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## **Arizona university presidents: Global warming real**

The Business Journal of Phoenix - by [Ty Young](#) Phoenix Business Journal

The presidents of Arizona's three state universities told an audience of 200 academic, business, media and public officials Monday that not only is global warming real, but it must be addressed beyond the laboratory.

During a conference at Arizona State University, each president took one aspect of global warming and dissected the need for societal change in the state and beyond. While quoting research, much completed at their own universities, the presidents used the time to explain what each school is doing to reduce carbon emissions, integrate "green" technologies, and promote the need for climate-related study.

Northern Arizona University President John Haeger discussed the economic benefits of sustainability. He pinned future economic growth on attracting new jobs and companies. But for that to happen, the state must make itself more attractive in a society increasingly interested in climate change and environmental sustainability, he said.

Sustainable cities will "attract more capital and better paying jobs," he said. "We don't have the luxury of conducting business as usual. Doing nothing here is absolutely unacceptable."

Citing studies showing increased demand in the business community for more sustainable buildings and practices, he said long-term losses based on lack of sustainable practices far outweigh the short-term monetary cost.

If measures are not taken to reduce carbon emissions and reduce global warming Arizona will face increased water supply and treatment costs and energy prices, all of which will eventually will be an added strain public budgets, Haeger said.

NAU increased budgetary allotments for energy every year for the past three years despite using similar amounts of energy, he said.

"We're talking of shifts in the budget by millions of dollars solely on energy price increases," he said.

Arizona State University President Michael Crow, considered a leader in global sustainability direction in the U.S. academic system, said the connection between environmental sustainability and the private business sector is "extremely important."

Citing recent agreements with Arizona Public Service Co. and British Petroleum, Crow said technology developed in the university system must be balanced with private investment.

"If we want to advance in this area, we must have private funding as a support mechanism," he said.

University of Arizona President Robert Shelton, who earned a Ph.D. in physics from the University of California at San Diego, said the scientific community has determined there is at least a need to further explore the human impact on global warming. But beyond that, the science community must leverage its research and evidence to support societal change.

Like Crow and Haeger, he said business community support is integral to addressing climate change issues. He said solar power research, tempered with the solar power industry's investment, could allow a circular investment scheme that could fund innovation in the university system.

"In the future, what I want to see is a small tax on every kilowatt of electricity drawn in Arizona to go back into the university system for further research," he said. "It's just like they do in Texas (with oil)."

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