

September 7, 2022
volume 23 | issue 1

state press magazine



The Crow Issue



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Editor's letter

There's one enigmatic individual who feels synonymous with the vastness and complexity of ASU. Throughout President Michael Crow's 20-year tenure, the University has changed drastically and rapidly. Its reputation has mutated from a notoriously raucous party school to that of an esteemed research institution. Its scattered campuses and the private development surrounding them have contributed to gentrification. University revenue streams have been reimagined, prompting debates on taxation, legality and ethics. Crow's own relationships with the Arizona Board of Regents and state and local political players have ebbed and flowed. In this issue of State Press Magazine, we look back on and untangle Crow's legacy, two decades on from his arrival at ASU.

I'd like to extend special thanks to Ellie Borst, Nick Devor, Rubyanne Moley, Itzia Crespo, Jeffrey Horst, Zach Van Arsdale, Piper Hansen and Andrew Onodera for their help with this project.

Contents

- 04 The New American President
- 08 Real estate is king
- 15 Here first
- 23 No. 1 in innovation
- 27 Letter from the President

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Report

THE NEW AMERICAN PRESIDENT

Current and former Arizona politicians discuss Crow's rise in
Arizona politics over 20 years

by Reagan Priest

When Michael Crow became the 16th president of ASU in 2002, Neil Giuliano, former mayor of Tempe from 1994 to 2004, saw the immense impact Crow could have not only on the University, but on Tempe and Arizona as a whole.

Giuliano worked with Crow before he came to Arizona, while the soon-to-be ASU president was still working at Columbia University. Giuliano worked as the director of federal and community relations at ASU before and during his tenure as mayor, and said he collaborated with Crow and his colleagues at Columbia.

“The best way to look at [Crow's tenure] is the comprehensive advancement of the institution in serving the community,” Giuliano said. “I think it has exceeded nearly everyone's expectations. Probably not President Crow's, because he has very high expectations, but probably everyone else's.”



In the 20 years since, other local and state leaders have, sometimes begrudgingly, seen the impact Crow has had on ASU and the communities it inhabits. He has integrated himself into nearly every facet of Arizona politics, cultivating relationships with most political entities in the state, from the city of Tempe and the Arizona Board of Regents, to the state Legislature and the governor's office.

"He was seen as radical because higher ed hadn't changed before," said Mary Venezia, a student regent from NAU on ABOR during Crow's early years at the University. "Now I think when we look back at those ideas that he had, he was really thinking way ahead of everyone else in the higher ed industry."

FROM FLIP FLOPS TO FIVE CAMPUSES

Early on, Crow formed an alliance with then-gubernatorial candidate Janet Napolitano to enact one of his many changes at ASU. She said the two met while she was distributing campaign flyers outside an AJ's Fine Foods in Scottsdale. Crow approached the store in flip flops and shorts, she said. He and his wife were stocking up on groceries after just moving to Arizona and happened to run into Napolitano.

Shortly after, while still campaigning, Napolitano pledged to support Crow in his search for alternative funding methods for the University as the state suffered cuts to education funding.

"It was always a challenge at the Legislature particularly to get adequate funding for the state universities," she said. "So we've worked together quite a bit on that. And then he reached out to city leaders and really, by working with the municipalities, got help that the state Legislature wouldn't provide."

Giuliano said lawmakers really began to see Crow's drive in 2004, when Crow approached him and other local and state leaders

about holding the third presidential debate between then-incumbent President George W. Bush and then-Sen. John Kerry on the Tempe campus. It was an ambitious undertaking for a University president so new to the state and its political inner workings, Giuliano said.

On October 13, 2004, Crow and representatives of the Commission on Presidential Debates gave the opening remarks of the debate at Gammage Auditorium. According to State Press coverage at the time, 3,000 tickets were given out for the debate at Gammage, 300 of which went to students. 10,000 tickets were given to students for a viewing party at Wells Fargo Arena — now known as Desert Financial Arena — and other students participated in protests or rallies around campus.

By taking on the challenge of hosting a high-profile presidential debate, Crow let local and state lawmakers know he had large ambitions for the future of ASU, Giuliano said. So, when the University began expanding further into Tempe and other parts of the state in the years following, Giuliano wasn't surprised.

ASU's Downtown Phoenix campus broadened the University's reach in 2006, followed by SkySong the ASU Scottsdale Innovation Center in 2008. By 2014, the University had opened ASU Colleges at Lake Havasu City. The expansion continued with ASU breaking ground on ASU at Mesa City Center in 2020.

The University even expanded outside of Arizona in 2013 and 2018,

by opening facilities in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., respectively. Although ASU had a presence in Washington since the early 2010s, it didn't establish a D.C. headquarters until 2018.

"Most of us knew that the full aspiration of the University's potential was not to be confined by the borders of the city of Tempe," Giuliano said. "There's a larger constituency, there's a larger need in other parts of this region, for the University to serve the community, and to help educate the future of Arizona."

FACE OFF

Amid the early expansion of the University, Venezia was beginning her work as a student regent on ABOR. ABOR is the governing body that oversees Arizona's three public universities. The board is made up of eight regents and two student regents — all of whom are appointed by the governor — and the current governor and superintendent of public instruction as two ex-officio members.

Working as a student regent demanded some butting of heads with Crow and the other university presidents, Venezia recalled. In 2008, she was working with the Arizona Students' Association on a proposed tuition freeze that would offer fixed tuition to students at all state universities for four years, a proposal championed by Napolitano.

Crow has long been an opponent of tuition freezes. At a student forum in fall 2021, Crow said the University had only raised tuition about 2% over the last 10 years, making it cheaper than other Ar-

izona universities like UA, which has a Guaranteed Tuition Program that freezes tuition for eight consecutive semesters.

Ultimately, the 2008 tuition freeze didn't come to pass. But Venezia helped find a compromise by negotiating with the university presidents to keep tuition as low as possible.

Even though the tuition freeze initiative failed, Venezia said she gained a lot of respect for and insight from Crow while working at ABOR — inspiring her to continue working within higher education.

"A lot of the ideas that he brought to the board, and what ASU was doing, were seen as very different. Higher education in general hasn't changed in forever," Venezia said. "Michael Crow came in and was like, 'Hey, let's change this up. If there's ways that we can be more efficient, we can support students better.'"

In the years since, Crow has gone toe-to-toe with regents on other issues. At a budget meeting in June 2021, Crow reminded the board of ASU's independence from ABOR and state funding.

"We do serve the public and are governed by this board, but we operate in a modality where we seek partnerships, we seek revenue and mechanisms to generate revenue," Crow said at the time.

Other public officials took issue with Crow and his out-of-the-box ideas, according to former regent Mark Killian, who served on the board from 2010 to 2015.

“Some people at the Legislature, sometimes the governors, get their nose out of joint because a university president is strident in their advocacy to protect universities and what they do,” Killian said.

In February 2022, Crow took a jab at state legislators during his State of the University presentation to ABOR, saying the University “failed at convincing the state to make investments in the public universities, at least our public universities at the level that we think is merited.”

Napolitano was one lawmaker Crow was said to have a tense relationship with. Despite their early alliance, the two clashed in the later years of Napolitano’s tenure over issues like the proposed tuition freeze, with rumors that Napolitano threw Crow out of her office at one point.

“We both have strong personalities,” Napolitano said. “And yeah, occasionally we had differences of opinion, and we always worked through them.”

Napolitano and Killian agreed that Crow always did what he thought was best for the University, even if that meant duking it out with Arizona’s top political players and government officials.

“The legislative process is adversarial and you have people with strong views on either side,” Killian said. “So you can get caught up in those disagreements, but I think what Michael has done has been perfectly appropriate.”

Despite the sometimes contentious relationships, current ABOR Chair Lyndel Manson said the regents have great respect for Crow and

fully support his ambitions for the future of ASU. Manson said she admires Crow’s commitment to making higher education accessible, a goal outlined in ASU’s charter.

