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’m so delighted you could join us. And I’m also delighted that Rachelle Howell, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Pima Community College is with me today, too. And this is an exciting time of year. We’re into the new year, and just a little over a week from now, classes are going to start at Pima. So what’s new?

Hi Nina. That’s right. Classes start on January 18, so we are in busy, busy mode right now, and we are looking forward to having a lot more students show up. Um, you know, in the last couple of years, because of the downturn in the economy, we’ve seen double-digit enrollment increases.

Wow!

Uh, yes it’s been record-setting enrollment for us for the last two years, really. Last fall, fall 2009, we had a double-digit enrollment increase. This past fall, 2010, slowed down a little bit to a 4 percent or 5 percent increase. But on top of already record enrollment increases, you can imagine we’re really bursting at the seams right now.

There must be a lot you have to do in order to cope with that level of enrollment.

Uh, we do. There’s, there are a lot of things that we have to take into account. But our goal is to add sections, add classes as necessary, as much as is reasonable and feasible, because we want to continue to maintain the same level of service and be able to offer the same programs and classes to our students.

And what you’re doing with Pima students, you’ve got all kinds of different students. You have the more classic kids who have gotten out of high school and are choosing Pima for the first couple of years and then maybe going on to a four-year degree. But you have a lot of people, who, you were talking about the economy a couple minutes ago, who need to upgrade their skills or completely retrain, having lost their job or in an industry that is no more.

That’s right. And for community colleges, we’ve always really had those two markets, but we’re seeing the growth in both. The more traditional student, especially locally, needs a more affordable alternative to the first couple of years of college. And if you can come to Pima, which you can do, and pay only about $1600 a year for tuition as opposed to what you would pay to go to the U of A for those first couple of years, it’s a really good bargain. And our close relationship, our close ties with the U of A and other four-year universities makes it that easy to move on to get your four-year degree. And it just
makes a whole lot of sense to do it that way. Saves a bundle of cash, you get a good, high-quality, world-class education either way, and it’s a good way to start for the traditional student.

On the flipside, we unfortunately continue to see a lot of un- or under-employed individuals, individuals who have recently lost their jobs, maybe even their homes, who need to jumpstart their lives and their careers. And so we’re continuing to see a lot of growth in our occupational programs, those individuals who need to get new skills to get back on track.

(Trasoff) And I think, two points you made I think are exceptionally important. One is in the second point of retraining and getting the new skills. That’s also a real hook to help new employers come to our community, knowing they’re going to be able to have workers skilled, trained specifically for the skill set that they’re going to need.

(Howell) Absolutely. It’s really a part of how Pima is an integral part of the community here. And continuing to make sure that our local work base is a skilled workforce is so critical, especially right now.

(Trasoff) And then the other point on that is the students and the wonderful ties with the U of A, NAU, and ASU, and other universities and four-year colleges. It’s not putting one down or the other; it’s offering another choice. Some students want to go straight to the U of A, and others like the more intimate and personal kind of sense they get, community sense they get right off the bat when they come to Pima along with the savings.

(Howell) Right. Absolutely. And even those students that go straight to the U of A, we have so many students that are Pima and U of A students at the same time. And they get the best of both worlds, and it makes a whole lot of sense.

(Trasoff) So with these dramatic increases, where is the space? [laughs]

(Howell) Well, you know, that’s certainly one of the things that we have to deal with every semester, and what we’re trying to do is just be smarter, more efficient about how we use space. We’re reconfiguring spaces as needed and adding space where appropriate; although right now, we’re in the mode where we’re really looking at re-using space. And we’ve just done some things with our new Respiratory Care Laboratory Facility to add more space to that, which is a growing program and a really great program and has great employability at the other end of graduation. We have carved out more space for our Nursing Program, which is one of the premier nursing programs in the state. We have a new state-of-the-art dance facility, dance studio. So, taking our existing facilities, improving them, using them better, reconfiguring space as needed to accommodate our additional enrollment.

