

Global health grad is ready to take on the world

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

From aiding in late-night study sessions to helping students power through finals, coffee is a common fuel for the typical college student's life.

But when it comes to Samuel Rosales, a global health student in ASU's [School of Human Evolution and Social Change](#), coffee has fueled his education in more ways than what's typical.

As a longtime Starbucks employee, Rosales was a recipient of the [Starbucks College Achievement Plan](#) (SCAP), which provides upfront tuition coverage for a first-time bachelor's degree through [ASU Online](#). This spring, he is graduating from the [4+1 program](#), an accelerated advanced degree pathway, with his Master of Science in global health.

"The 4+1 program was a good financial decision for me because I was still eligible to use SCAP, but I had a bunch of incredible professors that brought a different level of passion, and it made me excited to learn more under them," said Rosales.

Although Rosales, who resides in Aurora, Colorado, has spent most of his academic career as an ASU Online student, he did get the opportunity to join fellow students in London for a School of Human Evolution and Social Change [study abroad program](#).

"It was certainly one of the most amazing experiences I've ever had in my entire life," said Rosales. "That was the only time I've ever really left Colorado, so that big jump halfway across the world was really a fascinating experience. Between the museum visits and some of the incredible experts that we had teaching us, I totally couldn't have asked for a better experience."

Undoubtedly powered by his usual drink of choice, a blonde Americano, Rosales has cruised through his time at ASU with a 4.0 GPA while working as a full-time shift supervisor at Starbucks and interning with the [Denver Department of Public Health and Environment](#). Despite his remarkable achievement, he has remained humble.

"Like most people, I certainly struggle with imposter syndrome and don't give myself enough credit for the work that I do," said Rosales. "I've also let that be a motivating factor to continue doing my best in spite of the part of me that has doubts."

ASU News talked with Rosales about coffee, his “aha moment” and his future plans.

Note: Answers may have been edited lightly for grammar, length and/or clarity.

Question: What’s your secret to success?

Answer: Having a seemingly endless supply of caffeine as a Starbucks employee is certainly helpful for those late-night study sessions!

Q: Did you have a favorite Starbucks drink that helped to fuel your studies?

A: I drink a blonde Americano. That is usually where I go every single time. I've gone for it for years. In fact, only when I am feeling a little crazy that I will throw in a little vanilla cold foam on top, but that's pretty much it.

Q: What was your “aha” moment when you realized you wanted to study global health?

A: I was in a Starbucks back in the spring of 2018, and I was taking ASB 100: [Intro to Global Health](#) with [Megan Jehn](#), a professor with the School of Human Evolution and Social Change. I just remember being completely mind-blown by some of the materials in that course. It was speaking to a part of me that I don't think I've ever really experienced before. It sparked a sense of urgency and this passion, and I had not experienced that studying anything before that point.

Q: Do you know why the class had that profound of an impact on you?

A: I grew up in a lower-socioeconomic neighborhood and I always had this vision for a positive future. I knew I wanted to contribute to a better community or just make improvements, but I didn't realize how passionate I was about that kind of stuff until I took that class.

I remember during one of the lectures toward the end of the course, Professor Jehn mentioned something along the lines of, “If you find yourself doing some research on these topics outside of class, maybe you should consider switching your major to global health.” I actually switched my major within just a couple of days.

Q: What’s something you learned while at ASU that surprised you or changed your perspective?

A: One of the most important things that I learned over time was self-discipline and time management. I definitely struggled with that when I first started as an ASU Online student. No longer commuting to school or sitting in a classroom and having to find the time in my own week and throughout the day to get the work done was a hard adjustment. Taking ownership of my own learning was something that I had to learn how to do, and it's something that certainly improved my life in many different aspects.

Q: What’s the best piece of advice you’d give to those still in school?

A: One thing that I always told myself is that there is an end in sight and it's coming. It's really hard when you know that you have several more years to graduate. But it's really important to stay motivated and know that you're going to look back on these days at some point and be proud of the work that you did.

Q: What are your plans after graduation?

A: Right now, I really want to get into the public health field. The internship that I did with the Denver Department of Public Health and Environment was really incredible, and that was an inspiring experience for me. I would also love to get into epidemiology a little bit more.

As far as directly after graduation, I'm going to build a lot of Legos that I have not had the time to do.

Q: If someone gave you \$40 million to solve one problem on our planet, what would you tackle?

A: I would use it to develop a [One Health initiative](#) that will prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

As the climate continues to warm up, we are seeing a lot of diseases spreading to new areas, and it's the most vulnerable communities that are hit the hardest. I think improving things like disease surveillance, improving access to vaccines, and finding a way to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities is the most critical thing that we can do to combat disease spread.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Although Samuel Rosales, who resides in Aurora, Colorado, has spent most of his academic career as an ASU Online student, he had to opportunity to join fellow ASU students in London for a School of Human Evolution and Social Change study abroad program. Courtesy photo