New Olympic center puts LA28, and beyond, in focus

The Center for Olympic Studies at ASU takes an interdisciplinary and global approach to understanding the Olympic movement

By Molly Loonam, ASU News
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The scale of the LA28 Olympic Games will be staggering — comparable to staging three Super Bowls daily for 21 consecutive days.

The Games are expected to connect more athletes, fans and spectators than ever before, supported by hundreds of thousands of experts working across sports business, marketing, journalism, sustainability, athletic performance, health and other fields.

Arizona State University's Center for Olympic Studies, anchored in the W. P. Carey School of Business's Department of Marketing, will explore the people, ideas and industries that support this global undertaking while creating new opportunities for students to engage with the Olympic Games.

While LA28 provides an immediate focal point for the center, its broader purpose is to build a lasting platform connecting ASU's students, faculty, research capacity and industry expertise with the needs of the Olympic and Paralympic movement.

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During the center's launch event, university leaders, student-athletes, ASU Olympians and affiliated faculty gathered to celebrate the center's mission to expand interdisciplinary education, research and understanding of the Olympic movement's global impact.

"This center has the ability to really transcend disciplines, transcend across schools and connect us to the world in many new ways," said Ohad Kadan, Charles J. Robel Dean and W. P. Carey Distinguished Chair in Business. "It goes way beyond athletics."

One of only three Olympic Studies and Research Centres at a U.S. institution, the center brings together faculty from the W. P. Carey School of Business, The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, the Watts College

of Public Service and Community Solutions, the School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences and the College of Health Solutions. This interdisciplinary approach reflects the wide-ranging expertise required to stage the Olympic Games and understand their influence around the world.

Daniel McIntosh, teaching professor of marketing and the center's founding director, described the center as a practical, student-focused organization that builds on ASU's longstanding commitment to global engagement and interdisciplinary collaboration. The center will also provide students with opportunities to study and engage with sport at its highest level.

"The Center for Olympic Studies is a natural extension of the work we've been doing. It helps position ASU, W. P. Carey and the Department of Marketing as leaders in the future of global sports," McIntosh said.

ASU Athletics Director Graham Rossini discussed the university's athletics program and commitment to developing student-athletes holistically.

"We're very much committed to success in the classroom and preparation for life after sport. So a collaboration like this is enormously important because as our student athletes are learning and growing and developing in this environment, they're also in the presence of greatness," he said. "We're honored to collaborate with W. P. Carey."

(Video: {https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g96-LZ82tr8&list=PLNrrxHpJhC8l6rR-ECcVc…})

ASU counts 217 Olympians and 85 medalists among its students and alumni. During the event, 12 of those athletes were awarded Arete Laureate medals as part of a new Center for Olympic Studies tradition. Athletes can keep the medals or present them to someone who played an instrumental role in their athletic journeys and careers.

The Olympic athletes in attendance included:

Melissa Belote Ripley, '79 BA in communication, swimming

Herman Frazier, '77 BS in political science, track and field

Sheri Rhodes, '76 BA in education, '79 MA in education, archery

Troy Dalbey, '93 BA in psychology, swimming

Zeke Jones, '90 BS in finance, wrestling

Brian Gyetko, '92 BS in aerospace engineering, tennis

Jacquelyn Johnson-Powell, '07 BS in kinesiology, track and field

Chelsea Gonzales, '17 BS in family and human development, softball

Tolu Young, '28 BS in business, swimming

Ilya Kharun, '27 BA in sports business, swimming

Tiago Behar, '25 BA in computer science, swimming

Simon Percy, '94 BS in psychology, swimming

Kharun presented the keynote address, followed by a Q&A session featuring Frazier, Jones, Belote Ripley and Charli Turner Thorne, the former head coach of ASU women's basketball. The panel was hosted by Paola Boivin, journalism and mass communication professor of practice, and explored leadership, the power of sports to unite people, the evolution of athlete preparation and the qualities that distinguish Olympic athletes from other top-performing athletes.

Rocky Harris, United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee chief of sport and athlete services, concluded the event by reflecting on Team USA's mission to strengthen sport nationwide by investing in performance innovation, developing long-term, holistic athlete experiences and building a sport ecosystem in which sports can thrive.

Harris called ASU the "perfect institution" to establish the nation's third Olympic studies center.

"The most innovative institution in the world. I'd say one that's committed to Olympic sports — it's absolutely committed," he said. "I can't think of a more important time for the center to launch."

This story originally appeared on ASU News.

Main image



Back row, from left: Brian Gyetko, Jacquelyn Johnson-Powell, Ilya Kharun, Tolu Young and Herman Frazier. Front row, from left: Sheri Rhodes, Chelsea Gonzales, Melissa Belote Ripley, Zeke Jones and Tiago Behar. Photo courtesy of the W. P. Carey School of Business

Gallery



Daniel McIntosh (left), teaching professor of marketing and the center's founding director, and Amy Ostrom, vice dean, President's Professor and PetSmart Chair in Services Leadership, celebrate the launch of the Center for Olympic Studies.



Ohad Kadan (left), Charles J. Robel Dean and W. P. Carey Distinguished Chair in Business, poses with ASU Olympian Ilya Kharun during the center's launch event.



Ohad Kadan (left), Charles J. Robel Dean and W. P. Carey Distinguished Chair in Business, poses with ASU Olympian Melissa Belote Ripley during the center's launch event.



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Ohad Kadan (left), Charles J. Robel Dean and W. P. Carey Distinguished Chair in Business, poses with ASU Olympian Zeke Jones during the center's launch event.