Welcome to *Pima Community College Perspectives*, a look on how education enriches our community. And now, here’s your host, Nina Trasoff.

Hello, and welcome to *Pima Community College Perspectives*. I am Nina Trasoff, and I am joined once again today by Rachelle Howell who is Assistant Vice Chancellor for Pima Community College. Welcome.

Thank you, Nina.

Our topic today is how the Pima Community College Foundation benefits the community. And again, we think about a foundation, scholarships benefit the individual students; but Pima students are really an essential part of our community and the foundation for our economic future.

They are, they are, and—helping them find ways to pay for college and to pay, to pay to get that education is what the Foundation is all about. And it’s a key part of how we help students get through, uh, through college.

And I know Pima is much more affordable than many of the other options, but even so, it is still a challenge for so many of our students.

Uh, you know, even at roughly $1600 a year for, for average annual tuition, that still can be a daunting task for the typical student. And one of the things that we try to avoid, also, is encouraging students to acquire student loans. If, if a student needs a student loan, then that’s a good way to get through college. But if we can help them find other ways to pay for college that doesn’t require them to pay it back at the other end, that’s a win for them.

That’s a fresh start, a real fresh start for them. And helping them achieve that is Cheryl House, who’s the Executive Director of Pima Community College’s Foundation. Cheryl, thank you for joining us today.

Thank you for having me.

Tell me a little about the Foundation, what its mission is.

Uh, the Pima Community College Foundation’s mission is to provide financial support to Pima Community College in, uh, whatever areas, uh, the College deems as priorities. Uh, scholarships are obviously the most important form of support that we provide. Uh, we actually support, um, over a thousand students a year with scholarship support, most of which comes from donors in the local community. But we also work with the College, uh, to develop support
for particular programs, um, support capital projects, whatever kinds of things the College needs that may not be, uh, supported by traditional sources of funding.

(Trasoff) How are you governed? Who oversees the, the Foundation?

(House) We have an independent Board of Directors, uh, comprised of community and business leaders, uh, who oversee the Foundation and, and everything that we do. So we are a separate entity from the College.

(Trasoff) But you work closely with, obviously.

(House) Yes. We-- Pima Community College is the only institution that we support in the Foundation, so we work very closely with them.

(Trasoff) So, how do you get out into the community, spread the word about Pima and the Foundation and the need for these scholarships? Because there may be that misperception that Pima is a very reasonably priced educational option, and yet, a lot of the students, as Rachelle said, really do need the support.

(House) Well certainly, opportunities like this are very helpful, and we do appreciate that. Our Board of Directors is, uh, very active in the community and are, uh, continuously advocating on behalf of Pima, talking to their friends and colleagues and business associates about what things Pima is doing and what the needs of the students and the College may be. Uh, and we work very closely with the College’s marketing department. We have a—a strong presence on the College website. Uh, we work through our Alumni Association to communicate with people that way. And we do a lot of our own kind of promotional, um, advertising in, in newsletters and marketing efforts to get the word out that we do have need at Pima. And our students are very appreciative of the support that we get.

(Trasoff) Tell me about that. Um, nowadays, are you seeing greater need in students? Is there more requests for these kinds of scholarships?

(House) There is more requests, because as enrollment increases at Pima, um, our requests for scholarship go up. More and more people are coming back to school for a multitude of reasons: losing jobs, needing retraining, uh, needing to find additional means to support their families. And so, uh, our requests for scholarships go up every year.

(Trasoff) And donations to the Foundation are tax-deductible.

(House) Donations are completely tax-deductible, that’s right.

(Trasoff) So tell us how you go about raising these funds. I understand you had a golf tournament that took place a couple of months ago.

(House) Uh, we do have a golf tournament. Uh, this year, coming up in June of 2011, will be the 20th annual golf tournament.

(Trasoff) Wow!
(House) It was started and, uh, continues to be primarily managed by Pima College employees, which is terrific.

(Trasoff) Really?

(House) They spend a lot of their own time putting this together. And, uh, we generate some sponsors. We get people out at the Dell Urich Golf Course and, uh, have a great time and raise money for scholarships.

(Trasoff) What is the benefit to me? Obviously, tax-deduction is very nice; that’s a business reason to give. But for business owners and business people in this community, why should they care beyond that? I mean, how do you translate that into an investment in their own future and their own well-being?