“He is very consistent with his message, he is very consistent with his efforts to increase attainment, to increase accessibility,” Manson said. “He walks the talk.”

Manson highlighted this and the University’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic as prime examples of Crow’s leadership. She called Crow’s lengthy tenure as ASU’s president “an incredible testament to his leadership” given that higher education leadership remain in their positions for less than a decade on average.

“And I certainly wouldn’t expect him to slow down,” Manson said. “I don’t think that’s in his personality.”

“Most of us knew that the full aspiration of the University’s potential was not to be confined by the borders of the city of Tempe” – Neil Giuliano



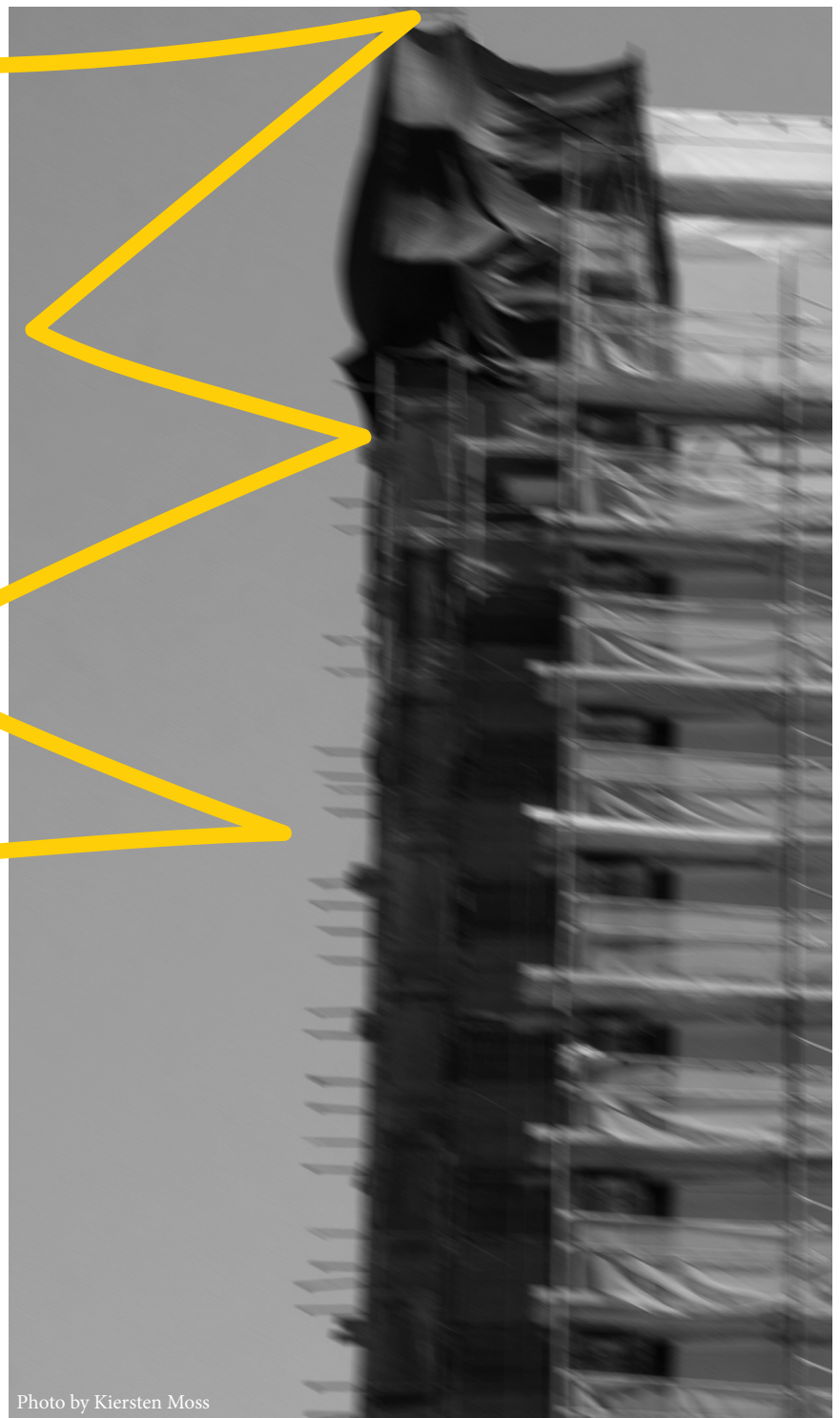
Report

‘REAL ESTATE IS KING’

The University’s use of tax-exempt land has given itself the ability to find new sources of revenue. The ethics of the practice, however, have come into question.

by Alexis Waiss and Jamie Montoya

Photo by Kiersten Moss



When President Michael Crow came to ASU, he had a new vision for higher education, with the lofty goals of transforming society, creating research with “purpose and impact,” and enabling student success. But his vision faced an immediate roadblock: money.

In the years since, ASU has generated revenue by leasing its tax-exempt land to private-sector companies, a practice pursued throughout Crow’s 20-year tenure in an attempt to make up for insufficient state funding. According to data collected by the Maricopa County Assessor’s Office, in 2002, over half of ASU’s parcels of



land sat vacant; today, that number is under 20%.

Some community members, however, have raised questions over how ethical these deals are. Some experts argue ASU is abusing its tax-exempt status for purposes it wasn't designated for.

Others say the matter is a "gray area." The state cut funding, so the University had to go looking for money using the tools it had available.

Morgan Olsen, ASU's chief financial officer, said the University's real estate expansion is meant to not only "diversify the revenue streams," but enrich the opportunities ASU can provide to students and faculty.

"We generate resources from how those lands are being used,"

Olsen said. "But it also is in a way that advances the University in terms of its mission and its charter and its programs."

The deals, especially in recent years, have been the root of controversy.

In 2019, Attorney General Mark Brnovich sued the Arizona Board of Regents, ASU's governing board, for the practice of leasing tax-exempt public land to private businesses in response to the University's deal to build an Omni Hotel in Tempe.

"ABOR's mission is to run our state public universities, not extend government tax-exempt status to private corporations," Brnovich told The State Press in 2019.

Earlier this year, the state Supreme Court ruled the case could be reheard in a lower court. Over the past year, students and Tempe residents have criticized the development of Mirabella at ASU, a retirement community built on campus near Mill Avenue, after some of its residents sued a local music venue over the loudness of its concerts.

As the University brings in large companies, the areas it inhabits become more desirable, leading to an increase in property taxes, experts said.

Theoretically, increased desirability would improve the economic prosperity of the whole community. In practice, companies that form academic-corporate partnerships with ASU get major tax breaks, forcing the rest of a city's taxpayers to pay more to make up the funding deficit, said Kevin McCarthy, president of the Arizona

Tax Research Association.

“There’s not a dime that goes to property taxes that goes to Tempe Union, Tempe Elementary School District,” he said. “It means all the other taxpayers have to make up the difference for the taxes that are not being paid.” Brnovich’s lawsuit against Omni echoed the same concern, stating that the deal ABOR inked with private firms to lease tax-exempt land “require other taxpayers to make up lost revenue.”

Under Article 9, Section 2 of the Arizona Constitution, the property of educational institutions can be exempt from taxation if it is not being used for profit. This includes all land owned by ABOR, McCarthy said. Most of ASU’s property is owned by ABOR.

Property taxes are collected from anyone who owns property within a county — including homeowners, businesses and more — based on a property value calculated by the county assessor’s office. About 20% of Maricopa County’s revenue for its public services came from property taxes, penalties and interest in fiscal year 2021.

State Press Magazine obtained copies of the December 2017 Mirabella lease and the March 2020 Omni Tempe Hotel lease.

