



22



NELSON



DURHAM



GAMMAGE

CREATING A UNIVERSITY

ASU's development over the past half-century has been "a wonderful evolution"

By BILL GOODYKOONTZ

By the mid-1950s, Arizona State College had the faculty, the students and the programs to be a university. It just didn't have the name.

Getting permission to tack "university" after Arizona State meant added prestige, status and responsibility for what had until very recently been strictly a teachers college. That's why so much was at stake when the name change was put to a public vote in 1958.

"I'm sure it's the only time in the country a university had to go to a vote of the people to get its proper name," said Don Dotts, who served as executive director of the ASU Alumni Association for nearly 30 years.

Barnstorming tours of the state – with speakers who included new football coach Frank Kush – paid off. The name change easily won approval.

Thus, on Dec. 5, 1958, with a stroke of Gov. Ernest McFarland's pen, Arizona State University was born.

And then the hard part started.



"I think the future is limitless."

ASU President

Emeritus Lattie Coor



"We thought we'd made it when we got the name change," Dotts said. "And then, lordy, we had to live up to it."

The university and the people who have led it have spent the last 50 years striving to do just that, seeing the school grow from a little more than 9,700 students in 1958 to more than 64,000 today. The faculty has increased more than tenfold, from 238 people to more than 2,800.

When the name change took place the school consisted of one campus and four colleges; now it spans four campuses and has 22 colleges.

Perhaps most importantly, it was named a Research I university in 1994 by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, signaling its arrival as a full-fledged research university.

"It's been a wonderful evolution," said Christine Wilkinson, ASU's senior vice president and secretary. Note the careful choice of words, more specifically the word she didn't use when describing the university and its changes. At a time when university buildings are springing up all over town – in several towns – and student population continues to swell, Wilkinson was deliberate about her use of the "G" word.

"It's not a matter of growth," she said. "It's meeting the demand and the diverse needs of our state."

Life on the "intellectual frontier"

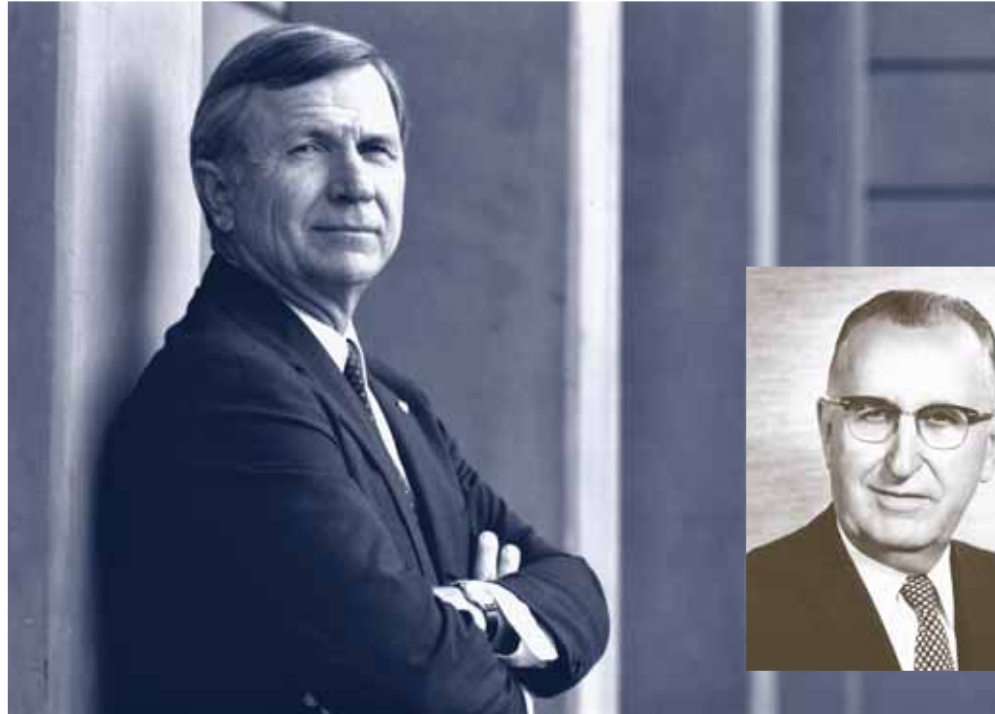
Grady Gammage, the university's legendary president for 26-plus years, pushed hard for the change in name and status. Without his efforts, it's difficult to imagine so much happening, so fast. But Gammage died in late 1959, leaving the work of starting the newly minted ASU on the path to loftier status to the man who succeeded him, Homer Durham.

