they started

For thousands of former students, a college degree may be closer than they realize. Arizona's public universities are reconnecting with adults who left school with significant credit earned and a clear path to completion still available.

Through the Arizona Comeback Initiative, Arizona's public universities are identifying these students, reaching out directly and clearing the obstacles that can stand between them and a finished degree. The initiative meets students where they are, replacing complicated processes, advising gaps and uncertain pathways with a straightforward route back. Nearly 770,000 Arizonans have some college credit but no credential, a testament to progress already made and an opportunity for both individuals and Arizona's workforce.

The effort is supported by a \$1.1 million investment from Helios Education Foundation to pilot and evaluate approaches that can be scaled statewide. By focusing on students already partway to

graduation, the Initiative helps increase degree attainment, strengthen the workforce and ensure more Arizonans can translate prior progress into long-term opportunities.

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

ASU's Operation Comeback welcomes back thousands of former students who earned substantial credit but had not yet graduated. More than 300 former Sun Devils returned through the program's pilot effort to continue work toward their degrees. The initiative uses personalized outreach and reentry support to identify students close to completion and provide a direct pathway back. ASU estimates that approximately 500 former students may immediately qualify for support to resolve past-due balances, alongside scholarships, dedicated advising and streamlined reenrollment.

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

NAU's Jacks on Track initiative focuses on students who paused their education after making significant academic progress. The program combines outreach,

financial support and success coaching to help students reenroll and complete their degrees. Students are connected with advisors who guide them through readmission, evaluate prior credits and build structured plans to finish remaining coursework. Support includes assistance with financial aid, academic planning and connections to campus services that help students persist all the way to graduation.

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

The U of A is strengthening reengagement pathways for former students through its Arizona Comeback work, identifying Arizona residents with prior credit and guiding them back through a streamlined reentry process. Programs such as Back2UA allow eligible students to return without application fees or administrative barriers, while expanded use of Arizona Online provides flexible options for working adults balancing school, employment and family responsibilities. The university is also developing a more centralized reengagement model that connects returning students with advising and degree pathways, making it easier to convert prior coursework into a completed credential. ●

Arizona College Application Campaign recognizes growth in college-going culture

The Arizona College Application Campaign, administered statewide by the Arizona Board of Regents as part of ACT's national initiative, helps schools encourage college-going behavior and support students through the application process. During the 2025-26 school year, 179 high schools participated in the campaign, connecting more than 58,000 high school seniors to college application activities and helping more Arizona students take the next step toward a postsecondary degree.

ASU Preparatory Academy Phoenix was named the 2025-26 School of Excellence for Arizona and one of 26 schools nationwide, recognized through a competitive review of sustained gains in college readiness and application outcomes.

At ASU Prep Academy Phoenix, student outcomes improved significantly over time. From 2022 to 2025, the share of students earning college credit increased from 26% to 88%, while college admissions rose from 72% to 97%. For the Class of 2026, 99% of seniors completed at least one college application and 94% earned college credit while still in high school.

The results reflect how schools participating in the campaign are increasing application completion and changing the mindset around what students can achieve after high school and why college matters.



ASU Prep Academy Phoenix was one of 26 schools nationwide named an ACAC School of Excellence.



El Valle Puede brings Arizona Decision Day to center court

More than 1,800 Arizona high school seniors gathered at the Mortgage Matchup Center in downtown Phoenix for the third annual El Valle Puede Celebration, a high-energy kickoff to Arizona Decision Day 2026.

Observed each year on May 1, Arizona Decision Day encourages seniors to commit to their next step after high school, whether that includes college, career training, military service or entering the workforce.

Hosted by the Phoenix Suns/Phoenix Mercury Foundation in partnership with the Arizona Board of Regents and Helios Education Foundation, the event combined direct access to college resources with the energy of a game-day environment. Students moved through a resource fair, connecting with college-going resources and support programs before returning courtside for on-court competitions, T-shirt tosses

and performances from Suns and Mercury entertainment teams.

University mascots celebrated students throughout the event, bringing Arizona's public universities onto the floor and directly interacting with seniors making decisions about what comes next.

Students also heard remarks from Helios Founding Chairman Vince Roig and Vice Chair Jane Roig, along with Student Regent Felipe Garcia, who spoke directly to students about continuing their education and the role they play in shaping Arizona's future.

The event closed with a private concert by Mexican-American hip-hop artist Baby Bash, concluding a day that reinforced a clear goal to help students see their next step and take it. ●

Arizona leads national FAFSA beta testing initiative



The Arizona Board of Regents was selected by the U.S. Department of Education for the second consecutive year to lead national beta testing of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Arizona joined four other states and Washington, D.C., to test updates before the form's nationwide release.

More than 350 Arizona seniors and their families tested the updated form in a statewide workshop,

using phones, tablets and laptops while providing direct feedback to federal officials.

The Arizona Diamondbacks supported the effort by providing 1,600 tickets to participating students and families, reinforcing a broader push to increase FAFSA completion and connect more students to available financial aid.

The testing served as a final validation step before the 2026-27 FAFSA launch, helping ensure a smoother rollout and a simpler application process.

Through this work, Arizona students helped improve the federal financial aid system while expanding access to higher education statewide.

Seventy-one students earn 2026 All-Arizona Academic Team Scholarship

The Arizona Board of Regents recognized 71 exceptional community college students as recipients of the 2026 All-Arizona Academic Team scholarship, which provides in-state tuition support for Arizona resident transfer students attending one of the state's three public universities.

Now in its 31st year, the scholarship honors students for academic excellence, leadership and community service. Honorees were celebrated during a ceremony in Mesa



Regent Penley celebrated the 2026 All-Arizona Academic Team scholarship recipients.

coordinated by Mesa Community College on behalf of the board and Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. Eligible students must maintain a GPA of 3.5 or higher, be in good academic standing and work toward an associate degree before transferring to a public university in Arizona. ●



Arizona launches 50 by Fall to boost FAFSA completions

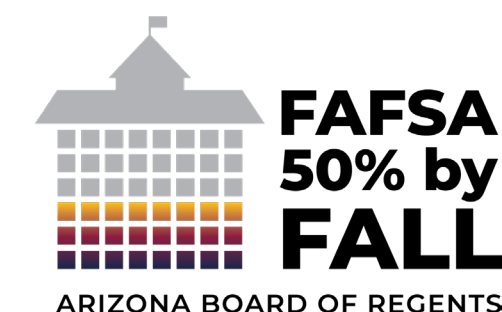
During the 2026-27 Free Application for Federal Student Aid cycle, Arizona launched the 50 by Fall campaign to help more high school seniors complete the FAFSA by pairing statewide goals with school-level incentives and support.