Mirabella agreed to pay ABOR over \$7 million upfront to lease the land. Rent is variable from then on, calculated

twice per year based on the amount of property tax the company would pay if it was not exempt. For the first eight years of the lease, that number is multiplied by Mirabella’s occupancy rate for the preceding six months.

The Arizona Tax Research Association estimated that the property taxes for Mirabella would be about \$2.5 million.

The Omni Tempe Hotel agreed to pay ABOR over \$6 million upfront. It also agreed to pay ABOR an annual rent of about \$1 million a year, which the two entities say is a “payment in lieu of taxes,” according to the Brnovich lawsuit.

In the lease agreement with Omni, ABOR says it intends to maintain the land the hotel is on as tax-exempt. If the status is revoked, the amount of property taxes Omni must pay will be taken off of its monthly rent price.

11 “REAL ESTATE IS KING”

Considering the ripple effect property taxation creates for public services funding, McCarthy said ASU’s real estate “drew and continues to draw really unnecessary negative attention.

“[I] said, ‘You realize if it’s OK for you to do this, Dr. Crow, it’s OK for everybody to do it,’” McCarthy said. “If it is reasonable for you to take such advantage over your tax-exempt status, it only follows that it’s going to be good for all local governments to — using my word — abuse their tax-exempt status in that manner.”

Tom Rex, associate director of the Center for Competitiveness and Prosperity Research at ASU, said it’s not all black-and-white.

“If ASU wasn’t developing this land, no money would be going to other governments anyway, because that land would be sitting there vacant,” he said.

Rich Stanley, ASU’s senior vice president and University planner, said Crow took this as an opportunity.


“When we talk about real estate activity at the University since President Crow started, what we’re talking about is planning in order to take the best advantage of the land that was already in the portfolio,” he said.

NOT JUST GAS STATIONS

Outside of using city land to build the Downtown Phoenix campus, which opened in 2006, Crow aimed to use land that was already acquired by the University to foster campus expansion, said ASU spokesperson Jay Thorne.

University officials say these projects support ASU’s goals to facilitate economic growth and the dissemination of innovative ideas. SkySong, the ASU Scottsdale Innovation Center and research facilities like the Phoenix Bioscience Core, two other examples of ASU’s real estate deals, are hubs for large companies.

“We’re not just out there, you know, building gas stations on street comers.” – Morgan Olsen



“We’re not just out there, you know, building gas stations on street corners,” Olsen said.

In addition to the partnerships formed with the Omni Tempe Hotel and Mirabella, Olsen said ASU has used its real estate to build and maintain relationships with various large companies in spaces called innovation zones.

In these spaces, companies get access to a pool of young workers who can bring fresh ideas, said Ji Mi Choi, vice president of ASU Knowledge Enterprise. For some students, these ideas can become intellectual property and even start-up companies, Choi added.

In exchange, students can easily find job opportunities with “world class companies,” said Aric Bopp, executive director of economic development of ASU Knowledge Enterprise. At Scottsdale’s SkySong innovation center, some of these companies include Dell, Oracle, TicketMaster, Canon and more.

Bopp said these zones encourage overall economic growth for the state of Arizona. In 2021, SkySong estimated it would be able to funnel \$58.2 billion into Scottsdale’s economy over the next 30 years.

“There’s a physical investment in the building — where there’s construction jobs created, there’s construction sales tax created,” Bopp said. “But then more importantly, long term, there are the jobs that are going to be created within that building that probably would not have existed in Arizona if it weren’t for that type of development.”

While there may be financial benefits from ASU’s knowledge communities, Davarian L. Baldwin, a historian and professor at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, said these partnerships are ultimately the building blocks in Crow’s “real estate hustle.” Baldwin has investigated the impact of university development across the country for his book “In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower.”

“What [Crow] never talks about is how the cost doesn’t come from

nowhere, and the prosperity is not internally generated,” Baldwin said. “It’s coming from extracting wealth from the city of Tempe, Phoenix.”

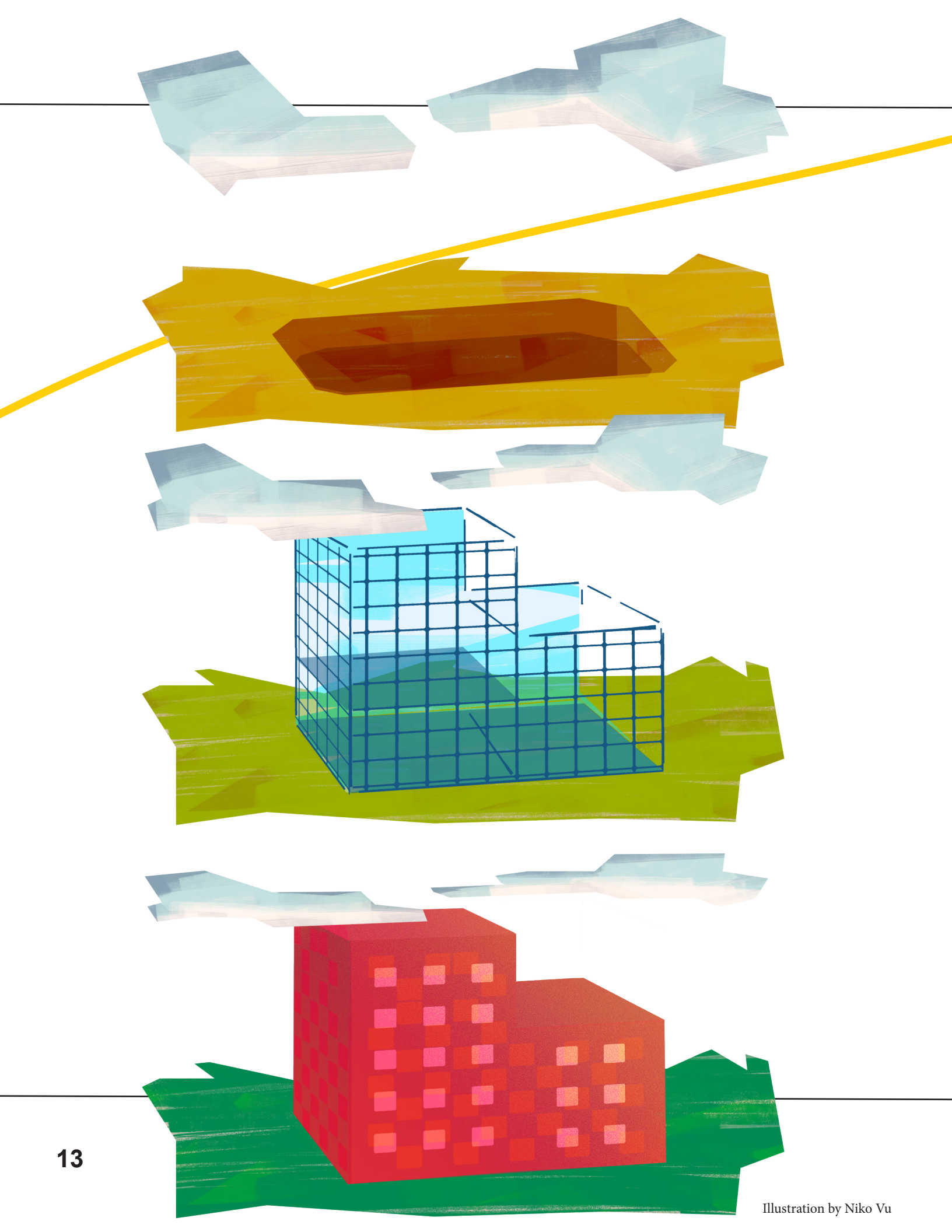
Rex sees it as a nuanced issue with arguments on both sides. But what he would rather address is the question of why ASU and Crow would turn to “gray area” deals in the first place.

‘DOING IT RIGHT’

President Crow told The State Press in February that ASU has been financing almost all of its own facilities because the University has little public financial support.

