Highlights from another year of innovative breakthroughs

Year in review

2020

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Arizona State University
Year in review
By the numbers

Economic impact

$886.5M
in research-based economic impact on Arizona economy

$292.6M
2-year economic impact on Arizona from ASU startups and affiliated businesses in 2019 and 2020

$17.2B
Annual earnings by Sun Devil alumni working in Arizona

Top 10 in the U.S. for patents: ASU with Stanford, MIT and Harvard

150+ startups
One of the top-performing U.S. universities for inventions and licensing deals, ASU has been the launching pad for 150+ startups

With an estimated $660M total research expenditures in FY20, ASU is one of the fastest-growing research enterprises in the U.S.

— U.S. NATIONAL ACADEMY OF INVENTORS AND THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION

— SKYSONG INNOVATIONS

— L. WILLIAM SEIDMAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

— ASU KNOWLEDGE ENTERPRISE
Best in field

- Sun Devil Triathlon won its fourth straight national title. Kyla Roy won the individual national title.
- Wrestling, coached by alumnus Zeke Jones, won its 19th Pac-12 title.
- Baseball’s Spencer Torkelson became the No. 1 pick in the Major League Baseball Draft as ASU had five selections, the most of any program.
- Brandon Aiyuk became the second straight NFL first-round pick, going to the San Francisco 49ers.
- Seven Sun Devils won Pac-12 individual titles: Brandon Courtney (wrestling), Tanner Hall (wrestling), Emma Nordin (women’s swimming), Kordell Norfleet (wrestling), Zach Poti (men’s swimming), Jacori Teemer (wrestling) and Anthony Valencia (wrestling).
- Samantha Noennig and Jackson Lewis make the Academic All-America® Division I track and field/cross country teams.
- Brinson Pasichnuk the first player to sign an NHL free agent contract.

Academics

#1 most innovative in the U.S. for six consecutive years, ahead of MIT and Stanford
— U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, SIX YEARS, 2016-2021

30 programs in top 10 in the U.S.
along with 79 ASU degree programs in the top 25
— U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, 2021

Degrees awarded

ASU annually graduates thousands of innovators who excel in engineering, business, education, the arts and other fields. In 2019-20, ASU awarded degrees to 20,308 undergraduate and 9,081 graduate students.
— ASU OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS, UARIZONA UNIVERSITY ANALYTICS AND INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH, NAU INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Top producer of elite scholars for 10 consecutive years

For the past 10 years, ASU has been a top-producing university for elite scholars, including 262 Gilman Scholars, 192 Fulbright Scholars, 21 Goldwater Scholars, 14 Udall Scholars, 10 Gates Cambridge Scholars, 4 Marshall Scholars, 4 Truman Scholars, 2 Rhodes Scholars and 1 Churchill Scholar.
— FRANK OFFICE OF NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS ADVISEMENT, 2020

Philanthropy

$290 million raised by the ASU Foundation in FY20 for students, faculty, research and community programs

90,357 unique donors to ASU in FY20
7,900+ ASU students received scholarships funded by donors last school year
January

A chatbot named Sunny is always there for students
With ASU ranked a top 10 university in the U.S. for first-year experience, we have the interactive chatbot Sunny to be thankful for, in addition to the many programs welcoming new Sun Devils to campus. Sunny is there 24/7 to answer students’ questions about ASU, and when the bot is stumped by a question, a human is always available to respond to campus-related queries.

February

ASU Innovation Open winners tackle large-scale industrial problems
Teams of entrepreneurs in the ASU Innovation Open win a total of $300,000 in funding, the most ever. The entrepreneurship event drew more than 100 applications from student-led companies. Finalists, including three from ASU, represented 22 universities.

January

ASU at Mesa City Center breaks ground
ASU at Mesa City Center is a state-of-the-art project designed to jump-start the revitalization of downtown Mesa and train students in one of the biggest industries in the U.S.: media production. The three-story academic building, scheduled to open in spring 2022, 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.

March

Sharing resources so learning continues at home
A vast collection of online resources is made available on a single platform called ASU for You, as people stay at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. It offers a wide array of content, much of it at no cost, for all learners — from elementary school students to adults — as well as resources for teachers and parents.

ASU brings new residence hall to downtown Phoenix
A 16-floor, 283,000-square-foot downtown Phoenix residence hall with a focus on entrepreneurship and the arts is scheduled to open in fall 2021 at the southwest corner of Fillmore Street and First Avenue.
April

ASU, Crash Course partner for series of educational YouTube videos
ASU expands access to its academic content to a vast new audience through a new partnership with Crash Course, a YouTube channel of educational videos with 10 million subscribers.

ASU ranks as top in the U.S. and fifth in the world out of 766 institutions, achieving 96.3 out of 100 points toward the U.N. sustainability goals.

ASU receives $2M to boost coronavirus rapid research response
Emergency grants from the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust vastly increase efforts underway to coordinate preparedness responses to the coronavirus pandemic.

May

ASU ramps up a massive initiative to design, produce and distribute critically needed personal protective equipment and other medical supplies, launching the PPE Response Network. It links ASU and community resources to help health care providers and patients.

