U.S. President Barack Obama addressed a crowd of more than 70,000 at Arizona State University's spring 2009 Commencement Ceremony May 13. President Obama's emphasis on building the next generation of leaders and innovators mirrors ASU's mission as a New American University.

More than 70,000 attend historic May 13 commencement in Sun Devil Stadium

By Sarah Auffret

At what may have been the largest U.S. graduation in history, President Barack Obama told graduates at Arizona State University that opening the doors of higher education to students from every background is a core mission of ASU and of his presidency, and should serve as a model for universities across the country.

Six high school seniors who are among the first recipients of ASU's President Barack Obama Scholars program got to meet the charismatic president and be introduced on stage. The scholarship, an expansion of the university's key financial aid program which will benefit 1,600 freshmen next fall, offers up to $17,000 annually to help students pay for tuition, room and board.

"What a wonderful gift, to open the doors of education for students of every background," Obama told a crowd of 71,000 people in Sun Devil Stadium at ASU.

"With a degree from this fine institution, you have everything you need to change the world. You can help our struggling nonprofits...teach in a high-need school...help us lead a green revolution."

For the last six years, ASU has served as America's largest effort at institutional transformation in higher education, building a solutions-focused institution that combines the highest level of academic excellence, inclusiveness to a broad demographic and maximum societal impact.

ASU also is home to the nation's first School of Sustainability and the Biodesign Institute, both of which focus on huge global challenges and which prepare students for essential future careers. The graduating class includes 13 students who are the first to graduate with degrees in sustainability.

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"As a nation, it is clear that we need to build a new foundation – a stronger foundation – for our economy and our prosperity...rethinking how we educate our children, and care for our sick, and treat our environment," said Obama.

"Many of our current challenges are unprecedented. There are no standard remedies, or go-to fixes this time around. That is why we are going to need your help."

He told the graduating class of 9,267 that starting their careers in troubled times is a challenge, but also a privilege, because they are forced to dig deeper and discover gifts they never knew they had.

"At this difficult time in our national history, the old approaches won’t get you where you want to go. The leaders we revere, and the businesses and institutions that last, are the result of devotion to some bigger purpose. The commitment at an institution like ASU, which is diverse and gives opportunity to all, that’s the hallmark of real success."

President Obama's emphasis on building the next generation of leaders in science, technology and sustainability, as well as the arts, mirrors ASU's mission as a New American University, said ASU President Michael M. Crow, who invited Obama to be the university's first graduation speaker in many years.

"He has a deep understanding of the need to drive change, and of the role of knowledge in advancing the American ideal," said Crow. "He goes hope to all who dream."

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The world’s first to make the world last

By Michelle Schwartz
A rizona State University’s School of Sustainability will confer degrees to the first graduating class of sustainability this spring. No graduate institution has ever offered a degree in sustainability. To be awarded a degree, students must have completed 120 semester hours of university-level work, including 30 hours in sustainability and at least 18 hours in science.

A nature-sustaining, industry-leading curriculum at Arizona State University will enable students to understand and take action on all things related to sustainability. An innovative sustainability minor offers the potential for graduates to enter the workforce with skills in sustainability and the environment and in relation to all things.

A small cohort of students has already completed classes in the area. With the first graduating class of sustainability in 2009, the minor will be extended to all students in all colleges at Arizona State University.

Launched in 2007, with a cohort of 20 graduate students, the minor will be offered across 38 departments and 12 graduate programs. The total number of courses offered in sustainability at Arizona State University has grown from 11 in 2005 to 43 in 2009.

The minor is designed to provide students with the skills and knowledge needed to address sustainability issues in their field. Students will learn to understand and evaluate the complex and interrelated challenges of sustainability, and to develop solutions to these challenges.

At Arizona State University, sustainability is not just a minor, but a way of life. Students are encouraged to think about sustainability in all aspects of their lives, from their daily routines to their academic choices. The minor offers students the opportunity to explore sustainability through coursework, field research, and community engagement.

The minor is open to all undergraduate and graduate students at Arizona State University, regardless of major. Students interested in learning more about the sustainability minor or applying for admission should contact the Sustainability Office at 480-965-5000 or sustainability@asu.edu.

