

Psychology grad takes on certificates and research as an undergraduate student

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

Emlyn Pratt's undergraduate journey at Arizona State University included a psychology degree, research, the completion of two certificates and various extracurricular activities — and they are just getting started.

The Oro Valley, Arizona, resident chose ASU after hearing positive things about its social sciences programming from their mom, who received their master's degree in social work from ASU. That combined with their fascination with the human brain led Pratt to pursue psychology in the [School of Counseling and Counseling Psychology](#) at ASU's [College of Integrative Sciences and Arts](#).

Pratt, who received the [New American University Dean's Scholarship](#), sees the brain as “a puzzle, but we can't see all the pieces,” and that curiosity inspired them to learn as much as they could about brain functions — how brains impact our bodies, and how it's impacted by the environment.

They took that passion to ASU's [EMpowerment Lab](#), directed by Assistant Professor [Em Matsuno](#), where they gained research skills and explored gender minority stress, among related topics. Pratt's team presented their work at an [American Psychological Association](#) conference.

“Presenting my results to the APA and working with a population I have always wanted to research made this project incredibly special,” said Pratt, who also received a Dean's Medal from the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts — an honor recognizing students who display exemplary academic achievement and use their skills to impact others' lives.

Their certifications in [disability studies](#) and [LGBTQ+ studies](#) supported their research. Pratt says they enjoyed their certificate programs, along with their degree and research, but the workload was stressful at times.

“Stress became a recurring theme, but I realized that stress is not always a negative. Sometimes it can motivate us to tackle challenges and form connections with others,” Pratt says.

On the flip side, they empathized with the stress felt by the populations they researched.

“Reframing stress can enable us to be more resilient and overcome challenges, and it’s one of the most important lessons I learned during my time at ASU,” Pratt says.

With their fresh perspective on life and new pieces added to their psychology puzzle, Pratt will continue their academic journey at ASU as a graduate student. They say they hope to become a professor or researcher, delving into eating disorder rates among minority communities, and exploring the intersections of disability, race and gender, and how those factors interact with the body.

Here, Pratt shares more about their experience at ASU.

Note: Answers have been edited for length and clarity.

Question: What was your “aha” moment when you realized you wanted to study the field you majored in?

Answer: As someone who loves learning, the brain was an area where my learning could never cease, as there is so much that we do not know.

Q: Please share your most impactful research experience during your time at ASU.

A: I have been able to work with the EMpowerment Lab here at ASU. It has granted me many amazing opportunities, such as going to the American Psychological Association (conference), where I presented a poster proposal about how gender minority stress (stress that trans and nonbinary people deal with) predicts burnout and fatigue in nonbinary adults. We found that binary normativity (the perpetuation of the gender binary) and invalidation were significant predictors of both burnout and fatigue.

Q: Which professor taught you the most important lesson while at ASU?

A: All of my professors taught me so much. The overarching theme that many of the psychology and counseling professors, such as Dr. [\(Bryan\) Camp](#), Dr. [\(Em\) Matsuno](#) and Dr. [\(Rachel\) Occampo](#), all share is caring more for the person than productivity. While productivity is incredibly important for academia, taking care of oneself always comes first. There is no shame in asking for extensions, nor is there shame in asking for help. Prioritizing yourself and your personhood is so important for maintaining a healthy balance in life. My professors solidified the idea of people over productivity for me, as it was a consistent message throughout my academic career here at ASU.

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

A: It is so important to see education not as a means to an end, but as an exploratory space allowing you to learn and obtain a vast amount of knowledge. I found that classes and courses I saw as a means to an end were uninteresting, as the energy I was bringing was not one of curiosity, but one of impatience and boredom. I urge current students to explore new topics, and boring topics, with a sense of curiosity, as it tends to help engage you in the material. Of course, curiosity is not the only mechanism utilized in academic success, though it is one that engages students to see a sense of wonder in something that we often take for granted. We learn every day, but how much of that learning is out of obligation rather than wonderment and joy?

Also, your grade does not equal your worth. It is important to know that many people struggle in school or are not good at academics. Struggling does not mean that you are worthless or that you are not trying. It is important to find worth and joy outside of school and academia; otherwise, you will get bogged down by the weight of grades and expectations. Remember that you are a person who is worthy of so much, and your grades do not change that.

Q: If someone gave you \$400 million to solve one problem on our planet, what would you tackle?

A: I would love to end world hunger. Giving people resources to live and eat is so important for mental and physical well-being. Without stable resources, well-being is threatened not only for us but also for our planet. Helping people gain access to food, and providing food security decreases health risks and food-related stressors. Part of solving world hunger would be to reduce food waste, which is a major contributor to climate change. Solving one big problem can help solve others.

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

Main image

Emlyn Pratt, ASU graduate, decked out in regalia and holding a pitchfork

Emlyn Pratt, earning a bachelor's degree in psychology from the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts this May, will continue at ASU as a graduate student in the fall. Photo by Henry Lu/ASU