"Those two were the giants that lay the foundation, creating the university and all that preceded it on Grady's part, but then putting in all the basic foundations, making it a full university, on Homer's part," said Lattie Coor, himself president of the university from 1990 to 2002. "Homer Durham took the concept that had been put in place and really gave it life."

Len Gordon, the dean of ASU's Emeritus College, remembers the early days of the university era.

"I came just about 10 years after the vote," Gordon said. He knew so little about the region he thought Arizona was next to Texas and had to use his son's U.S. map to find it. "It was a very exciting and ambitious time. We knew we were going to be heading into Research I status."

Granted, it would take a while. But under Durham's leadership the university gained stature, to say nothing of



several new freestanding colleges, including the College of Law, the College of Fine Arts and the College of Nursing. It also gained authority to grant doctoral degrees. The changes were rapid and profound.

ASU also began attracting top-flight scholars, Gordon said, ticking off names such as Milton Sommerfeld in biology, Carlton Moore in physics and Bernard Farber in sociology. Some academic recruits grew in status after arriving, but others were already established scholars, plucked from other universities.

Gordon said, "It was such an exciting opportunity, not just to be in a good Ph.D. program, but to actually form one."

That kind of work required not only the usual intellectual heft but also a sort of pioneering spirit, perfectly suited for the west. It wasn't exactly tumbleweeds and six-shooters in Tempe at the time, but ASU was still situated on an intellectual frontier.

"I think a certain type that was looking for a little bit of adventure" was attracted to the prospect of working at ASU, Gordon said. "We thought we'd have a great adventure and



move on. But in fact what happened was we kept getting better and better and we just didn't leave." ASU was "very ambitious in recruiting us," Gordon said of himself and his colleagues. "The pay got to the point where we were competitive on basic salaries with UCLA, Washington, Wayne State, and Michigan."

And the ambition was spreading.

Gordon recalled hearing a conversation between parents of an ASU student and former provost Milton Glick. "The parents said, 'Do we want to be as good as the

"We thought we'd made it when we got the name change. And then, lordy, we had to live up to it."
 – Don Dotts

"Homer Durham took the concept that had been put in place (by Gammage) and really gave it life."
 – Lattie Coor

"It was a very exciting and ambitious time. We knew we were going to be heading into Research I status."
 – Len Gordon



University of Arizona?" Gordon said. "Milt said, 'We never want to be as good as the University of Arizona. We want to be better.'"

That would take significant growth on several fronts. Building on campus increased, as more and more people moved to Arizona and, as a result, more and more students wanted an education at ASU.

Dotts points to two structures that went up in the '60s

as emblematic of ASU's growth during that time, and as being especially important to what the university would become.

The first was Gammage Auditorium, named for Grady Gammage – an arts building was one of his passions – and based on a Frank Lloyd Wright design for a Baghdad opera house that Wright never built. "I think that was a great thing, because until then we were having even

major artists appear in a 600-seat ballroom in the Memorial Union,” Dotts said.

But the new building meant more than bigger crowds. It also gave students a place to perform, as well.

“That meant a lot to the public,” Dotts said. “Some people missed the idea that students have benefited from that. The arts have flourished since then.” Some of that flourishing was also no doubt a result of the College of Fine Arts, later regarded as one of the top arts schools in the nation, being established in 1963.

Also important was Hayden Library, what Dotts called a “big huge library right in the middle of campus. It’s the heart of campus and it’s right in the heart of campus.”

The basics were now in place. From there it was a matter of building upon them.