Led by the Arizona Board of Regents in partnership with Gov. Katie Hobbs, the campaign challenged public and Title I high schools to reach 50% FAFSA completion by Dec. 31 or increase completions by 10% during the first three months of the cycle. Schools that met the benchmarks earned financial awards to continue FAFSA and college-readiness work, including workshops, family outreach and other student support activities in the spring semester. The campaign offered awards ranging from \$1,000 to \$4,500 based on school size, with additional funding available for Title I schools.

Participating schools also had access to Arizona College Connect data tracking, technical assistance, FAFSA workshops, toolkits and webinars to help counselors and educators reach students and families.

The effort supported more than 56,000 Arizona seniors in completing the 2026-27 FAFSA during the fall semester. Seventy-three high schools met campaign benchmarks, earning a total of \$161,000 to expand FAFSA outreach and college-readiness support.

By tying completion benchmarks to local resources, 50 by Fall helped schools establish momentum early in the FAFSA cycle and financial awards to sustain that momentum throughout the spring semester.



Data-driven redesign enhances College Ready AZ

Launched just two and a half years ago, CollegeReadyAZ.com — the board's one-stop college-planning platform — has already become a trusted resource across the state. This year, the board conducted research into how students, families, counselors and educators use the site, gathering insights that shaped a redesign focused on stronger content, clearer navigation and a more useful overall experience.

The refreshed CollegeReadyAZ.com also expands its reach to students, families and adult learners at every stage of the college journey. Two new resource hubs reflect that same evidence-based approach to serving

Arizonans: Fostering Success connects current and former foster youth with tuition waivers, financial aid and personalized support available through Arizona's public universities, while AZ Comeback gives adults who started college but never finished helpful information to navigate a clear path to return and complete their degree.

The redesign is one step in an ongoing effort. As CollegeReadyAZ.com continues to grow, the board remains committed to enhancing the site and related communications and initiatives to support efforts to increase educational attainment. ●

Building pathways for incarcerated students

The board continued work to strengthen postsecondary pathways for incarcerated learners, building on Arizona's participation in the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association Higher Education in Prison Learning Community and the state's broader Reentry 2030 efforts.

Working alongside the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry, ASU, Valley of the Sun United Way and existing prison education

providers, the board helped establish a coordinated statewide approach to prison education. The board-led effort included prison site visits, the creation of a 15-member Incarcerated Learner Advisory Council and an assessment of Arizona's existing prison education landscape to identify gaps and opportunities.

This work lays the foundation for a long-term strategy that expands access to postsecondary education, aligns programs with workforce needs and creates stronger pathways to family-sustaining careers for incarcerated Arizonans. ●



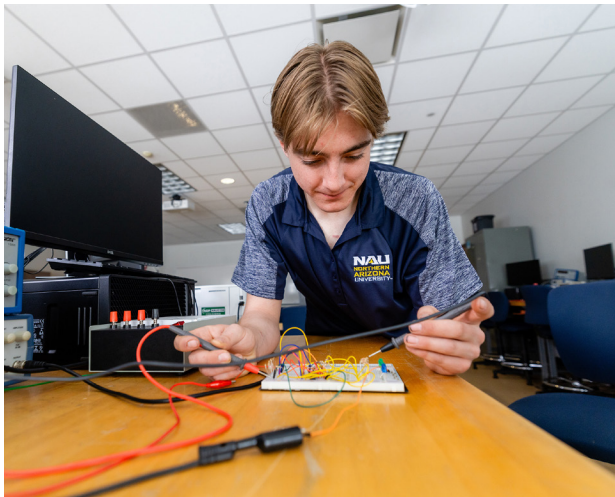
TOP 5 STORIES
Northern Arizona University

1 | MARIA & STEVE SANGHI COLLEGE OF NURSING

NAU named its College of Nursing in recognition of a significant gift from longtime NAU supporters Maria and Steve Sanghi. The investment will strengthen nursing education, expand student and faculty support, and help address Arizona’s critical nursing workforce shortage.

2 | NAU LAUNCHES FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND ENGINEERING DEGREE TO FAST-TRACK ARIZONA’S FUTURE WORKFORCE

As Arizona’s semiconductor and advanced manufacturing industries continue to grow at a rapid pace, NAU’s Steve Sanghi College of Engineering is launching a new degree program designed to help meet the state’s workforce needs. Beginning this fall, NAU will offer a Bachelor of Professional Studies in Engineering Technology, a flexible, workforce-focused degree pathway that prepares students for careers in microelectronics, semiconductors and advanced manufacturing in as little as three years.



3 | NAU STUDENTS DESIGNED AND BUILT FOUR CAMERAS FOR NASA’S ESCAPADE MISSION

The twin spacecraft launched into deep space aboard a Blue Origin New Glenn rocket from Cape Canaveral on November 13, 2025. Thirty-five students across astronomy, planetary science, and mechanical engineering gained hands-on experience over the course of three years conceptualizing, designing and constructing the cameras. Using Earth’s gravity, the spacecraft will slingshot toward Mars in November 2026, with an anticipated arrival at the Red Planet in September 2027.



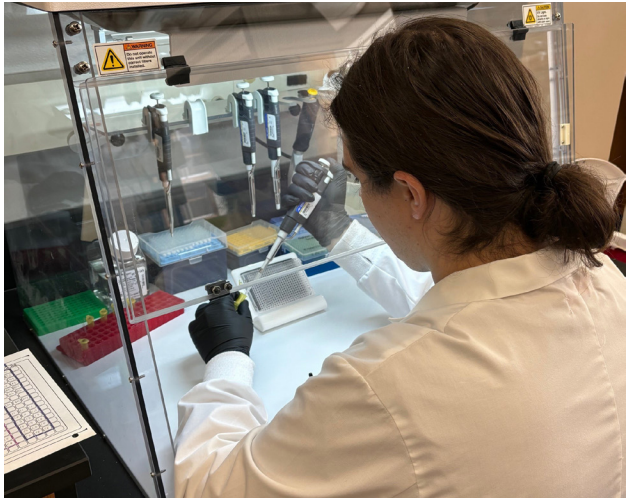
4 | NAU RESEARCHERS LAUNCH GROUNDBREAKING TOOL TO TRACK AND IMPROVE WILDFIRE TREATMENT

A new nationwide database developed by researchers at NAU is helping land managers answer a long-standing question: Are fuel treatments actually reducing wildfire risk? The Treatment and Wildfire Interagency Geodatabase, is the most comprehensive open-access resource of its kind, bringing together decades of fuel treatment records and wildfire data from across the United States into one interactive platform. The tool was co-led by NAU’s Ecological Restoration Institute in partnership with the other two Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes, collectively known as SWERI, in Colorado and New Mexico.