(Trasoff) You also, uh, you have a lot of challenges beyond finding the space. I mean, it’s a nice program to have with an increasing enrollment, but it’s happening at the same time as financial cutbacks in terms of support from the state. But are you picking up more with federal grants? How are you balancing all of this?

(Howell) Our goal is to look to federal and other grants to help balance the state budget issues that are impacting our funding, the local property tax issues that are impacting our funding. We, out of necessity,
have to look elsewhere, and so we’ve really stepped up our activities in that area over the last couple of years. And, in fact, in 2010, we received the largest amount of grant funding that the College has ever received at $26 million.

(Trasoff) Wow!

(Howell) It’s a huge amount and a great achievement for the College to bring those kinds of dollars here to serve our community.

(Trasoff) And people forget, this person forgets on occasion, that with the bust and the housing bust, all home values have really gone down; therefore, the dollars you are getting in, which is based on a percentage of assessed valuation, those dollars are going down at the same time everything else is being cut.

(Howell) Correct. It’s really a double hit for us. The state budget woes are impacting what we receive from the state, and we expect nothing but further cuts. At the same time, one of the other legs of the "three-legged stool" that we like to call our funding, which is property tax, is also taking a dip. So we’re being impacted by that. And then the other leg in our three-legged stool is tuition, and we purposely keep tuition rates as low as we possibly can to make our programs accessible.

(Trasoff) Well, you were talking about the federal grants. There were three of them that you were talking, that you’ve really identified that I find especially exciting, because they’re geared at really helping students who might not otherwise have that leg up, succeed.

(Howell) Right.

(Trasoff) Would you talk about those a little bit?

(Howell) Sure. Well, we’ve got a couple, um, that are specifically targeted at needy students, um, individuals who have special need, first-generation, low-income, disabled individuals, veterans. And those are really targeted at getting these individuals into occupational programs and getting them up on their feet. So two of these programs, one is called “SOAR,” which works on the Students with Opportunities for Academic, excuse me, Achievement and Retention, and then the other is called “GREAT,” Graduation Retention Academic standing and Transfer. And these two programs combined will serve about 240 students and get them into programs that will give them skills that will get them jobs. So those are a couple of the most recent grants that we’ve gotten, and they are good programs.

(Trasoff) And this really changes peoples’ lives. I think it’s important to really talk about that. And that has an impact on the whole community, because you’re able to focus in, in a very unique way on an individual student with specific needs. And once you have that person ready to achieve, they become productive members of society to the greatest, to their greatest ability. That has an impact on our entire community I would think.
(Howell) It does. [clears throat] It’s transformational for the individual, but it’s also transformational for our local community. And I think it’s something that we all have to keep in mind, and it's easy to lose sight of. But these transformations happen one person at a time, or in this case, 240 people at a time...

[Trasoff chuckles]

(Howell) ...which is our goal.

(Trasoff) And then you also have a grant that is going to be helping the unemployed and underemployed workers and vets get back into the workforce.

(Howell) That’s correct. We just received the largest grant in Pima history, $18.5 million through the Department of Health and Human Services.

(Trasoff) [whispers] Wow...

(Howell) And it’s a Health Professions Opportunity Grant. It will be used over the next five years to get individuals into health-related professions, and we’re very, very excited about this. And we talk about transforming the lives of these individuals and transforming, and helping to transform the economics of the community, but just think about these 18.5 million dollars that are pumping into the community. I mean, just look at the dollars themselves, and that’s another boom to the local economy.

(Trasoff) And Lord knows we need them right now.

(Howell) We do, we do.

[laughter]

(Trasoff) Well, what I like, though, is that it is an investment. It’s not just dollars coming in that are one-time dollars. These are dollars that are going to pay dividends, both in terms of quality of life for these individuals and a raising, a rising of the economy, uh, because they’re going to have increased buying power and become stronger citizens.

