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University improves student experience

Over the last year Arizona State University has made many advances in helping students get the most out of their educational investment.

The university's ongoing improvements aim for a positive student experience and ensure that not only will today's ASU student be more versatile than ever, but that he or she will graduate from a top-ranked school with a valuable degree.

In the 2006-2007 school year, ASU awarded 13,629 degrees and welcomed its largest, most diverse freshman class, which included 148 National Merit Scholars and 111 National Hispanic Scholars, an increase of 164 percent since 2002. ASU boasted a record 17 Fulbright Scholars, making ASU history with the largest number of national study abroad scholars ever and placing ASU fourth among top public U.S. universities for the award.

As a result, U.S. News & World Report 2008 edition of America's Best Colleges placed ASU in the top tier of its national college rankings.

In order to accommodate ASU's growing enrollment, financial aid spending increased by more than \$100 million from last year with programs such as ASU Advantage and Sun Devil Promise that have evolved over the past year. Total university financial aid was estimated at \$486 million.

ASU launched 21 new degree programs and redesigned several major schools and colleges, as well as expanded course offerings campuswide.

To help students navigate the growing number of opportunities available at ASU, the university implemented programs such as eAdvisor, an online tool that guides students in finding a major, and the Kuder Career Planning System, which provides students with information about possible academic major and career choices.

The university's emphasis on interdisciplinary education paved the way for a growing number of

courses, degrees and certificates that fused academic disciplines in an effort to broaden students' core area of study. To support this initiative, departments earned new names, broke down old boundaries and offered degrees that merged disciplines such as engineering with business and medicine with law. The university increased its opportunities for honors students as well with the construction launch of the nation's first honors campus at a public university.

Facilities and services were enhanced across all campuses. Wireless computing got a boost with expanded access on intercampus shuttles that also were newly equipped with GPS tracking systems, making it easier for students to plan their daily transportation. The ASU 1:1 laptop program flourished and led to the development of Technology Studio, a technical repair service that provides laptop users with a convenient drop-in support service free of charge. The ASU Web site got a face-lift, and interactive services were upgraded for students to better employ when registering for classes and managing their online student accounts. The Emergency Text Messaging service was also implemented to keep students informed in the occurrence of a crisis.

Sustainability-driven initiatives picked up great momentum as ASU established itself as a university leader in sustainability and offered its students an array of organizations, initiatives, programs and classes to take part in that focus on sustainable practices. Under ASU President Michael Crow's leadership, the nation's first School of Sustainability continued to develop, and ASU became part of the revolutionary American College and University President's Climate Commitment, which promises to lead the effort against climate change.

Urban campus living developed at the Downtown Phoenix campus with the construction of new student housing in Taylor Place, two-tower, 13-story buildings equipped with a 10,000-square-foot first-floor area for retail outlets that will be open to the public as well as students.

Tower One will open in August of this year while the second tower is slated to open in 2009. The Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication will open during the summer to welcome students, faculty and staff to its new downtown location. The six-story building houses Eight/KAET-TV, Arizona's PBS affiliate, as well as newsrooms, computer labs and television studios.

The Downtown Phoenix campus launched several new degree programs and redesigned one of its core colleges and gave it a new name, the School of Letters and Sciences. The ASU Center for Nonprofit Leadership and Management, in the College of Public Programs, became the recipient of numerous grants to advance nonprofit research, and Downtown Phoenix welcomed the historic partnership of two longtime rivals with the opening of The University of Arizona College of Medicine in partnership with Arizona State University. The medical college boasts an innovative curriculum that will help meet the future medical needs of Arizona. The campus also saw the arrival of the Arizona Biomedical Collaborative 1 that is combining biomedical informatics with basic medical science research.

The Polytechnic campus saw the continued construction of new buildings, academic name changes, establishment of a collaborative innovation center, approval by the FAA on an air traffic controller program and enrollment growth of 40 percent in courses and programs.

The Department of Aeronautical Management and Technology helped launch the ASU/Mesa Airlines Hangar, a 21,000-square-foot facility used for pilot preparation and aircraft maintenance by students in the Airline Bridge Training Program. The one-of-a-kind pilot training arrangement with Mesa Pilot Development provides qualified students an interview with Mesa Airlines upon graduation. With the introduction of a new alternative energy technologies program and access to one of three Photovoltaic Testing Laboratories in the world, the College of Technology and Innovation continued the development of alternative energy sources and future experts.

The Tempe campus redesigned a core college with a new name, the School of International Letters and Cultures, and launched the School of Earth and Space Exploration, in addition to several new research centers. The nation's first campus for honors students at a public university began taking shape last fall. The community will house 1,700 students on the 8.25 acre campus and is modeled after residential colleges at Oxford, Harvard and Yale. It will offer amenities such as a fitness center, computer lab, amphitheater, outside activity courts, dining center and of course, classrooms.

ASU's West campus developed and expanded degree programs in addition to its new School of Criminology and Criminal Justice that began providing criminology classes to students on the Tempe and Downtown Phoenix campuses. The award-winning College of Teacher Education and Leadership thrived with various community partners including Teach For America that sent students to schools throughout the Valley helping them to prepare for careers in education. West's blooming student body and developed campus culture drove the launches of campus initiatives, such as the Office of Student Engagement, which provides students with activities, events, clubs and support organizations.

The university's goal to help students feel at home and get the classes they need to graduate drive the ongoing advancements at ASU.

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