

ASU president connects with veterans during town hall

Crow gives vets glimpse into ASU innovation, support

By Jerry Gonzalez, ASU News
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Arizona State University President Michael Crow shared his family's military background, provided university updates and reaffirmed ASU's commitment to military-affiliated students during a town hall held on April 18 at Armstrong Hall on the Tempe campus.

Organized by the Student Veterans of America ASU chapter with support from ASU's Office for Veteran and Military Academic Engagement, the inaugural town hall gave student veterans a chance to gain insight from the university's top executive and ask him questions.

When asked about a project he's excited to be working on, Crow demonstrated a mobile app featuring a small-language-model agentic AI avatar the university is adapting to serve as a student tutor, among other things, for the fall.

"This is called FYI.AI," Crow said. "You asked about the funnest project I'm working on. That one."

FYI.AI, a tech company founded by artist and Black Eyed Peas frontman will.i.am, is partnering with ASU on the project, which was [announced](#) at the ASU+GSV Summit earlier this month. The platform will provide AI tools for academic advising, career support, learning and more to the university community.

ASU is a new type of university, Crow said. Old university models are too slow, too biased, too fixated on high school GPAs, and not always supportive of veterans, who are not traditional students. Having attended 17 schools in 20 moves before graduating high school, the president understands the challenges of not being the ideal student that typical universities are searching for.

"We don't operate that way," Crow said.

Crow grew up in a Navy family. His father was a career enlisted sailor; his grandfather also served in the Navy, and his maternal grandfather served in the Army during World War I. Both of his

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Crow talks about the FYI.AI project

brothers joined the Marine Corps. Crow himself was a Navy midshipman at Iowa State University, training to become a Marine, and remained in the inactive Reserves for six years.

Acknowledging that many veterans value self-sufficiency and may hesitate to “raise a ruckus” by speaking up, Crow urged students to seek help as soon as they need it.

“Raise your hand; don’t suffer; don’t think you can solve things by yourself,” Crow said. “There is nobody here working to keep people from graduating. The only purpose we have here is to help people to graduate, help people to move forward.”

Founded in 2009, the SVA at ASU serves as the university’s chapter of the national organization. SVA supports veteran and military-affiliated students by fostering leadership, building a strong sense of community and providing services — all aimed at helping them succeed in college and beyond.

Jonattan Robles, SVA ASU chapter president and a Marine veteran, provided an overview of the chapter and their accomplishments, including national recognition for community service.

“We are a national organization that provides veterans with the resources and support that they need to thrive in academia and their transition to civilian employment,” said Robles, a graduate student at the [Thunderbird School of Global Management](#). “At the national level, our chapter was recognized for providing over 600 hours of community service in 2024. We earned the Presidential Volunteer Service Award that was signed by the (U.S.) president.”

The SVA chapter leads several initiatives throughout the year, including participation in Washington Week, where they engage legislators to advocate for policies to benefit veterans and their communities, Robles said.

The town hall with Crow was an SVA first and one that was long overdue, said Dani Bermudez, SVA advocacy officer and graduate student with the [New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences](#).

“The significance of this event is that it hasn’t been done before,” she said. “Although all veterans that go to this university are not here, we do interact with them through our social events and our national platforms. So we are able to advocate for the things in our community that we would like to see here at ASU.”

ASU touts one of the largest populations of military-connected students in the nation. Through the Pat Tillman Veterans Center, ASU supported an all-time high of 22,342 military students in 2024. This included active-duty members, veterans, members of the National Guard and reserves, as well as military family members using Post-9/11 G.I. Bill benefits.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



ASU President Michael Crow speaks with student veterans gathered during the inaugural Student Veterans of America ASU chapter town hall held Friday, April 18, in Armstrong Hall on the Tempe campus. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News

Text image(s)



ASU President Michael Crow demonstrates the FYI.AI app on his cell phone during the Student Veterans of America ASU chapter inaugural town hall held Friday, April 18, in Armstrong Hall on the Tempe campus. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News



Jonattan Robles, Student Veterans of America ASU chapter president, welcomes guests and talks about opportunities within SVA, before ASU President Michael Crow addresses student veterans during a town hall held Friday, April 18, in Armstrong Hall, on the Tempe campus. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News