Among the other additions in the 1960s: the establishment of the law school, which would later become the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law; the founding of the School of Social Work, which would gain national renown and, in a move that truly diversified the university’s offerings in the scientific realm, the establishment of the Center for Meteorite Studies.

Population explosion

Growth continued on-campus under the next three presidents, Harry Newburn, John Schwada and J. Russell Nelson – and continued off-campus, as well. During the 1970s the ASU Farm Laboratory was created, most importantly, the push for a campus of ASU to be established in the West Valley began.

As Nelson, in fact, began his tenure as ASU president in 1981, the school found itself in a now-familiar situation for any Arizona institution: unable to keep up with tremendous population demands.

“The university had been simply overwhelmed by the number of students that showed up,” Nelson said. “The Phoenix area was growing rapidly and a lot of people were coming to school. The rate of increase at the university was well ahead of that which the university got appropriations, so we were always behind.”

Thus Nelson, who had spent his career at research universities, found himself in something of a foreign position – working not just with faculty, staff and students, but lawmakers, as well.

“Here I found, as president, the demands to be involved with the legislature were greater,” he said. “I learned that one of the things I had to do was spend more time and energy working with members... some of whom were not sympathetic and others of whom were very supportive.”

He found enough supportive ones so that ASU managed to secure appropriations, and borrow money, as well, to embark upon what Nelson called a “major building program of facilities that would help meet the need” – a phrase that certainly sounds familiar today, but one that was apt then, too. The ASU Foundation also contributed to the facilities frenzy, by executing a Centennial Campaign during the 1980s that raised more than \$30 million in construction funds for the university.

The building began in earnest, paid for with appropriations from the state legislature and also by borrowing money. Buildings like the Noble Science and Engineering Library were completed, as were notable Tempe campus landmarks such as the Mona Plummer Aquatic Center and the pedestrian overpass that spans University Drive. And finally, in 1986, the West campus became a reality.

“It’s been a wonderful evolution— it’s not a matter of growth. It’s meeting the demand and diverse needs of our state.”

—Christine Wilkinson

The most recent phase of development kicked off in 2002, when Michael Crow became ASU’s president.



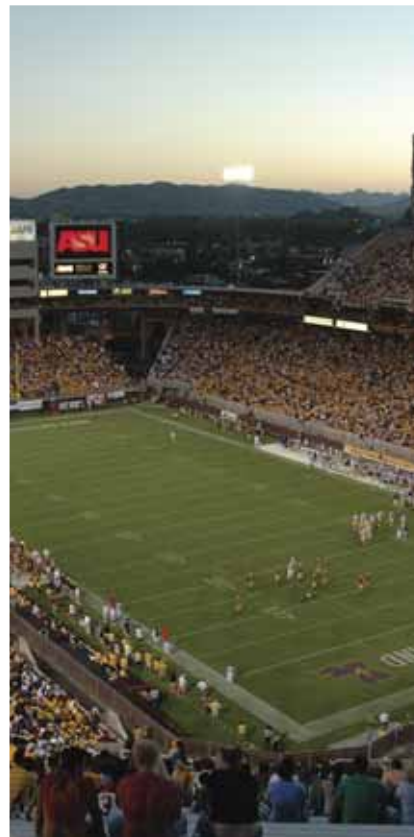


But the construction was about more than bricks and mortar. It was also about increasing the university's profile for prospective research faculty.

"The array of facilities was much enhanced," Nelson said. "That made a difference, because people in the teaching positions suddenly began to have adequate office space, support for the things they were doing. It made the university attractive to people who previously wouldn't have considered us as a place to work."

In 1981, for instance, ASU hired its first faculty member who would win a Pulitzer Prize: Rita Dove, who won for poetry in 1987.

"We were able to begin changing the character of the faculty and began to be successful at bringing people in from really fine universities, mostly Ph.D.s from very fine universities," Nelson said. "It had a very positive effect."



Playing leapfrog

Of course the recurring theme at ASU, from the end of World War II through the present, is same theme present for the state of Arizona itself: continuous, sometimes explosive, growth. It's meant the metropolitan area has had to work to keep pace, and that ASU has had to, as well.

