

## A DECADE OF PARTNERSHIP ROOTED IN CARE, CELEBRATED WITH GRIT AND GRATITUDE

**Kelly Wood, Sr. Corporate Account Executive, UAGC Business Education Services Team**



For more than ten years, the education partnership between the University of Arizona Global Campus (UAGC) and Airgas Inc. has embodied a spirit of growth and "students first" ethos. Rooted in the shared belief of the potential of others—Airgas through its "Fill Your Potential™" promise, and UAGC through its Culture of Care—this partnership has proven that resilience thrives when opportunity and care meet. That shared commitment has also created moments worth celebrating—honoring the personal milestones and

workplace impact of more than 200 Airgas associates who crossed the graduation stage with UAGC during the last ten years.

### **Airgas: "Fill Your Potential™" as a Culture of Care**

Airgas, an Air Liquide company, employs roughly 18,000 associates in all 50 states, supporting customers in manufacturing, healthcare, construction, and other essential sectors. Associates are invited to "be yourself while becoming your best" in a workplace where they are valued for who they are and who they are capable of becoming, with opportunities to grow through hundreds of career paths in operations, engineering, sales, customer service, and corporate roles.

In 2022, Airgas introduced its clever "Fill Your Potential™" tagline as a way to capture the company's promise to help customers and associates grow as they "create, build, care, serve and sustain." This message is not only reflected throughout its talent and culture messaging but is also integrated into our collaborate partnership marketing as well.

In other words, "Fill Your Potential™" is not just an Airgas marketing tagline; it symbolizes our shared values and the strength of our education partnership.

### **Where Our Two Cultures Meet**

When an Airgas associate enrolls at UAGC, they are not just moving from "work" to "school"; they are moving between two cultures of care and potential. Just as Airgas encourages their associates to pursue new roles and responsibilities as they grow into their potential, UAGC invites students to see themselves as scholars, leaders, and change agents.

Growth is a shared responsibility. Airgas actively promotes its education partnership and UAGC's Full Tuition Grant opportunity, knowing that, in return, UAGC provides rigorous, flexible academic programs and robust support services to help their workforce succeed.

Belonging and safety matter: Airgas emphasizes a welcoming workplace rooted in safety and support, just as UAGC's Culture of Care explicitly focuses on building trust, belonging, and psychological safety. This allows students to fully engage, grow in confidence, and be successful in and out of school.

## The Annual Virtual Graduation Celebration: Culture of Care in Action

One of the clearest expressions of this successful partnership and our shared philosophy is the annual virtual graduation event dedicated to Airgas–UAGC graduates. These yearly events showcase the extraordinary achievements of Airgas associates who balanced work, family, and UAGC's rigorous academic study to reach a milestone they will carry forever.

At the heart of these events are the student testimonials — brief yet heartfelt reflections that underscore how their children inspired their self-determination, and how fulfilling lifelong dreams, gaining confidence, and realizing that education has changed how they approach leadership, teamwork, and their future.

Airgas leadership of all levels — from colleagues and direct supervisors to Divisional President—take turns speaking, honoring not only the degrees earned, but also the distinguished qualities that we at UAGC strive to cultivate in all of our students. Common themes shared are:

**Grit** – Persisting through difficult terms, long shifts, and family responsibilities.

**Time-Management** – Balancing coursework with full-time work, often in physically demanding roles.

**Perseverance** – Returning to education after time away or continuing to push through setbacks.

**Dedication to Advancement** – Pursuing degrees not just for personal pride, but to better support their families, serve customers, and grow into leadership roles.

Bloodworth, who earned his Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration Summa Cum Laude at UAGC in 2022, was featured as a speaker at the recent Airgas Central and Airgas Safety Division graduation and shared a moving testimonial on how his degree played a pivotal role in his career advancement with Airgas.

*"Our partnership with The University of Arizona Global Campus truly embodies a successful educational collaboration. We have witnessed firsthand the immense value it brings to our organization, empowering our employees and driving personal and professional growth. This initiative is helping to build a lasting framework for succession planning, creating a pipeline of skilled leaders ready for future roles. The dedication UAGC shows to our team's development is invaluable, reinforcing our commitment to a culture of continuous learning."*

Michael Bloodworth

These events also feature congratulatory remarks from the BEST Airgas Inc. Account Management Team and Student Services, including myself, Deniss Mendoza, BEST Operations Specialist, Stephani Kilby, Student Services Director, Brandon Sterk, BEST Education Partnerships Representative Manager, Mike Speer, BEST Education Partnerships Representative, Bill Davis, UAGC Program Chair and Assistant Professor, and most recently, Dr. Rochelle Robinson-Levant Ed. D., Associate Dean and Professor, Division of Operations Professions.

Featured as the event's inspiring keynote over the last two years, Davis reminded graduates to "lead with care, empathy, and compassion — and to show others, by example, that commitment creates opportunity." His message reinforced the values that both Airgas and UAGC share: lifting others, pursuing excellence, and fostering environments where individuals flourish personally and professionally.

### **A Partnership with Proven Impact**

Since 2015, UAGC has been the preferred education partner for Airgas. In that time

- More than 200 Airgas employees have completed their degrees tuition-free with UAGC through the Full Tuition Grant.
- More than 60% of all Airgas–UAGC graduates have earned their bachelor's degree, and fourteen of those graduates also completed their master's degree with UAGC.
- More than 140 Airgas students are actively enrolled and progressing towards their degree with B.A. Business Administration, MBA, B.A. Business Leadership, B.A. Accounting and B.A. Operations Management & Analysis being four of the top enrolled degree programs.

As this second decade of partnership unfolds, each new graduate reminds us that when people are supported to "Fill Your Potential™" — and cared for along the way — the impact reaches far beyond any single ceremony.