(Howell) Correct. It goes well beyond the five years that we’ll have the grant dollars in place. Well, well beyond.

(Trasoff) And you have some other initiatives that are underway to make things easier for students to get in, to get through, et cetera.

(Howell) We do. Uh, in 2009, we did a major revamp of our student services, which is, which is the centers that we have at each one of our campuses for intake, helping students get access to advising, to counseling, to financial aid assistance and all sorts of things. We did that in 2009, but it’s an ongoing process. We really just want to continue to step up our customer service to students. So one of things that we’ve done recently is implement a new intake system that helps students when they come to our centers get to counselors, advisors, and everything else as quickly as we can. It’s very similar to an
experience that individuals have right now if they go into say, for example, an Apple Store anywhere in the country. So it’s sort of new and cutting-edge.

(Trasoff) And fun. And you’ve got an upcoming speaker series that, my favorite-- I’m sorry, actually the ones you’ve, you and I have talked about are just great-- but "Does the Past Have a Future?" I mean, there are some really interesting lectures. And we can talk about more, that more, a little bit more in the second segment, because we’re going to be talking about the arts and all of the outreach opportunities within the College.

(Howell) Right.

(Trasoff) Um, and each campus has its own unique field. But you’re really facing a lot of challenges with the dips in property tax, the lack of, the cut backs in state funding. That has to be really impacting how you’re envisioning the future and tuition even.

(Howell) It’s true. We talked a little bit about the budget issues, and we are really going to be focusing, well we don’t have a choice, we have to focus on those issues. And one of the things that we’re beginning to explore is something called “differential tuition,” which is the possibility of perhaps charging slightly higher tuition rates for some occupational classes. We charge the same tuition rate for all classes right now, but all classes are not created equally. In fact, some are very, very expensive to deliver, for example, our Aviation Technology classes. A plane costs millions of dollars, and when you put that, the cost of that training side-by-side with your typical, say, English or writing class, all things are just not equal there. So we’re looking at the possibility of perhaps increasing some tuition for some occupational classes, low cost increases.

(Trasoff) But something. But it also reflects that those people on that course also stand the potential of greater earnings potential because of the class.

(Howell) Correct. And the important thing to remember is, we’re looking at differential tuition for perhaps some classes is that our goal is to be able to keep those classes in place, keep those programs open, as opposed to looking at having to be able to perhaps cut higher-cost programs or classes in the future, which is not what we want to do at all.

(Trasoff) Terrific. Well we’re going to take a break now, and when we come back, we’re going to be joined by Carol Carder, who will be talking about the spring art season. So we’ve talked about the education, and art is an integral part, but it’s also fun. So we’ll be getting an idea of what’s going to be coming up this semester at Pima Community College. We’ll be right back.

[music]

(male 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]

(Trasoff) Welcome back. I’m Nina Trasoff. Joining me is Rachelle Howell. And we’re with Pima Community College Perspectives talking about the spring semester that is just about to get underway. Rachelle, we were, ended the last segment talking a little bit about the upcoming speaker series, and the first one is coming up in just a couple of weeks.

(Howell) The 25th; it’ll be here before we know it. And it is a really fascinating topic: “Does the Past Have a Future?” It’s by one of our anthropology and archaeology faculty, Dr. David Stephen, and it should be really interesting. This has been a really successful series for us. There are two more lectures coming up this spring. We encourage everyone to go to the website to take a look at that, pima.edu. And then we’ll have more lectures again this fall.

(Trasoff) That’s great. And they are free and open to the public.

(Howell) They are!

(Trasoff) Free is a good price.

[laughter]

(Trasoff) Or something like that. And joining us now is Carol Carder. And Carol is the Marketing and Public Relations Coordinator for the West Campus, which is the home to a lot of the arts activity that goes on at Pima, although I know that there are things on every campus. But, um, welcome, Carol. Thank you for joining us.

(Carol Carder) Well, thanks for having me.