“We realized as a university, we were uniquely capable of setting up this sort of [COVID testing] operation, because we had the skill sets, we had the technology … We know how to do this, let’s do it.”
— JOSHUA LABAER, BIODESIGN INSTITUTE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ON WHY ASU IS THE OPTIMAL TESTING SITE FOR COVID-19

ASU’s Biodesign Institute develops state’s first saliva-based COVID-19 test
To make COVID-19 diagnostic testing easier and more readily available, ASU researchers develop the state’s first saliva-based test, providing rapid results in 48 hours or less. The tests detect an active COVID-19 infection by measuring the amount of virus present in the body. The tests diagnose an active COVID-19 infection by detecting genetic material from the virus. This kind of test, known as a PCR test, is the most accurate type currently available.

ASU scientific team finds new, unique mutation in coronavirus study
As the coronavirus pandemic sweeps across the U.S., ASU School of Life Sciences Assistant Professor Efrem Lim leads a team that looks at how the virus may be spreading, mutating and adapting over time. Lim’s team uses a new technology at ASU’s Genomics Facility to rapidly read through the SARS-CoV-2 genetic code.

Zoom partners with ASU on new research center
Zoom Video Communications Inc. announces the opening of a new research and development center near ASU. The company plans to hire software engineers over the next five years, drawing largely on ASU’s engineering talent pipeline. “With 4,500 engineering graduates per year and a nationally competitive faculty ... we are making great strides in creating a top-tier, concentrated environment of technology and talent in greater Phoenix to support the workforce and research and development needs of companies like Zoom,” says ASU President Michael M. Crow.
ASU Gammage launches digital series
The Digital Connections programs include live performances, master classes by renowned artists, demos and other experiences online.

Led by composer Daniel Bernard Roumain, The DBR Lab artists create music, spoken word, movement and film, now adapted into livestream and recorded presentations.

An uncommon commencement
ASU celebrates virtual commencement with nearly 16,400 graduates — projected to be the largest class yet — including approximately 4,200 ASU Online students. Nearly 6,600 graduate with honors, the most ever for an individual class.

New Mars rover is carrying an ASU camera system
The ASU-led mast-mounted camera system for NASA’s Mars 2020 rover mission, Mastcam-Z, achieves a major milestone when the cameras are officially installed on the rover’s mast. Mastcam-Z is a dual camera system that can zoom in (hence the “Z”), focus and take 3D pictures and panoramas at a variety of scales.

July

Partnership to increase COVID-19 diagnostic testing in Arizona
The Arizona Department of Health Services and ASU create a new partnership to expand COVID-19 diagnostic testing in Arizona. ASU sets forth plans to launch several testing sites to provide free saliva testing in high-need, underserved communities around the state. Through this partnership, ADHS has committed up to $12.7 million to fund the expansion of testing sites to serve up to 100,000 Arizonans.

August

Launch of virtual institute to prepare teachers for online instruction
The new $7.5 million partnership among the governor’s office, the Arizona Department of Education and Helios Education Foundation, ASU Prep Digital’s Arizona Virtual Teacher Institute supports the state’s K-12 teachers delivering instruction in online and blended learning environments.
September

Infosys, ASU partnership will accelerate workforce development in Arizona

Infosys, a consulting company that creates digital platforms, opens its new Technology and Innovation Center in the SkySong ASU Scottsdale Innovation Center, creating its sixth U.S. hub and accelerating workforce development in Arizona as it is on track to create 1,000 jobs.

ASU is named the most innovative university in the nation for the sixth year in a row, and one of the top 50 public schools in the country by U.S. News & World Report.

October

Dreamscape Learn delivers fully immersive, avatar-driven virtual reality systems to the ASU community and beyond.

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“In focusing on the immediate issues and opportunities for Black faculty, staff and students, ASU earnestly accepts the inclusive institutional responsibilities laid bare in the ASU charter.”

— MICHAEL M. CROW, PRESIDENT OF ASU, WHO PRESENTED A LIST OF 25 ACTIONS TO SUPPORT BLACK STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF

October

Sprint and ASU will combine innovation with 5G and Curiosity IoT in collaboration to reach millions of Arizona residents and students, driving economic, educational, technological and social growth for the entire region. The partnership will help create a Sprint 5G incubator at ASU’s Novus Innovation Corridor and engage in joint research and development. Sprint is a founding partner of the Greater Phoenix Smart Region Consortium, leveraging advanced connectivity that will reach 22 cities in Arizona.

November

NASA selects ASU teams for astrobiology research

NASA selects eight new interdisciplinary research teams to inaugurate its Interdisciplinary Consortia for Astrobiology Research program working across astrobiology research, cosmic origins and planetary system formation to the origins and evolution of life and the search for life beyond Earth.

Sun Devil 100 Class of 2020 has combined revenues of $6.1 billion. The 127 Sun Devil alumni honored have earned 155 degrees, across every college, and they employ more than 10,200 people in 10 states.

December

ASU awarded $12.5M to better understand COVID-19 immune response and improve patient outcomes

With funding from the National Cancer Institute, ASU will join the NCI Serological Sciences Network, the nation’s largest coordinated effort to study people’s immune response to COVID-19. The goal is to develop high-performance serological tests to determine previous exposure to SARS-CoV-2.
INNOVATION LEADER
ASU is a top knowledge engine with a rich diversity of highly ranked programs led by the world's top minds, producing research that solves pressing global and local issues through powerful partnerships. And for the sixth consecutive year, U.S. News & World Report ranks ASU as the No. 1 school for innovation, ahead of MIT and Stanford.

On the cover: Leo Villareal, "Point Cloud (ASU)," 2020, 12' 10" x 3' 3" x 1' 1", LEDs, custom software, electrical hardware, steel, Nov. 2020, joint collaboration between ASU Art Museum and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.