

ASU is No. 1 in innovation for 11th straight year

Also, multiple academic programs rank highly among public schools in 2026 US News & World Report 'Best Colleges' list

By Mary Beth Faller, ASU News
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In a year when higher education has faced major disruption, Arizona State University's mission of inclusion and access has set it apart from other institutions.

ASU's peers have again ranked it No. 1 in innovation — for the 11th year in a row — in the [2026 "Best Colleges" rankings](#) by U.S. News & World Report.

ASU has placed first every year since the "Most Innovative Schools" category was created by U.S. News & World Report magazine and has ranked ahead of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Stanford University every year.

The ranking is based on a survey of college presidents, provosts and admissions deans, asking them to name the institutions they think are making the most innovative improvements in curriculum, faculty, students, campus life, technology or facilities.

"Now more than ever, higher education needs new and better ways to move teaching, learning and discovery forward," ASU President Michael M. Crow said.

"This ranking reflects our continued efforts to perpetually revolutionize knowledge creation and practice, all in service to our mission, while navigating a rapidly changing and complex landscape."

The latest rankings also placed ASU at No. 3 among national public universities for first-year student experience, tied with Texas A&M and ahead of the University of Michigan, Purdue University and the University of Wisconsin. In the category of learning communities, which is cohort-based learning, ASU was tied for No. 8 with Virginia Tech and Florida State University. In an area important for career building, ASU ranked fifth among public universities for co-ops and internships.

(Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QP90uTzi7qI>)

A top-rated education

In addition to the U.S. News rankings, ASU has recently ranked highly in other reports for sustainability, access and impact:

For the sixth year in a row — and bucking a downward trend among American universities — ASU ranked as the No. 1 institution in the U.S. and in the top 10 globally for work toward the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals by the [Times Higher Education 2025 University Impact Ranking](#).

In the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, ASU was [rated globally as a “top performer” in its 2025 Sustainable Campus Index](#). The university also earned a Premium STARS rating and special callout for the institution's three-credit sustainability general education requirement.

ASU ranked eighth in the country among public national institutions for “2025 Best Colleges for Your Tuition (and Tax) Dollars” in the [Washington Monthly annual College Guide and Rankings](#), which bases its ranking on four equally weighted measures: access, affordability, outcomes, and community and national service.

ASU ranked fourth among public universities in the U.S. for developing the next generation of digital and AI-ready leaders, according to the [Digital Leaders in Higher Education Survey](#), which placed ASU 16th among all American universities — public and private.

ASU again ranked No. 2 among U.S. public institutions for employable graduates, according to the [Global Employability University Ranking and Survey](#).

Big headlines from the past year

This year, ASU has made big impact in several areas.

Research

ASU researchers have made several breakthroughs over the past year that will improve peoples' lives. For example:

Developing [a new test](#) that can reveal when cancer began and how quickly it is progressing.

Discovering how [lighting](#) that mimics the day-night cycle can boost the sleep and mood of people with dementia

Creating a fire-detecting and risk-mitigating system that improves the effectiveness of [fire sensors](#) to reduce the death and devastation caused by wildfires.

Artificial intelligence

ASU, the first university to partner with OpenAI, just expanded its collaboration, giving access to [free ChatGPT licenses](#) to every student, faculty member, research and staff member in the ASU

community.

In research, ASU faculty have built a new AI tool to help doctors [read chest X-rays](#) more accurately to improve health outcomes, and used AI to analyze huge data sets to help [feed the world](#).

Microelectronics

Two years ago, ASU partnered with Applied Materials on a [Materials-to-Fab Center](#), and over this past summer, the switch was flipped on the first phase, with researchers and industry partners beginning work.

In addition, Applied Materials is investing in several [initiatives](#) in the Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering to accelerate discoveries, help researchers respond to real-world challenges and train the workforce of the future.

Surviving the heat

ASU faculty have found several ways to help the local community survive the brutal Arizona heat, helping [construction workers](#) avoid heat-related illnesses and studying how elementary school [kids](#) can still be active during recess.

A professor who developed a first-of-its-kind outdoor thermal manikin recently discovered the mechanism behind sweating that [keeps the body cool](#).

More from latest US News & World Report rankings

In the U.S. News and World Report 2026 rankings for academic programs, ASU once again ranked second among all universities nationwide, public and private, for its [supply chain management](#) degree program, in the W. P. Carey School of Business.

ASU also placed in the top 20 among public national universities in these areas:

No. 5 for undergraduate teaching programs.

No. 6 for business analytics.

No. 8 for management information systems.

No. 8 for entrepreneurship.

No. 8 for production/operations management.

No. 9 for software engineering — a new program ranking.

No. 9 for finance.

No. 9 for management.

No. 10 for cybersecurity.

No. 10 for environmental health (engineering).

No. 10 for accounting.