1,500 graduate from top-ranked Carey School

By Debbie Freeman
A rizona State University’s School of Business will confer degrees to 1,500 students this spring. The Class of 2009 is the largest class in the school’s history, and the Carey School of Business has more than doubled in size since its launch in 1993.

The Carey School of Business has also seen an increase in the number of students pursuing graduate degrees. The number of graduate students has increased from 500 in 1993 to more than 2,000 today.

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Class of 2009

Who’s Who

Raul Alatorre is the youngest student to be enrolled at the university. The transition from high school to college was easy, because the people I got to know were in the field and we had a lot in common,” says Singh, who grew up in Scottsdale.

When Raymond Singh was accepted to ASU at age 14, he became the youngest student to be enrolled at the university.

Granduation at Sun Devil Stadium

Class of 2009

Elodie Billioniere

Executive Director of Service Learning and Innovation at ASU. As a child of a French

Her awards and accolades both on and off the field are numerous, with her work has brought national

Clockwise from top: Hillary Bee of Scottsdale expertly arranges the start of the ceremony at Sun Devil Stadium.

ASU’s Alyssa Ashno (left) and Krista Mercer tape their hands and enjoy the pre-commencement entertainment at Sun Devil Stadium.

President Obama autographs the mortarboard of Barack Obama Scholar, Yarbdal Maja-Lopez.

A crowd of more than 70,000 filled Sun Devil Stadium.

Graduates Elle Cono and Shaterra Pryor take pose for a photograph together before commencement.

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Class of 2009

Jeff Zetino not only excelled in his major, but also was an active student leader. As a member of ASU, he was an integral part of the student body at ASU. Zetino is one of many students who have made a meaningful contribution to the community.

Class of 2009

A new college program has its home run

By Steven D. George

Taylor calls the program a “new departure” for the College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, which offers programs in more than 1,000 courses covering a wide range of disciplines.

This is a typical and gradual program, which is a key factor in the program’s success, says Paul H. D. Cottrell, vice president for institutional development and strategy.

The program features interdisciplinary course offerings, both within and across disciplines, and a variety of research opportunities.

The MAIS graduate program features a “roll-out” approach, in which students are introduced to new material as they progress through the program.

The program is designed to be flexible and allow students to explore different areas of interest.

Graduate students in the MAIS program will have the opportunity to pursue a master’s degree in any area of interest, including business, engineering, humanities, and social sciences.

Class of 2009

Entrepreneur helps energize job market

Gattyin, a system that allows students to receive training and education, has been developed by the company and is now available to the public.

The company says that the system provides a way for students to receive training and education in a variety of fields and is designed to help employers find qualified employees.

The system was developed by the company’s CEO, who had experience in the field of education.

Class of 1959 first to graduate from Arizona State University

This year, more than 70 graduates from the class of 1959 will be among the first to graduate from Arizona State University.

The class of 1959 was one of the first classes to graduate from ASU, and included students who graduated with bachelor’s degrees in various fields, including engineering, science, and social sciences.

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to promote equal opportunities for all genders, races and ethnicities." Chacón was energized by the campaign and excited to be part of an historical election. She has during the 2008 presidential election. Although she was not old enough to vote at that time, her most memorable volunteer experiences was working at the Democratic Party Office in Tempe Valley Boys and Girls Club in Guadalupe and the Escalante Center in Tempe. One of her education. In high school she has volunteered to organize activities for children at the East community. In addition to her academics, she has excelled in sports as a member of the softball team and cheer squad.

Brown will enter Arizona State University in the fall as a psychology major and participate in the inaugural class of President Barack Obama Scholars.

“I know I have to stay focused on my goals,” says Brown. “I want to go to college and won’t let anything get in my way. I look forward to attending ASU and am honored to be a part of the Obama Scholars Program.”

Annalili Chacón

A native of Guadalupe, Annalili Chacón is the youngest of four children and comes from a family dedicated to education. A senior at Tempe’s Marcos de Niza High School with a 3.9 GPA, she dreams of graduating from the W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University. As an inaugural recipient of the President Barack Obama Scholarship, Chacón is one step closer to realizing that dream.

