

First-ever Taiwan Symposium at Thunderbird celebrates business, cultural connections

Event highlighted TSMC's advanced sustainability measures to be applied in Phoenix location

By Mary Beth Faller, ASU News
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The investment by TSMC and other Taiwanese corporations in Arizona will reap dividends not only in thousands of new jobs but also in strengthened cultural connections and new methods of sustainability.

That was the message embraced on Friday at the first-ever Taiwan Symposium sponsored by Arizona State University's Office of Global Academic Initiatives and hosted at the [Thunderbird School of Global Management](#). The daylong event at the Downtown Phoenix campus featured speakers, panel discussions and performances.

The symposium was titled, "Digital Innovation and Sustainability," and the crowd heard about TSMC's advanced sustainability measures at its two dozen facilities around the world. The semiconductor company has a long-term goal of replacing 60% of the water it uses with reclaimed water, according to Greg Jackson, director of facility operations for TSMC.

"There are challenges with water in Taiwan as well," he said.

He described how the chip-manufacturing factories there — as well as the one in Phoenix — have water-reclamation plants that filter and clean wastewater.

"The goal is 350% utilization, which means that every drop goes through the process three and half times," he said.

The plants also recover rainwater, condensed water from air-conditioning units and water from the factory cooling towers. Jackson said the Phoenix plant will offload water to the city of Phoenix to keep in aquifers near the facility.

In addition, the North Phoenix property has 4,000 parking spaces shaded by solar structures that produce enough electricity to power 2,000 houses.

“We’re just getting started in our journey with TSMC in Arizona,” he said. “We have many more factories to build and improvements to happen with water and resource conservation.”

A 'city within a city'

TSMC in Phoenix has one factory that’s already making chips, one under construction and a third that’s in the planning stages. But the plan is for the plant to be part of a “city within a city,” surrounded by 2,500 acres that will become housing for employees and space for supporting companies that are needed to strengthen the supply chain, Jackson said.

That gigantic ecosystem will produce thousands of jobs at every level, according to Caleb Rhodes, vice president for international trade and investment at the Arizona Commerce Authority, and Sean Fogarty, vice president of international business development at the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, who spoke on a panel.

“There are a lot of pathways — from GEDs to PhDs to work in advanced manufacturing in Arizona,” Fogarty said.

ASU, as well as the other state universities and the community college system, began creating workforce-preparation plans years ago, he said.

“When I look at Arizona, the semiconductor industry is tremendous, but clean tech, quantum optics, life sciences, (agriculture) tech, water tech — plus the technologies that are going to be addressing issues of climate change and geopolitical instability — are all in Arizona,” he said.

Rhodes said that Arizona is becoming a hub for all kinds of high-tech business thanks to its welcoming atmosphere and its energy grid.

“We’re ranked as the state with the number one most secure and most reliable energy grid,” he said.

“And much of what drives that is that we have a diverse and sustainable portfolio of energy. We have the largest nuclear power plant in the United States. We have hydroelectric, we have solar, we have natural gas. When you look at the Arizona energy portfolio, it’s scalable, it’s clean, it’s reliable.”

Employment opportunities

Kent Hopkins, vice president for academic enterprise enrollment at ASU, moderated a panel titled, “Breaking into Semiconductors: Career Opportunities in a High-Growth Industry.”

He told the many students in the audience: “The semiconductor and microelectronics industry is going to change this city. In the next 10 years, there will be new and different types of jobs.

“Many of you will have multiple jobs. You’ll probably be in five or seven or 10 different careers in your lifetimes.”

Michelle Kurth, a senior manager for talent at ASM Global, told students not to be intimidated by the semiconductor industry.

“The industry needs diverse skills sets. Multidisciplinary talent is what we’re looking for — learning agility, transferrable skill sets such as problem solving, communication and thinking beyond borders and cross-cultural collaboration.

“We think of semiconductors, and what’s critical is technical expertise — we need that to survive. But there are other parts of the business that are just as important, such as project management and supply chain.”

Timothy Tang, head of the U.S. business unit for WITS, a global IT services provider, said that his employees must be highly adaptive.

“You have to shift working hours. Accept that you have to take a call at 7 p.m. because it’s 10 a.m. in Asia,” he said.

Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego said that the city has worked to welcome the influx of people from Taiwan.

“Several of our hospitals — from Banner to HonorHealth — have a great partnership with Mandarin-speaking physicians, who are in many cases trained in Taiwan, so people have access to the medical care that they want in this community,” she said.

The city also is in talks with airlines to add more nonstop flights from Asia as well as more restaurants that would appeal to travelers from Taiwan.

Gallego noted that Phoenix and Taipei have been "sister cities" for 46 years.

“It’s a friendship that I think has benefited both sides. We’ll both be more prosperous and more secure,” she said.

After the symposium, “Taiwan Night at Thunderbird” featured entertainment and food, presented in partnership with the Taipei Committee of [Phoenix Sister Cities](#).

