US secretary of education visits ASU, praises affordability of ‘world-class education'

By Scott Bordow, ASU News
October 23, 2026

Story highlights

Linda McMahon visits the university as part of her speaking series, “The Next 250: American Education.”

McMahon lauds ASU's partnership with Starbucks, three-year education degrees.

The Secretary of Education also visited a Mesa high school that uses an ASU-developed team-teaching model.

U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon on Thursday praised Arizona State University for offering a “world-class education" at an affordable cost for students.

McMahon toured ASU and delivered her remarks as part of her speaking series, “The Next 250: American Education.”

“I have chosen to come here to ASU because your institution has been setting a national standard for years, proving that a world-class education need not come from highly selective or prohibitively expensive institutions,” McMahon told students from the Mary Lou Fulton College for Teaching and Learning Innovation.

“ASU demonstrates that great universities can pair high-quality instruction with lower costs and still produce results that transform lives, strengthen our workforce and meaningfully advance the national interests.”

McMahon began her day at Mesa Mountain View High School, where educators are using the team-teaching model, developed by leaders from the Mary Lou Fulton College. The model replaces the traditional, one-teacher, one-classroom approach with collaborative teams of educators.

McMahon said she was captivated by the students’ enthusiasm, the teachers’ collaboration and the fact the team-teaching model allowed teachers to leave the classroom and take a break if they needed to.

“Kids were excited. They were happy to be studying and learning,” she said. “I was so impressed with watching how all that was working, I think I said at one point, ‘OK, I’m ready to go back to school.’”

Read more about the model

Does team-based teaching improve student learning? Early evidence from Arizona

In the afternoon, McMahon toured ASU’s Dreamscape Learn, an immersive platform that blends cinematic virtual reality storytelling with hands-on science and university coursework.

McMahon put on a VR headset and participated in an exercise for Chemistry 113, which places students in investigative roles solving real-world problems, such as analyzing Himalayan chemical water pollution or Amazon rainforest challenges. The curriculum of the class covers topics like atomic structure, chemical bonding and intermolecular forces.

“This is so cool,” McMahon said. “Kids have grown up today with so much gaming and virtual reality. I think this kind of puts them in their element. It just made it fun and made it interesting.”

In her remarks, McMahon praised ASU President Michael Crow for ASU’s emergence as a model for the New American University. She cited the fact that approximately 40% of ASU’s undergraduates are first-generation college students and that more than half its students are enrolled in online classes.

“ASU has kept tuition increases to a modest rate for Arizona residents and doubled institutional aid in less than a decade, steps that make college affordable for families who might otherwise be shut out entirely,” McMahon said. “That’s really important. … You’re giving Americans real choices, the ability to pursue education on their terms in the format that fits their lives without sacrificing rigor or ambition.”

McMahon also noted that ASU is the first public university in the country to offer three-year Bachelor of Education degrees.

“We’re hoping to see more and more universities go to this plan,” McMahon said. “(ASU) proves that excellent instruction need not require that extra year and thousands of additional dollars. We can prepare the next generation of teachers sooner and put their talents to work in classrooms across America.”

In addition, McMahon said, ASU is among the “best in the country” at partnering with employers to create “new avenues for prosperity for working Americans and their families.”

She specifically mentioned ASU’s partnership with Starbucks through the Starbucks College Achievement Plan. Since its launch in 2014, nearly 20,000 Starbucks partners have received 100% upfront tuition coverage and earned a degree through ASU Online.

“It’s no surprise that ASU has been ranked number one in innovation for 12 straight years,” McMahon said. “This leadership will define the next era of American learning — cutting costs, expanding access and delivering clear, high-value pathways that restore higher education’s purpose as an engine of upward mobility.”

This story originally appeared on ASU News.

Main image



U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon (left) chats with high school students on Oct. 22 about their experiences with team teaching at Mountain View High School in Mesa, Arizona, a model developed in collaboration with ASU’s Next Education Workforce. Photo by Samantha Chow/Arizona State University Photo by Samantha Chow/Arizona State University

Text image(s)



U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon experiences Dreamscape Learn, an immersive learning experience, at the Creative Commons building on ASU's Tempe campus on Oct. 22. Photo by Samantha Chow/Arizona State University



U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon delivers keynote remarks during a visit to ASU's Tempe campus on Oct. 22. Photo by Samantha Chow/Arizona State University