(Trasoff) Tell me a little bit about how long you’ve been at Pima, and what do you do out there?

(Carer) Well, I’ve been at Pima almost six years, and primarily, my job is to market all the Pima arts events and performances at the Center for the Arts. So I get to be immersed in the arts hour after hour, day after day, and it’s wonderful.
(Trasoff) Gee, what a rough life! [laughs] I love that! Because there really are some exciting things that are happening out there, and your performers are, by and large, either students or faculty.

(Carder) Mostly. Mostly they’re students and faculty. We do have guest artists, uh, coming in occasionally and, uh, at the Center for the Arts we also, uh, from time to time, rent the space to community groups. So, but primarily, my job is to market the events that Pima does.

(Trasoff) And I know the facilities out there. I know some of them, and they’re really comfortable, classy, and you can park right next door.

(Carder) The complex is wonderful. It’s the best way to see and be involved in the arts. And they’re, you’re just up close and personal in everything that you participate in and want to see. The largest theater is 425 seats, and there is not a bad seat in the house. And then the Black Box Theatre, literally, performances are performed around you. You almost feel like you could stand up and act with them. And the Recital Hall is lovely for those musicians, and you feel like the music is just coming from inside of you almost.

(Trasoff) That’s such a good description, because there is an intimacy there that gives you a different sense of the arts when you have that close a tie with the performance.

(Carder) It is wonderful, and it’s very accessible to everybody. Um, most of the people who come from the community are amazed; they can’t get over what a wonderful feeling it is to watch these performances and see everything so up close.

(Trasoff) And to see the level of talent. It’s not just that you get to be close; these are really some very talented young performers.

(Carder) They’re very talented. And the faculty is so passionate about what they do, and they’re so professional. And we would not do anything that wasn’t the highest quality, because nobody would have it that way. From the technicians to the directors, and even the students, they push themselves, push themselves. And everyone loves what they’re doing.

(Trasoff) It is such a gift to the students, because whether they go on to an arts career or not, it enriches their lives, their souls, and their education. But it’s also a gift to the community, because we get the chance to come in and benefit from their work and see things we might not otherwise see.

(Carder) And personally benefit, as far as, you can talk to the actors, you can talk to the directors. Before the show, the directors are always out in the courtyard greeting people and talking to them. After the show, the actors all come out and greet and talk to people. So you do feel a part of, you know, the arts experience on a different level than you would maybe somewhere else.

(Trasoff) That’s exciting. Now, first of all, for basic education, we’ll say it several times. You can go to the website of basic information; you go to pima.edu/cfa.
Right. And “CFA” stands for the “Center for the Arts.” And then when you get to that page, you can branch off, and if your interest is music, you can go to the music performances; you can go to theater, the Louis Carlos Bernal Gallery, the dance, or you can go to our “Now Playing” page and see what’s happening in the next month.

That is wonderful. Um, tell them a little bit, uh, talk a little bit about, uh, because right now you have a show that’s going on for just another week, uh, the George Welch Exhibit.

George Welch has been at Pima Community College teaching painting for 40 years. And this is a retrospective of his work. And actually, we only have, I think, 22 pieces up in the Gallery, because his paintings are so large. You walk into that Gallery now, and the colors jump out at you. It’s like a kaleidoscope, like you’re part of a kaleidoscope. George is a wonderful person, and he’s been a part of, a fixture in this community. He has been a very strong advocate for community arts, and he’s a wonderful mentor for the students.

That is so good. Talk about what’s going on with Theater Arts. What are the big productions this year?

Well...

This semester.

Always, every spring semester we do our big musical, and the musical is always held in the Proscenium Theatre. And the theater directors try to find a musical that involves a nice mixture of dance, singing, and acting. And this year, we’re doing Cole Porter’s “Anything Goes.”

What fun!

It is so much fun! It’s total tap dancing and jokes. There’s like, I was talking to one of the directors yesterday, and he was telling me there is not a page of the script that doesn’t have at least two jokes on it.

