Taiwan Studies Initiative event highlights interdisciplinary research, future partnerships

Open house brings together ASU leaders and community partners to discuss expanding academic, workforce and cultural connections

By Megan Neely, ASU News
October 30, 2026

Students, faculty and staff from across Arizona State University, as well as the surrounding community, gathered at Armstrong Hall last Wednesday to learn more about Arizona's budding relationship and research partnerships with Taiwan.

The Taiwan Studies Initiative, one of ASU's newest research efforts, launched this fall in partnership with the Taiwan Ministry of Education. The initiative builds on current faculty and student-led projects, creates courses focused on different social and historical aspects of Taiwan, and provides resources for advancing more Taiwan-centered research opportunities.

Guests including industry partners and ASU leadership joined The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to discuss Taiwanese investments across Arizona and the university's commitment to a shared future. Daniel Lee, consular officer in the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Phoenix, spoke about opportunities for collaboration and the excitement of working with ASU.

"This is an extraordinary time for Taiwan and Arizona. Over the past few years, we have witnessed a historic surge in economic, technological and cultural collaboration with industry leaders like TSMC expanding here in Phoenix," Lee said. "The ties between our two communities have never been stronger and more vibrant.

"This initiative creates endless avenues for curiosity, collaboration and discovery. Taiwan is proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with ASU as a steadfast partner in this effort. Our office remains

deeply committed to supporting exchange programs, facilitating academic partnerships, and nurturing every opportunity (that) empowers our students and researchers to excel together," he added.

Grace O'Sullivan, ASU's vice president of TSMC Partnership Initiatives, elaborated on the university's role in recruiting TSMC to Arizona, and its impact on community enrichment.

"As a large supplier of talent to TSMC Arizona, we hope to be a comprehensive partner to serve them in whatever way is needed for their success," O'Sullivan said. "There's a knock-on effect of TSMC being in our community. We see 40 to 50 supplier companies coming into the ecosystem. We see retail, restaurants, new airlines and so many exciting things happening to enrich our communities. We really see that as a two-way street."

Kenro Kusumi, senior vice provost and dean of The College, outlined the initiative's next steps, including recruiting faculty experts in the semiconductor field, expanding internship opportunities and collaborating across disciplines. He highlighted the Chinese Flagship Program, an intensive four-year program that supports more than 60 students and is offered at only 10 U.S. universities.

"We want there to be a community of people that are engaged in studying Taiwan while also building on the resources that we have, including the experts in this area," Kusumi said.

The conversation then broadened to the initiative's interdisciplinary reach, with Binil Starly, director of the School of Manufacturing Systems and Networks, and Helen Wu, executive director of global partnerships and operations at the Thunderbird School of Global Management, discussing how engineering, workforce development and global partnerships can strengthen ASU's ties with Taiwan.

Starly described engineering-led exchanges and workforce programs designed to support TSMC and Arizona's industrial needs. In one such effort, engineering faculty worked with ASU Prep to visit a private high school in Taiwan, where they engaged students in biomedical manufacturing, robotics and automation.

To help meet TSMC's immediate need for technicians and operators, ASU also launched a flexible, nondegree training program that prepares members of the public for full-time careers with the company. Since launching this past summer, the program has completed two cohorts, and participants have received 34 job offers from TSMC.

"I'd like to applaud Dean Kusumi as well as the staff for initiating this Arizona-Taiwan initiative. If you are years in the future and you look back at this event and all of the engagements that we do, it's not just the technology or the companies that we're bringing in, but it's also the impact that we have on generations of people that come in," Starly said.

Wu then outlined Thunderbird's longstanding Taiwan partnerships, including degree programs and alumni engagements.

"At Thunderbird, we've been working with Taiwan for a long time. We have had the 1+1 dual degree program with Soochow University since 2007, and we just signed another dual degree partnership with their School of Big Data Management as well to try and bring more students to Arizona," Wu said. "I'm just excited that so many people are interested in coming to Arizona."

Will Hedberg, the initiative's leader and director of The Asia Center, closed out the event's remarks by introducing upcoming events and opportunities related to the initiative.

"University leadership has supported our conviction that, in the present moment, given our burgeoning ties to Taiwan, ASU can easily emerge as an international leader for the study of Taiwan and Taiwanese culture and a prime mover in the maintenance and development of relations between Taiwan and Arizona," Hedberg said.

Students and faculty can learn more about available grants and research opportunities here.

This story originally appeared on ASU News.

Main image



ASU leaders and community partners pose for a photo during the Taiwan Studies Initiative Open House at Armstrong Hall in Tempe on Oct. 21. Pictured from left are Binil Starly, director of the School of Manufacturing Systems and Networks; Helen Wu, executive director at Thunderbird School of Global Management; Denise Su, associate dean of research and global initiatives in The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; Kenro Kusumi, senior vice provost and dean of The College; William Hedberg, director of The Asia Center; Daniel Lee, consular officer with the Taipei

Economic and Cultural Office; and Grace O’Sullivan, ASU vice president of TSMC Partnership Initiatives. Photo by Emma Fitzgerald/Arizona State University

Text image(s)



Attendees gather at Armstrong Hall in Tempe for the Taiwan Studies Initiative Open House on Oct. 21. Photo by Megan Neely

Gallery



Dean Kenro Kusumi (center) speaking with students from the Chinese Language Flagship Program at ASU.



William Hedberg, director of The Asia Center and leader of the Taiwan Studies Initiative, speaking to guests during the night's presentations.



Student organizations such as the Taiwanese Students Association tabled at the event after the presentations concluded.