Seven University Employees Among '40 Under 40'

University Communications
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Seven University employees and one graduate student have been included on Tucson’s annual 40 Under 40 list in recognition of their leadership and commitment to Southern Arizona.

The list [1], which is released by the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Arizona Daily Star, recognizes 40 local professionals under the age of 40 for "making significant achievements and contributions to their profession and the community."

This year's honorees will receive their awards on Dec. 2 at the JW Marriott Tucson Starr Pass Resort & Spa. The event is sponsored by the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Arizona Daily Star and the Law Offices of Snell & Wilmer.

Read more about the honorees and their contributions below.

Crystal Adams [2]
Director of the Evening MBA Program, Eller College of Management

In addition to being a "gifted mentor" who guides more than 150 students through Eller's Evening MBA program [3] each year, Adams is also a dedicated volunteer for local organizations, according to her nominator.

Adams is a member of the Tucson Metro Chamber's Emerging Leaders Council, the League of Women Voters of Greater Tucson, the National Black MBA Association and other organizations. These roles put her "in a unique position to impact the Tucson community through her volunteer work but also through her professional influence," her nominator wrote, adding that Adams often uses her personal network to connect students to opportunities that can help advance their careers.

"Crystal is passionate about higher education and developing future engaged leaders to build a stronger Tucson community," according to the nomination letter.

Alexei Marquez [4]
Coordinator of Financial Wellness, Thrive Center

Marquez is the "quintessential role model for young leadership" at the University and in Southern Arizona, according to her nominator. In her role at the Thrive Center, Marquez developed a program to empower students to teach students financial literacy and wellness.

Marquez is vice president of the University of Arizona Hispanic Alumni club [5], where she helps students connect with finance-related resources and professional development opportunities. She also is a member of the board of directors for the Southern Arizona Volunteer Management Association, a professional organization that promotes excellence in volunteer program management, and has coordinated events as a volunteer for a variety of
local organizations, including United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona, the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation and the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona.

"Alexei demonstrates her leadership abilities by setting the tone and rolling up her sleeves," her nominator wrote. "She will try every volunteer project before encouraging someone else to try it."

**Lorraine Rivera**
Content Producer and Host, Arizona Public Media

Rivera, host and producer of "Arizona 360," Arizona Public Media's statewide public affairs program, is being recognized for keeping Arizonans informed over her 15-year career. Originally from Douglas, Rivera has spent her career reporting on key issues in Southern Arizona, including border relations with Mexico, gun rights, education funding, the opioid crisis and immigration, according to her nominator.

"A longtime journalist who has based her career in this region, Rivera brings depth to her interviews and an understanding of the nuance often missed by the national press," her nominator wrote.

**Sherard Robbins**
Associate Director of Equity and Inclusion for Community Engagement, College of Education

Robbins was nominated for his work promoting and enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion at the University through his role in the College of Education. But his efforts extend well beyond campus and Tucson, his nominators wrote, noting that Robbins is the founder and CEO of **Visceral Change**, an organizational development consultancy centered on diversity, equity and inclusion.

Robbins has led initiatives to amplify the voices of marginalized students and has shared his expertise on a variety of topics ? including the First Amendment, micro-aggressions and hiring disparities ? through talks delivered on campus, at a local TEDx Talk, and at national events, according to his nominators.

"Sherard's work has rippled across the University of Arizona community and beyond," one nominator wrote. "As a result of his efforts, more people are having critical conversations about intersectional identities and how to create more just workplaces and communities."

**Russell Toomey**
Associate Professor, John and Doris Norton School of Family and Consumer Sciences

Toomey's research on positive youth development and identity development, as well as his mentorship of LGBTQ youth and students, have earned him 40 Under 40 recognition, his nominator wrote.

Toomey's work, according to his nomination, has been cited in research nearly 3,500 times, and is widely mentioned in the media, in policy decisions and in legal cases. He also volunteers for several LGBTQ youth-focused organizations both locally and nationally. Toomey also is the chair of the **Society for Research on Adolescence**'s Inclusion, Equity and Social Justice Committee.

Toomey is an "exceptional mentor" to his students, according to his nominator, who added
that he "creates a learning environment and a research environment where students feel supported, challenged, and capable of accomplishing their goals."

**Mary Venezia**
Chief of Staff, Enrollment Management

Venezia is being recognized for her work “to ensure access and success for all students at the University of Arizona,” particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, according to her nomination letter.

Her accomplishments in previous positions at the University include moving Commencement from McKale Memorial Center to Arizona Stadium, implementing a retention program for incoming students who need extra support, and increasing University outreach to high school counselors, according to her nomination. Venezia also volunteers as a collegiate chapter supervisor for the Gamma Phi Beta sorority and as a member of the Tucson Metro Chamber's Emerging Leaders Council.

"Her leadership, professionalism and community service demonstrate her level of commitment and her inherent desire to improve the world, with a particular interest in Arizona and Tucson," her nominator wrote.

**Heath Vescovi-Chiordi**
Adjunct Instructor, School of Government and Public Policy

Vescovi-Chiordi was an economic development specialist for the town of Marana until recently, when he was named assistant to the town manager. He was nominated for his dedication to improving lives in Southern Arizona through his economic development work as well as his volunteerism and mentorship.

His nominator wrote that Vescovi-Chiordi ? a board member of United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona ? help his master's students find internships and other opportunities on local government and economic development boards, commissions and organizations, adding that Vescovi-Chiordi created a course on the essentials of regional economic development.

"His passion for local issues is infectious and he enthusiastically educates people" on the role and significance of local governance and how affects everyone, his nomination letter says.

**Albert Alan**, a graduate student in the College of Medicine ? Tucson, was named to the list in recognition of his mentorship and volunteerism.

*Source URL:* https://uaatwork.arizona.edu/lqp/seven-university-employees-among-40-under-40

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[2] https://eller.arizona.edu/people/crystal-adams
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