5 | A BREAKTHROUGH TOOL COULD DETECT EARLY SIGNS OF ALZHEIMER’S

NAU researchers are experimenting with new technology that could help medical providers easily detect Alzheimer’s disease early and prevent its advance. Led by Travis Gibbons, an assistant professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, and fueled in part by a grant from the Arizona Alzheimer’s Association, the research project centers on the brain’s metabolism—specifically, how it uses glucose, the sugar that fuels our thoughts, movements and emotions.



03 Delivering financial oversight

Board establishes new peer-review model to strengthen financial oversight

The Arizona Board of Regents this year introduced a structured peer-review process for assessing financial management practices across Arizona's public universities, giving the board and university leaders a more consistent, comparable framework for oversight. Under the model, a university completes a comprehensive self-assessment of its financial practices — spanning budget development, revenue management, capital planning and financial reporting — and receives direct feedback from peer institutions and the board office.

Rather than reviewing practices in isolation, the process gave institutions a structured setting to compare approaches, identify differences and learn from one another — building a shared, systemwide understanding of where financial management is evolving and where improvements can be made.

The U of A served as the first university to go through the new process, sharing the results of its self-assessment with financial leaders from ASU, NAU

and the board office. The review highlighted several initiatives underway at the U of A, including its new All Funds Planning Process, a Budget and Fund Balance Policy, and the developing Arizona Forward budget model, along with progress on procurement and supply chain modernization.

The peer-review model was introduced through the board's inaugural Annual Financial Summit and Financial Management Business Process Review, which brought senior financial leaders from all three universities and the board office together to discuss cash and liquidity management, financial forecasting and reserve strategies, investment governance, debt planning, and how financial metrics can better support institutional and board decision-making.

The board will continue the Financial Summit as an annual forum, with the peer-review process rotating to additional universities in future years to establish a more consistent, systemwide approach to financial accountability and continuous improvement. ●

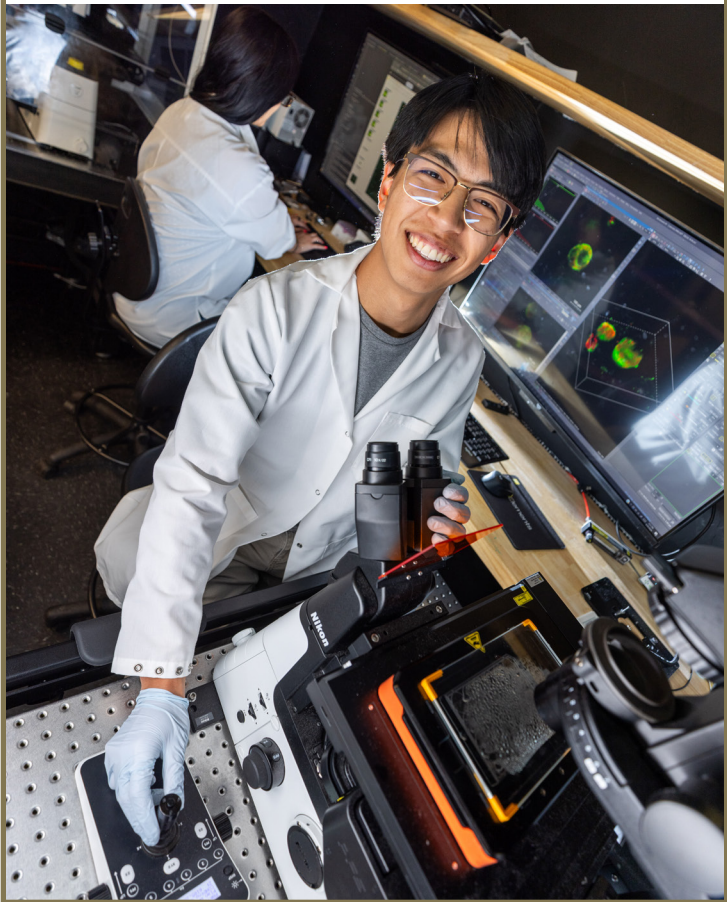
University and board finance leaders met for the inaugural Financial Summit and Business Process Review.

Universities’ research impacts Arizona’s economy

Research at Arizona’s public universities generated more than \$2.175 billion in economic activity in fiscal year 2025. That impact strengthens Arizona’s economy, drives growth and attracts new investment.

Across the three public universities, faculty and students are advancing innovations that address real-world challenges. Their work generates patents, licenses technologies and helps launch new companies that bring discoveries to market.

This is research with impact – creating new knowledge that translates into real-world solutions for Arizona and communities around the globe.



Strengthening faculty and staff retention at Arizona’s public universities

Arizona’s public universities rely on talented faculty and staff to deliver world-class education and research. Yet in an increasingly competitive national market, attracting and retaining top talent remains a challenge. In fiscal year 2026, compensation for many faculty and staff continued to lag peer institutions, creating recruitment and retention pressures.

Employee turnover has improved significantly, declining from 18 percent in 2022 to 12.4 percent in 2026. Even so, retirements, competitive job offers and cost-of-living pressures remain among the primary reasons employees leave. Continued investment in Arizona’s higher education workforce is essential to retain the faculty and staff who drive student success, research excellence and the universities’ broader impact across the state. ●

Board continues to enhance responsiveness to public inquiry

Whether through formal public comment at board meetings, records requests, or the day-to-day questions that come in from students, families and the public, the board is committed to ensuring every voice is heard.

This year, the board updated its public comment policy to create a more structured process for stakeholders to raise questions and share input on board business, ensuring comments are communicated clearly and considered effectively in board discussions. The updated approach, supported by outreach from the student regents who worked closely with undergraduate student governments at all three universities, reinforces the board’s commitment to hearing from a broad range of stakeholders. By improving structure without limiting access, the policy supports more effective engagement and ensures concerns and perspectives continue to inform governance and oversight.