No. 10 (tied) for international business.

No. 11 for artificial intelligence.

No. 12 for electrical engineering.

No. 12 for civil engineering.

No. 12 (tied) for marketing.

No. 14 for computer engineering.

No. 14 for undergraduate business programs.

No. 20 for undergraduate engineering programs.

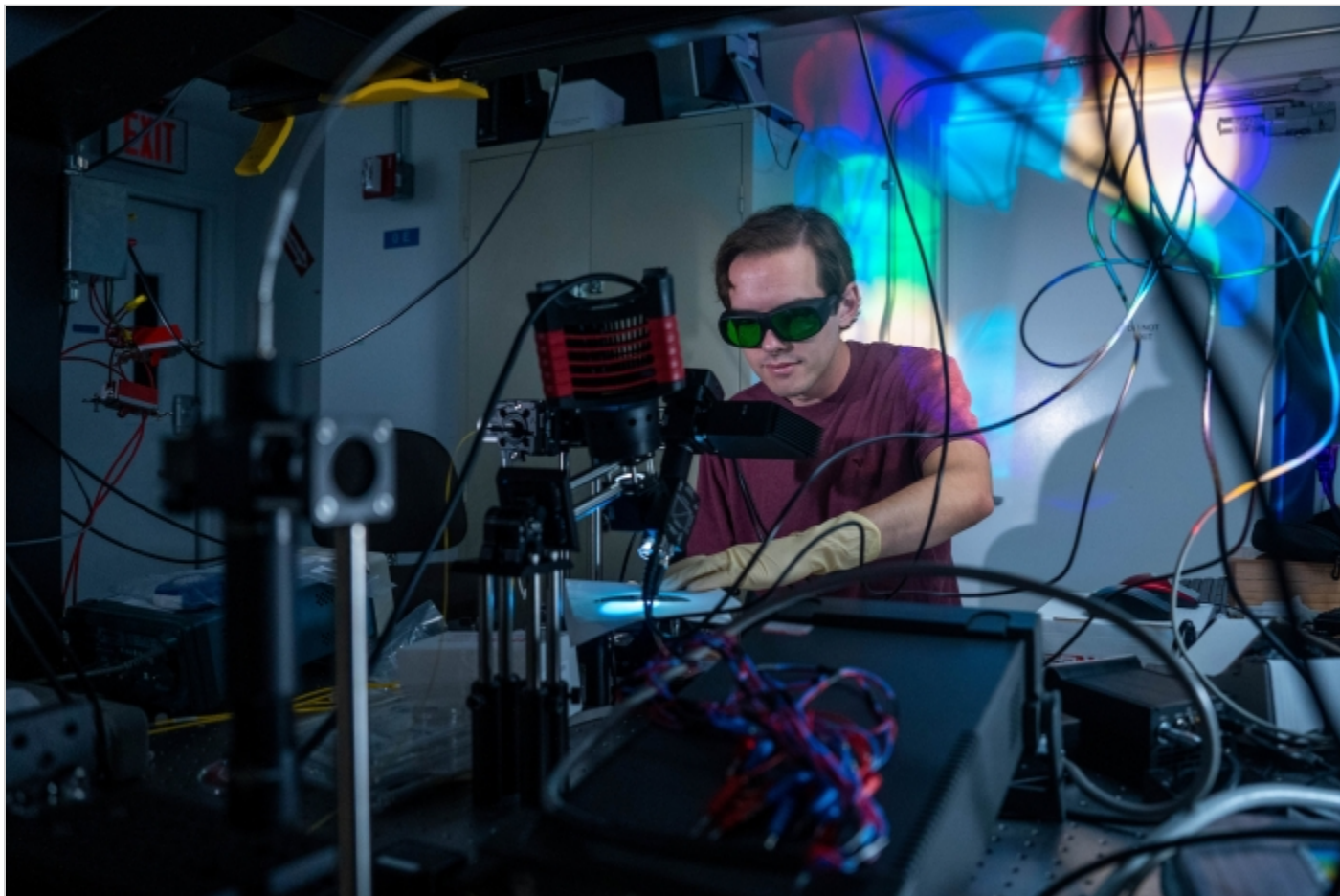
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[Growing nursing program ranks in top 5% nationally](#)

[10 undergraduate business programs rank in top 25 in nation](#)

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

Main image



Among the many advancements that ASU made over the past year is the startup of the new Materials-to-Fab Center in the MacroTechnology Works research facility (pictured here) in the ASU Research Park. Photo by Samantha Chow/ASU News

Text image(s)



Students work in the Knight-Swift Logistics Lab at the West Valley campus. The lab is a partnership between ASU's W. P. Carey School of Business and Knight-Swift to further the dissemination of supply chain knowledge and skills to students, companies and professionals worldwide. Photo by Samantha Chow/Arizona State University