



November 1, 2022

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY SUPPORTING JOURNALISM EDUCATION:
A CONVERSATION WITH EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
AND PROVOST, NANCY GONZALES

Our conversation with Provost Nancy Gonzalez was designed as a question-and-answer session (Q&A). The Q&A began with prepared questions by Dean Batts, followed by additional questions from attendees, which Provost Gonzalez graciously answered.



“As the nation’s journalism school it is important to take the lead in addressing the big challenges we have facing us today, such as misinformation in journalism.”

– Provost Nancy Gonzalez

We believe Cronkite is the Nation’s Journalism School. What does being the “Nation’s Journalism School” mean?

Provost Gonzalez believes Cronkite is “special.” As she explained to our group, “it is the jewel in [ASU’s] crown, and it’s to be protected.” According to Provost Gonzalez, “to become the nation’s journalism school is to take and leverage that reputation” and “have it do even more impactful work.”

While understanding the importance of a national presence, she believes the school’s focus needs to expand globally. Moreover, she thinks as the “nation’s journalism school,” it is essential for Cronkite to “take the lead in addressing the big challenges we face today, such as misinformation in journalism.”

Large institutions seem to prioritize the sciences over journalism, how is that different here at ASU?

Provost Gonzalez, believes that non-core arts and science disciplines, such as journalism, are vital to ASU’s mission, which is to “produce research of public value that is interdisciplinary in nature.” Further, from her perspective, the “strategy is not pitting one discipline versus the other but to work together in a symbiotic, mutually beneficial way.”

How can we work together as an institution to confront mis and disinformation, with Cronkite taking the lead, and leveraging the weight of ASU as an enterprise?

Provost Gonzalez acknowledged that there is work to do in moving this particular agenda forward. She is aware of the ongoing conversations being held by Dean Batts but recognized no action has been formally taken. However, Provost Gonzalez explained, “ASU moves with speed, agility” and by “thinking outside the box.” We have “designed structures within the university that can define an important issue and marshal the appropriate resources across disciplines.” She highlighted the university’s “Design Institute” as a group dedicated to thinking about these types of complex and challenging questions.

There has been a lot of discussion about the possible certification of journalists to provide a level of accountability for journalistic objectivity and accuracy. We have some ideas on how ASU could provide certification at scale. From ASU’s perspective, it could be a learning enterprise opportunity or an opportunity through the academic enterprise. What are your thoughts?

Provost Gonzalez explained that she recognized the “value in certification” and believes “ASU is presently set up to scale such an effort.” She added, certification could “benefit a broad spectrum of society, not only those in the community seeking a degree.” It could also include those “in the workforce looking to add a certification to their list of qualifications” and others who “seek certification as a pathway back to getting a master’s certificate or a master’s degree.”

We have also discussed news literacy and building trust with news consumers. We know you have to get to the purveyors, but you also have to get to the consumers to help them understand the difference between truth and entertainment. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Provost Gonzalez stated that ASU is in the middle of a general education redesign. Central to the university are its goals to ensure it is “educating future citizens who understand how to use information, digest information and process it.” She believes Cronkite will play an essential role in this redesign. She mentioned how vital news literacy goals are for teaching the undergraduate student body and young children.

Do you think there is any hope of a news literacy curriculum being required in K-12 schools?

Provost Gonzalez expressed her concern over the political battles being waged at the K-12 level regarding what children should be learning. She believes there are better and faster ways to foster these concepts outside the traditional K-12 system. Explicitly, she thinks if we wait for news literacy to be mandated, “we will be waiting for a long time.” Given ASU’s current success in teaching scientific principles to students, she doesn’t see why similar programs couldn’t be developed for journalism.

Does ASU have something in place on campus to harness student innovation on some of our more complex national and global problems (e.g., a student think tank, innovation lab, etc.), regardless of their area of academic study?

Provost Gonzalez explained that ASU has innovation zones that “do exactly that.” She highlighted the “Luminosity Lab.” A group of students who take on challenging tasks and “come up with ideas the faculty would never dream of.” According to Provost Gonzalez, the lab is currently more tech-focused. However, they are about to start an innovation lab around education reform. Further, although there is not presently an innovation lab focused on issues in journalism, Provost Gonzalez believes the infrastructure is already in place to create one.

ASU is a large institution with significant impact and reach. Can you talk a little about its alliances?

According to Provost Gonzalez, ASU has “about 60 different international and national partnerships,” including New South Wales and Kings College in London. In addition, many of ASU’s schools have international partnerships, such as in India and China. Provost Gonzalez believes ASU’s “alliances are another way to market the work of the Cronkite School and draw attention, globally, to the issues and topics deemed to be important” to the field of journalism.