That same commitment extends to how the board handles formal requests for information. During fiscal year 2026, the board fulfilled 80 public records requests spanning contracts, financial information, procurement activity, student and enrollment data, real estate transactions, board policies, conflict-of-interest disclosures and legal matters — reflecting sustained public interest in how Arizona’s university system operates, and a consistent standard of timely response.

The board also fields a steady stream of everyday inquiries — questions and concerns from students, parents and the general public. Last year, the board responded to 867 inquiries related to board actions, financial aid, academic issues and more issues of the moment.

Each inquiry is treated as an opportunity to inform the public and strengthen trust in how the board governs. ●



Community members address the board during call to the audience at the November 2025 board meeting in Tucson.

Producing graduates for high-demand careers

Arizona’s public universities continue to increase the number of graduates in high-demand fields, awarding a record 18,049 bachelor’s degrees in 2026. The Arizona Board of Regents tracks high-demand degrees in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, healthcare and education since these disciplines are essential to meeting Arizona’s workforce needs and supporting the state’s long-term economic competitiveness.

Since 2016, the number of bachelor’s degrees awarded in high-demand fields has grown from 10,859 to over 18,000, an increase of more than 66 percent. This sustained growth reflects the universities’ continued commitment to preparing graduates for careers in industries that are critical to Arizona’s economy and success.

The increase in high-demand degree production strengthens Arizona’s talent pipeline by supplying highly skilled graduates to employers across the state. Continued growth in these fields supports workforce development, attracts business investment and helps ensure Arizona remains competitive in a rapidly evolving economy. ●

Commitment to tuition affordability, predictability

Arizona’s public universities remain committed to providing students with an affordable, high-quality education while maintaining a thoughtful and transparent tuition-setting process. Although published tuition and mandatory fees establish the cost of attendance, many students pay substantially less after financial aid and scholarships are applied.

For the 2025-26 academic year, the average net tuition paid by full-time, resident, degree-seeking undergraduate students — after gift aid and scholarships — was \$3,441.50. Average net tuition paid reflects tuition and mandatory fees minus federal, state, institutional, private and other gift aid received by students.

Approval of tuition and mandatory fees at Arizona’s public universities is a comprehensive public process that considers each university’s financial needs, institutional priorities, student affordability and public input through tuition workshops and public hearings.



Universities innovate to save money

Arizona’s public universities continued to demonstrate a strong commitment to fiscal responsibility in fiscal year 2026, reducing costs while advancing priorities that support student success, research and service to the state. Across the system, universities implemented cost-management strategies ranging from project consolidation and energy-efficiency improvements to technology modernization and organizational restructuring.

Collectively, the three universities reported \$161.4 million in cost-containment savings. Personnel and workforce management initiatives generated \$102.8 million in savings. Procurement and contract management improvements contributed an additional \$24.3 million, while the U of A’s Global Campus restructuring initiative produced \$19.6 million in savings. ●



Strengthening policy oversight through systematic review

The Arizona Board of Regents formalized a five-year review cycle for all board policies, ensuring each policy is evaluated on a regular basis and updated as needed to reflect changes in law or practice.

In addition to that process, the board invited the three university presidents to identify policies that may benefit from revision to improve efficiency at the campus level. Their recommendations were reviewed by board staff and incorporated into the broader policy review process, creating a direct link between system governance and university operations.

As of June 2026, staff completed reviews of more than 90 policies and submitted more than 50 for a first reading before the board. Remaining policies are under review with stakeholder input and will be brought forward for consideration over the next fiscal year.

This work strengthens oversight while ensuring policies remain aligned with current needs, supporting more efficient operations across Arizona’s public university system. ●

04 Advancing athletic excellence

Athletic excellence across Arizona's public universities

Arizona's public universities delivered memorable moments on the field, court and track during the 2025-26 academic year. Across ASU, NAU and the U of A, athletics continued to elevate institutional pride, connect generations of students and alumni, and showcase Arizona students' talent on a national stage. Student-athletes earned conference championships, national titles and historic milestones while strengthening the traditions and bolstering support from fans of communities that surround collegiate athletics.



Dr. Richard Duran was named NAU's new Director of Athletics in June 2026.

The U of A men's basketball team reached the Final Four for the first time since 2001.

Celebrating historic football team, today’s outstanding volleyball athletes at ASU

At ASU, athletics highlighted both the traditions that define the Sun Devil experience and the community that supports today’s student-athletes. The university honored its 1975 football team with induction into the Sun Devil Athletics Hall of Fame, celebrating a squad remembered for “The Catch” and its appearance in the Fiesta Bowl. Nearly five decades later, the team’s legacy remains an important part of ASU athletics history.

The power of athletics to bring people together was also on display at Desert Financial Arena where . ASU Volleyball generated unprecedented excitement across the Sun Devil community, drawing record crowds, earning a trip to the Sweet 16 and creating one of the most electric atmospheres in the program’s history. The energy surrounding the sport program reflected growing engagement from students, alumni and fans across the Valley.



photo: Peter Vander Stoep

NAU milestones: new athletic director, NCAA, women’s programs excellence

NAU continued its tradition of competitive excellence while preparing for the future. The university named Dr. Richard Duran as vice president and director of athletics, bringing on board his Division I leadership experience and steadfast focus on student-athlete success, community engagement and long-term program sustainability.

On the national stage, Colin Sahlman closed his collegiate career with one of the most accomplished seasons in Lumberjack history. He won NCAA championships in the men’s 800-meter and 3,000-meter races and helped lead NAU’s distance

medley relay team to its first NCAA indoor title in the event.

NAU also demonstrated exceptional depth across its women’s programs. The Lumberjacks claimed the Big Sky Women’s All-Sports Trophy for the fifth time in six years and the 11th time in school history. Conference championships in cross country, volleyball, indoor track and field and golf helped secure the honor. The swimming and diving program added another conference championship, extending its title streak to 13 consecutive seasons.



Capturing Allstate Big 12 Commissioner’s Cup, excellence across multiple sports at U of A

At the U of A, the results were among the strongest in school history. Under the leadership of Vice President and Director of Athletics Desireé Reed-Francois, Arizona captured the 2025-26 Allstate Big 12 Commissioner’s Cup, recognizing the conference’s top athletics program for excellence in competition, academics and community service.