(House) Well, certainly a well-educated citizenry is going to be better for our economy in the long run. People are going to be able to get better jobs; they’re going to be paying, uh, taxes; they’re going to be able to work in the businesses that we have in our community. And so that is the basic thing I think a lot of businesses look to when they want to support scholarships at Pima to help students get through.

But we have several businesses who support scholarships within their own industries to try to grow their own employees. Uh, Raytheon, for example, has a program called the Raytheon Scholars Program, where students start at Pima, spend two years, uh, in the engineer curriculum, then transfer to the U of A, end up graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Engineering. And all along the way during the summers, they’ve been working as interns at Raytheon. So Raytheon has a chance to impact their future workforce while helping people in the community at the same time.

(Trasoff) That’s powerful. And it’s not just younger people or what would typically be thought of as a “college student,” but some of the older students, um, well-educated people who are coming back to make a change, as will be our guest in the second half of this program.

(House) Yes, they are; they range from 18 years old all the way up to, uh, the woman who was the, uh, eldest Pima graduate last year, graduated at 72, and she was one of our scholarship recipients and credits the scholarship for helping her get through school. Not only from the financial point, but also because the group that supported her gave her so much confidence, that they believed in her and that she could finish.

(Trasoff) Our guest, um, uh—in a prior program, was talking about not just the education he got, David DeLeon, who, um, is now an entrepreneur, and we were talking about adult education, which is how he came into it. He talked about the education being essential, but the confidence that he got, and the support he got from Pima instructors was even more important than the basic education.

(House) Yes. We hear that, actually, quite a bit from our alumni. You know, a lot of Pima alumni maybe only went a semester or two at Pima before transferring on to another institution. And yet, we hear over and over again, the impact that a professor made in that first semester,
30 years ago, when they first took a class at Pima. They remember their professor’s name; they keep in touch with them; um, they remember some of the things the professor said in class. So I think it is, it’s a powerful experience for a lot of our students.

(Trasoff) And you have a very strong Alumni Association as well.

(House) We are, uh, building a strong Alumni Association, and yes, we’re very proud of that. We have about 15,000 -16,000 people that we, uh, email to on a regular basis.

(Trasoff) Wow!

(House) And, uh, try to encourage more and more to come and get involved with Pima.

(Trasoff) Now Desert Vista, Rachelle, is working on an endowment. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

(Howell) Sure. It’s part of a Title V grant that, uh, that the College has received and is working through Desert Vista on. And it’s, it’s a fundraising; it has a fundraising component. There’s a dollar-for-dollar match, uh, up to $310,000. So when it’s fully funded, there’ll be $620,000 sitting in that endowment that, uh, the, the interest off of that can be used to, uh, support scholarships and program development and facilities improvement at Desert Vista, at the Desert Vista campus. The, the deadline for raising our matching dollars is next fall, so October of 2011. Uh, we’re little over halfway there, $170,000. And as with, with anything else, we don’t want to leave dollars on the table, so we’re looking to raise our last $140,000, roughly, in the next year or so.

(Trasoff) And so people can go, if they want to be part of this endowment, they can call 206-4646.

(Howell) Yes.

(Trasoff) To reach you, Cheryl. And also go online to, um, www.pima.edu/foundation. I’m going to say that number again, a couple of times, because it’s really important people know about that. But you have an event coming up this December that people can mark their calendars for now; one of my very, very, very favorite places in the city.

(House) Yes, uh, we’re excited about this; this’ll be our Fourth Annual Pima Alumni at Zoolights. Um, on December 13th, Pima alumni will be taking over the Reid Park Zoo during their Zoolights exhibition. And, uh, we have a lot of our campuses and programs will be there with information about things that they’re doing. We have groups of students providing cookies and hot chocolate, and, uh, I believe Santa Claus will be making an appearance. So it’s a great way for alumni to come back, reconnect with the College, reconnect with other alumni. Um, it’s an inexpensive evening; $5 for adults, children under five are free. And all the information will also be on our webpage.

(Trasoff) And the webpage, again, is pima.edu/foundation. And I know Zoolights is a magical time, and now it’s a magical time to do some amazingly good work. Cheryl House, thank you very much for joining us. I do appreciate it.
(House) Thank you.

(Trasoff) We’re going to take a break now, and we’ll be coming back to talk with Renée Ochsner, who is a very interesting story of a former secondary school science teacher who decided to make a career change. And she did it just before the recession took hold, so hopefully it was a really good timing for her. So we’ll be back in just a few minutes.