To those who were paying attention, the ever-increasing population came as no surprise.

"I knew demographically this was going to be one of the great growth areas in the country," Gordon said. He was also attracted to the free spirit of the place – a state diversified enough in its thinking that both Barry Goldwater and Mo Udall could comfortably call it home.

"I knew this was a very ambitious state," he said.

And a very ambitious university. It has had to be.

"We are relatively young," Wilkinson said. "Fifty years – that's like starting adolescence. Look at when these other universities became universities. We can't evolve just naturally. We are going to have to find different ways to leapfrog in what we do with research and academic programs, and even athletics."

ASU has to be creative, in other words. And it has been. Under Nelson's tenure, the West campus was founded, the first of several such expansions. Today the university also has, in addition to the Tempe and West campuses, a downtown Phoenix campus and a Polytechnic campus in Mesa.

Of course, the extra room helps, as people continue to stream into Arizona, as they did when Nelson was president.

How did the students—the cause of these expansions, after all—change over the years?

According to Jim Rund, vice president of University Student

Initiatives, over the years, ASU shifted from being primarily a commuter campus with a large body of undergraduate students to an institution with multiple campuses and a substantial graduate school population. Exponential growth of residence halls and campus amenities such as a student recreation center made living on campus a much more palatable option.

Where the students live is one change. Who they are as a group is another one, one that Rund says is indicative of ASU's success at becoming more diverse, more academically

The recurring theme for ASU from World War II to the present is continuous, sometimes explosive, growth.



1958
2008
TIMELINE

Arizona State grants its first non-education master's degrees to James Barton Baker Jr. and Ralph Terry Bryan.

1958



The first 30,450 seat section of Sun Devil Stadium is completed.

1958



Proposition 200 passes, allowing Arizona State College to be renamed Arizona State University.

1958

The engineering division of the College of Applied Arts & Sciences becomes the School of Engineering.

1959



rigorous, and more accessible to students of differing backgrounds—all at the same time.

“Our students today better reflect the society at large than they did 50 years ago,” Rund said. “We enroll students from every county in Arizona, from every state in the nation and from over 150 countries around the world.”

Rund asserted that the university has made tremendous strides in honoring its original charge to educate the state’s citizens for a productive and prosperous future.

“I am especially pleased that while academic entrance requirements have increased several times during my tenure here, the university’s mission is still primarily one of access,” he said.

And some things don’t change. Sun Devils will always be Sun Devils.

“Despite the multitude of changes over the last 50 years, today’s ASU students share a common bond with those from 1958: they are hard working, highly motivated, independent thinkers with great aspirations and a will to succeed,” Rund said.

Running with the PAC

Though it might not seem immediately evident, one boost to ASU’s reputation was, again, due in part to

athletics. In 1978, Arizona State (along with the University of Arizona) was admitted to the Pacific-10, or Pac-10, conference.

Yes, it meant the sports teams would be in a more-competitive league than they were in the old Western Athletic Conference. But it meant more, as well.

“I think that was major, not only in intercollegiate sports, but also for the whole university,” Wilkinson said. “From a peer standpoint, these (other Pac-10 members) are institutions you would like to be aligned with – Stanford, Berkeley, UCLA, Washington. All around, they’re just very strong schools.”

For Coor, inclusion in the Pac-10 was not just a sign of progress made but also a promise of more to come.

“We wouldn’t have been let in if we hadn’t been viewed as at least an aspiring university,” he said.

Obviously, with ASU now the second-largest university in the country, growth and expansion have been instrumental in its history. Perhaps ASU’s best weapon in the fight against the perception that bigger doesn’t mean better is the Barrett Honors College. It has more National Merit Scholars than several Ivy League schools, including Princeton and Yale. And while it’s nationally recognized, it’s still something of an unsung hero in the community.



President Grady Gammage, leader of Arizona State since 1933, dies Dec. 22.

1959



G. Homer Durham becomes president of ASU.

1960

The university celebrates its Diamond Jubilee (75th anniversary) as an educational institution.

1960

An M.B.A. degree program established in the College of Business Administration.