The Wildcats produced standout performances across multiple sports. During November, football and men’s and women’s basketball combined for an 18-0 record. Men’s basketball won 36 games, captured both the Big 12 regular-season and tournament championships and advanced to its first Final Four in 25 years. Women’s triathlon secured its second consecutive national championship in only its third season, while men’s golf tied for third at the NCAA Championships, matching the program’s best finish since 2004.

From celebrated traditions and passionate fan support to conference championships and national titles, athletics continues to play a vital role at Arizona’s public universities. The accomplishments of student-athletes, coaches and staff reflect a shared commitment to excellence that extends beyond competition and strengthens campuses and communities across the state. ●



Student-athletes champion FAFSA completion

The Arizona Board of Regents partnered with student-athletes from ASU, NAU and the U of A to launch a statewide Free Application for Federal Student Aid awareness campaign. Featuring standout athletes from all three universities – including Koa Peat (U of A men’s basketball), Jordyn Tyson (ASU football), Audrey Taylor (NAU women’s basketball) – the initiative encouraged Arizona students to complete the FAFSA and access available financial aid. Leveraging the name recognition of the student-athletes and athletic programs, the campaign supported broader statewide efforts to increase FAFSA completion, building on Arizona’s national leadership in year-over-year improvement and helping students claim critical financial aid resources that make college more affordable and attainable.



TOP 5 STORIES
Arizona State University

1 | ASU MEDICAL SCHOOL GAINS ACCREDITATION — AND A NEW NAME

ASU’s School of Medicine and Advanced Medical Engineering received national accreditation and was renamed in honor of Dr. John Shufeldt. This milestone allows the university to begin recruiting its first class of students, who are expected to start in fall 2026. The school combines medicine, engineering and technology in a single training model. It is designed to prepare physicians who can advance healthcare delivery while expanding Arizona’s provider pipeline.

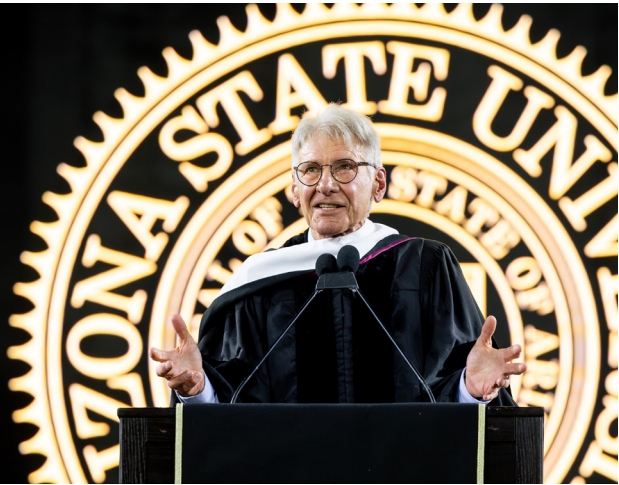
2 | ASU LAUNCHES ASU LONDON, BRINGING GLOBAL REPUTATION FOR INNOVATION TO THE UK

ASU launched ASU London, establishing a permanent presence that brings its model of innovation and international partnerships to the United Kingdom. The site supports study abroad programs, internships and career pathways for students while embedding ASU in a global hub for business, policy and research. The expansion reflects ASU’s growing international footprint and its strategy to connect Arizona students to global opportunities. It also strengthens collaboration with global institutions and industries and reinforces the university’s reputation for innovation on an international stage.



3 | HARRISON FORD TELLS ASU’S CLASS OF 2026: ‘THIS IS YOUR TIME’

Actor Harrison Ford delivered the commencement address to ASU’s Class of 2026, speaking to one of the largest graduating classes in the country. The ceremony celebrated students from across disciplines as they prepared to enter the workforce and their communities. Ford’s remarks emphasized responsibility, leadership and the choices graduates will carry forward. The event reflected the scale of ASU’s role in preparing students to contribute across Arizona and beyond.



4 | ASU LAUNCHES OPERATION COMEBACK TO HELP ARIZONANS FINISH THEIR DEGREES

ASU launched Operation Comeback to reengage former students who left college with significant progress toward a degree. The initiative provides financial support, including help with past due balances and per-credit scholarships, along with personalized advising. The program builds on earlier pilot efforts that have already brought hundreds of students back to continue their education. It focuses on shortening time to completion by aligning prior coursework with clear degree pathways.



5 | ASU, DREAMSCAPE LEARN BRING IMMERSIVE VR BIOLOGY CLASSROOMS TO PHOENIX SCHOOLS

ASU partnered with Dreamscape Learn to bring immersive virtual reality biology classrooms to Pendergast Elementary School District. The program places students in interactive environments where they actively explore scientific concepts rather than passively learn them. The approach translates university-level curriculum into experiential learning for K-12 classrooms. It is designed to increase engagement in STEM and strengthen the connection between early education and higher education pathways.



05

Leading with responsible stewardship

Measuring civic learning across Arizona

Arizona's public universities completed a systemwide effort to define and measure what students learn through general education, with a focus on civic knowledge and its role in preparing graduates for life beyond the classroom.

The work stems from a general education policy adopted by the board in 2019, which requires universities to assess student learning in core areas including civic knowledge, written communication, quantitative reasoning and critical thinking.

This approach reflects a broader objective of ensuring that students graduate not only with technical skills for the workforce, but with the knowledge and perspective needed to understand government, engage in civil discourse and participate in civic life.

In 2025, the universities reached a key milestone with the first systemwide assessment of undergraduate civic knowledge. Faculty and academic leaders from ASU, NAU and the U of A worked together to develop a



shared rubric and evaluate student work drawn from courses that meet civic knowledge and American institutions requirements.

The assessment focused on how students apply knowledge, not memorize it. Coursework examined constitutional principles, key historical events, landmark Supreme Court decisions and the responsibilities of civic participation, requiring students to analyze, question and engage with foundational concepts.

Student work from hundreds of course sections across all three universities was reviewed as part of the evaluation. Results showed that students met or exceeded expectations in civic knowledge, indicating that the revised general education framework is producing consistent outcomes across the system.

