

JUNE 2009

President Obama addresses graduating class

At what may have been the largest U.S. graduation in history, President Barack Obama told graduates at Arizona State University that opening the doors of higher education to students from every background is a core mission of ASU and of his presidency, and should serve as a model for universities across the country.

For the last six years, ASU has served as America's largest effort at institutional transformation in higher education, building a solution-focused institution that combines the highest level of academic excellence, inclusiveness to a broad demographic and maximum societal impact.

He told the graduating class of 9,267 that starting their careers in troubled times is a challenge, but also a privilege, because they are forced to dig deeper and discover gifts they never knew they had.

"At this difficult time in our national history, the old approaches won't get you where you want to go," said Obama. "The leaders we revere, and the businesses and institutions that last, are the result of devotion to some bigger purpose. The commitment at an institution like ASU, which is diverse and gives opportunity to all, that's the hallmark of real success."

Solar center finds home at ASU

ASU will be home to a new Energy Frontier Research Center (EFRC) announced by the White House in conjunction with a speech delivered by President Barack Obama.

The ASU center, one of 46 new EFRCs, will pursue advanced scientific research on solar energy conversion based on the principles of photosynthesis, the process by which plants convert sunlight to energy. All 46 centers are being established by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) as part of an overall effort to tackle the "grand challenges" and accelerate scientific advances needed to build a 21st century energy economy. DOE officials plan to fund ASU's EFRC for bio-inspired solar fuel production at a level of \$14 million over a five-year period.

Essentially all of the energy we use today – from oil, coal and natural gas – originally was solar energy that was captured by plants through photosynthesis. The traditional way of unlocking

energy from these compounds has been to burn them, which also releases greenhouse gases.

"This grant will allow us to put together a complete system that starts with the absorption of sunlight and ends with the creation of a clean fuel, such as hydrogen," says Devens Gust, an ASU professor of chemistry and biochemistry in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences who is director of the new center. "It also will provide resources to educate students at all levels about renewable energy, and it could lead to whole new industries. I am especially pleased that this center is being established in Arizona, which has a tremendous potential for solar energy utilization."

ASU students break record

A record number of ASU students have won Fulbright awards to study abroad next year.

Twenty students received the exciting news from 18 different countries. Seventeen accepted the award, while three declined it to pursue other opportunities. Another student has received a separate Fulbright grant sponsored by the French government.

ASU students are especially successful at winning these overseas study grants, partly because of ASU's emphasis on global studies and foreign languages, and also because of the strong support of faculty mentors, says Janet Burke, director of the office of national scholarships and associate dean of Barrett, the Honors College.

Half of the awardees are graduating this month from ASU with bachelor's degrees in fields ranging from political science to education. The other half are master's and doctoral candidates, bringing their expertise in chemistry, computer science, biology and literature to study topics in the different countries. They will live for one year in countries that include Ecuador, Croatia, Argentina, Japan, Romania, Cyprus, South Korea, Norway and Romania.

Outstanding faculty named Regents' Professors

Five exceptional ASU professors at the top of their careers have been named as ASU Regents' Professors for 2009 by ASU President Michael Crow and Elizabeth D.

Capaldi, the university's executive vice president and provost.

The rank of Regents' Professor is the highest faculty honor bestowed by the university, in honor of their accomplishments and the quality they have brought to ASU.

This year's honorees are:

- Jane Buikstra, a professor of bioarchaeology in the School of Human Evolution and Social Change, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

- James Elser, a professor of ecology in the School of Life Sciences, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

- Bruce Rittmann, a professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and the Biodesign Institute, Ira A. Fulton School of Engineering.

- Michael Saks, a professor of law and psychology, Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law.

- Dieter Schroder, a professor of electrical engineering, Ira A. Fulton School of Engineering.

USA Today lauds super seniors

Once again, an ASU senior has been chosen as one of the top 20 students in the country by *USA Today*.

Charlene Bashore, who at 22 already is involved in highly sophisticated DNA research, is featured as one of 20 students named to its "All-USA College Academic First Team" for exceptional intellectual achievement and leadership.

ASU has had more students named to the prestigious award than any other public university in the nation, with 12 students winning first-team honors in 17 years. Only Harvard and Duke have had more students win the honor.

Eric Anderson, a senior majoring in bioengineering and medicinal biochemistry, was named to the second team of 20 students. Hundreds of students were nominated by colleges and universities across the United States.

A national team of judges selects top students based on grades, leadership, activities and how students extend their intellectual talents beyond the classroom. Each first-team member receives a \$2,500 cash award, in addition to a photo and profile in the newspaper.