1961



KAET begins broadcasting educational television programs to the metro Phoenix area.

1961

For Coor, Barrett is an essential ingredient in ASU's success.

"I believe the responsibility of a great public university is to provide a quality of education to those who attend it, which really means the citizens of our state, that is as good as they could get anywhere they went, whatever their station in life as they entered college," he said.

Yet ASU's unique mission means, in effect, having it both ways.

"The honors college students are as good as any students in the country," Gordon said.

"Yet at the same time, we have thousands who are transferring in from the community colleges and will take six or seven years (to graduate)," Gordon continued. "It can work – you can still maintain your quality."

There's evidence that he's right. In 1994 ASU received its Research I designation. To a school growing like crazy, it was a sign that it didn't have to leave quality behind.

"That, I thought, was major for the academic stature," Wilkinson said. "You look at the peer



"We are relatively young. Fifty years – that's like starting adolescence. Look at when these other universities became universities. We are going to have to find different ways to leapfrog in what we do."
– Christine Wilkinson

"I think the thing I am most excited about is that we are building a true public university, one that reaches across the many public universities."
– Michael Crow



The College of Fine Arts is established.	The College of Law is established.	Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium opens.	Michael Skolnik becomes ASU's first Rhodes Scholar.	The College of Nursing becomes a freestanding college of the university.
1964	1964	1964	1964	1964



institutions in that grouping, and they're all primarily the flagship institutions. They are definitely the leaders in research and discovery. It just puts you in a very different plane."

The future is limitless

The 1990s brought, what else, more growth for the university. The striking William C. Blakely Law Library was completed, as was the Nelson Fine Arts Complex. Meanwhile the university continued to spread; the East (now Polytechnic) campus opened in Mesa on the grounds of the old Williams Air Force Base, and ASU took root in downtown Phoenix at the Mercado, foreshadowing the opening of a campus there in 2006 and the massive building projects underway there now.

The most recent phase of development kicked off with a vengeance in 2002, when Michael Crow became ASU's president.

"When President Crow came in, I think he rode in on a wave he could build on," Gordon said, referring to all the change that came in the years before.

Ride it he has. Unparalleled expansion and building programs – it often seems as if there are



ASU wins its first College World Series baseball title under Coach Bobby Winkles.

1965



The College of Law's Armstrong Hall is dedicated.

1968

Cady Mall becomes the first pedestrian mall on campus.

1968

U.S. Astronaut Neil Armstrong walks on the moon.

1969

Harry Newburn becomes the president of ASU.

1970

more cranes and derricks on the various campuses than actual buildings – are at the heart of what Crow calls the “New American University.”

As ambitious as ASU’s growth and changes have been over the last 50 years, Crow’s vision is, if anything, even more so. As Crow stated in his 2002 inaugural address:

“The new American university would cultivate excellence in teaching, research, and public service, providing the best possible education to the broadest possible spectrum of society. The new American university would embrace the educational needs of the entire population – not only a select group, and not only the verbally or mathematically gifted.

“The success of the new American university will be measured not by who the university excludes, but rather by who the university

includes, and from this inclusion will come its contributions to the advancement of society.”

With a state changing as rapidly as Arizona, the New American University mandate is a tall order. Can it happen?

Crow certainly believes so.

“I think the thing that I’m most excited about is that we are building a true public university – one reaching across the many public universities,” he said. “(So many other public universities) are abandoning that mission, and so that excites me the most.”

Coor is also optimistic that real change can continue, and that it can happen fast.

“I think the future is limitless,” Coor said.

“I guess the best way I can phrase it is that ASU has the best chance in the country of being that new American university.”

Bill Goodykoontz is a Chandler-based freelance writer.

“ASU has the best chance in the country of being that new American university.”

– Lattie Coor



John Schwada becomes president of ASU.

1971

Packard Stadium, a baseball facility, opens.

1974

Title IX passes, banning gender discrimination in federally funded educational programs.

1972

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is passed, outlawing discrimination against the disabled.

1973



The remains of 3 million year old hominid, nicknamed “Lucy,” are discovered.

1974