[music]

(announcer) For more than 40 years, Pima Community College has helped prepare the citizens of Tucson and Pima County for good jobs and better lives for themselves and their families. We don’t do it alone. We appreciate your ongoing investment in education, especially during these extraordinarily tough times. Your tax dollars, combined with student tuition, make it possible for thousands of Southern Arizonans to get a jump-start before transferring to a university, to get the training they need to stay competitive at work, and to prepare for the jobs of tomorrow. Many of our students are seeking to restart their careers after losing their jobs, and some, their homes, during the recession. All of our students know, as you do, that the more you learn, the more you earn. We know that today’s students are often juggling work and family, as well as school. That’s why Pima offers classes at night and on weekends at six campuses, more than 180 other locations, and over the Internet. Our programs deliver education how you want it and give you the opportunity to achieve your goals at your pace. Today’s Pima Community College students will be tomorrow’s firefighters, nurses, police, teachers, and small business owners—the backbone of a safe, healthy, prosperous Tucson and Pima County. Thank you for your support as we continue to help you and your family build a better tomorrow. For more information, contact us at 206-4500, or visit us on the Web at pima.edu. Pima Community College, Developing our Community Through Learning.

[music]

(Nina Trasoff) Welcome back. I'm Nina Trasoff and we—you are listening to Pima Community College Perspectives. And joining Rachelle Howell and me is Renée Ochsner. And Renée is a student at Pima and an atypical student, or maybe a typical student, I'm not sure. You've made a career change, mid-life, from being a high school science teacher to becoming...

(Renée Ochsner) A respiratory therapist or respiratory care practitioner.

(Trasoff) Fabulous! So what made you want to do that?

(Ochsner) Well, I was spending a lot of extra time outside of my former, or my previous career. My parents were getting older, uh, my husband and I were kind of in the prime of our lives, and I thought I needed a different type of career where I could still work with people and then do science projects or work within the science field. So I decided to go into the healthcare, um, profession.

(Trasoff) When you came to Pima, did you know that, um, respiratory therapy was something you wanted to pursue, or did they help, did you find that out as you went through coursework?
I found that out as I went through coursework. I was thinking nursing, and I was planning on going to the U of A Nursing Program. And then, um, with the economy the way that it is, the Nursing Program had some issues, so I applied at some of the Pima programs. And what was nice is that the Director of Respiratory Therapy called me, set up an appointment, I came in, and she told me all about respiratory therapy. And then I went home and did some research about it and thought, “I can do this.” And it has been fantastic.

And what is the impact it’s had on your life? I know you’re still a student; you’re not quite out there doing it yet. But it still has to have been a life-changing decision.

Oh, it’s been fantastic, um, working with the people in the hospital setting. And what’s kind of unique is my son’s going through the program too, so us spending time together has been fantastic.

Really! So your son is in the respiratory?

He is, yes.

Well, that’s unique and wonderful. How is that?

It’s fantastic. We study together, and we carpool together a lot. Um, figuring that he will be out of the house, you know, in the next couple of years; he’s 20 years old now. So we get to spend time together. Um, it’s a nice bonding experience, too. And it’s nice that he’s gonna get off on the right foot as far as, um, having a profession and skill, um, as an adult.

Renée, um, was telling me that they will graduate together in May.

Yes.

So not only are they study buddies, they are going to graduate together as well, which is really unique.

Yes, very exciting.

Wow, as a mom, that just, you, just makes your heart feel so good about that. That’s terrific.

Yes.

Now, you are a, a scholarship student. Tell me about that.

Yes, I am. Um, my husband and I had planned for us to do a career—make a career change and didn’t realize that the economy wasn’t going to work with us. [chuckles] So I spent part-time hours, like instead of having a part-time job, part-time job hours looking for scholarships. So I applied to lots of scholarships outside of Pima and then also on the Pima Foundation, um, page. So anything that came up, I was on the page looking for scholarships or any way that I could help support, um, my career change.

And what did you land?
I, I have been very fortunate with the Pima Foundation. Um, the AAUW, um...

The American Association of University Women.

Yes. They have been fantastic. And they help pay for books, uniforms. I got a scholarship for this semester and for next semester. And then also, I was a recipient of an Aztec Grant Scholarship, and that combines community service, um, looks for people who spend time in the community. So I got that scholarship, too, to help cover, um, tuition.

Wow. I mean, that’s a lot of work to put that together, but the Foundation was helpful to you in that.

