

Top 5 takeaways from ASU President Michael Crow's town hall with students

The president of the nation's No. 1 school in innovation talked with students to get ideas on furthering progress at ASU



Photo by Anya Magnuson | The State Press
ASU president Michael Crow answers students' questions at a town hall on Sept. 29, 2016.

By Angel Mendoza | 10/02/16 3:28pm

Students from all four ASU campuses poured into the Downtown Student Center on Thursday to talk innovation, sustainability and social issues with ASU President Michael Crow.

At the live-streamed Q-and-A session hosted by [ASU Undergraduate Student Government](#), students from all four ASU campuses had the opportunity to chime in over webcam and ask Crow questions about the future of the University.

Many important talking points were covered during the hour-long event, but here are five that stood out.

1. Tuition

In response to a student's concern over the cost of tuition, Crow said he believes that a high-quality education should come with a proportionate price.

"The rate of return on your investment in a degree from ASU is a very significant return," Crow said. "We have high employment, high numbers of students going to graduate school ... our degrees have value in the marketplace."

He said ASU does its best to remain affordable for students before and after graduation.

"We try to operate our University overall in a way where only about half of our undergraduates graduate with debt," he said. "You hear stories about people graduating from somewhere — I don't know where — with hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt and no job. I don't know what that's about."

He also said that there are campus employment opportunities for students who are experiencing debt that could hinder their academic experience.

"We have 11,000 students who work for the University for compensation," he said. "We have that many jobs within the institution, and we're greatly expanding the number of jobs per students."

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2. Gaming

Michael Carlton, ASU student and president of the ASU eSports Association, asked Crow about the future of eSports at the University, considering how much success was demonstrated by ASU's Real Dream Team and their 2016 Heroes of The Dorm Championship win.

"On a collegiate level, I fantasize a dream where students can compete at a collegiate level and get a degree," Carlton said.

Crow responded by first giving the audience background about eSports.

"If you want to sit with 50 million people and watch ASU win a national championship in eSports, you should've been watching a few months ago when we did that," he said.

Crow said after the championship, he and other faculty met with the Real Dream Team and gave them the funding and equipment they needed to become an ASU club sport.

He also said he is part of the board of directors for the Pac-12 conference and that there is interest in making eSports a professional collegiate sport.

"Several of the schools — Berkeley, Washington, ASU and a few of the others — are talking about how we can maybe move it into the collegiate sport realm and have scholarships like other sports," Crow said.



3. Social Injustice

In response to a Polytechnic student's concerns over racial injustice on ASU's campuses, Crow said he acknowledges that a large percentage of students are people of color and said ASU strives to represent all students in terms of socioeconomic diversity.

He also said that ASU has been working with multicultural campus groups to make sure that there is an appropriate dialogue going on between ASU students and faculty.

"We have been working with student groups — with minority student groups, with student leadership groups, with individually self-assembled student groups, with every group that we can possibly connect to — to make certain that we have the right kind of discussion and dialogue going on, which we think we do," Crow said.

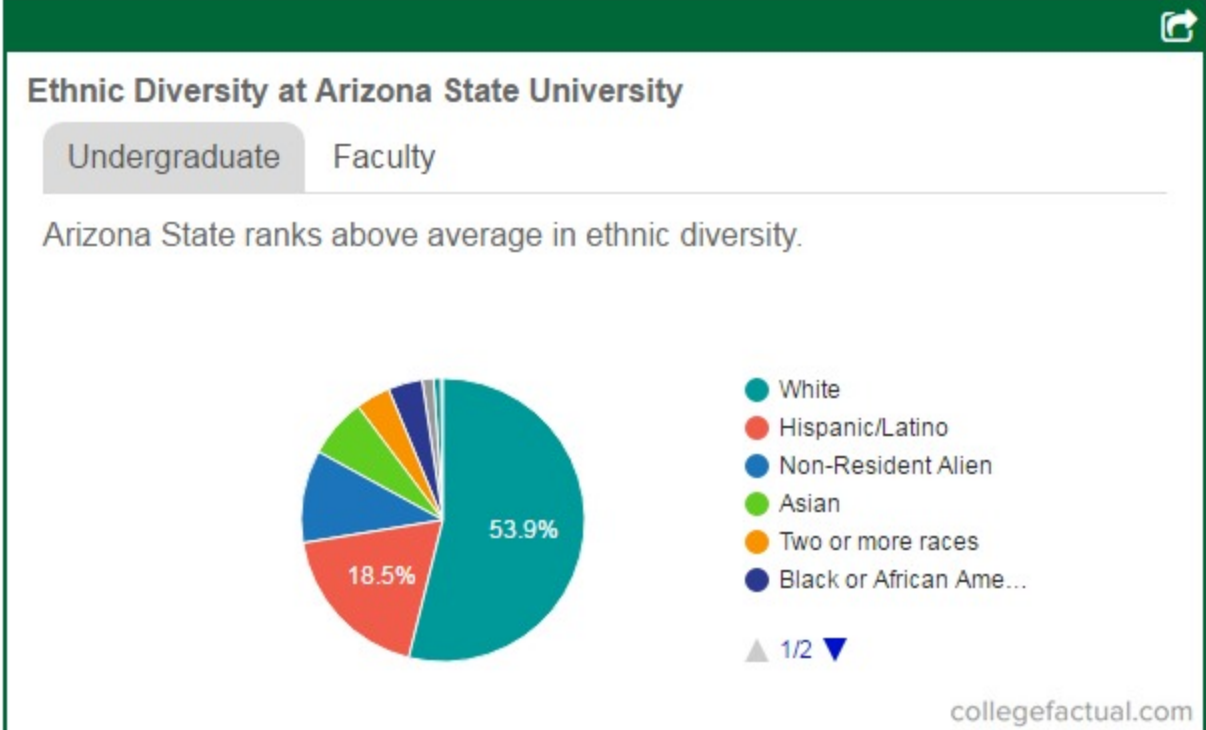
Crow said the University is also working to address incidents of insensitivity as often as they arise.

