

ASU

ASU's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication building in Downtown Phoenix.

10 Reasons ASU Rocks

1 Addressing Urban Health Needs

ASU is close to being the first public university in the nation to offer a Master of Public Health program in Urban Health. In a sputtering economy, understanding and addressing the needs of the homeless, mentally ill and those without access to affordable health care grows ever more critical. The new program marries the School of Health Management and Policy to the College of Nursing and Healthcare Innovation, and will prepare graduates for work in diverse urban settings, such as government agencies, voluntary health organizations and primary care facilities.

2 Revealing Mercury's Wonders

Since the mid-1970s, scientists have been able to gather enough information about the planet Mercury to reconstruct only half of its globe. However, after its second close-approach flyby, the MESSENGER spacecraft, originally launched in 2004,

has produced enough high-resolution images to finally allow researchers at ASU, NASA, Johns Hopkins University and the Carnegie Institute of Washington to nearly complete mapping the globe of Mercury. The details obtained from cameras attached to MESSENGER also have provided scientists with enough information to begin analyzing the planet's composition as well as its origin and evolution.

3 Spreading the Word

Making good use of the school's new Downtown Phoenix facility, students from the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication continue to rack up regional and national awards in print, broadcast and online journalism. This year, the school finished first, for the second time in three years, in the Hearst Journalism Awards, deemed the Pulitzer Prize for college journalism. The Cronkite School also ran away with more student awards than any other school at the Society of Professional Journalists' intercollegiate news contest for the fourth year in a row.

4 Engaging the Community

ASU extends educational programs beyond its traditional students and classrooms to involve surrounding communities. The school's award-winning American Dream Academy, offered by the Center for Community Development and Civil Rights, challenges parents in low-income or disadvantaged areas to become an integral part of their children's education. The goals of the program, which boasts more than 7,000 parent graduates, are to improve family relationships, reduce high school dropout rates while improving classroom performance, and provide students with tools that will help them further their education.

5 Going Solar

ASU is in the midst of converting its West campus to using almost exclusively solar energy. The system is expected to be operational this December and is part of the second phase of the university's ambitious mission to transition all of its campuses over to renewable and sustainable energy sources.

6 Spearheading Social Change

The ASU Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation aims to bolster nonprofit and civic engagement through its Public Allies program. Public Allies, in conjunction with AmeriCorps, places talented, diverse and community-minded individuals in 10-month internships at area nonprofits for rigorous on-the-job training. The program also provides leadership training to its participants in the hopes that they will go on to strengthen their communities and help encourage civic participation.

7 Earth to Mars

ASU recently teamed with Google Earth 5.0 to make Mars more interactive. University scientists and researchers developed an application that allows users to suggest places on the Red Planet for ASU's THEMIS camera to photograph. The THEMIS camera, attached to NASA's Mars Odyssey orbiter, also takes infrared images of Mars, including the planet's dust storms, and sends the regularly updated images back to Earth for study.

8 Spring/Summer Sports

On the links, the ASU women's golf team won the 2009 NCAA Championship (their seventh national title), while the men's golf team advanced to the national quarterfinals. On the field, for the fourth year in a row, the women's softball team – the defending national champions – slugged their way to the Women's College World Series before losing to PAC-10 rival Washington. The men's baseball team tied for third place at the men's College World Series in Omaha. Numerous individual accolades and honors have also been doled out to ASU student athletes this year.

9 Going with the 'Flo'

The Go With the Flo™ toilet just may revolutionize how we use the restroom in the future. The new self-sustaining, mechanical-free toilet, which won the "Breaking the Rules Silver Award" at the Northwest Design Invitational, was conceived by a team of two faculty members and two graduate students from ASU's College of Design. The design employs a squat toilet approach and is believed to be helpful in strengthening muscles of the back and abdomen. It uses just one half to one gallon of water per flush and recycles water from its attached sink.

10 Mapping the Moon

This year, NASA is launching its Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter, which will orbit the moon for a year. Attached to the spacecraft is the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter Camera (LROC), a creation of ASU's own Mark Robinson, a professor in the School of Earth and Space Exploration. The LROC will provide images and information that will help scientists map the surface of the moon and locate potential lunar resources and landing sites for future moon missions.

— Joshua Schoonover
PM