

Hugh Downs School grad excels in academics, leadership at ASU

Dean's Medalist Grant Skala reflects on journey of scholarship and impact in communication

By Charles Najera, ASU News
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Editor's note: This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [spring 2025 graduates](#).

This spring, Grant Skala graduates from Arizona State University with two Bachelors of Science — one in communication and the other in political science, along with a minor in history and certificates in philosophy, ethics and law, and in political history and leadership.

He is also the recipient of the Dean's Medal from [The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences](#) for Outstanding Academic Achievement.

"Being a recipient of the Dean's Medal is one of the highest academic awards I could have received as an undergraduate, so I am extremely thankful and humbled to be honored in this way," he said. "It validates the challenges I've faced in college and makes all of the hard work worth it."

When he started at ASU, Skala originally pursued only political science. But his curiosity and passion for learning led him to expand his academic path.

"I added communication in my first year after really enjoying my introductory courses, and I added history because I wanted to expand my knowledge beyond what I learned in high school," he said. "I've always sought to challenge myself academically, and this combination of studies allowed me to do that."

His interest in the [Hugh Downs School of Human Communication](#) was sparked in his COM 100 course with [Alexis Valianos](#), an instructor at the Hugh Downs School.

"I was intrigued by the theories behind communication research and how they apply in the modern age," he said. "The faculty at the Hugh Downs School made every course engaging, and [Barrett](#),

[The Honors College](#) provided invaluable resources that helped me maximize my education.”

Beyond academics, Skala made an impact on campus through leadership and service. As a tour guide and executive board member for [Devils’ Advocates](#), he found a strong sense of community while advocating for student voices.

“One of my favorite experiences was leading a retreat for our organization to South Mountain Park,” he said. “It was about more than giving campus tours — our group was a tight-knit community, and I worked hard to ensure that the administration understood the importance of prioritizing student voices.”

As an [LIA 101 Learning Assistant](#), he guided first-year students toward valuable university resources, drawing from his own experiences navigating ASU’s vast opportunities.

Skala was also the vice president of the Politics & Leadership Club, where he led discussions during weekly meeting about a variety of current political topics.

His honors thesis explored how political news consumption influences public perception through communication theories, aiming to shed light on how individuals engage with information in today’s media landscape.

In addition to his own research, Skala worked as a research assistant for ASU’s [Center for American Institutions](#), where he contributed to the center’s National Commission Reports.

His academic success and research opportunities helped prepare him for his next step: working full-time at the Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Public Affairs in Washington, D.C.

“I moved to D.C. in March to begin working while finishing my final courses online,” he said. “Both of my degrees made me extremely prepared for this opportunity in public service, and I hope to continue contributing to a safe and healthy society.”

Looking back on his ASU experience, Skala is most proud of the community he helped build.

“My biggest piece of advice to students is to challenge yourself, but also make sure you enjoy what you’re studying,” he said. “Find courses that align with your passions and take advantage of the incredible opportunities ASU has to offer.”

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Main image

