


ASU's "enterprise" model to drive Arizona's new economy

 Victoria Harker November 17, 2020 7 min read Add comment

From open spaces to open minds, Arizona has the "highest potential" of any state in the nation to successfully move into the new economy, said Arizona State University (ASU) president and innovation trailblazer Michael Crow. The university's "enterprise" model will help lead the way.

"The potential index for Arizona is off the charts. Off the charts. You can still build here and build well. You can design communities here. You can do new things here, and ASU is really representative of that," said Crow, who spoke last week at a virtual breakfast meeting of the nonprofit [Valley Partnership](#), the voice of the real estate in the Phoenix metro region. "We have all the pieces. We have all the components. We still have small government. We still have a willingness to accept new ideas."

About
150 real
estate



Michael Crow

professionals and business and community leaders attended the event to hear Crow speak. He talked about what is needed to take Arizona's economy to the next level, ASU's response to COVID-19, and the school's transformation into a leading global institution that has amassed vast real estate holdings and leases to attract tenants, corporate partners and startups.

Today, the university relies little on public funding, bringing in hundreds of millions of dollars each year from corporations, donors and organizations, and tuition from students worldwide.

ASU now exceeds top research institutions

Since becoming president in 2002, Crow's vision and hard driving personality have positioned ASU as one of the top research universities in the country.

The university has been named the most innovative university in America by U.S. News and World Report every year since the category was created six years ago.

ASU now rivals and exceeds institutions like Cambridge, MIT, Oxford, Stanford, UCLA and USC for research in both medical and non-medical innovation, Crow said.

COVID-19 leader in testing, research

ASU took a leading role when news surfaced in December that a new virus had surfaced in China.

Since then, more than 200 COVID-19-related research groups have been created at ASU. Among its successes is one of the fastest saliva-based PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests for COVID.

In April, an ASU research team expects to complete a new microchip fluidity device that will allow anyone to spit into a microchip containing an internal “laboratory” that can produce a quick result and send an alert to an individual’s phone.

As the world rushes to create a vaccine for the coronavirus, ASU will continue to develop new tools to protect lives in the coming years and build profit-making enterprises around it, he said.

Building recovery in fiercely competitive world

Moving forward, Arizona’s number one challenge will be how to build an economy that grows faster than population growth. With per capita growth on the decline in recent years, this will be critical to its global standing, Crow said.

“Arizona’s new economy is going to require us to leapfrog into an understanding that the world has become ever more competitive,” he said. “In Singapore, in Korea, in Europe, in Indonesia, in China and other places, are rising competitors, and significant competitors, on every possible level.”

If Arizona and the nation do not stay in front of the pack, they will be overwhelmed by the scale of all the other competitors, he said.

“So the only way to be successful is to always be in the lead, to always be in front, to always be the most innovative, always to be the most creative.”

Knowledge-driven enterprises will lead the way

Knowledge-driven enterprises with more technological underpinnings are necessary to push the economy higher here, Crow said.

Towards that end, ASU has been undergoing massive [expansion](#) of its research, teaching and real estate operations to advance industry and high paying jobs, create tens of thousands of jobs over the next two decades, and to attract new students from around the globe.

Expansion of 10 innovation corridors in Phoenix metro

Among its many projects, the university is expanding its global presence including building a new headquarters in Los Angeles and satellite campuses across the world to attract new investment and students.

In Arizona, the university is building and expanding a host of facilities and projects including in its 10 “innovation corridors” including:

Health Futures Center ASU and Mayo Clinic are building a 150,000-square-foot building next to Mayo Clinic in North Phoenix that will feature a MedTech Accelerator, biomedical engineering and informatics research labs, nursing programs and an innovative education zone. Through the project, Phoenix expects to see \$3.5 billion in capital investment over the next two years, an additional 4.4 million square feet of advanced facilities, creating more than 7,000 jobs.

Entrepreneurship Residence Center This will be the first new residential space on the ASU Downtown Phoenix campus since 2008. It will house more than 1,200 students including 500 student entrepreneurs who will be launching their own companies. It is set to open next year.

Mesa City Center Also under construction, this state-of-the-art project will jump-start the revitalization of downtown Mesa and train students in one of the biggest industries in the U.S.: media production. Set to open in spring 2022, it will offer programs in the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts in digital and sensory technology, experiential design, gaming, media arts, film production, and entrepreneurial development and support.

Polytechnic Research Park This facility near Phoenix-Gateway Airport and ASU's Polytechnic campus in Mesa will specialize in hands-on exploration of solutions in aviation, alternate energy, human-technology integration, comprehensive commercial printing and design services, and on-demand digital manufacturing.

Phoenix Biomedical Campus A new biomedical campus is underway that is part of a development in downtown Phoenix that is owned by a public-private partnership that includes Phoenix, ASU, Wexford and Ventas. The Wexford Innovation Center is part of the \$1.5 billion research and innovation pipeline with Ventas. Ventas is investing \$800 million in four university-related developments totaling more than 1.3 million square feet. Upon completion, the campus will include seven buildings totaling more than 6 million square feet of research, academic and clinical facilities.

Novus Innovation Corridor This public/private partnership between the ASU and Catellus Development Corporation is under construction adjacent to the Tempe campus and has been dubbed the nation's "most progressive," urban, mixed-use developments for introducing leading-edge technologies into an urban landscape. Built in phases, it will house more than 11 million square feet of offices, residences, hotels, retail stores and restaurants throughout 355 acres.

A successful diverse student population is a must

In addition to research, ASU has not forgotten its mission as a public teaching institution, Crow said. Data backs that up.

For example, the engineering class went from 6,000 students with low retention rates their freshman year to 25,000 engineering students with a 90 percent retention rate today. This year, ASU is graduating four times more students than it did in 2002.

While geniuses are essential to any research university, ASU is focused on reaching down into high schools to make sure not only A and B students make it to college but lower performers as well. Recruiting in-state students, particularly Latinos, has been a major effort that has paid off.

"For the first time in the history of the institution, the student body is completely representative of the population of the state, economically and ethnically," Crow said.

Continuing that trend will be key to raising per capita income and building the economy, he said.

"We don't want to build an economy that's growing at 1 percent or 2 percent or 3 percent a year. We want an economy that's growing at 4, 5 and 6 percent every year."