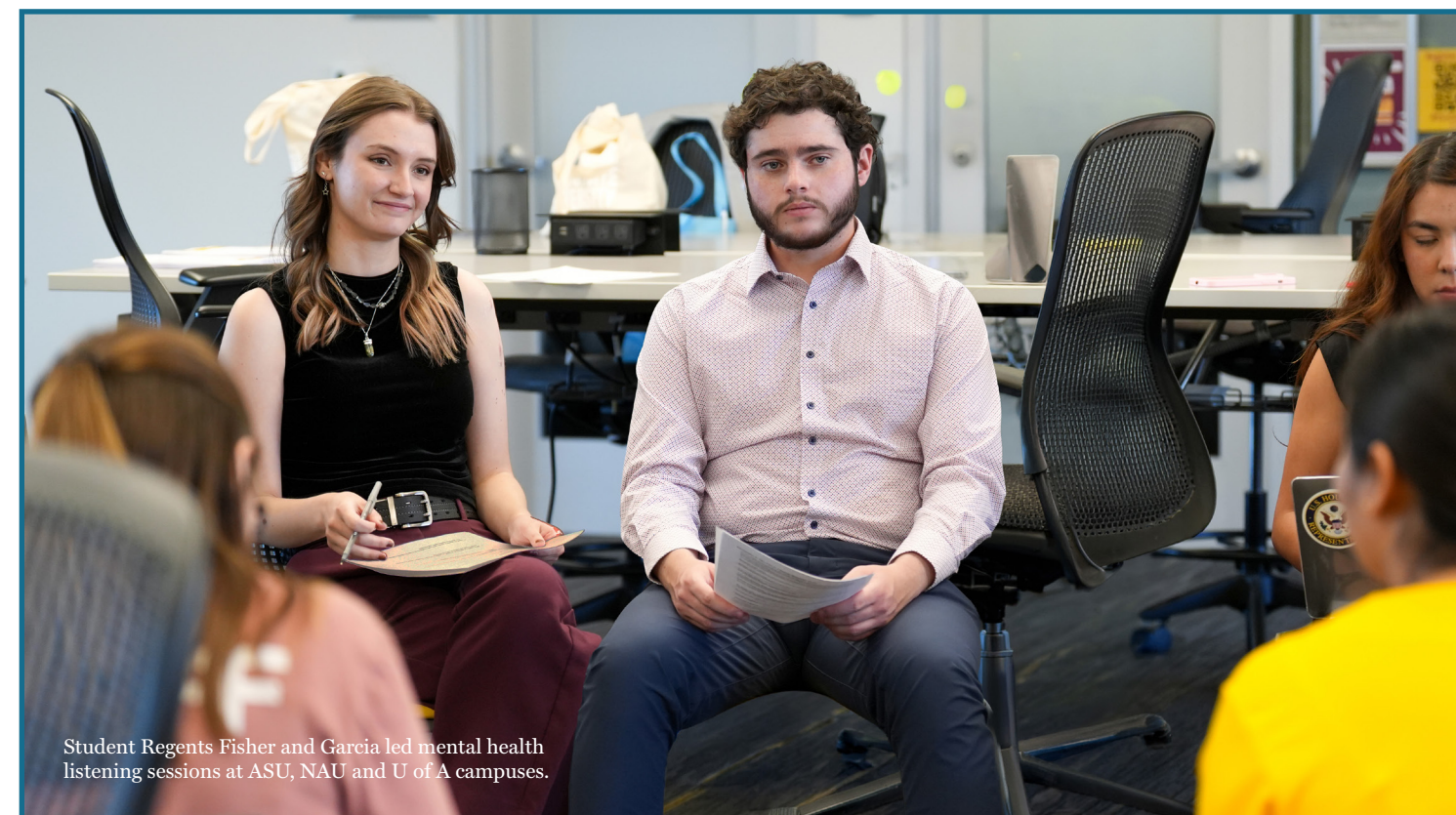
The effort also introduced a new level of coordination across Arizona's universities. While each institution maintains its own curriculum, the shared assessment framework provides a consistent way to evaluate learning outcomes while allowing flexibility in course design and delivery.

The importance of this work extends beyond academic performance. National surveys show gaps in civic understanding among adults and young people, raising concerns about civic participation and informed decision-making.

Arizona's approach responds directly to those challenges by integrating civic learning into the core of the undergraduate experience. The goal is not only to improve knowledge, but to prepare students to engage in public life, contribute to their communities and navigate complex issues.

The universities will use the assessment results to refine coursework, strengthen instruction and continue improving outcomes. The process establishes a foundation for ongoing evaluation, ensuring general education remains aligned with both workforce expectations and the responsibilities of citizenship.

This work reflects a broader commitment across Arizona's public university system: preparing graduates who are equipped to succeed professionally and contribute meaningfully to the state and its civic life. ●



Student Regents Fisher and Garcia led mental health listening sessions at ASU, NAU and U of A campuses.

Student regents bring voices of their peers front and center

This year, Student Regents Jadyne Fisher and Felipe Garcia led structured listening sessions with students across Arizona's three public universities. In partnership with student governments and campus leadership, the sessions created space for candid conversations about campus culture, belonging, alcohol use, hazing prevention and how responsibility is understood within student communities.

The initiative reflects the continued work of the student regents to address issues of importance to students, including efforts started five years ago to understand food and housing insecurities. This year, work continued to gain greater perspectives about student mental health and developing recommendations to present to the board this fall. Additionally, the listening sessions extended to hazing and substance misuse.

Building on feedback, the student regents worked with campus leadership to ensure perspectives from their peers inform ongoing planning and decision-making, and are shared with the board.

Arizona's participation this year in the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association Basic Needs Academy reinforces this work, linking student input with enhanced data and development of a dashboard to provide helpful information.

By pairing student-led engagement with collaborations across campus leadership, the regents are helping to ensure student voices are an integral part of wellness and safety efforts.



ASU took home the hardware at the 2026 Regents' Cup in Tucson.

Regents' Cup showcases free speech and civil discourse

The seventh annual Regents' Cup, hosted at the U of A, was an impressive display of free speech and civil discourse among the state's three public universities. ASU took home the win with multiple standout performances in both the debate and storytelling categories.

The 2026 tournament was held in March 2026 and featured a series of storytelling and Oxford-style debate rounds inspired by the theme, "Liberty and Responsibility." Storytellers shared tales of their experiences with the theme, and debate teams engaged in robust discussions on prompts such as the role of generative artificial intelligence in undergraduate curriculum, physician-assisted suicide, social media age restrictions and a citizen's moral obligation to be well-informed in order to vote.

Highlights of ASU's victory included Jake Dueck and Sam Luba claiming first place in the Oxford debate competition, defeating Baibhav Saraf and Ayla Smith of NAU, with two additional ASU teams — Shravya Aragam and Ryan Medrano, and Gauri Murkoth and Alexander Shin — tying for third.

