Guest Column: UA North Valley Expands Wildcat Reach in Phoenix

UA North Valley
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Phoenix is an ideal area for the UA to expand and welcome more students to the Wildcat family.

The University of Arizona North Valley, now in its second semester of operation, is helping the University do just that by offering new opportunities for people seeking a world-class education in Arizona.

UA North Valley's location on the campus of Paradise Valley Community College in north Phoenix allows us to take advantage of the population base in Phoenix and the support of many of our alumni who have made Phoenix home, and to respond to community needs in a part of Phoenix with no other university presence.

The UA North Valley extension campus emerged from a partnership between the UA and the Maricopa Community College District to support the needs of transfer students.

The campus launched with its first class of students in the fall and offers a degree completion program, or two-plus-two program, to allow students in the Phoenix area to earn a bachelor's degree from the UA.

Entering students must have completed an AGEC - Arizona General Education Curriculum - certificate and are encouraged to complete an associate degree prior to transferring.

During this initial phase, we are concentrating on one degree program: the Bachelor of General Studies. UA North Valley students will complete 60 additional units of coursework with University of Arizona faculty to earn the degree.

The general studies degree is a rapidly growing program on main campus, making the multidisciplinary program an ideal choice for the first UA North Valley offering. The diversity and flexibility built into the degree path allows us to address a variety of different student interests and goals while slowly growing our curricular offerings.

We currently offer five of the seven UA general studies degree themes: Arts, Media and Entertainment; Economy and Industry; Global and Intercultural Understanding; Social Behavior and Human Understanding; and Study of the U.S. and the American Experience.
The structure of the general studies degree fosters students’ ability to think critically and broadly about the world and trains students in how to express their questions and ideas in different formats. These critical skills will allow students to follow their interests to success in a diverse array of career paths. They can further expand their skills by participating in the internship component of the program.

Providing a Flexible, Student-Focused Experience

Our goal at UA North Valley is to provide the student-focused experience of a small liberal arts college within students' budgets and with the resources and backing of a world-class research university.

The campus operates on a lower tuition model than main campus and students have access to the UA's transfer scholarships and an alumni scholarship.

We are concentrating on offering in-person classes to provide students the benefit of classroom interaction with faculty and classmates, although online courses are also available to allow students flexibility in their schedule.

The majority of our students have graduated from one of Maricopa County's community colleges with an associate degree the semester before they enter UA North Valley.

The transition to a university and upper-division coursework can often be a difficult one. UA North Valley's small class size, faculty guidance and structured learning environment support the transition from community college to the UA and upper-division courses.

We also are hoping to expand upon the support system available for transfer students at the UA's Tucson campus by creating a community at UA North Valley to work with students in and outside of the classroom.

Our current students come from diverse backgrounds and have diverse interests. They range in age from 19 to 65, with a third of our students being non-traditional. All of them work either part or full time to support themselves and/or their families. Their commitments made it difficult or impossible to pursue a UA degree in Tucson, despite a strong desire to do so.

These students are attracted to the flexibility and convenient location of our program.

For example, one of our students comes from a long line of UA graduates and was originally a student at main campus. Financial and family concerns required a return to Phoenix, and UA North Valley presented the perfect opportunity for this student to finish a final year of coursework and graduate on time.

We hope to provide similar opportunities for other students, and our goal is to grow our program to cohorts of 30 students, keeping class size small.

We are also beginning to offer summer session courses this year, which will be available to main campus students returning to Phoenix for the summer who would like to complete one or more in-person courses.

More information can be found at [here][1] or by contacting me at [vmeyer@email.arizona.edu][2].
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