

# ASU a key partner in US-Taiwan technology relationship

## University's student workforce played major role in Phoenix's burgeoning semiconductor hub

By Scott Bordow, ASU News  
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In 2016, the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., or TSMC, was scouting cities in the United States that could potentially serve as the home of its \$165 billion semiconductor manufacturing complex.

Officials from the company toured several possible sites in the greater Phoenix area but didn't find a desirable location. They wanted, at the time, what Phoenix couldn't give them: A science and technology park in which its employees could walk across the street to its customers and vendors.

So Phoenix got to work, and in 2019 was invited to make another pitch in Taiwan. After presenting the details of the park and discussing vital elements such as power, water, etc., the city took another shot.

Arizona State University vice president Grace O'Sullivan joined the delegation to represent the workforce in the region and shared the scale and scope of the over 30,000 engineering students at the university.

"What Grace said really did turn the tide for us being able to bring in this large investment," said Christine Mackay, president and CEO of the Greater Phoenix Economic Council.

Mackay made her remarks during the inaugural U.S.-Taiwan Technology Partnership Forum, co-hosted by the U.S.-Taiwan Business Council and ASU, held May 8 at the San Tan Ford Club inside Mountain America Stadium. The event brought together ASU leadership, industry officials and city leaders.

ASU President Michael Crow was the keynote speaker and noted that the U.S. has at four times in its history decided that certain areas of scientific and technological activity would be owned by the government: exploration, agriculture, nuclear power and, today, digital.

Crow said ASU is constantly thinking of ways it can enhance the partnerships between TSMC, which employs more than 3,000 people at its Phoenix facility, and other American manufacturers.

“How can we give service? What can we do? How can we help TSMC here in Arizona?” Crow said. “How can we enhance the knowledge change, and change the people production chains that accelerate the research and development activity, accelerate the use outcomes and accelerate the social transformation issues associated with massive compute?”

Crow said ASU can provide a broader cultural education for TSMC and other Taiwanese companies by hosting cultural events or educating communities on how the semiconductor industry is changing Arizona.

“I don’t have an exact answer for you other than it’s a very important thing that we need to work on, and it’s a very important thing that’s going to need some attention,” he said.

Rupert Hammond-Chambers, president of the U.S.-Taiwan Business Council, said the event was timely because Taiwan has become a major trading partner with the U.S.

In 2025, Taiwan became the fifth-largest merchandise trading partner, with total goods reaching \$256.1 billion. U.S. goods imports from Taiwan surged to \$201.4 billion, while U.S. exports to Taiwan were \$54.7 billion.

“It’s an absolute reflection of just how rapidly the relationship is growing,” Hammond-Chambers said.

In the afternoon panel, titled “Higher Education Meeting the Needs of the Tech Industry,” Kyle Squires, dean of the Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering, said it is essential that ASU’s degree programs are responsive to semiconductor industry demands.

“Universities produce graduates into a company, and then there’s a period of onboarding. It might be 90 days, it might be two weeks, it might be a year,” Squires said.

“That onboarding is a signal to universities that while we are very good listeners and we’re producing very good graduates, there’s a mismatch between what the universities are producing and our company partners.

“What does that mean? Optics into company road maps ... the more we know about (them), the better we’re going to be able to prepare students.”

Michael Troop, associate vice president for educational outreach and student services, ASU Preparatory Academy, said students should have the opportunity to prepare for semiconductor jobs before they set foot on an ASU campus.

“A lot of jobs that are highly technical that are coming from Taiwan do not require four-year degrees,” Troop said. “So, working all the way down to CTE (career and technical education) programs in high school is critically important because students can get a large head start and even begin to work before college or while they’re in college.”

Pearl Chang Esau, founder and owner of Shan Strategies, a Phoenix consulting firm that works on global partnerships, said that for the U.S.-Taiwan technology partnership to flourish, Taiwanese citizens who come to the U.S. to work must feel appreciated.

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"I really think the bigger factor for success is around culture, in our ability to welcome people that are different from ourselves," Chang Esau said. "That includes new cross-cultural settings down to the elementary schools where the children of the employees who are coming here to train attend school.

"That all matters. Taiwan is a small place. If you have a bunch of people going back and saying, 'The Americans were unfriendly and the school children were mean,' that's not a good look."

In that regard, Chang Esau said, ASU already has stepped up, hosting what is now the largest Double Ten Day (Taiwan's national holiday) celebration in North America, on the West Valley campus.

"Those sorts of things really matter," she said. "So I don't think we can over emphasize how important the university's role is in creating the culture of welcome. It's critical."

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

## Main image



ASU President Michael Crow (right) answers a question from Squall Wu, a member of the North America Taiwanese Engineers Association Arizona chapter, during the U.S.-Taiwan Technology

Partnership Forum held at the San Tan Ford Club at Mountain America Stadium in Tempe on May 8. Photo by Samantha Chow/Arizona State University

## Text image(s)



Grace O'Sullivan, ASU vice president of TSMC partnership initiatives, listens as ASU President Michael Crow speaks during the U.S.-Taiwan Technology Partnership Forum held at ASU on May 8. Photo by Samantha Chow/Arizona State University





Pearl Chang Esau (third from right), founder and CEO of both Shàn Strategies and TechSmart Learning Fund, speaks during an afternoon panel at the U.S.-Taiwan Technology Partnership Forum held at ASU on May 8. Other panelist (from left) are: Kyle Squires, dean of the Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering; Danny Seiden, president and CEO of the Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Leah Palmer, executive director of the Arizona Advanced Manufacturing Institute; Michael Troop, chief learning officer of ASU Preparatory Academy; and moderator Matt Salmon, special advisor to ASU and former U.S. House of Representatives member. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News