Olsen said this is because Arizona’s higher education funding was cut during the 2008 recession, and has not been able to reach pre-recession levels since.

ASU is “doing it right” by utilizing its real estate, Rex said. The property deals guarantee stable, long-term revenue for the University while contributing to city development. He thinks it is unlikely the state will increase its budget for



higher education.

Compared to the enterprises of private universities, Baldwin said Crow has a unique approach to real estate development.

“As a public university [ASU] relied more heavily on public money than these other schools, but it also took an entrepreneurial turn,” Baldwin said. “Then compound that by the fact that it was situated in a state where real estate is king.”

In March of last year, Maricopa County Assessor Ed-die Cook decided to require SkySong to pay property taxes to the city of Scottsdale for the first time in its 12-year history.

In lieu of a property tax, lessees pay additional rent to ASU, said Patrick Panetta, the director of project management for ASU’s real estate development office. This additional rent payment is calculated based on how the Maricopa County Assessor’s office would value the property taxes.

“They make a payment that would be equivalent to the property tax that they would make if they owned it themselves,” Panetta said. “So they don’t get out of paying a tax, it’s just not called a tax because it’s collected by the University.”

This system is detrimental to local government funding, especially toward K-12 education, since it relies on property taxes and voter support for overrides, McCarthy said. Overrides allow increases in property taxes that exceed the normal limits.

“The cost of the override is higher than it should be,” McCarthy said. “The more the taxpayers figure out the game that’s being played, that they’re paying taxes and other people aren’t, it undermines the legitimacy of the whole operation.”

“The more the taxpayers figure out the game that’s being played, that they’re paying taxes and other people aren’t, it undermines the legitimacy of the whole operation.” – McCarthy

Even with McCarthy’s K-12 argument, Rex argued that if ASU doesn’t make these deals with private companies, the companies may not have come to the area at all.

ASU has been a major factor in making these areas attractive for both businesses and residents, Rex said, which has also led to issues like rising rent costs. But the issue isn’t just on ASU, he said, as the entire Valley has seen home prices and rent costs shoot up in recent years.

“I mean look at what’s happening with real estate prices here in Phoenix — not just in the immediate area of the campuses — but all over, people are being priced out by these huge, huge increases in both rents and home prices for the purchase,” Rex said.

Thorne, the ASU spokesperson, said economic pressures and the Arizona Legislature have encouraged Crow to find an entrepreneurial approach to University funding.

The president has made strategic decisions in response to decisions of the state government and ABOR, he said, decisions that have directed ASU “to act more entrepreneurially, to look at

investments, to look at ways to run the University — my words not theirs — more like a business.”

Feature

HERE FIRST

Under Crow, ASU's Downtown Phoenix campus was built from scratch, credited with revitalizing the area. Critics say the project has contributed to gentrification, continuing a long history of displacement in the Valley.

by Alexis Moulton and
Jamie Montoya



Photo by Kiersten Moss

There was no ASU campus downtown when Eve Reyes-Aguirre bought her home in Phoenix's Garfield neighborhood 26 years ago.

She and her husband settled down to raise their four children within a couple of miles of where the new campus would emerge. Over the next 20 years they would witness a drastic transformation in the demographics, character and affordability of downtown Phoenix.

"I'm lucky enough to still live here," Reyes-Aguirre said. "But a lot of my neighbors aren't."

Reyes-Aguirre is an Indigenous rights activist who works with Tonatierra, a Cultural Embassy of Indigenous Peoples located a short walk from where the Downtown Phoenix campus now stands.

Throughout the 2000s and 2010s, she watched as many of her neighbors were forced to relocate due to rising property taxes, predatory real estate investors and fear of deportation. As they left, new neighbors were moving in, including ASU.

Michael Crow arrived in the Valley in 2002 as president of ASU. By 2003, he was making plans to build a campus in the city center. By 2006, the Downtown Phoenix campus was operational.

Tanya Chakravarty, executive director of the Downtown Phoenix Farmers Market, has lived in Phoenix for over 35 years. She said the perception and accessibility of downtown has changed drastically over the last 12 years.

In May, the Farmers Market had to relocate to the Phoenix Bioscience Core after its previous location of 17 years on Central Avenue and Pierce Street was sold to a developer with plans to build a 350-unit luxury apartment complex.

Chakravarty said finding a new location was made possible with support from ASU and the city of Phoenix. She also called the move a direct consequence of gentrification.

Researchers like Meagan Ehlenz, an associate professor of geographical sciences and planning at ASU, cast a critical eye on

how universities relate to the communities they're situated in. New urban campuses often encourage investment in historically neglected neighborhoods, but they also bring an influx of white-collar workers and higher rents.

"A lot of them do result in pretty dramatic changes," Ehlenz said. "... It's not just that the neighborhood improved, it's that it changed. You had turnover in who was there."

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates the neighborhoods nearest the Downtown Phoenix campus had substantial workforce growth between 2000 and 2020, but that growth was disproportionately in white-collar jobs.

The neighborhoods' populations have seen a marked increase in residents who work management, business, science and arts occupations, accompanied by slow growth or decline in occupations like construction, maintenance, transportation and service jobs.

By some, these demographic



Photo by Kiersten Moss



changers are hailed as economic progress. For others, they have devastated the affordability of their own neighborhoods. Rent and home values have increased disproportionately in the neighborhoods closest to the Downtown Phoenix campus over the past 20 years compared to the rest of the city.

In Tempe, gentrification proximate to ASU is old news. The State Press itself has issued the warning for years. Under Crow, ASU has rapidly extended its presence to downtown Phoenix as well.

“Certainly, ASU is not the only market force in downtown Phoenix,” Ehlenz said. “But it’s the big one.”

Reyes-Aguirre is optimistic about the future of the University’s relationship with the downtown Phoenix community. But she says it hinges on building a more holistic and inclusive understanding of who deserves a say in ASU’s development.

“Our families are a part of the ASU community as well,” she said.

BEFORE CROW

ASU’s expansion has always been a collaboration between municipal government and real estate developers, according to Anthony Pratcher, an honors faculty fellow at Barrett, The Honors College.

Pratcher grew up in Glendale. Today, he studies how urban policies influence community formation in Phoenix and other Southwest metropolitan areas.

According to Pratcher, for generations, white settlers in the Valley have employed a practice of “civic colonialism,” using policy tools such as segregation, municipal annexation, and eminent domain to dispossess pre-existing communities of their land and fuel rapid development. Eminent domain is a legal term for the government’s power to unilaterally

acquire property from private entities for public use, given the original owners are paid just compensation.

“The targets of that practice have generally been people who are marginalized within the Tempe community, either due to race or gender discrimination,” Pratcher said.

When the Arizona Territorial Normal School, which would eventually become ASU, was established in 1885, a family relinquished its entire property for its construction after pressure from Tempe city officials and the state Legislature.

In the 1950s, ASU and the city of Tempe displaced the residents of the historic San Pablo neighborhood using eminent domain. Where a longtime Mexican American community once lived now stands a series of dorms, commercial buildings and the Sun Devil Stadium, nestled against Tempe Town Lake.

From the 1950s onward, Tempe would undergo a series of semi-planned redevelopments — the process of gentrification repeated over and over again.

Tupac Enrique Acosta, an Indigenous human rights activist, co-founded Tonatierra, where Reyes-Aguirre now also works. He was invited to the Valley in 1980 to participate in a movement against forced displacement of residents of the historic Golden Gate Barrio. The Mexican American neighborhood was razed in the 1980s to make way for the Sky Harbor airport.

Like Pratcher, Acosta sees contemporary gentrification as a continuation of settler colonialism.

“This is a recurring pattern, from LA to San Antonio to El Paso to Phoenix,” Acosta said. “This isn’t just incidental, it’s systematic ... So where is that destruction today? Who is doing it? Is ASU doing it?”

