

UA Fueling Rapid Tucson Tech Growth

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The UA Tech Park at Rita Road. Photo: Tech Parks Arizona

TUCSON, Ariz. — Tucson technology and talent have hit the map, as low unemployment and high demand for talent have tech companies turning to smaller communities to fill their pipelines, according to a new report that says Tucson is the leading emerging market in the United States.

In its 2019 [Scoring Tech Talent report](#), global commercial real estate services and investment company CBRE places Tucson at the top of "The Next 25 Markets," where tech companies are looking to find new opportunities. The company pegs the city's tech job growth at 90% over the last five years, with employment in the industry reaching 15,700 in 2018. Tucson's total tech wage growth – 29% over the last five years – is also highest among the list's 25 cities.

University of Arizona leaders involved in commercializing and developing university-born technologies say the UA is a crucial piece of that growth.

"In the last six years that we've been working on startup development, we've launched 80 startup companies," says [Joann MacMaster](#), senior director for venture development at [Tech Launch Arizona](#), which helps UA researchers bring their ideas and discoveries to market.

"That's roughly 1,000 new jobs that have been created," she added, with about three-quarters of them in Arizona.

Also helping to ensure that Tucson builds on its momentum as an emerging tech hub is [Tech Parks Arizona](#), which directs the UA's tech parks as well as the UA Center for Innovation, the university's startup incubator.

Tech Parks Arizona works to connect companies that have or want to build connections with UA resources and talent. **Carol Stewart**, associate vice president of Tech Parks Arizona, says the designation from CBRE, an internationally recognized company, validates what the organizations are doing and, importantly, puts Tucson in front of corporate real estate professionals and site selectors working with their domestic clients to expand through satellite operations and international companies looking for U.S. headquarters.

"If you go to Silicon Valley, it's a very competitive landscape," Stewart says. "Tucson is a very different environment, with academia and business working together to advance technology. The university's student and graduate talent is the lead card when we're talking to companies both in North America and internationally."

As companies look to emerging cities to call home, Tech Launch Arizona and UA tech park leaders say they are ramping up efforts to make sure talent matches business needs.

For example, at a recent meeting with leaders from the more than 40 tenants at the [UA Tech Park at Rita Road](#), Stewart connected the companies, including tech industry leaders IBM and Raytheon and startups Reglagene and TG Companies, with UA [Student Development and Career Services](#). The office helps provide students with experiential learning opportunities, which allow companies and prospective workers find their ideal fit.

"The students get to test-drive the companies and the companies get to test-drive the students, and that is the lifeblood of the companies that are here in the Tech Park. That's their path to growth," Stewart says.

Stewart is planning a job shadowing day at the park to showcase tech job opportunities in areas including life sciences and engineering to hundreds of UA students.

Another key factor in boosting Tucson's tech pool, says [Doug Hockstad](#), assistant vice president for Tech Launch Arizona, is creating and strengthening programs surrounding student engagement and entrepreneurship. He says most of the companies formed through Tech Launch Arizona stay in Arizona, with more than three-quarters of those remaining in Tucson.

"Investment and entrepreneurship are increasing in Tucson. There's this kind of activity in the region and it becomes attractive to relocate here because of all the talent starting to form around the entrepreneurial ecosystem," he says.

Hockstad says Tech Launch Arizona is also looking for alumni domain experts and industry partners who can serve as advisers for startup companies and help them find the best pathways to market.

Not to be forgotten, says Stewart, is the UA's position as a tier-one research university. "That should not be overlooked in combination with the high-level talent that we're graduating from the university as well."

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