

ASU's Panchanathan to lead Phoenix Quantum Strategy

Mayor announces initiative aimed at positioning city — and its economy — at forefront of ‘next era of breakthrough technology’

By Penny Walker, ASU News
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Phoenix is ready to make a leap into its economic future with quantum computing, and the city has asked Arizona State University to play a leadership role.

Mayor Kate Gallego announced the Phoenix Quantum Strategy, a new initiative, during her April 21 State of the City address. The initiative aims to position Phoenix as a quantum hub in the United States, adding to recent efforts to grow the area's economy through key industries — efforts that led to Phoenix recently being named one of the top four cities¹ for gross domestic product growth.

“Phoenix's targeted investments have led to enormous growth in the biosciences and advanced semiconductor manufacturing — and I want to make sure that our city, our region and our state lead the economy of the future,” Gallego said.

“Quantum technology is a promising platform for new economic growth, and if we do it right, harness our assets and develop a smart strategy, we can attract investment and better diversify our economy with industries built for the future.”

Quantum technology — which has applications from health to national security — uses the strange physics of particles to build new, problem-solving technologies. Quantum computers, for example, may one day solve problems that would take today's supercomputers thousands of years.

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At Tuesday's announcement, the mayor said the city has “the very best person in the country” to lead the new quantum initiative: Sethuraman “Panch” Panchanathan, former director of the National Science Foundation and now University Professor of Technology and Innovation at ASU.

“Panch's leadership at ASU and NSF helped shape America's innovation agenda, and now he's ready to lead the efforts for Phoenix,” Gallego said.

Before becoming director of the NSF in 2020, Panchanathan worked at ASU for 22 years, where he created the [Center for Cognitive Ubiquitous Computing](#), founded the [School of Computing and Augmented Intelligence](#) (formally the School of Computing and Informatics) and the Department of Biomedical Informatics, and served as the executive vice president of ASU's Knowledge Enterprise and the chief research and innovation officer.

During his tenure at the NSF, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, quantum biotechnology, advanced manufacturing and next-gen wireless were strengthened and accelerated. He also oversaw the development of the National Artificial Intelligence Research Resource Pilot, an access point for researchers and educators to advance research ideas in AI and train the next generation of AI talent.

Much of his work both at the NSF and at ASU has been advocating for the importance of science and technology to American competitiveness. This new initiative with Phoenix continues that.

"ASU is more than ready for the challenge to help bring Mayor Gallego's request to lead a quantum computing, communication and sensing initiative to vision," Panchanathan said. "Her foresight to establish Phoenix as a hub for quantum technologies is timely and important. The quantum strategy will leverage Arizona's inherent strengths in the areas of semiconductors, supply chain and biosciences.

"ASU and other institutions are an incredible source of talent that can unleash new ideas, skilled workforce, entrepreneurs and the emergence of new industries."

The initiative will unite industry, higher education and government to "ensure we are ready to lead in the next era of breakthrough technology," Gallego said. "I'm grateful for ASU's leadership in helping us seize this opportunity."

The mayor said quantum technology holds great potential for economic growth and that the city can strengthen and diversify its economy with "industries built for the future."

"This is a powerful signal that Phoenix is not just participating in the future of quantum technology; we have the potential to become the place where it takes root," she said.

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

¹ Gallego said that from 2022 to 2024, the top four cities for GDP growth are Seattle, San Jose, San Francisco and Phoenix.

Main image



Photo of the downtown Phoenix skyline by Samantha Chow/Arizona State University

Text image(s)



Sethuraman "Panch" Panchanathan