THE NEW AMERICAN PROJECT

Crow first met with Phil Gordon in 2003, and Gordon took office as Phoenix mayor in January 2004. The pair agreed that downtown Phoenix would benefit from a university campus in its urban core.

In 2005, ASU entered an inter-governmental agreement with the city of Phoenix, in which the city agreed to acquire and develop the land for the campus. A committee of several hundred citizens, chaired by former mayor Paul Johnson, was tasked with developing a bond proposal.

The proposal passed in 2006, allocating an unprecedented \$184 million to ASU — just over 20% of the \$878.5 million bond.

Rick Naimark supervised the development of the Downtown Phoenix campus while serving as a deputy city manager. In 2015, he became an associate vice president of the University, where he said he continues to work on downtown development.

Naimark said the city and ASU originally collaborated with the goal of building a “knowledge economy” that would “move the city forward.” In the process, they would also turn downtown into a densely populated urban environment, “instead of a bunch of vacant lots or dilapidated one-story buildings,” he said.

A 2011 booklet titled “Downtown Phoenix Campus: The First 5 Years” described downtown Phoenix as “a wasteland,” and “somewhat hollow and desolate.” ASU was prophesied to “inject a much needed, livelier ambiance in the city’s moribund core.”

Davarian L. Baldwin, an urbanist and historian at Trinity College, got his first taste of the Downtown Phoenix campus in 2012. At the time, he was researching urban universities in cities like New York and Chicago. Crow’s downtown project quickly became an unexpected yet essential case study — his book “In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower” dedicates a chapter to ASU.

Baldwin sees the University’s narrative as manipulative and inaccurate. Despite vacant lots, there were people living downtown and in the surrounding neighborhoods before ASU planted its flag.

“When universities and their developer partners say there’s ‘nothing there,’ what they mean is the land has not been adequately monetized per square foot,” Baldwin said. “That it’s not being built up, it’s not being commercialized.”

Naimark asserts that “people were coming downtown, but they weren’t staying and weren’t living” before ASU’s campus helped to “revitalize” the area. He also acknowl-

edges that some Phoenicians were already there, such as the residents of the Roosevelt Row arts district.

Early in development, ASU hosted meetings with community leaders and stakeholders. Acosta said Crow once invited him to participate in an advisory committee on the development of the downtown campus.

“I was basically there as a figure-head,” Acosta said. “I didn’t have much input or presence. I got an invitation, I attended, I was there.”

The planners and advocates of the Downtown Phoenix campus continued to make promises about community-minded development. The 2011 “First 5 Years” booklet emphasized, in Crow’s words, the campus’ “social embeddedness.”

“What we needed to do is build a notion that the University is not a single place that you go, with walls around the building and ivy growing on the walls ...” Crow said in a 2018 interview with Arizona PBS. “We wanted to be where people worked, where people lived.”

IMPACT

In the past 20 years, increases in rents and home values in the ZIP codes nearest the Downtown Phoenix campus have outpaced the city of Phoenix as a whole, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

In ZIP code 85006 — which includes Garfield, the neighborhood where Reyes-Aguirre lives — the median value of owner-occupied homes increased about 190% from 2000 to 2020, from just under \$80,000 to over \$200,000.

ZIP code 85004, which contains the Downtown Phoenix campus, saw about a 195% increase in median gross rent between 2000 and 2020, from a median of \$427 to \$1,260 per month. By contrast, the city of Phoenix as a whole only saw about a 75% increase over the same timeframe, from \$622 to \$1,100 per month.

Naimark said none of ASU's construction eliminated affordable housing, and he credits the University with increasing the market value of surrounding properties.

"We're definitely guilty of making downtown a more desirable place to live, or being a contributor to that," Naimark said. "Desirability does tend to drive up prices."

This "desirability" effect is common with campus development, but may be preventable, according to Ehlenz. She recommends Universities proactively invest in housing and community infrastructure before development to avoid an affordability crisis like Phoenix has today.

"If you don't protect that affordability from the beginning, it's super hard to unwind the clock," Ehlenz said.

Reyes-Aguirre said Tonatierra has been repeatedly "threatened by eminent domain" in the past 25 years and now receives offers to purchase the property "almost on the daily."

In her view, the intensified real estate market has become completely inaccessible to working families. Today, her own daughter cannot afford to live in the same neighborhood she grew up in.

"All of us who lived here as young parents now have children who are parents trying to raise their children, and we recognize that they can't do that in the same place because of gentrification, inflation, all of those things," Reyes-Aguirre said.

The immediate impact of the campus affected more than just the housing market.

In 2012, the Downtown Phoenix campus began restricting access to the campus' buildings to only ASU students, faculty, and staff. State Press coverage at the time featured the former dean of the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication and one university administrator who said the policy was implemented in

response to parents' and students' negative perceptions of unhoused people.

According to Baldwin, these effects are the consequence of designing a campus with suburban students in mind, rather than Phoenix locals. He has documented similar tendencies at other campuses around the country.

Although recorded incidents of crime downtown were expected to be roughly equivalent to Tempe's at the time of the campus' opening, students and parents began to call for greater police presence in the campus' early years, claiming it lacked a "feeling of safety."


'CAPTIVE MARKET'

Chakravarty said ASU's presence in downtown Phoenix is colored by "a sense of transiency," with downtown undergraduates often only living in the area for four years.

"While ASU has leveraged their size, girth, muscle and their student body to help gentrify the space, it's not as stewards of the space," she said.

Students have quickly become a key demographic for housing developers downtown. They've also become a source of income for local businesses.

Andrew Meister co-founded Bud's



Glass Joint, a downtown Phoenix vape and smoke shop, in 2012. He said the campus was a major factor in deciding to open a business, and that student consumers have had a positive impact on the local economy across the board. Businesses downtown are still largely independent, he said.

Baldwin isn't so sure — he thinks students downtown have become a “captive market” of the University and its corporate partners. Citing the insular design of student housing, compulsory meal plans and Maroon and Gold dining dollars, he argues the University encourages students to only spend within the ASU ecosystem. In his analysis, this system is antithetical to Crow's ideal of “social embeddedness.”

Chakravarty said she has tried to make Maroon and Gold dollars available for use at the Farmers

21

Market to no avail. Meanwhile, students are locked into University meal plans which largely restrict their

options to Aramark-operated dining halls, chain restaurants and convenience stores.

The downtown Phoenix area was once classified as a “food desert.” That changed in 2019, when a Fry's grocery opened on First and Jefferson. ASU officials have since credited the campus with attracting the investment necessary to build the supermarket.

The Farmers Market has provided fresh, locally-sourced food to the area since 2005. In 2022, after the market was given 90 days to move, Chakravarty said Naimark himself helped find the new location. But she also noted that demand for luxury housing brought on by gentrification was the reason they had to move in the first place.

