

# Blackstone Charitable Foundation awards \$3M to launch Blackstone Skilled Futures

## ASU a partner on program aimed at expanding trades opportunities in Arizona

By Michelle Stermole, ASU News  
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The [Blackstone Charitable Foundation](#) has awarded a \$3 million grant to launch Blackstone Skilled Futures in partnership with Arizona State University, Maricopa Community Colleges and local nonprofits. The program aims to increase access to high-quality training and workforce development, focusing on construction and advanced manufacturing in the Phoenix area.

Blackstone Skilled Futures will support students in need, along with capacity building for training institutions and other wraparound support to ensure learners can get education, certifications and employment in these fields.

The initiative will also support high school students with career-connected programming, creating workforce pipelines into postsecondary training and industry credentials in high-wage, high-demand and high-skill jobs in the skilled trades.

Arizona's rapid growth in electric vehicles, artificial intelligence, energy infrastructure and semiconductors is fueling a construction and advanced manufacturing boom. The Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity projects 37,000 new construction jobs will be added in Arizona by 2031, including 13,000 electricians and 3,000 HVACR (heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration) technicians. Job demand in advanced manufacturing parallels this trend, with the state expecting to add over 30,000 jobs by 2033.

"It's getting harder and harder for people to find good-paying, stable jobs without a college degree, but this investment helps change that," U.S. Sen. Ruben Gallego said. "By preparing Arizona students for careers in high-demand fields like construction, manufacturing and energy, we can strengthen our local businesses, keep our state competitive and help more people build their careers and families in Arizona."

Blackstone Skilled Futures plans to:

Award scholarships to 4,000 students.

Introduce skilled trades to 3,500 new students.

Enroll 5,000 students in training or apprenticeships.

Support 1,000 job placements.

The program will provide scholarships, dual-enrollment credits, OSHA training, recruitment tools and connections to employers. ASU's [Academic Alliances](#), in partnership with the OSHA Training Institute at ASU's [Del E. Webb School of Construction](#) and [Maricopa Community Colleges](#), will expand training and certificate programs.

“The demand for skilled trades is growing, and these careers are the backbone of a thriving Arizona community. The Blackstone Charitable Foundation is committed to opening doors for individuals to gain the training, tools and opportunities they need to succeed,” said [Maura Pally](#), executive director of the Blackstone Charitable Foundation. “By investing in skilled trades, we’re not just helping to meet today’s demand, we’re supporting a stronger future for the city and the people who call it home.”

[Nancy Gonzales](#), executive vice president and university provost, said, “ASU is honored to work closely on this grant with the Blackstone Charitable Foundation and the Maricopa Community Colleges, one of the university’s most valued community college partners. We share a mission of student excellence, access and impact, and this collaboration is a direct reflection of ASU’s commitment to transfer student success.”

The colleges and university will collaborate with [Center for the Future of Arizona](#), [Greater Phoenix Chamber](#), Phoenix Mayor’s Future Talent Fund and [Maricopa County Regional School District](#) to increase the number of students pursuing these skilled trades.

Center for the Future of Arizona will connect education and industry leaders to build seamless college and career pathways in high-demand sectors through the [Arizona Pathways to Prosperity](#) initiative. The organization will engage school districts, nonprofit organizations, municipalities, state agencies, companies and chambers of commerce to recruit students and provide technical assistance and scholarships. The center will continue collaborating with the Greater Phoenix Chamber Foundation to support employer outreach.

“Building the workforce of the future requires collaboration, innovation and a deep commitment to creating opportunity through education and training,” said [Sybil Francis](#), chair, president and CEO of Center for the Future of Arizona. “We are proud to join the Blackstone Charitable Foundation, ASU and Maricopa Community Colleges in creating pathways that empower young people across Arizona to pursue rewarding, high-skill careers. Together, we’re providing all Arizonans with access to training and opportunities to help them thrive.”

At the same time, Maricopa Community Colleges will lead localized engagement efforts, which include expanding scholarships for low-income students, securing industry partners to serve as hosts and training providers for apprenticeships, facilitating work-based learning and career-support activities such as resume reviews and mock interviews, and convening industry advisory

councils to inform curriculum updates and identify student engagement opportunities.

“Maricopa Community Colleges have a rich history of training skilled workers,” said [Steven R. Gonzales](#), Maricopa Community Colleges chancellor. “As the largest provider of workforce training in Arizona, we are developing the next generation of skilled workers — who will undoubtedly play a critical role in supporting nearly every facet of our infrastructure.”

Collectively, the partners will reach a variety of populations who can benefit from these skilled trades opportunities, including high school students, community college students and working adults to rapidly scale access to high-wage, high-demand careers.

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

## Main image



ASU faculty from the Del E. Webb School of Construction and the School of Sustainable Engineering and the Built Environment on a construction site. Photo by Erika Gronek/Arizona State University

## Text image(s)





Special guests at the Blackstone Skilled Futures launch Friday at South Mountain Community College include (from left): Alex Katz, senior managing director of government relations at Blackstone; Todd Sanders, Greater Phoenix Chamber president and CEO; Ruben Gallego, U.S. senator; Greg Blank, CEO of Blackstone Infrastructure Strategies; Kate Gallego, mayor of Phoenix; Erica Lock, vice president of Blackstone Charitable Foundation; Steven Gonzales, Maricopa Community Colleges chancellor; Sybil Francis, president and CEO of Center for the Future of Arizona; Maura Pally, executive director of Blackstone Charitable Foundation; Greg Stanton, U.S. representative; Mike Forman, head of digital infrastructure of Blackstone Real Estate; Kyle Squires, dean of the Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering; and Nancy Gonzales, ASU executive vice president and university provost.