My goodness, yes. They want you to have these scholarships. They’re out there, um, I would make phone calls, and they would let me know if I needed to fax something in or if I needed to drive it and drop it off. They-- always fantastic when I called, very, very helpful.

And your son is also a scholarship recipient.

He is. We have some health-related scholarships that come on the website, and again, we have to be aware of that. And he’s gotten two, um, $500 scholarships that have helped pay for equipment that we need, like stethoscopes and uniforms, um, books. So it’s been very, very helpful, especially with two of us, and I’m not working. I worked part-time getting my prereqs, but during the program, I haven’t been working. And then my son’s been working part-time. So it has helped tremendously.

This was a big change. It took a lot of guts to make that kind of change, and it was for quality of life, I guess.

Yes, it was. Yes, it was. And yes, it, it took a lot of guts to do it. It was scary, yeah, but getting our bills in order and our affairs in order and having a plan has helped tremendously.

I find it interesting, though, and I think it’s important for our listeners to realize, because you think about Pima just for younger people coming out of high school, or we’ve talked about Adult Education helping people get their GED, helping people get started as a first step towards university, whatever; there’s a variety of ways Pima is thought of. But you must already, as a high school science teacher, already have a bachelor’s degree.

I do, yes.

So you are coming back as somebody with a four-year degree and turning to Pima for your next career.

Yes.

Does that surprise you?

It does. It does. And it’s funny to be getting an associate’s degree when I already have a bachelor’s degree, but it’s been a very positive experience.
(Trasoff) But the associate’s degree, I mean, I think it’s important to point out the value in a degree such as that. Because it might, by some, be considered a “lesser” degree; it’s a two-year degree. But what you’re learning is a specific skill that’s going to give you entry into a very meaningful career.

(Ochsner) Yes. And what’s very interesting is I will, once I’m in the field, I’ll be making about what I did as a teacher with a bachelor’s degree.

(Howell) Interesting.

(Trasoff) [with irony] Well, that speaks volumes, right there, about our education system, but we won’t go into that.

(Ochsner) I know, yes.

(Trasoff) You were going to say, Rachelle?

(Howell) You know, this—this is, you—you mentioned before, “typical,” do we have a “typical” PCC student? I think the answer to that—to that is, “no.” Although, I think that Renée’s story really points out one of the key things that we do, and that’s the career change. Uh, that—that we help individuals with, especially in today’s economy. That is really becoming one of our primary roles, is helping individuals with career change and moving on to the next, whatever the next step in their, in their lives, uh, might be. And—and it’s an important one. And—and actually, uh, we heard something recently about Pima becoming the, the “graduate school of choice,” locally, meaning that individuals who have bachelor’s or master’s degrees are coming back for retraining. And so, it’s a little bit of a, of a—of a joke, but not really, because its—it’s the next step for a lot of people.

(Trasoff) And the realities have changed a lot. I mean, you’re going into a very technical field that you need specific skills.

(Ochsner) Yes, yes.

(Trasoff) Tell me about the coursework, as a former science teacher.

(Ochsner) Coursework, okay. Actually, I love it. Um, get into a lot of anatomy, physiology, um, chemistry, believe it or not. We get into different calculations. But what’s nice is we are the people that, when somebody’s having a cardiac arrest in the hospital, we’re the “code” people. So we go in and we do compressions, and I’ve done compressions, and we do bagging, to make sure that their airways... We’re very, a very important part of the emergency response team in the hospital. And very, very exciting to be able to help save somebody’s life.

(Trasoff) Now, have you spent, um you’re just coming into this new semester now. You’ll be spending time at TMC? Actual practicum?

(Ochsner) Yes. I’m at UMC right now, for, um eight weeks, doing the evening shift, um, well actually, from 2:00 to 10:00. And it has been fantastic. And then I’ll go to TMC for eight weeks doing the morning shift from 6:30 to 2:30. Then next semester we have our pediatric rotations.
And we don’t know where we’ll be assigned yet, but it’ll be either TMC or UMC because they have the neonatal intensive care and then the pediatric intensive care units. So we’ll learn how to work on little ones, too.

(Trasoff) Have you thought about what you want to specialize in or what you want to do?

(Ochsner) Oh, my goodness. All of it’s been exciting.

(Trasoff) Yeah, but you’re graduating in May!

