Chancellor Lee Lambert
Interview on “Wake Up Tucson” Radio Program
February 25, 2014 – Part 1

[Dean Faber] You boys seen your grade point average yet? It stinks. It’s the lowest in Faber history. You clowns have been on double-secret probation since the beginning of this semester.

[Eric Stratton] You know what we gotta do?

[Donald ‘Boon’ Schoenstein and Eric Stratton] Toga party

[John Belushi] Toga! Toga!

[Multiple male voices] Toga! Toga! Toga! Toga!

[Host] I think chancellor Lambert just from this whole lead is not going to come on.

[Second host] We know that of course Harold Ramis, the director/actor/writer, passed away yesterday at age 69 so Ed’s been playing clips from his movies. That’s why, of course, he helped write National Lampoon’s Animal House so not that this means anything about your college, Chancellor Lambert. Good morning.


[Host] How are you doing?

[Lambert] Good, thank you.

[Host] So you heard our lead in discussion about what goes on in Tucson, kind of where it’s heading, and you said you guys are the middle of the sandwich, as we like to say.

[Lambert] Yes. We’re squeezed right in between what happens at the K-12 level and what happens at the university side of the equation. I always feel like we’re right in the middle. The nice thing about that is we get to see a more 360-view of what’s happening in the community as well.

[Host] Plus you’re students and your output are more than likely going to stay in this region. They are getting a technical grades and schools, their moving on to the U of A if they get that associate degree so you have a very unique spot where I think the U of A is really an island in and of itself many times. We look at and say what - how are you implementing in the local market, you know.

[Lambert] We are designed to meet the local and regional needs as you’re pointing out, and I think that’s an important piece of what we do. A lot of folks come to us because they want to stay in the
community and then they want those opportunities that take them to the next level so that they can continue to contribute to their community.

[Host] And there’s tremendous pressure with student loans and the value and role of the 4-year college degree and to have folks and kids really look at technical backgrounds to have a skill that they can go and leave and go into the workforce with.

[Host] Aviation, aeronautics, that kind of...

[Lambert] Well, you know we need to get back to a place where we make things in America. And as part of making things you have to service and fix those things. It really helps to strengthen and build that economy. Talking about aviation for a moment, you look at the aviation jobs on the maintenance side – over 17,000 here in the state of Arizona. Over the next two years about 25% of those folks are eligible to retire. You look at our program, we serve about 150 students a year. Well if you do the math it will take decades for us to be able to replace the individuals retiring. We have got to expand capacity just in the aviation arena alone, which I think is a great opportunities for this community.

[Host] Look at Evergreen as you drive to Phoenix on your left - all those 747s and planes that are getting retrofitted. They’re coming in for airframes and motors and engines and all those things. Those skill sets are a big part of Marana’s plan as they move through here - to blow that area up with more opportunity.

[Lambert] I’ve had an chance to talk with Boeing executives, Airbus executives and they’re talking about the future of aviation. There’s going to be the need for well over 34,000 new commercial airplanes in the next 20 years. Think of that opportunity for this country to not only make those planes but to be able to service those planes. If we pull together in the right way there is tremendous opportunity.

[Host] I remember when we worked on JTED, one of the conversations that we looked at - which is technical training at the high school level before they get to the college-level - we looked at the role of auto mechanics, because the average auto mechanic right now in America and Arizona is 56, 57. As those folks retire whose going to fix it? And it is no longer a wrench – it’s a computer and it’s an app, and it’s a connection. That auto mechanic of the future needs to be trained.

[Lambert] You know, our cars any more are computers on wheels. That technician has to have a set of skills that really are on par with someone who understands how a computer operates. High-end diagnostic tools become an important part of the industry. Our ability to train folks to that are going to be critical, but also the nice thing about it is, those are very well-paying jobs if we can train folks to that level of

[Host] fix Cadillacs. Thank you very much.