THE SUSTAINABILITY QUESTION

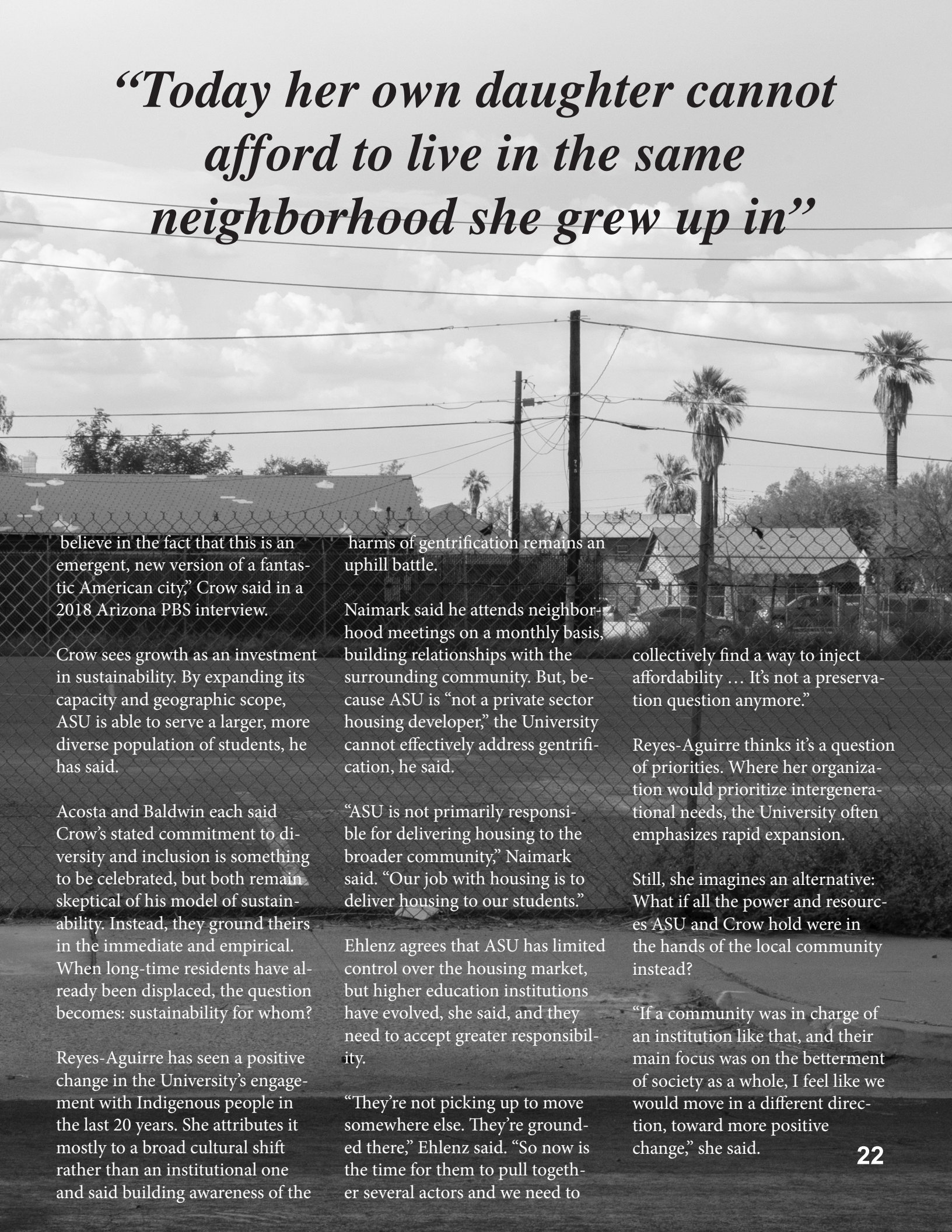
In 2018, the Arizona Republic declared ASU the “secret ingredient” to revitalization of downtown Phoenix. The campus has been

hailed as a success by ASU administrators and local government officials alike.

A written statement sent to State Press Magazine by ASU media relations said “the overwhelming majority of Phoenix residents would strongly agree that Downtown Phoenix and the surrounding neighborhoods have improved in marked and multifaceted ways since the establishment of the Downtown Phoenix Campus — and in great part as a result of the campus.”

A 2021 report from ASU's University Design Institute said downtown Phoenix attracted more than \$6.5 billion in public and private investment to the area between 2004 and 2021. The report also correlates the opening of over 100 new restaurants and bars between 2008 and 2020 to the campus' success.

“The biggest challenge is always getting the local community to



“Today her own daughter cannot afford to live in the same neighborhood she grew up in”

believe in the fact that this is an emergent, new version of a fantastic American city,” Crow said in a 2018 Arizona PBS interview.

Crow sees growth as an investment in sustainability. By expanding its capacity and geographic scope, ASU is able to serve a larger, more diverse population of students, he has said.

Acosta and Baldwin each said Crow’s stated commitment to diversity and inclusion is something to be celebrated, but both remain skeptical of his model of sustainability. Instead, they ground theirs in the immediate and empirical. When long-time residents have already been displaced, the question becomes: sustainability for whom?

Reyes-Aguirre has seen a positive change in the University’s engagement with Indigenous people in the last 20 years. She attributes it mostly to a broad cultural shift rather than an institutional one and said building awareness of the

harms of gentrification remains an uphill battle.

Naimark said he attends neighborhood meetings on a monthly basis, building relationships with the surrounding community. But, because ASU is “not a private sector housing developer,” the University cannot effectively address gentrification, he said.

“ASU is not primarily responsible for delivering housing to the broader community,” Naimark said. “Our job with housing is to deliver housing to our students.”

Ehlenz agrees that ASU has limited control over the housing market, but higher education institutions have evolved, she said, and they need to accept greater responsibility.

“They’re not picking up to move somewhere else. They’re grounded there,” Ehlenz said. “So now is the time for them to pull together several actors and we need to

collectively find a way to inject affordability ... It’s not a preservation question anymore.”

Reyes-Aguirre thinks it’s a question of priorities. Where her organization would prioritize intergenerational needs, the University often emphasizes rapid expansion.

Still, she imagines an alternative: What if all the power and resources ASU and Crow hold were in the hands of the local community instead?

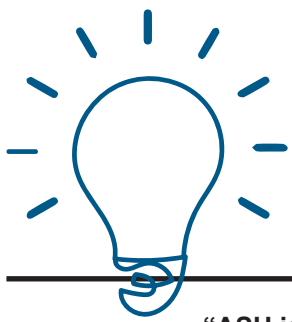
“If a community was in charge of an institution like that, and their main focus was on the betterment of society as a whole, I feel like we would move in a different direction, toward more positive change,” she said.

Report

No. 1 in innovation

The University prides itself on this top ranking, but
where does it come from?

by Camila Pedrosa



“ASU is ranked #1 in innovation ahead of MIT and Stanford for 7 consecutive years.”

We’ve all seen the phrase plastered on University buildings, buses and promotional materials. But ubiquity is all it has holding it up — the ranking is subjective, determined by the opinions of the upper echelons of university administrations.

ASU was long seen as a party school from the late 20th century into the 21st, but the University ultimately changed its image to that of a bastion of innovation in higher education. The shift of the public’s and academia’s opinion of ASU, experts on higher education say, was mostly driven by one man: ASU President Michael Crow.

“We had to rethink everything under President Crow,” said Frederick Corey, ASU’s former vice provost for undergraduate education from 2014-2021. “[He] had a vision that ASU could be something quite spectacular, that ASU could be an example of a new kind of American university.”

Crow’s vision of a spectacular university largely came to fruition — the school’s reputation and rankings have improved immensely during his 20 years in office, thanks in part to myriad innovative projects spearheaded by the University.

Yet some still question, after seven years of ASU as the reigning title-

innovative projects spearheaded by the University. Yet some still question, after seven years of ASU as the reigning titleholder, what the No. 1 in Innovation ranking means and the metrics by which it is measured.

THE INGLORIOUS DAYS

Crow did not have it easy at first, inheriting a University that was precariously balancing a new classification as a top research university with a decades-old reputation as a party school.

ASU’s party school reputation seemed to have hit its peak in 2002 — the year Crow became president — when *Playboy Magazine* named it the top party school in the nation. This was the first time since 1987 the magazine had ranked colleges on their party scenes, when the University placed third on the list.

According to State Press coverage from the time, when brand-new President Crow saw the ranking, he said he “thought it was a joke.”

Only months prior, in August 2002, Crow had to deal with the vice president of the Associated Students of ASU being featured in an on-campus porn video that was commercially distributed.

“ASU has fought for years to shed its party school image and make itself a Research-I institution,” read a 2002 State Press column about the situation. “Unfortunately, reputations take years to build and only minutes to tear down. In this case, it took exactly 109 minutes (including advertisements).”

According to a spring 2002 study by the American College Health Association, be-

tween 2000 and 2002, the behavior of ASU students while intoxicated became riskier, with 5% fewer students using a designated driver when going to bars and the amount of students having unprotected sex while drunk going up nine percentage points.