All three universities had a finalist in the storytelling competition with Benjamin Winkler of NAU finishing in first place and Calliope Burkhart of ASU and Rebecca Ursule of the U of A taking second and third place, respectively.

Students spend months preparing for the event, working with dedicated coaches at their university to hone their skills. At the competition they present their skills before a panel of judges that includes elected and appointed

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Year after year, Regents' Cup students demonstrate how free speech thrives alongside thoughtful listening and respectful engagement. Their ability to challenge ideas while honoring one another gives me great confidence in our country's future and it's why I'm proud to return as a judge to the Regents' Cup.

**USA TODAY INTERIM
EDITOR IN CHIEF
MICHAEL MCCARTER**

officials, business leaders, university leadership and their peers.

The board awards one-time scholarships to the top three winners in each category — \$15,000 for first place, \$12,000 for second and \$5,000 for third. All other student competitors receive a \$500 one-time scholarship, along with internship or course credit for their work.

For the last seven years, the Regents' Cup has served as a hallmark board event and a meaningful commitment to free expression and civil discourse. Similar to the Territorial Cup rivalry, the winning team proudly displays the Regents' Cup trophy on its campus until next year's competition, which will be held at ASU in 2027. ●

Regents' Grants: Investing in solutions that matter to Arizona

Backed by Arizonans through Proposition 301, the board's Regents' Grants ensure that public university research delivers public benefits where it's needed most. From groundwater protection and sustainable agriculture to wildfire resilience, public purchasing and risks tied to abandoned mines, these state-funded investments connect academic expertise with real-world challenges facing communities across Arizona. Here are some examples of Regents Grants that have served the state this year:

1

Improving long-term ground water management

Arizona's public universities are working with the Arizona Department of Water Resources and local partners to improve how groundwater is measured and modeled across the state. The project is developing new data tools and predictive models that track groundwater levels, usage patterns and long-term supply risks, giving policymakers and water managers better information to guide planning and conservation strategies.

2

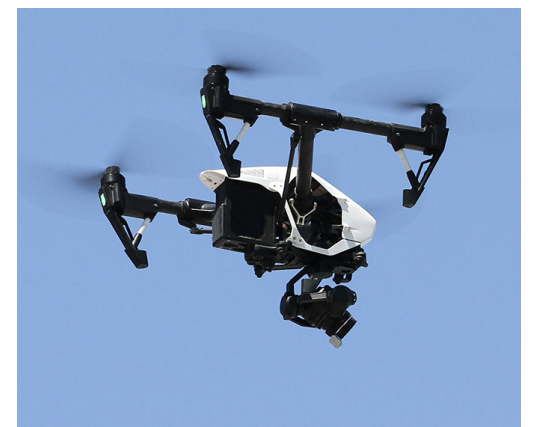
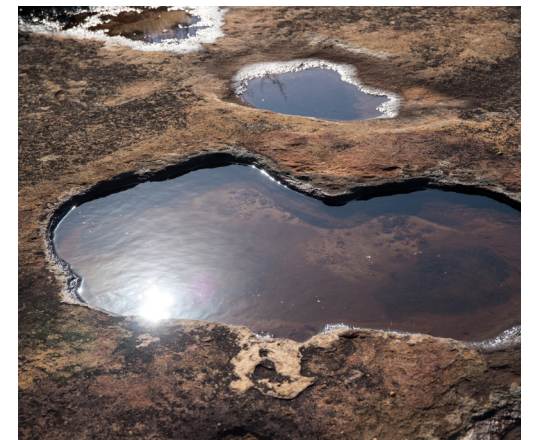
Advancing dual-use technologies with national security and commercial applications

Working with the Arizona Commerce Authority as well as federal and defense-sector partners, researchers are developing technologies that can be deployed in both commercial and national security settings. Projects focus on areas such as advanced materials, sensing and data systems, helping move research from early-stage development into applications that support industry, defense and economic growth in Arizona.

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By combining the deep expertise of our academic institutions with the real-world knowledge and implementation power of our state agencies, we're building practical, forward-looking solutions that directly serve Arizona's communities and secure our water future.

REGENT FRED DUVAL



Chair Goodyear and Executive Director Sampson toured Yuma farms with public education leaders.

3

Strengthening Arizona’s agricultural future

The Agriculture Innovation Hub is testing new approaches to water-efficient farming, soil health and crop resilience in Arizona’s arid conditions, in partnership with producers and the Arizona Department of Agriculture. The work includes field trials and applied research designed to help farmers reduce water use, maintain yields and adopt practices that can be scaled across the state’s agricultural sector.



4

Addressing environmental and public safety risks of abandoned mines

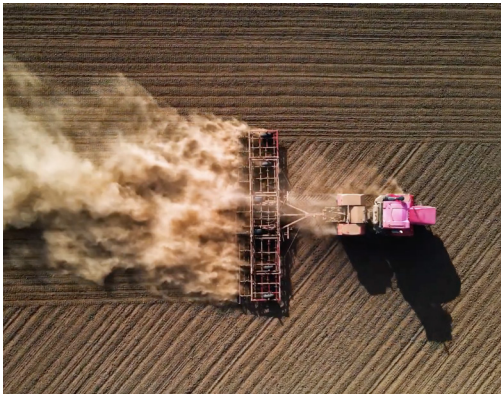
In collaboration with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality and other partners, researchers are mapping abandoned mine sites and assessing risks related to contamination and structural instability. The project is developing data-driven methods to prioritize cleanup, reduce exposure to hazardous materials and guide remediation efforts in affected communities.



5

Mitigating the effects of dust while improving air quality and soil health

Working with regional air-quality agencies and local partners, this research examines how soil composition, vegetation cover and land use contribute to dust emissions in central Arizona. The project is testing land management practices that reduce airborne dust while improving soil stability and maintaining agricultural productivity.



6

Protecting Sonoran Desert communities and landscapes from wildfires

In coordination with the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management and federal land agencies, this project is analyzing wildfire behavior, fuel conditions and landscape vulnerability across the Sonoran Desert. The work is developing mitigation strategies and planning tools that help communities reduce fire risk, improve response and protect natural and built environments.



7

Improving efficiency and transparency in local government purchasing

In partnership with County Supervisors Association, this study evaluates how local governments procure goods and services. The research identifies specific strategies to streamline purchasing processes, reduce costs and increase transparency, providing actionable recommendations that local governments can implement to improve efficiency and accountability.