[Host] Hey its 7:25 in the morning and we’re on with, you’ve got to be some sort of doctor, right? [laughter] you’ve got to be some sort of doctor, Dr. Lee Lambert from Pima Community College. If you have a question for Dr. Lambert 790-2040 is the phone number or wakeuptucson@gmail.com .
[Host] How long have you now been in our community? Have you hit the year anniversary yet?

[Lambert] Well I’ve just finished or am coming up on 8 months.

[Host] OK. It’s just time blurs out there

[Lambert] Indeed it does

[Host] It goes really fast. So when you look at the Pima County area for this last 8 months, and every community college I assume they’ve got to develop in relation to what their particular community needs, so what have you seen – where is Pima now in what they offer, and after looking at the needs of Southern Arizona, where does it need to morph to match better with what goes on in Southern Arizona?

[Lambert] When I look at the employer community there are opportunities in a wide range of areas like, as we mentioned, automotive. Aviation is another important area. I think when you look at the building and construction trades and you look at what’s happening with just the HVAC systems alone, there are tremendous opportunities in all of those areas. The question is how do we build the relationships with those sectors of the economy and then align what we’re doing from a curriculum standpoint from do we have the appropriate facilities to train to a 21st century standard, have we helped support our faculty to be able to rise to that level of training needs, so there are a lot of pieces that are moving in terms of that aspect of things.

I think also we have to face another reality in this community. We’re the sixth poorest community in the nation for our size. What that represents is that we’re seeing a lot of students who aren’t prepared for careers and college. We’ve got to face that reality and start to provide them with on-ramps to post-secondary education. Otherwise there won’t be opportunities for those individuals. But what that really represents – there won’t be a great community to live and reside in any longer either if we don’t provide those opportunities. I’m seeing that there’s a disconnect happening – too many siloed systems, not enough people aligning their resources to move in the same direction.

[Host] It only took a year to figure that out too

[Lambert] But what’s happening that’s really cool is

[Host] because we figured that out too [laughter]

[Lambert] But what’s really cool is so yesterday I was in a meeting with H.T. Sanchez, Superintendent of TUSD, with Alan Storm of JTED, and we talked about how can we start to align our efforts, align our resources so that all of a sudden we become a more seamless system at least coming through the K-12 through the community college, and leverage the combined strengths to do a better job for our students and our community. There are conversations now happening that I think are positive but we need to make sure that there’s something waiting for that student as he or she leaves us to go into the broader society.
[Host] You mentioned the avionics, and auto mechanics and HVAC and all of those things. Do you work with private companies that look for mentorships or internships? How do you connect the dot back to the consumer?

[Lambert] What have been doing is been working with private business especially in the aviation area where that’s part of the equation. Whether it’s an internship, whether it’s scholarships to support, and to hire. If you look at our placement rates they are phenomenal. They are well in excess of 80%. So we know that those types of approaches – internships, scholarships, the wrap-around support - makes a difference for the success of a student.

[Host] Sure – and an employer.

[Host] What was an industry in Southern Arizona that was like the most unexpected, that you said “Hey, we need to start providing education for that.”

[Lambert] Well, as a new person I didn’t realize how much potential there is in aviation in this region.

[Host] And you’re from Portland or Seattle?

[Lambert] I’m from Seattle, of course I come from the backyard of Boeing to here to realize the state has a lot going on in that area so that was very surprising for me. To see Pima’ program, which I would say you could hold that up to any other program in the nation as being on par. But yet, I never knew about that up in Seattle.

[Host] Yeh, you build them we fix them. [laughter]

[Lambert] That’s right. That’s a good point.

[Host] Let’s do this. Let’s go pay some bills, we’re on with Dr. Lee Lambert from Pima Community College. If you have a question for Dr. Lambert 790-2040 is the number. We’re going to cover your Futures Conference that you did and some of the things that came out of that and then you have a homework assignment – you have to think of, before the end of, I need your top 3 local favorite restaurants. [laughter]

[Host] That’s a questions that we ask all of our new guests in-studio so be ready.

[Lambert] OK

[Host] So Dr. Lee Lambert, Pima Community College. We’ll be right back on the Wake-Up Tucson! Show.

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