In comparison to the entire survey, ASU had lower rates of designated driver use and higher rates of intoxicated unprotected sex that year.

ASU party culture during the early-to-mid 2010s became ruthless, with some incidents proving to be sinister. Four fraternities were banned from the University in the 2013-14 school year for incidents that occurred at parties or for incidents related to excessive drinking or hazing.

This time period marked the end of ASU's reign as top party school. The school was ranked in *The Princeton Review* for the last time in 2011, at No. 17, and its final appearance in *Playboy* was in 2013, rolling in at No. 9.

All of this is not to say that Sun Devils don't let loose anymore. Niche ranked ASU No. 55 in party schools out of over 1,600 schools in 2022 — but the University probably won't be topping party school rankings again any time soon.

NEW AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

The apparent Crow-ification of ASU even predates the president's tenure. Corey said the University's shift in focus toward innovation began with former President Lattie Coor, who was replaced by Crow in 2002.

According to the University's biography of the former president, Coor elevated ASU's status to that of a respectable research institution, earning it a prestigious ranking as a Research-I University by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in early 1994.

Peter McPherson, the president of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, said ASU changed enormously, with "fantastic outcomes" under Crow.

McPherson, who was the president of Michigan State University during the transitory period between Coor and Crow, said ASU has become more visible in the last two decades.

"It's the only college that has ever received the title"

Crow expanded upon Coor's efforts to professionalize the University, arriving at ASU with a strong and uncompromising vision for the direction of the University.

"He had a vision of ASU as this 'New American University,' and we were asked to envision it with him," Corey said.

For example, he said Crow made changes by uniting different fields — like combining what at other universities would have been highly divided departments for biology and microbiology into the School of Life Sciences at ASU — allowing for more collaboration across similar disciplines.

In 2009, ASU was ranked fifth in U.S. News and World Report's "Top Up-and-Coming Schools," one of various classifications chosen by a panel of Crow's peers based on their perceptions of the school's performance. This was the second year in a row the University was considered a school to watch by university officials at schools similar to ASU.

Also in 2009, *Time* Magazine named Crow one of "Nine Presidents To Watch," highlighting ASU's impressive statistics in the aughts.

In his first seven years as president, Crow managed to boost the number of National Merit Scholars enrolled at ASU by 61%, increase the population of minority students by 62%, and surge the number of low-income in-state freshmen by nearly nine times, according to the *Time* article.

The article cites Crow's goal of ASU becoming a university "that embraced students with a wide range of backgrounds and abilities while giving elite public schools a run for their research money" as a reason for the stellar numbers.

Corey said Crow's expansion of the school's charter, which underscores inclusion and support over exclusivity, was instrumental

to defining "A New American University" and boosting ASU's reputation as a respected research university.

"This idea of acceptance rate being a sign of a good university is intellectually offensive," Corey said. "This just encourages universities to get students to apply so that they can be rejected."

AHEAD OF MIT AND STANFORD

In 2016, Crow's efforts came to fruition when U.S. News and World Report bestowed upon ASU the first-ever honor of Most Innovative School in the Nation. This honor went to the University six more times in a row, giving ASU a seven-year streak. It's the only college that has ever received the title.

The innovation category is also chosen by university officials, who nominate universities "that are making the most innovative improvements in terms of curriculum, faculty, students, campus life, technology or facilities," according to U.S. News and World Report's methodology page.

According to U.S. News' methodology, universities are ranked in decreasing order based on the number of nominations they received that year, meaning ASU has received the most nominations for innovation every year since 2016.

The innovation ranking is not the only metric that relies on peer assessment; other U.S. News categories that ASU displays on its homepage, like Top 10 in the U.S. for first-year experience and Top 10 in the U.S. for undergraduate teaching, are ranked by the responses Crow's peers provide in an annual survey.

While ASU's charter appears to be a very important example of academic innovation to former university administrators like Corey and McPherson, the University seems to put more emphasis on the outcome of the Most Innovative School in the Nation ranking.

On the ASU website's homepage, a carousel of text flaunting the University's rankings sits above an excerpt of the University charter that Corey and McPherson alluded to: "We are measured not by whom we exclude, but by whom we include and how

they succeed.”

The University heavily leans on its rankings when creating marketing materials; ASU’s brand guide includes an entire section just for how to incorporate rankings into University marketing assets.

But ASU leaned even further, creating a portfolio of 72 distinct designs that prominently advertise its Most Innovative School in the Nation ranking.

Francie Diep, a senior reporter covering money at the Chronicle of Higher Education, has extensively covered the U.S. News and World Report’s college rankings. She said Crow’s success in the rankings is likely attributed to a combination of the University’s vast number of advertisements hinging on its innovations and rubbing elbows with important academic figures.

Diep said it’s not uncommon for university leaders to show off their schools to other university leaders around U.S. News ranking season. She said universities buy ads touting their strong suits in the Chronicle of Higher Education during this time, which are often read by decision-makers at these institutions.

In contrast to ASU’s standing in survey based rankings from U.S. News, the categories that rely on hard data typically rank ASU lower.

Best Value Colleges and Top Performers on Social Mobility are top U.S. News categories in which ASU is ranked lower, coming in at No. 139 and No. 179, respectively. These categories are determined using University statistics on the cost of attending ASU after need-based scholarships and grants, the graduation rate and performance of Pell Grant recipients and comparing overall “academic quality” to average cost.

This academic quality measurement is calculated using objective factors, like first-year retention rates, class sizes, graduate indebtedness, and even the aforementioned glowing peer assessment surveys. This year, U.S. News gave the University an overall score of 59 points out of 100.

“The University probably won’t be topping party school rankings again any time soon.”

Letter from the President

July 1 marked my twentieth anniversary as president of Arizona State University. Some of you weren't yet born when I took office, and those who were may know only fragments of the changes ASU has undergone since then. Either way, the full story of where we were, what we've done and where we're headed is too lengthy to share here, but there are several details that are too important to ignore on this occasion.

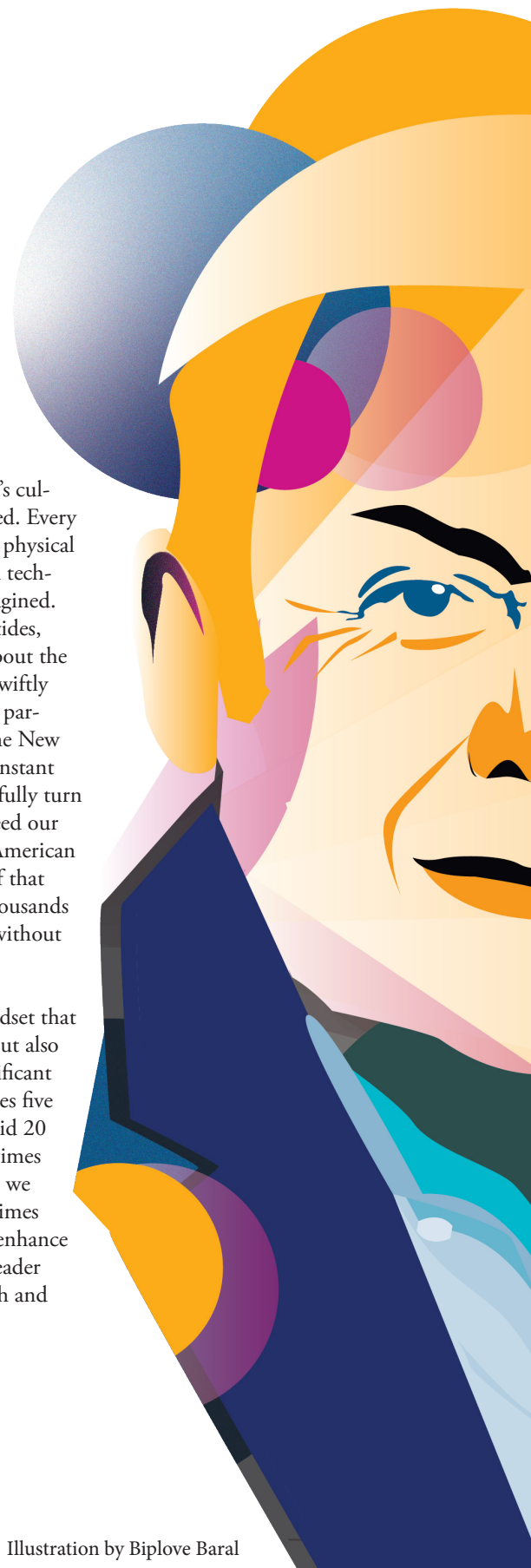
When I left Columbia University to lead ASU, I did not arrive alone. I brought family and colleagues, along with many ideas about what a university could be. I had been a student, a professor and an academic administrator by then, and those experiences informed what I saw was working—and not working—in higher education. That inspired me to re-imagine how a university could produce better outcomes for its students, the community and the world beyond. With that in mind, the concept for the New American University was the first thing I unpacked here and its core concepts have fueled every aspect of ASU's evolution for the last two decades.

