

ASU tops in scholars

ASU again has attracted a higher number of freshman National Merit Scholars than almost any other public university in the U.S. ASU ranks third among public universities and 13th overall with 156 National Merit Scholars in the freshman class and 532 overall.

For the past six years ASU has ranked among the top 20 universities in the country. This represents a meteoric rise since 1991, when just six freshman National Merit Scholars enrolled at ASU.

Business/engineering offer dual degree

Responding to demand from the high-tech industry, ASU will offer an on-line graduate dual-degree program in business and engineering.

Tailored to working professionals, the program begins this summer and gives students the opportunity to earn both a master's degree in business administration from the W. P. Carey School of Business and a master's of science in engineering – with a focus on electrical engineering – from the Ira A. Fulton School of Engineering.

“It's designed so students can earn the degree in less time and at a lower cost than pursuing both separately,” said Gerry Keim, associate dean of the W. P. Carey MBA program. “The on-line delivery will make the program accessible to qualified students in any location and any time zone.”

USA Today honors students

Two outstanding ASU students have won national academic honors from *USA Today* for their exceptional intellectual achievement and leadership. Taylor Jackson, a senior in biology and society, has been chosen for the All-USA College Academic Third Team and Elizabeth Dreeland, a December graduate, has received honorable mention.

In the past 14 years, 18 ASU students have been chosen for the top three academic teams, one of the best records of any public university in the nation.

Jackson has a deep interest in protecting the environment and revitalizing communities. Winner of a 2005 Udall Scholarship, Jackson spent several weeks in Malaysian

Borneo, writing an eco-tourism development plan for a rhino protection group.

Dreeland, a champion fencer, wrote her honors theses on how revolutions and governments claim past heroes to legitimize themselves. The work took her halfway around the world, looking for statues and talking to residents.

A cheer for ASU cheerleaders

The 2006 ASU cheerleading squad came home with the national title at the recent USA Collegiate Nationals competition. In addition, Stephen Aiken and Nicole Loeb were the national runners-up in the partner stunt competition and Brian Duncan and Jessica Shannon earned fourth-place honors.

The Sun Devils cheerleaders are co-coached by J. C. Kobashi and Suzi Susee and assisted by choreographer Lupe Davis.

Reducing ER wait times

On New Year's Day this year, Banner Baywood Medical Center in Mesa closed its emergency room for three hours when it couldn't handle the number of patients showing up at its doors.

This scenario is repeated across the country as hospitals face overcrowding that threatens their abilities to provide critical health care – and renders them ill-prepared to cope with a large-scale crisis.

Jeffrey Cochran, professor of industrial engineering at the Ira A. Fulton School of Engineering, is collaborating with Banner Health on a Door-to-Doc (D2D) program, a “tool kit” for implementing operational changes aimed at getting patients more timely and effective health care.

The target is to ensure it typically will take no more than 20 minutes for a patient to be seen by an emergency room physician. The key is a “whole hospital” approach to hospital management, taking into account the “chain-reaction affect” of each area of care on the other.

Studies show waiting times can be reduced if doctors, nurses and staff perform their emergency-care assignments concurrently, instead of strictly segmenting each task. “You need something like an air-traffic controller,” says Cochran, to direct the things that need to happen to keep the system from getting into a start-and-stop-again routine.

Working to end poverty

Barbara J. Robles, associate professor in the ASU School of Social Work, has been named to a nationwide task force that will address the issues of persistent poverty in the U.S. Hope, Opportunity and Mobility for Everyone: The National Initiative to End Poverty (HOME) was launched in February by the Center for American Progress in Washington, DC.

The HOME initiative will identify new solutions to address the fact that too many Americans are living on the edge in today's economy, with one quarter of working families trapped in low-income jobs with limited opportunities to advance.

Robles was selected for this national effort because of her expertise in researching and applying family asset building efforts for low-income families. Her work focuses on developing financial expertise among individuals and families in the Southwest borderlands through partnerships with community-based organizations, companies and schools.

Project Literacy a reading success

Students at Frank Elementary School in Guadalupe are reading better than ever thanks to a group of student volunteers from ASU's Project Literacy organization.

Founded less than a year ago, Project Literacy enables volunteers to work in public schools with underprivileged children who struggle with their reading skills. Since 2005, volunteers have been meeting for weekly one-on-one sessions with their fifth-grade “reading buddies,” and the improvement the fifth-graders have shown thus far has been dramatic.

“Frank Elementary has continually been one of the lowest scoring schools across the district,” says Bernadette Kadel, principal. “At this time, we have risen to the top and can boast some of the highest scores in the district thus far.”

Project Literacy, led by founder and president Jess Koldoff, recently received a grant from the Edson Student Entrepreneurial Program at ASU to become a non-profit organization in Arizona and increase the capacity of children who can be served.