

ASU wants Goodyear to build new campus in SW Valley

But some city leaders wonder if investment would be wise

[26 comments](#) by **Elias C. Arnold** - Aug. 31, 2009 12:00 AM
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[Arizona State University](#) wants a campus in Goodyear. The southwest Valley city wants a college presence.

But there's a caveat: ASU wants Goodyear to pay for the school.

The campus would be one of the [Undergraduate Colleges @ ASU](#), the university's plan to offer lower-priced degrees in a handful of majors. ASU's pitch in Goodyear also is the first public effort to partner with an Arizona city on the new venture.

A high-ranking ASU official told city officials the school could pay for operations and maintenance, but Goodyear would need to build the teaching campus.

"Right now, our plan is that we would not undertake any of (the construction)," said David Young, senior vice president for academic affairs.

Under the Colleges @ ASU plan, students could earn [four-year degrees](#) in three years, cutting the cost by about 40 percent, or \$11,150.

Lake Havasu City and Show Low also have expressed interest in such campuses. ASU President Michael Crow recently confirmed he was considering downtown Phoenix.

But the idea of shifting part of the financial burden to Goodyear could be a hurdle. Like other Valley cities battered by the recession, Goodyear is spread thin.

It resorted to raising taxes, including sales and hotel taxes, and tapping reserve funds to help close a \$13.9 million budget gap for this fiscal year. On Tuesday, Goodyear's sales tax will rise from 2 percent to 2.5 percent.

Despite the depressed economy, the prospect of an ASU expansion in the All America City by fall 2011 is no far-fetched dream.

"I think they're in a good process, and it's worth consideration," said Jack Lunsford, president and CEO of Westmarc, a coalition of civic and business leaders.

With the West Valley growing, it must plan for higher education now, Lunsford said. Goodyear's population has tripled since 2000, nearing 60,000, according to 2008 U.S. Census figures.

Offering college opportunities in the city has been a goal of Mayor Jim Cavanaugh for years.

A City Council meeting last week marked ASU's first public briefing after months of closed-door talks with local officials and other prospective universities.

ASU's formal interest in Goodyear - and need for funding - deviates from the higher-education model the city previously embraced: Private schools building their own campuses on land leased cheaply from the city.

The sole private university committed to Goodyear so far also wants the largest state school involved.

"With ASU in the mix, I think this could be a model for the nation," said Raymond Van der Riet, vice president of strategic initiatives for Franklin Pierce University.

The New Hampshire-based college began teaching classes in Goodyear last year and has leased city land for a future campus. Van der Riet said ASU's proposal would accelerate Franklin Pierce's plans for a permanent campus. Franklin could reach build-out by 2017, four years earlier than planned, and full enrollment of nearly 1,100 students by 2018, almost eight years early.

In stark contrast, the University of the Incarnate Word left Goodyear because of ASU. The San Antonio-based school had started teaching classes in temporary facilities but backed out of its land lease in May, with school officials saying ASU's early signals that it wanted a Goodyear campus and the poor economy would make it too difficult to raise money to build their campus.

They thought ASU's brand was too strong to compete with. Incarnate Word is now part of the CommuniversiTY @ Surprise, a newly opened one-stop learning center for higher education in the northwest Valley.

For its part, ASU envisions a network of five to 15 campuses around the state. Initial degrees could include business, education and social sciences.

The Arizona Board of Regents governs the state's three public [universities](#) and is redesigning the system to include more affordable options.

Young said ASU is under pressure to open some of those colleges in two years, so planning for one in Goodyear has to happen fast.

The ASU campus is projected to start with about 300 students in temporary facilities, requiring \$3 million to \$5 million from the city in short-term funding.

Over the long term, the school would need \$35 million to \$50 million from the city to build a campus for up to 5,000 students, Young said.

Cavanaugh, who has been instrumental in raising Goodyear's profile among Valley cities, is not willing to miss out on the opportunity.

"We have to find a way to get ASU here in 2011," he said.

But some city leaders don't want to be rushed to meet ASU's deadlines.

Councilman Rob Antoniak asked for more specifics about the economic advantages for Goodyear. He questioned whether students would use such a campus, given its proximity to ASU in downtown Phoenix. He also wondered if local residents paying the taxes to build the buildings could see a tuition discount.

Antoniak challenged ASU to show what would commit the university to Goodyear, beyond operating and maintenance funding that could be taken away by state lawmakers like other funds have.

Just a few months ago, the budget crunch hit ASU West, a satellite campus at 43rd Avenue and Thunderbird Road in Phoenix. Top administrators dissolved the [business school](#), moved whole programs to other campuses and considered making it an undergraduate liberal-arts campus. Public outcry led them to restore some [master's programs](#) and bring some courses from the W.P. Carey School of Business to the campus.

ASU officials are confident the program they would implement in Goodyear would be on solid financial ground.

"We don't want to enter into an economically unviable situation," Young said. "Because I can guarantee you that, if we were to do this, ASU would be committing for the long term. You don't start a university campus and walk away from it."

Unlike a research institution like the main ASU campus in Tempe, the Colleges @ ASU program is designed to provide degrees in a limited set of disciplines, university spokeswoman Terri Shafer said.

"The state needs additional capacity in higher education, so there is no risk of overbuilding," she said. "We believe city, county and state government will find this to be a very cost-effective way to produce the skilled workforce that is needed for the Arizona economy, and we are comfortable that any commitment we make will be long-term in nature."

ASU now is working to establish a planning committee for the Goodyear campus. City staff plans to bring the proposal for council approval in September.

<http://www.azcentral.com/community/swvalley/articles/2009/08/31/20090831newcampus0831.html>