Steering a ship the size of a small city is no simple task. Effectively addressing the many prospects, challenges, needs and perspectives involved is a weighty and complex responsibility. However, I have been more than fortunate to be surrounded from “day one” by university and community members, colleagues, friends and mentors who believed that designing a university dedicated to simultaneous academic excellence, broad access and social impact was both possible and necessary. With their

support and hard work, we set out together to bring the New American University to life by prioritizing student success, reorganizing our structure, and empowering faculty and staff to freely innovate and collaborate across units and disciplines to create positive change.

The scope, scale and speed of ASU's culture change has been unprecedented. Every aspect of our institution—from our physical footprint to our tuition model and technology philosophy—has been reimagined. In the face of changing economic tides, losses in state funding, cynicism about the value of a college degree, and the swiftly changing expectations of students, parents and employers, our idea for the New American University has been a constant “north star,” allowing us to successfully turn the ship, steady our course and speed our transformation as a new breed of American university. And we have done all of that while educating and graduating thousands of students, and serving our state without interruption.

Building perpetually from the mindset that a university is more than a place, but also a force for advancing real and significant social outcomes, ASU now produces five times the number of graduates it did 20 years ago. We perform nearly five times the amount of world-class research we used to, and we serve twenty-five times the number of learners seeking to enhance their knowledge. We are a global leader in sustainability education, research and





practice.

ASU is more diverse than ever before, with a student body that reflects the ethnicities of the communities we serve and also mirrors the socioeconomic diversity of Arizona's population. Thousands of learners from more than 136 countries around the world have made ASU the "top public university of choice" for international students, and both current Sun Devils and our outstanding alumni are working and thriving around the globe. ASU is now empowered to educate more high-quality engineers, teachers, health professionals and business executives than ever before; to establish educational and research alliances with global powerhouses like Starbucks, Uber and adidas; and to spearhead groundbreaking virtual reality technology like Dreamscape Learn, a game-changing educational offering with the potential to engage students in unparalleled, off-world learning experiences.

All told, we have spent the last 20 years finding new and better ways to reach traditional and non-traditional students where they are; to make college more accessible and affordable; and to build fruitful relationships with other ambitious and innovative individuals and organizations. We are constructing a comprehensive

knowledge enterprise that is designed to continually enhance the value of your college degree while also enhancing your daily quality of life—no matter where you are—through real world service.

As someone who has personally visited more than 800 college and university campuses in 60-plus countries during my career, I can write without reservation that ASU is one of the greatest universities that has ever been created, and we are not done yet.

No matter what comes our way in the future, ASU's gaze is set on the horizon and our steadfast commitment to the heart of the New American University, our official charter, will continue to guide us to new frontiers. I am excited to continue this incredible journey together and I want to hear your ideas about where the next 20 years should take us.

— *Michael Crow*

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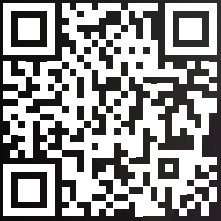
prime student




STUDENT MEDIA HOUSING FAIR

FALL - NOVEMBER 2-3, 2022
SPRING - MARCH 15-16, 2023

Memorial Union/Cady Mall
Tempe Campus
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

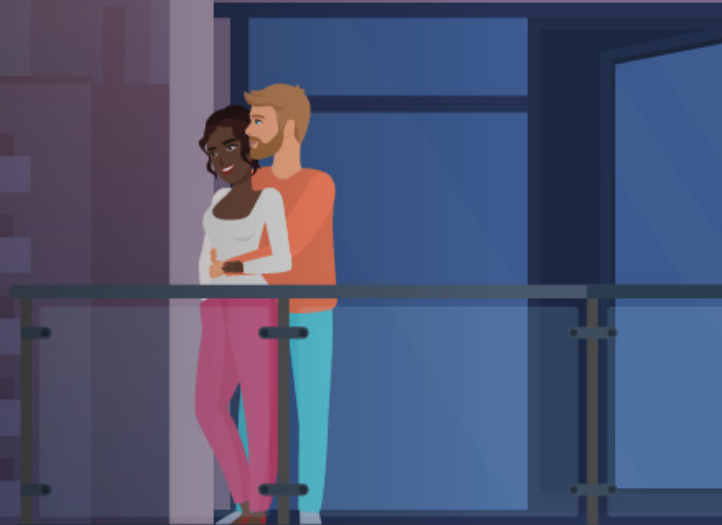


For Virtual Housing
Fair and off campus
housing listings
SCAN THE CODE

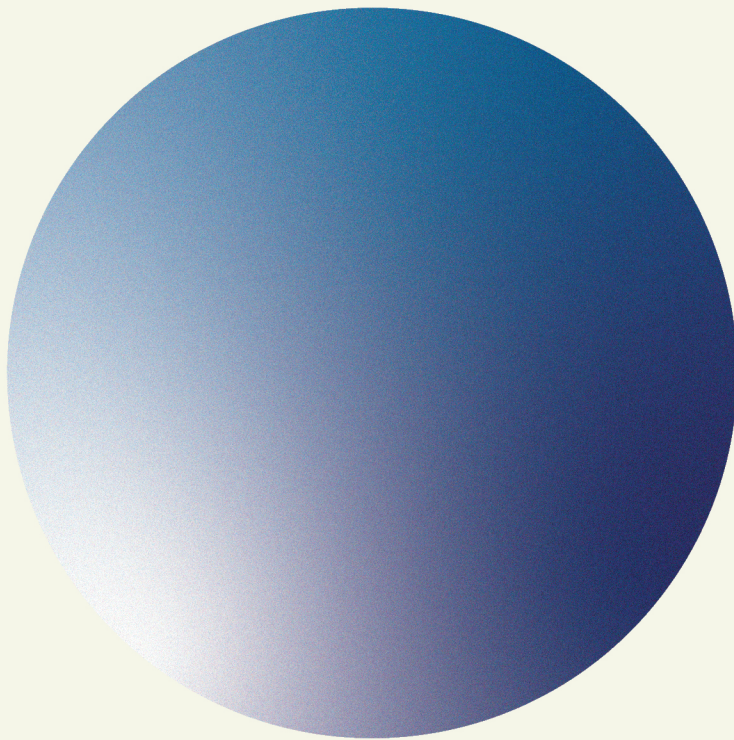
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**Are you looking for a place to live?
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The bi-annual ASU Student Media Housing Fair features services that can assist with your transition to off-campus living. Representatives from a wide range of residential communities and businesses on and off campus will be available to answer your questions.



The Crow Issue



state press magazine

Bold | Risk-Taking | Provoking