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Main image

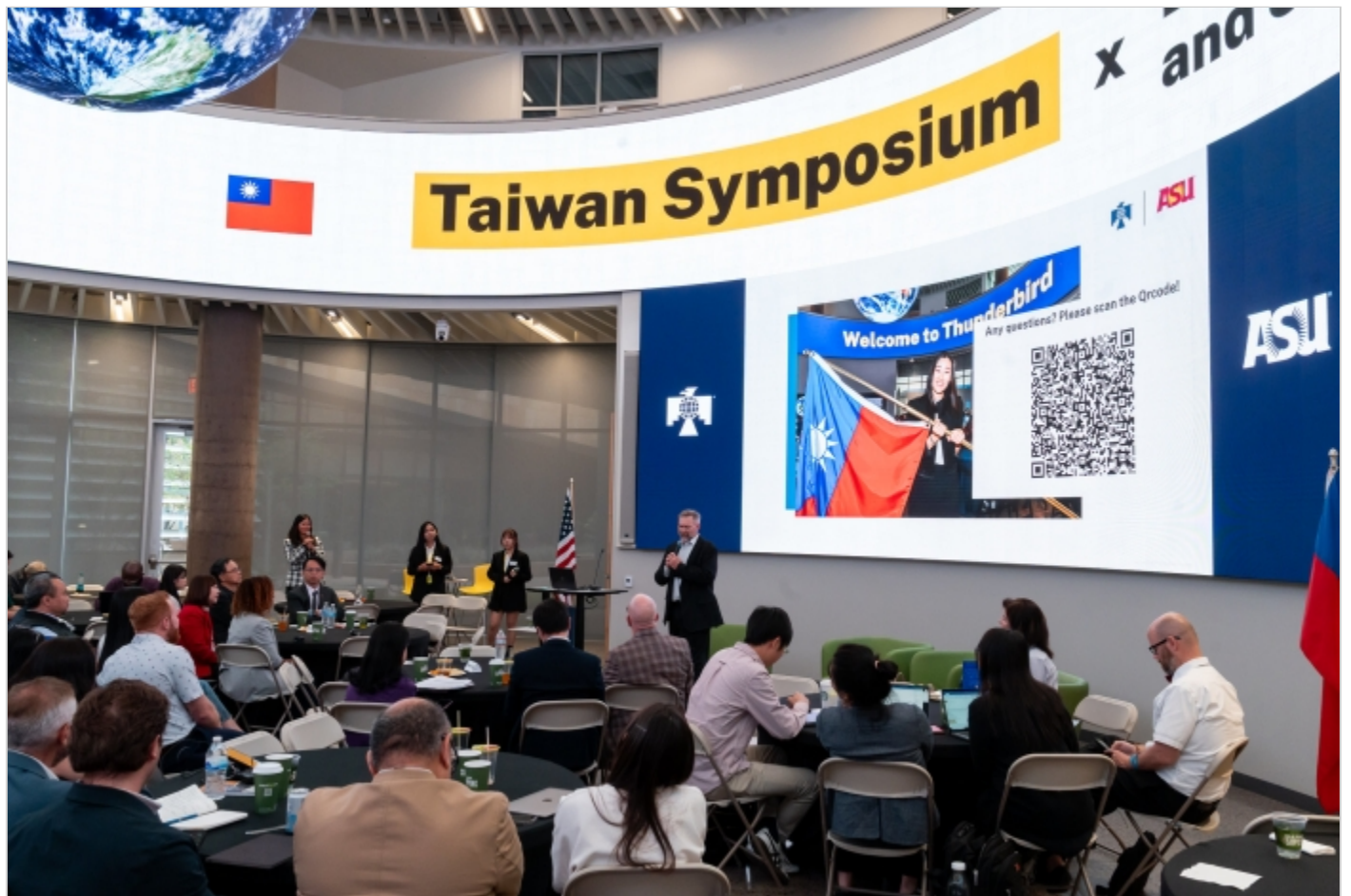


A dragon dance was part of the Taiwan Night Celebration held after the first-ever Taiwan Symposium on March 28 at Thunderbird School of Global Management at Arizona State University. Photo courtesy of Thunderbird School of Global Management

Gallery



Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego told the audience at the Taiwan Symposium at the Thunderbird School of Global Management that Phoenix and Taipei have been "sister cities" for 46 years.



Greg Jackson, director of facility operations for TSMC, described the innovative water and waste recycling measure that the company has created at its many factories around the world. The plant in North Phoenix has 4,000 parking spaces covered by solar panels.



A panel titled "Breaking into Semiconductors: Career Opportunities in a High-Growth Industry" featured speakers (from left) Timothy Tang, head of the U.S. unit of WITS; Michelle Kurth, senior manager for talent at ASM Global; and Jiho Chin, system installation manager for ASML.