"We have a very productive and constructive dialogue," he said. "I know that because when we have issues or incidents that are related to inappropriate interactions or insensitive communications we are able to resolve those."

The student pointed out that students of different racial backgrounds can often feel neglected or unsafe and requested that ASU place more attention and release more statements regarding this issue.

Crow said that the student had an appropriate critique of how ASU has handled cases of racial discrimination on campus, and that there are always counseling opportunities available to any and every student who needs them.

"Our counseling services are available always to our students — individually, collectively, programmatically — at any level," he said. "Perhaps we could reach out more, perhaps we could have more discussion. Those are things that we really want to work on significantly."



Arizona State University Ethnic Diversity by College Factual

4. Health

An ASU student from the West campus said she would like more ASU students from all campuses to visit West and utilize its fitness center. She also said she would like to see Crow on campus, whom she invited to take a group fitness class.

"Have you been talking to my wife?" he asked, as the audience laughed with him. "Being an old guy, I can tell you that you can't begin to imagine how important it is for you to actually be thoughtful about how you're managing your body."

He said that students in the modern age have much useful information to apply to their own health.

"You have more information than I did when I was your age and that information should lead you to at least be aware of your body or making sure that you're exercising and so forth," he said.

He also said that students originally led the initiative to end public smoking outdoors on campus and that students should try their best to avoid picking up the habit of smoking.

"Smoking is not a good thing," he said. "Thirty years after you're done smoking, they can still find evidence of it in your DNA ... it is really, really scary."

5. Sustainability

Another ASU West student asked Crow about the possibility of ASU separating itself from companies that use fossil fuels, considering how much emphasis the University puts on sustainability.

Crow said it's very unlikely that ASU can pull away from investments in companies whose practices involve the burning of fossil fuels due to the way the school is funded.

"We have index funds ... index funds are spread out across the entire investment portfolio ... of nearly all publicly-traded companies," he said. "So we've looked at different ways to back out of an index fund and invest into companies individually. It turns out, at the moment, that (divesting) is beyond our means."

However, in response to another student's question about sustainability, Crow said ASU is seeking to reduce its carbon footprint through other means; particularly through a solar-power initiative in collaboration with APS.

The student, Andrew Lane, is an Army major and sustainability grad student. He expressed concerns about the amount of pollution spread through fossil fuels.

"Twenty-two pounds of (carbon dioxide) per gallon consumed is not good," Lane said.

Crow responded saying the University is looking to use more and more solar power in the future.

"We're trying to get to total solar power for daytime electricity," he said. "We are not done yet with the APS deal — that's still being negotiated but should be done shortly."

Lane also asked about the possibility of electric cars becoming a campus accessory. Crow said the campus vehicles currently in use have already proved to be satisfactory as far as sustainability goes.

"In the minds of the people managing our fleet, a 30-year-old vehicle that's been used and repaired and used and repaired," he said. "It's a highly sustainable thing in their eyes."

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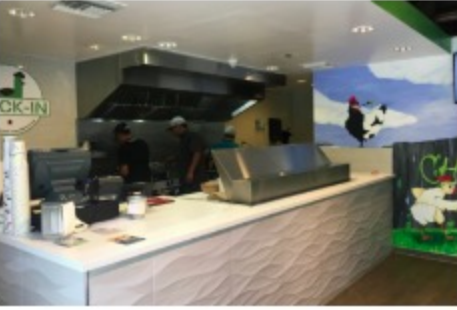
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