8

Extending research on biosolids, mining, communications and cybersecurity projects

The board approved no-cost extensions for four projects to complete their original scopes of work: a tri-university study on contaminant movement in biosolids; a project recovering critical minerals from copper mine tailings; a collaboration to improve Arizona Department of Environmental Quality communication tools; and a cyber resilience project to strengthen secure communications in contested environments. The extensions allow teams to finalize laboratory analysis, complete data modeling and deliver tools, datasets and guidance for state partners. ●



U of A political science and international affairs student Rebecca Ursule was among 44 student competitors at the 2026 Regents’ Cup.

Universities lead in free speech rankings

Arizona’s three public universities remain national leaders in protecting free speech, according to the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings from the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE). All three universities are ranked in the top 35, with ASU at No. 23, NAU at No. 31 and U of A at No. 32 out of 257 U.S. private and public universities.

Arizona is consistently one of the top states in free speech protection. The 2026 FIRE report showcased the state’s average speech-climate grade, which is one of the best in the country. All three universities have a “green light” rating, the highest awarded by FIRE, marking Arizona one of the only states where all rated, public four-year institutions earn the highest possible mark for protecting student speech.



Basic needs initiative expands data-driven student supports

Arizona’s public universities are participating in a multistate effort to improve how colleges identify and respond to students’ basic needs, including food, housing and mental health.

Through the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association Basic Needs Data Academy, Arizona is working with six other states to strengthen how data is collected and used to support students. Across Arizona’s public universities, the effort includes student surveys, annual reporting and listening sessions designed to better understand and address barriers that can affect student success.

The work builds on a student-led initiative launched in 2020 and reflects continued use of data and student input to guide improvements in support services across the state. ●



University presidents spotlight higher education’s role in Arizona’s future.

Connecting education to Arizona’s future

Across Arizona, regents and university presidents connected directly with communities to link the value of higher education to opportunity and economic growth. Through engagements with local chambers, statewide forums and public discussions, they met with business leaders, policymakers and residents to emphasize the role universities play in shaping the state’s future.

In these conversations, leaders focused on what matters to Arizona families and employers. They highlighted how access and affordability open the door to college, and how education translates into workforce readiness, higher earning potential and stronger communities.

University presidents reinforced the impact of college going that extends beyond individual outcomes. They pointed to the role of higher education in supporting economic development, meeting workforce demand and preparing students for a rapidly changing economy.

These engagements ensured that the value of higher education was part of conversations happening across the state. By showing up in communities and connecting education to local priorities, regents and university leaders strengthened public understanding of how Arizona’s public universities contribute to long-term growth and opportunity.



Regent Brewster joined the AZ Opportunity Podcast to share how university communities continue to shape lives long after graduation.

Sharing the message: The board amplifies its voice and convenes Arizona’s leaders

Through media relations, continued growth in social and digital media, community outreach, news releases, editorial content and podcasts, the board continues to engage with the community and spread the word about its service for the state and the value of public higher education in Arizona.

College access and affordability remained a steady coverage area, with FAFSA completion efforts, enrollment trends and student pathways generating ongoing attention across broadcast and print. The team also expanded the AZ Opportunity Podcast with eight new episodes covering regent priorities for higher education and workforce development. Combined with social media and YouTube activity, these efforts generated tens of thousands of impressions, extending the board’s reach beyond traditional media. Across

the board’s five social media accounts, impressions grew 53.9% year-over-year and engagement increased 10%, with nearly 4,000 new followers added. LinkedIn remained a top-performing platform, while Facebook and Instagram showed significant growth — impressions up 553% and 342%, respectively. Across a three-year span, the reach and engagement of messaging has grown significantly. Proactive story production rose more than 30%, video packages nearly 80%, and engagement with board content nearly 170%. This past year, the office continued its Future of Arizona convenings, bringing more than 100 key stakeholders together with various state agencies to discuss challenges and opportunities for solutions. The board partnered with more than 40 business, community, and education organizations through various outreach opportunities to discuss education access and impact. ●



Regent Brewster joined the 2025 ATLAS Gala, where the board and universities were recognized.

Arizona universities recognized for hospitality workforce leadership

The Arizona Board of Regents and Arizona’s three public universities were named the 2025 Honoree of the Year by the Arizona Lodging and Tourism Association during the ATLAS Gala in Scottsdale. The award recognizes the board, ASU, NAU and the U of A for their contributions to workforce development and leadership preparation in Arizona’s tourism and hospitality industry.

The recognition highlighted the universities’ efforts to expand hospitality education, strengthen industry partnerships and support Arizona’s growing hospitality workforce needs through innovative academic programs and career pathways. The honor also reflects the goals of the board’s AZ Opportunity initiative, which focuses on increasing access to higher education and preparing students for high-demand industries that drive Arizona’s economy.

Arizona Promise Program earns National Impact Award

The Arizona Promise Program, a statewide financial aid initiative administered by the Arizona Board of Regents, received the National Impact Award from College Promise during its 10th Anniversary Symposium and Careers Institute convening in San Antonio. The award recognizes the program’s success in expanding college access and affordability for Arizona students.

The Arizona Promise Program guarantees that eligible Arizona residents attending ASU, NAU and the U of A have tuition and fees fully covered after all other financial aid is applied. The program was recognized for its statewide impact in supporting student success and degree attainment while helping thousands of students pursue higher education.

State support for the initiative also continued to grow in 2025, including a \$54 million investment for the Arizona Promise Program and an additional \$3 million to launch the Arizona Community College Promise Program. ●



Rankings

ASU

No. 1 in the U.S.
FOR INNOVATION FOR THE 11TH YEAR IN A ROW

No. 1 in the U.S., top 10 worldwide
FOR GLOBAL IMPACT IN RESEARCH, OUTREACH AND STEWARDSHIP

No. 2 in the U.S.
FOR EMPLOYABILITY AMONG PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES



NAU

Top 15 in the U.S.
FOR ECOLOGY

Among the best in the U.S.
FOR OCCUPATIONAL AND PHYSICAL THERAPY GRADUATE PROGRAMS

A top university in the U.S.
FOR GAME DESIGN BACHELOR’S PROGRAM



U of A

No. 1 among U.S. public universities
IN SPACE SCIENCES

No. 1 in the world
FOR ENTOMOLOGY

No. 3 in the U.S.
FOR ONLINE MASTER’S PROGRAM IN CYBERSECURITY





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