

ASU ranks No. 1 in the US for impact with UN Sustainable Development Goals

By Lori Baker, ASU News
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For the seventh consecutive year, Arizona State University ranks as the No. 1 institution in the U.S. for work toward the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, announced by Times Higher Education in its [2026 Sustainability Impact Ratings](#).

The yearly release of university rankings measures how institutions worldwide advance sustainability toward fulfilling 17 specific objectives designed to create a better world by 2030 — goals that serve as a collective framework for promoting environmental sustainability, as well as peace and prosperity for all.

The 2026 rankings evaluate 1,646 universities from 116 countries and territories across 17 individual SDG tables and one overall ranking.

ASU's overall score of 93.9 out of 100 points puts it at No. 1 in the U.S., ahead of MIT, Purdue University and Pennsylvania State University.

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[ASU ranks No. 1 nationally in the newly released 2026 Sustainable Campus Index.](#)

"Our planet faces increasing challenges, but that is not a case for despair," ASU President [Michael M. Crow](#) said. "Unbelievably brilliant and creative minds are working toward solutions, and our university has focused its energies on finding new ways to create a thriving future for all. ASU's approach to complexity is transformative, not incremental. As a result, we are uniquely positioned to respond swiftly and lead the way in sustainability and global futures research."

[Peter Schlosser](#), university vice president and director general of the [Julie Ann Wrigley Global Futures Laboratory](#), said higher education institutions play a key role in defining pathways toward a future in which all life will thrive on a healthy planet.

"The THE rankings reflect our innovative, holistic approach in producing knowledge required to turn the numerous challenges we face into opportunities at scale and at a pace that matches that

of a rapidly changing world,” Schlosser said.

ASU also ranked No. 1 in the U.S. for six specific SDGs. Here’s a closer look at three of those: climate action, responsible consumption and production, and affordable and clean energy.

SDG 13: Climate action

This goal — where ASU ranks No. 5 in the world and No. 1 in the U.S., ahead of Virginia Tech and the University of Maryland — aims to help countries adapt to climate change, invest in low-carbon development, and integrate disaster risk measures, sustainable natural resource management and human security into national development strategies.

Among its climate action initiatives, ASU informs and supports governments in early warning and monitoring of local climate change risks, from [extreme heat](#) to [agricultural futures](#) to [more efficient water use](#). It convenes municipal and regional leaders, planners and practitioners across Arizona in [workshops](#) and working groups to help build heat resilience, sustainable groundwater management and local capacity for climate adaptation and disaster preparedness.

On its campuses, ASU has ongoing programs and research about carbon capture, ocean health, renewable energy, heat risk mitigation and adaptation, and more.

SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production

This goal — in which ASU ranks ahead of Virginia Tech and the University of Maryland — requires the efficient management of our shared natural resources and the way we dispose of toxic waste and pollutants, encouraging industries, businesses and consumers to recycle and reduce waste, and supporting developing countries to move toward more sustainable patterns of consumption.

Among its initiatives, ASU researchers are turning to large industries to help them rethink how they use water. In the Phoenix metropolitan area, nearly 40% of municipal water use supports commercial, industrial and institutional, or CII, users, including semiconductor fabs, data centers, hospitals, airports and food producers. By partnering with these sectors, ASU researchers are identifying [new ways to reuse water](#) and improve efficiency where innovation can have the greatest impact.

Addressing how waste created from mining carries contaminants that can potentially make their way into nearby waterways, several projects at ASU are working on [ways to stabilize mine waste](#), reduce environmental contamination and recover critical minerals across Arizona as part of the ASU Mining Innovation Initiative.

As the Colorado River provides water to about 40 million people, irrigates millions of acres of farmland and generates electricity for millions of homes and businesses, ASU researchers are examining how to improve hydrologic forecasting. [More accurate estimates of water availability](#) could help state agencies anticipate shortages earlier and make more informed decisions about conservation, which is crucial as Arizona continues to face mandatory cutbacks tied to declining river and reservoir levels.

SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy

Ensuring energy for all involves investing in solar, wind and thermal power, improving energy efficiency, expanding infrastructure and upgrading technology to promote growth and protect the environment.

The university pursues this goal through extensive research, community infrastructure and regional sustainability initiatives. Its No. 1 in the U.S. ranking puts it ahead of the University of Maryland and the University of Pittsburgh.

With the growing energy demands of artificial intelligence and high-performance computing, a [joint ASU and DCX USA, LLC research team](#) appointed by the U.S. Department of Energy is studying whether a small modular reactor can provide dependable energy for emerging high tech.

As rural and remote communities face the persistent challenge of unreliable energy, ASU researchers are [collaborating](#) with Hopi Utilities Corporation and BoxPower, a microgrid development company, to design a solar-powered hybrid microgrid that serves as a replicable blueprint for rural energy resilience.

A 26% to 40% reduction in utility bills could be a budgetary game changer. An ASU research project called [Providing Energy Resilience With an ROI](#) achieved these savings at a demonstration site using Adaptive Control of Energy Systems technology. The supervisory software with smart energy controls monitors and manages when and how energy is used or stored by existing systems or networks. An added benefit was a 22% improvement in electrical system performance during mock grid outages, meaning power stayed on for a full day longer than if relying solely on backup generators.

Other top rankings

ASU also scored No. 1 in the U.S. for work toward the following SDGs:

SDG 5: Gender equality, ahead of the University of Pittsburgh

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth, ahead of the University of Maryland

SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions, ahead of Michigan State University and the University of Pittsburgh

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

Main image



ASU ranks No. 1 in the U.S. and No. 5 in the world for its efforts on the U.N. Sustainable Development Goal focused on climate change. The university's efforts include supporting governments with monitoring and improving local climate risks, including a partnership with the Arizona Department of Transportation to optimize water use across urban freeways. Here, Harry Cooper, director of water conservation innovation for the Arizona Water Innovation Initiative, reviews records during landscape data collection efforts. Photo by Uday Kumar Marthineni