

\$22M funds cutting-edge research

With a \$22 million endowment ASU is making seed investments in research areas that push the boundaries of traditional academic disciplines.

Donors Brian and Kelly Swette of Pebble Beach, Calif., and Sharon Dupont McCord and Robert McCord of Paradise Valley, Ariz., have made separate commitments to establish endowments at the ASU Foundation worth \$10 million and \$12 million, respectively. The endowments have been combined into an Intellectual Fusion Investment Fund for ASU that will promote sustainability initiatives and other research at ASU.

“Cross-discipline collaboration can be electric. Creativity is essential. And those slight shifts in attitude create a dynamic environment in which to work and learn,” says ASU President Michael Crow.

Three immediate investments will be made in the research areas of biofuel, child development and human evolution.

ASU transforms gene detection

Scientists at ASU’s Biodesign Institute have developed the world’s first gene detection platform made up entirely from self-assembled DNA nanostructures. The results could have broad implications for gene chip technology – and also could revolutionize the way in which gene expression is analyzed in a single cell.

Yonggang Ke, a chemistry and biochemistry graduate student, is the lead author of the study.

“This is one of the first practical applications of a powerful technology, that, until now, has mainly been the subject of research demonstrations,” says Stuart Lindsay, ASU physics professor and director of the Center for Single Molecule Biophysics.

DNA chip and microarray technology have become a multibillion-dollar industry, as scientists use it to examine thousands of genes at the same time for mutations or uncovering clues to disease. But because DNA probes are pinned to the solid surface of the microarray chips, it is a relatively slow process for the targets to search and find the probes.

New school links language, culture

The study of other languages and cultures has an ever-increasing importance in today’s changing world – and it will become the focal point of ASU’s new School of International Letters and Cultures in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

The new school, built on the strengths of the former Department of Languages and Literatures, has a distinct global perspective. It reaches across traditional academic boundaries to create innovative alliances with other departments, schools and centers.

“We are transforming the study of language, literature and culture at Arizona State University by offering students a rich variety of transdisciplinary educational experiences across languages and cultures,” Cutter says.

The intercultural and interdisciplinary nature of the new school reflects ASU President Michael Crow’s vision for a New American University to prepare students for a world transformed by a flow of information, people and culture in multiple languages.

SkySong opens for business

SkySong, ASU’s Scottsdale Innovation Center, opened its doors with a number of ASU units moving in.

More than 20 global startups and mid-sized companies from Canada, China, Germany, India, Japan, Turkey, Mexico and Singapore will follow that have joined the university’s efforts to change the entrepreneurial landscape of Arizona and the world.

Key tenants of the first phase include ASU, Canon and American Solar. Ticketmaster already has agreed to space in Phase II, locating research and development units at SkySong.

The opening marks the completion of the first 157,000-square-foot building. A second building is under construction with completion scheduled for May.

“The opening of SkySong represents a new chapter in ASU’s ability to engage with, and positively influence, Arizona’s economy,” says Julia Rosen, assistant vice president for economic affairs at ASU. “We are creating a differentiated, interactive community to connect Arizona to the world.”

West campus vies for ‘Point of Pride’

ASU’s West campus has been selected as a finalist in the Phoenix Pride Commission’s consideration as a “Point of Pride” designation. The honor, which is awarded every four years, recognizes a landmark or attraction unique to and located within Phoenix that evokes a sense of pride among area residents.

“This is quite an honor,” says Elizabeth Langland, vice president and dean of ASU’s New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences. “I’m proud of this campus’ long tradition of partnering with our local communities to enhance life in the west valley and metropolitan Phoenix, as well as the scholarship programs we offer and the research we conduct.”

The public may vote online for the next City of Phoenix “Point of Pride” at www.phoenix.gov/pride2008 beginning Feb. 11.

Zah earns MLK leadership award

Peterson Zah was chosen as ASU’s 2008 Martin Luther King Jr. Servant-Leadership Award winner. An adviser to the ASU president for 13 years, Zah has helped double the Native American student population at ASU, and he continues to build key alliances with tribal and community groups. He helped create ASU’s Native American Achievement Program, a partnership with tribes to provide scholarships, mentoring and advising to students. He frequently speaks to national and local groups about tribal issues, gives presentations to ASU classes, and meets with students in his office who are having financial or personal problems.

Zah also has raised funds for American Indian programs at ASU, helping to bring in hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Department of Interior and the Navajo Nation to support students in the Indian Legal Program.

“Our success doesn’t stop at enrolling students, or graduating them,” Zah says. “Success is helping the schools prepare them for college, working with families, supporting traditional values and developing scholarship programs so they can succeed. Success is when they go back to their people and become contributing members, working to improve American Indian communities.”