(Ochsner) I don’t know! I know, I know! Um, uh, having, getting a job is very important, and I want a job in a hospital. I would love to have a job in a hospital. Um, and I don’t care if I work nights; I don’t care if I work days. I don’t—I’m not sure how I will be with pediatrics; I can’t wait to see. Being a mother, it might be a little bit hard. But I, intensive care’s been fantastic; emergency room’s been fantastic. I—I’ve enjoyed helping people. I got to, um, work on a young lady yesterday who had some breathing issues. But she’s waiting for a heart transplant, and, you know, you, your heart goes out to them, any way that you can make them comfortable, um, in that process... But it’s been very fulfilling.

(Trasoff) So Pima, Rachelle, is really playing a role in helping people find these kinds of transitions, making a difference in the community, but also finding real meaning in their own lives, from the way Renée is describing this new career.

(Howell) That—that’s true, and that’s why I love hearing from students like Renée who, who have been able to find their passion, and some of the other guests that we’ve had on the show. Um, and—and having access to, to scholarship dollars to help make that happen, I think, is really key and really important. And having support of groups like the—the AAUW that you mentioned, that provided the support for you. Um, and, you know, there’s so many different types of scholarships that are available to help all sorts of individuals find, uh, what it is their next step is.

(Trasoff) And again, for people who may be listening and interested in possibly coming up with a scholarship to pursue something like this, the Pima Community College Foundation’s phone number is 206-4646, and their website, to learn more about it, is pima.edu/foundation. And I’m impressed, actually, because I’d thought about the Foundation going out and raising money itself, but I didn’t realize that it formed partnerships with groups like the AAUW to help them find people who, with shared interests, and make their scholarship money go farther.

(Howell) Yeah, you know, that’s one of the key functions of the Foundation. And, and, uh, groups like AAUW, which is the local Casas Adobe branch, um, you know, they, they have a vested interest in our local economy, uh, and in helping to see, in this particular instance, local—local women grow in their lives and thrive and—and, uh, um, be able to—to, to move forward in their lives. But there are a variety of other local groups, uh, national groups, that the Foundation partners with. Uh, Cheryl House, at the top of the show, spoke about the partnership that we have with Raytheon. Just another one of the many examples that we have with partnerships, um, to—to provide educational resources to—to, uh, individuals.
And, uh, the Foundation also has an Alumni Association associated with it. And one of the goals of the Alumni Association which I find interesting, which I think impacts you, Renée, um, is to inspire alumni to pursue lifelong learning. And I think it’s also for the alumni to inspire other people in the community to lifelong learning, because there’s so much out there. And we’ve been talking specifically about Adult Education in this half-hour, but there’s also continuing education just purely for enrichment, to help people live fuller lives. Do you think you may end up continuing?

Well, you know what I would really like to do when I get out into the workforce; I would love to be a clinical instructor so other Pima students could come and learn from me, like I’ve learned from previous Pima students. So as far as lifelong learning or lifelong teaching, I guess it’s in my genes, I don’t know. But, um, we’ll wait and see.

But that-- so some of your instructors are Pima grads.

Oh, many of them are.

Interesting. What stor—have they told you any stories or shared any thoughts about what they got out of Pima?

Just how ready they were, how prepared they were for the workforce in the respiratory care, um, field. They were very, very well-prepared, and a lot of them are registered already, um, registered respiratory therapists, so, and doing a fantastic job.

I hadn’t thought about that. So you’ve got students teach—former students teaching current students who want to go on to teach the next generation of students. That’s—that’s pretty neat. Um, so if we’re talking about community involvement in all of this, we really do need members of the community to kind of step up to support this. Because here we have somebody who devoted her life, um, Renée, as you did, to helping young people learn science. And for yourself and your next phase of life, you wanted to go on to something new. So we need community people to step up to make this possible.

We do. We need support and we need involvement. Um, even, even Renée talking about giving back after she’s done, which is really what she’s talking about doing should she become an instructor on—the other side. But yes, anything that—that you, as a community member, can do to support these, these individuals. Um, look at the impact that you’re having on one individual’s life that’s going to then uh, balloon into all the people that she’s now going to impact. And it, it starts with, uh, with help from the, from the community, and support.

As it should be. And Tucson is a wonderful community; I—I know people will be there to step up to help the next generation. Um, thank you, Renée, for joining us. Thank you, Rachelle, for your conversation today. This has been Pima Community College Perspectives. I’m Nina Trasoff, and I hope you’ll join us next week for the next edition, um, uh, an opportunity to learn more about Pima and its impact on our community.
(male announcer) K-J-L-L, South Tucson.