

Grad transforms from a shy first-gen student into a campus servant leader

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

Saad Abuhamdieh, a [communications major](#) graduating from Arizona State University's [New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences](#) on the [West Valley campus](#), is a standout example of what it means to lead with authenticity and purpose.

Known for his passion for connecting with others, Abuhamdieh has made the most of his undergraduate experience by immersing himself in nearly every corner of campus life — from mentoring at the Communication Lab to leading tours as part of the Devil's Advocates.

Saad is graduating this semester with a Bachelor of Arts in communication and a minor in organizational leadership, earning the prestigious Dean's Medalist award.

A self-described servant leader, Abuhamdieh brings warmth, organization and empathy into every role he takes on — whether he's coordinating events, mentoring students or checking in with team members to ensure they feel heard and supported. His ability to balance academic excellence with deep involvement in clubs and organizations reflects not only strong time management skills, but also a genuine desire to uplift others and build community.

Inspired by faculty who encouraged him to pursue real-world applications of his degree, Abuhamdieh credits New College with expanding his horizons and helping him discover his passion for leadership.

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

Answer: For me, it was always about connecting with people. I love talking and communicating; I'm very social. I knew that communication was something I would enjoy because it's such a broad field. No matter where you go, whether in your personal or professional life, knowing how to communicate well is key. I wanted a degree that would open up many opportunities and that I

could apply in any setting, so communications felt like the perfect fit.

Q: Why did you choose New College?

A: I had a few friends who came here, and they recommended it. They said it was a beautiful campus, and because it's smaller, you get to form closer connections with fellow students and professors. I really liked the idea of learning in a more personal environment, where I could make those meaningful connections. Throughout my time here, I've built lasting relationships with both students and faculty, which has been really important to me.

Q: What's something you learned while at New College that surprised you or changed your perspective?

A: One thing I didn't know about before coming here was the Communication Lab, or Comm Lab. I had never heard of it, but my professor, [Elise Poll](#), mentioned it to me. She thought I'd be a good mentor there because I was so communicative. So I decided to check it out, and I found out it's a place where students, especially first-years, can get more comfortable speaking in front of others. It really made an impact on me to be able to help students build confidence in their speaking skills. I enjoyed being a mentor there, and now I'm actually a teaching assistant for the lab. It's been a great experience to continue helping students with their speaking skills.

Q: Which professor taught you the most important lesson while at New College and what was that lesson?

A: [Professor \(Kenneth\) Kunkel](#), the director of [CommLabASU](#), taught me a valuable lesson. He always emphasizes real-life scenarios. The most important lesson I've learned from him is to always be yourself and be authentic. It's something I carry with me, especially in leadership roles. Being authentic is something people truly appreciate, and it's helped me connect with others in meaningful ways. [Aaron Romans](#) was another professor who had a great impact on me. I've always enjoyed helping others improve their communication skills, and he encouraged me to consider teaching one day. That kind of guidance from professors here at New College has really expanded my horizons. I came here unsure of what I wanted to do, but the professors here have helped me find my path and inspired me to explore new opportunities.

Q: What's the best piece of advice you'd offer to someone considering applying for college?

A: I would say get involved. One of my goals here was to be as involved as I could. Over the course of my time here, I've probably been in around 20 different clubs and organizations each semester, with a total of about five that I stick with. Getting involved is key — it's how you make connections, meet friends and build relationships with faculty and professors. For example, this semester, I'm a teaching assistant, an event coordinator for Pitchfork Pantry, the chief of staff for the Student Alumni Association and a tour guide for Devil's Advocate. I've had so many experiences and met amazing people through all the clubs and organizations. So, my number one piece of advice is to get involved. Don't be afraid to try new things because you might discover something you've been waiting for all along.

Q: What are your favorite locations, whether for studying, meeting friends, or just thinking about life?

A: When I need to study or hang out with friends, I have a few favorite spots. I love Fletcher Library, especially higher up, where it's quieter. I need absolute silence to focus, or I get distracted. When my friends and I really need to study, we go up to the quiet levels. I also enjoy the [Programming and Activities Board](#) area. Sometimes we hang out there or outside, just eating and chatting with friends. Additionally, I spend time at the [CommLab](#) and the [Undergraduate Student Government](#) area. I'm pretty much all over campus.

Q: What are your plans after graduation?

A: After graduation, I plan to get a full-time job at ASU and continue on to grad school. My major is communications, and I'm also minoring in organizational leadership — which I genuinely love. There's always something new to learn when it comes to leadership, and it's a skill that applies to just about any job. That's why I'm planning to get my master's in organizational leadership. I really see myself as a servant leader. If you asked people from my past jobs or clubs, they'd probably tell you I love being there for others. For me, leadership isn't just about giving directions — it's about being authentic, checking in, and making sure people feel supported and heard. I always try to create a space where people feel comfortable, valued and welcome. That's the kind of leader I aim to be.

Q: Are you a first-gen college student — and if so, what does your degree mean to you and your family?

A: I am a first-gen college student. Being a first-generation college student, this degree means a lot to me and my family. It's a huge step for all of us. My parents always told me that college was optional, but I knew for me, it was important to continue learning beyond high school. It's exciting to be the first one in my family to go to college, and I hope that my journey motivates others in my family to pursue higher education as well. My parents are so proud. My mom actually called me and said, "I can't believe you're graduating. I'm so happy for you." It's been a big deal for them because neither she nor my sister went to college. I think my achievement has even motivated my sister to consider going back to school. So it's been a big, positive influence on our family.

Q: Can you share how your experiences at ASU reflect one or more of the core values of the ASU Charter, like inclusion, community impact or academic excellence?

A: I'd say my experience at ASU aligns with the core value of community impact. Through my involvement in clubs and organizations, I've made meaningful connections and had the opportunity to help others. For example, in [CommLabASU](#), I worked with people who were shy about speaking and helped them become mentors. I also helped freshmen get acclimated to campus by encouraging them to join the PAB and gain leadership experience. All of these experiences have helped me contribute to the community in a positive way.

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

Main image



Saad Abuhamdieh is graduating this spring with a BA in communications and minor in organizational leadership. Courtesy photo

Gallery



Saad proudly poses by the 2025 ASU sign in Tempe, celebrating his upcoming graduation.



Saad collaborating with students at CommLabASU, guiding them on their journey to become future mentors.



Saad and a friend engage in a spirited game of table foosball at ASU's PAB Center.