Chacón’s family has instilled in her a strong sense of community and giving back. In addition to her business career, she will make it a priority to give back to her community by serving as a role model for the younger generations of Guadalupanos who aspire to achieve a higher education. In high school she has volunteered to organize activities for children at the East Valley Boys and Girls Club in Guadalupe and the Escalante Center in Tempe. One of her most memorable volunteer experiences was working at the Democratic Party Office in Tempe during the 2008 presidential election. Although she was not old enough to vote at that time, Chacón was energized by the campaign and excited to be part of an historical election. She has since turned 18, registered to vote, and is excited about participating in the next election.

In the meantime, Chacón will begin her pursuit of higher education at ASU in the fall. On selecting a university she says, “It is very important to me that ASU prides itself in its policies to promote equal opportunities for all genders, races and ethnicities.”

Lysandra Frey

Lysandra Frey was a typical sophomore in high school – she studied hard and participated in extracurricular activities. Then one day her father passed away unexpectedly. Shortly thereafter her grades began to slip, and she had trouble sleeping. Fortunately, her teachers noticed and supported her by talking with her and encouraging her to focus on her academics. It worked. This spring she will graduate from Mesa’s Skyline High School with a 3.39 GPA.

The next chapter in her life will take her to Arizona State University where she will study biological sciences as a President Barack Obama Scholar. She hopes to one day work in the field of forensics solving crimes. In planning for college Frey knew that finances would be an issue, as her mom was now the only source of income for Frey and her younger sister. Frey worked diligently applying for financial aid and scholarships.

Upon hearing about being a President Barack Obama Scholar she said, “Knowing that I won’t have to worry about paying for school or housing on campus is a great relief. It is an incredible honor to be a part of this program.”

George Khalaf

George Khalaf was born in Lebanon and came to the United States when his parents fled the civil war in their country in 1996. Khalaf was five years old. Although he was a young boy and doesn’t have many memories of that time, he is very proud of his heritage. In his native country educational goals are difficult to achieve so he appreciates the opportunities he has as a U.S. citizen.

This appreciation for education has prompted him to work hard in school and it has paid off. He will graduate this spring from Dobson High School with a 3.79 GPA. In addition to being a scholar, Khalaf also is a leader. He was a member of Valley Teen Leadership Class XI and continues to volunteer and train young leaders through the organization.

In the fall he will continue his educational journey and begin studying political science and finance at Arizona State University. While Khalaf has always known that college was in his future, he wasn’t sure how he would pay for it. As a President Barack Obama Scholar, financing his education is no longer a concern.

“I am grateful to be a part of the President Barack Obama Scholars Program, as I will have the opportunity to further my knowledge and education at ASU without having to be worried about finances,” says Khalaf.

Yobani Mejía-Lopez

Yobani Mejía-Lopez is a resilient young man who has overcome many obstacles. An orphan at the age of 8, his grandparents have raised him in a household of 11. He currently works part time to assist his family with household expenses.

A senior at Mesa’s Westwood High School, Mejia-Lopez was actively involved in sports until a heart illness prevented him from playing last year. After undergoing emergency heart surgery, he returned to school following a two-month absence. Although he was no longer able to participate in sports, Mejía-Lopez focused his energy on academics and will now graduate with a 3.25 GPA. Upon hearing about being a President Barack Obama Scholar she said, “Knowing that I won’t have to worry about paying for school or housing on campus is a great relief. It is an incredible honor to be a part of this program.”

The next phase of his life will take him to Arizona State University where he will major in biochemistry with an ultimate goal of becoming a dentist. Mejía-Lopez was influenced by his first dental visit in the United States at the age of nine and since then has continued to have conversations with his dentist about this career choice.

“I want to do something with my life that I will enjoy,” says Mejia-Lopez. “The Obama Scholarship is a great blessing for me and my family. With this scholarship, I know I can be successful.”

President Barack Obama greets and congratulates a few incoming ASU students belonging to the university’s first class of Barack Obama Scholars. The Barack Obama Scholars are first-time freshmen from Arizona whose lack of family resources may be a barrier to higher education.