[chuckles]

Um...

That’s a fun, old time musical.

It’s a fun, old time musical. In fact, it’s called, “a classic, screwball comedy set to music with a whole lot of dancing."

That sounds about right.
(Carder) It’s set on a cruise liner of all things, and there’s a lot of the slap-stick humor, and the mixed identities, and it’s set in the ‘30s.

(Trasoff) Love it.

(Carder) Before the war.

(Trasoff) Now the contrast is Antigone.

(Carder) Yes. There we have, um, every year, the Theatre Arts Department tries to do a classic drama, and this year it’s Sophocles’ Antigone. It’s very stark and powerful, and it kind of grapples with the issues of state control, natural law, civil disobedience. And basically the story is about, basically about simple human rights of how to bury your loved one. And what happens is the King of Thebes is forbidding Antigone, who is engaged to his son, to bury her brother. And this is because she had two brothers. One was for the King; the other rebelled against the King. And they fought each other in battle, and they both were killed. Well, the one who is on the side of the King is getting this heroic burial, and his soul gets to move on, where the other brother is supposed to lie in the field for the crows to eat and the vultures to eat. And this upsets Antigone; she feels that everybody deserves the proper burial rights. And so she rises up and disregards and disobeys the King. And it’s a tragedy.

(Trasoff) There are so many talking points there. I mean, that could just elicit so much conversation, provoke so much conversation that’s relevant today. It’s interesting that Sophocles, you know these ancient plays, have such relevance in our world today.

(Carder) And it’s really a great, great educational experience for the students, because they get to actually think about some of these issues and how it pertains to them today and just kind of admire the fact that these issues have been around forever.

(Trasoff) But it also, uh, we keep talking about Pima in the community and why it matters. It also, it could be a vehicle for the community, because it’s easier to think about critical issues today in a historical setting, because it removes some of the emotion. But it prompts you to start thinking about how we make decisions and what our priorities are. What an interesting combination. What I love also is that you have a lot of matinees for school children to start getting elementary school children and middle school children involved and excited about this.

(Carder) Well, we’re very excited at the Center for the Arts for our Student Matinee Program. And we start in the fall. We always have a Children’s Theatre production. And this past year, well the past couple of years, we have sold out all six of our school matinees.

(Trasoff) Wow...

(Carder) And, uh, then for the musical, we’ll have one school matinee, and primarily it is targeted to high school students, which, you know, is a great experience for them to see what they can do in the Theatre Arts area past high school. And then the dance production also has a school matinee in May. But the thing about the school matinees that’s so amazing is the kids! They love it! They, they see it as magic...
(Trasoff) It is magic.

(Carder) And they totally become involved in it...

(Trasoff) Yeah...

(Carder) And they get to meet all the actors afterwards. And they’re so excited. I’ve, I’ve, I like to go to all the school matinees just to be there with the children and watch the looks on their faces and see how they respond to the actors when they’re on stage.

(Trasoff) It’s opening a whole other world to them.

(Carder) I love it!

(Trasoff) It’s also, I think it has to be said, you’re opening the world of theater to them and those possibilities, but you’re also bringing them to the campus so that they can see that Pima is attainable. It is a comfortable place to be, so for children in high school who may not have a tradition in the family of going on to college may be able to start envisioning themselves in college.

(Carder) And both the Theatre and the Dance Departments offer a high school night to come to, come free to a dress rehearsal so that they can experience it.

(Trasoff) Those, those, that combination of the wealth of the arts, introducing young people to the College, and also giving our community such a wonderful gift, those are important things. Carol, thank you so much for joining us. This has been fascinating. Please go to pima.edu/cfa and look at the detail on all of these things, because there’s so much happening. Rachelle, thank you once again. And I’m Nina Trasoff. Thank you for joining us for Pima Community College Perspectives.

[music]

(male announcer) K-J-L-L. South Tucson.