

## **Obesity Solutions Initiative offers funding for innovative ideas**

Arizona State University

### **Students, faculty, staff and alumni are invited to Jan 31 kick-off event**

Arizona State University is showing its commitment to health once again by launching an Obesity Solutions Funding Challenge, which will officially kick off Jan. 31. The goal is to encourage community members to get involved with developing solutions to the growing obesity epidemic by coming forward with their own ideas to address the issue.

The challenge gives anyone affiliated with ASU – students, faculty, staff and alumni – the opportunity to win up to \$10,000 in seed funding to help get their obesity solution off the ground, along with office space, mentoring and access to investors.

The Obesity Solutions program at ASU, in partnership with the Mayo Clinic, is spearheaded by Elizabeth D. Phillips, executive vice president and provost of the university. Obesity Solutions brings together the world-renowned doctors of the Mayo Clinic, distinguished scientists at ASU and members of the community and government in order to identify, test and share innovative ways of addressing obesity. The goal is to gather together people from many diverse backgrounds in order to develop simple solutions that work for real people in the real world.

Alexandra Brewis Slade, director of operations for the program, has spent her career researching obesity from environmental and economic perspectives.

"While expert opinions are important, solutions to challenges as complex as obesity need people from all backgrounds and with really different skills helping to develop solutions," Brewis Slade says. "Solutions can emerge from technology, from social media or medicine, or places we haven't even dreamed of yet. No idea is too crazy if it works."

Solutions to the obesity challenge can take a variety of different shapes, from new ways to increase physical activity in the community by creating more walkable neighborhoods, to technological or social media innovations that make it easier to maintain a healthy lifestyle, to promoting global food policies that encourage health. The most successful solution is likely to be a combination of several different approaches.

"Obesity is a complex problem, with no single fix," Brewis Slade says. "What we need are imaginative solutions that can come from any part of the human experience – how we eat, exercise, sleep, maintain our health individually, interact with each other, and also how we plan our society, cities and policies. A good solution can take a million different forms, as long as it aims to be simple, smart

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and effective."

James Levine, an endocrinologist and director of the Obesity Solutions Initiative for the Mayo Clinic, specializes in obesity research and inactivity studies. He was awarded the entrepreneur of the year award by the state of Minnesota in 2007, inventor of the future by NASA, and he has won the platinum innovation award at the world fair. He has had a role in developing many obesity solutions, including the walking desk.

"Millions of people spend billions of dollars on weight management solutions that fail," says Levine. "We know that most people struggle with the 'eat less, exercise more' mantra. Expecting people to solve the obesity issue on an individual basis is unrealistic, and what we need now is for people with all different talents to join in and build solutions that will really help people succeed in their efforts."

Obesity Solutions will be hosting the Funding Challenge kick-off event from 3 to 5 p.m., Jan. 31, at Changemaker Central in the Memorial Union on the Tempe campus for anyone who is interested in the challenge. For more information about the Obesity Solutions Funding Challenge, visit the website [obesitysolutions.asu.edu/challenge](http://obesitysolutions.asu.edu/challenge) [1].

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### Links:

[1] <http://obesitysolutions.asu.edu/challenge>

[2] <https://asunews.asu.edu/mailto:kathryn.eaton@asu.edu>

[3] <https://asunews.asu.edu#>