

Innovation Showcase opens doors for students

Signature student event highlights engineering, technology projects designed to address real-world challenges

By Aisha Kaddi, ASU News
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This May, students, faculty members, industry professionals and community supporters gathered on Arizona State University's Polytechnic campus for [Innovation Showcase](#), a signature student event highlighting engineering and technology projects designed to address real-world challenges.

Hosted by the [Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering](#) at ASU, the showcase featured projects from students in [The Polytechnic School](#), the [School of Manufacturing Systems and Networks](#) and the [School of Computing and Augmented Intelligence](#).

Throughout the event, attendees moved between student presentations and interactive exhibits that reflected the Polytechnic campus' emphasis on applied learning, industry collaboration and community engagement.

"The success of the Polytechnic campus requires the kind of innovative hands-on learning and broad partnerships that are on display at the Innovation Showcase," said [Vanessa Fonseca-Chavez](#), assistant vice provost of the ASU Polytechnic campus. "Our Poly students rose to the challenge of designing and showcasing impactful team-based projects that highlight skills they'll use well into the future."

For the second year, Innovation Showcase welcomed 240 East Valley high school students. For many, the showcase offered a firsthand introduction to engineering and technology education at ASU.

"For many students, this may have been their first experience seeing how engineering and game-based immersive technologies come together in real industrial environments," said [Binil Starly](#), School of Manufacturing Systems and Networks director and professor. "Moments like these can spark curiosity and help students envision themselves pursuing future careers in STEM."

Student innovation tackles real-world challenges

In the Sun Devil Fitness Complex, ASU students demonstrated the technical and collaborative work that shaped their projects throughout the academic year. One student team earned both the People's Choice Award, selected by high school students, and the Technical Excellence Award, selected by industry professionals.

Consisting of undergraduate students Eli Greetis, Harrison LaBell, Arick Nitzsche, Zack Okun, Dominick Trusko and Kirk Volin, the team created an Internet of Things-enabled smart manufacturing work cell that automated product handling, sensing, sorting, packaging and transfer across eight integrated stations.

"Hands-on experiences give students experience in real industrial settings while helping them build meaningful professional relationships with potential employers," said Zack Okun, a recent manufacturing engineering graduate.

Other projects across the showcase demonstrated how students from multiple disciplines are applying engineering and technology skills to challenges in energy, automation and public safety.

One team explored the development of a scaled robotic prototype designed to assist with solar panel installation on tracking systems. Another team focused on Hazard-KG and Hazel AI, a knowledge graph and autonomous artificial intelligence, or AI, interface developed to improve natural hazard analysis.

Inspiring the next generation of engineers

In addition to viewing projects and participating in activities, visiting high school students also heard directly from ASU students during panel discussions focused on engineering and technology pathways, internships and student life.

Bradley Pollock, an undergraduate student studying engineering in the robotics concentration in The Polytechnic School, says he enjoyed sharing his experiences with students considering ASU.

"People are designed to progress and grow," Pollock said. "For these visiting high school students, their next step is tapping into ASU's immense resources and starting their college journey."

The event's impact was also evident among the educators who accompanied the visiting high school students.

"I had a lot of students walk away feeling so inspired," said a teacher chaperone from a visiting high school. "And a lot of them were not students who usually consider college!"

Strengthening industry connections

Industry engagement remained a central part of the showcase experience throughout the day. Representatives from partner companies interacted with their sponsored student teams, offering technical feedback and discussing workforce skills relevant to their industries. For many industry professionals, Innovation Showcase also serves as an opportunity to identify emerging talent and strengthen long-term relationships with ASU.

“We’ve actually hired three students from previous projects in the past year,” said Karl Schultz, vice president at [Axon](#). “When a student calls, we look at what’s available, what skills they have, and we try to find the right match.”

Organizers say the continued growth of the Innovation Showcase reflects the university’s commitment to creating environments where education, industry and community engagement intersect in meaningful ways at the ASU Polytechnic campus.

“This showcase authentically demonstrates the experiential learning opportunities our Polytechnic students consistently receive,” said [Renee Clancy](#), director of Polytechnic campus strategic enrollment initiatives. “It engages high school students in a hands-on, meaningful way, helping them better understand what college can be and the possibilities it can offer them.”

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

Main image



Agilan Kumar, an undergraduate studying engineering with a concentration in robotics, makes final adjustments to his project at the spring 2026 Innovation Showcase, hosted on the Polytechnic campus at Arizona State University. Photo by Aisha Kaddi/ASU

Text image(s)



From left: Undergraduate students Kirk Volin, Zack Okun, Eli Greetis, Harrison LaBell, Dominick Trusko and Arick Nitzsche stand behind their team project, "Investigating IIoT Components to Enable Smart Manufacturing," at the spring 2026 Innovation Showcase on the Polytechnic campus at ASU. Photo by Aisha Kaddi/ASU



Kurt Paterson, school director and professor in The Polytechnic School, and Thu Luu, a systems engineering graduate student in the School of Manufacturing Systems and Networks, pose at the 2026 Innovation Showcase. Photo by Aisha Kaddi/ASU



From left: Cade Tanner, Bradley Pollock, Kyle Burnett, Sidra Elsaady and Bryn Perry speak on a spring 2026 Innovation Showcase panel about life on the Polytechnic campus at Arizona State University. Photo by Kurt Paterson/ASU