

‘This will forever change my life’: Scholarships made college, the arts possible for theatre major

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

Aglae Mendez is graduating from the School of Music, Dance and Theatre at Arizona State University with a bachelor’s degree in theatre.

A recipient of the President’s Award, an Obama Scholar and a [College Assistance Migrant Program Scholar](#), Mendez credits the scholarships she received during her time at ASU for making college possible.

“It gave me the opportunity to grow academically and as a person,” she said. “I am proud to say that my scholarships will allow me to graduate debt free. This will forever change my life.”

Originally from the small border town of San Luis, Arizona, Mendez toured ASU as a junior in high school and fell in love with the campus.

“I could picture myself here studying and doing homework,” she said. “I loved the people, the campus, the opportunities. I’m really into music, and I knew that ASU had a mariachi ensemble.”

A conversation with her high school English teacher helped her decide to major in theatre.

“She told me, ‘Do something you’re passionate about,’” Mendez said. “I said I was passionate about theatre and music. She said, ‘That’s your answer.’”

During her four years at ASU, Mendez focused on technical direction and scenic construction in the theater design and production program while also playing trumpet in the [ASU Mariachi Ensemble](#). Mendez said she appreciated the support she received from faculty and staff during her

time at ASU and how it has set her up for success in the future.

“Throughout my time at ASU, I have been given access to professors and mentors that have guided me and given me tools to succeed,” Mendez said. “I have been able to take on various work interviews that led to successful summer work and connections in the industry.”

She’s passionate about helping other students have access to the same opportunities she had.

“I love going back to my high school and inspiring people to go to college,” she said. “I tell them it’s possible.”

Mendez said the flexibility of the theatre program has allowed her to pursue her interests.

“If you’re thinking about studying theater, you should totally come and study theater here at ASU,” she said. “What I love most is that even though we have a major map, you’re able to cater your education experience to what you want to learn and what you want to focus on.”

Question: What was your “aha” moment when you realized you wanted to study theatre?

Answer: I had always been involved in performing arts. In high school, I discovered theater. We saw the 25th anniversary recording of “Phantom of the Opera,” and I was just amazed. I wanted to know how they did it. I wanted to know how they made the chandelier fall. That’s what really sparked my interest in theater. By the time I got to my senior year, I had been involved in theater, both in acting and the technical side.

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

A: It’s really hard to pinpoint and say one specific thing, because I’ve just learned so many different things here during my time here at ASU, from education to personal life skills. But I would say the biggest thing — and I’m a true believer of this — is that you learn something new every day, and there are a million ways to do the same thing, especially in theater. When you’re building a set, everybody might have a different way of building something, but there’s no one, correct way. There’s a million ways that it can get built and have that same final product. So I think that’s a big takeaway I’ve learned here, just being really open minded and being able to communicate with other people. Allow yourself to be creative and also hear other people’s input about their ideas, and we can work together to create something.

Q: What’s been your favorite theatre show to work on at ASU?

A: We’ve done so many shows! I would say “Clue.” I enjoyed working on that show a lot. It was my first time doing a massive show with a lot of stuff flying in and out ... but it was also the community we built throughout the whole process, from start to end, really coming together to get the show put up for people to enjoy. I also enjoyed working on “Iphigenia” in the Lyceum — a smaller, more intimate space. Having a swing on stage was really cool. With every single show, I’ve been able to learn so many different things. Each show is unique and allowed me to learn different skills.

Q: What was your favorite spot on campus?

A: If it's indoors, it's the Music Library. I discovered it my second year. It's so quiet! Outside, it's the "pringles" (on the Nelson Fine Arts Plaza). I think that's just cool to see people passing by and to be outdoors.

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

A: There are so many, but I would say Digger Feeney. She's my mentor and my professor in so many different classes. The first college course I took at ASU was her class. I remember really feeling her enthusiasm, and her own career really inspired me to keep going, especially during my freshman year. She's been awesome, and I've learned so much about how to navigate this world — not only doing the things but also networking and making sure my portfolio and resume are ready to send out to potential companies. The help she's provided throughout has been amazing. There have been many people here at ASU who have helped me.

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

A: The biggest piece of advice I would give is to step out of your comfort zone and ask questions. Asking questions enables us to learn new things and clear any doubts we might have about how stuff works. At the end of the day, whatever we learn here will help us learn more in the future. And then communication — learn how to communicate with your peers, your professors, your mentors. That's a really valuable skill to have, especially in theater. That's very collaborative, knowing how to speak to other people in a professional way, how to communicate your needs or about issues that arrive. It really helps with problem solving, too.

Q: What would you say to students who are thinking about the theater program at ASU?

A: I would say that you should totally come and study theater here at ASU! What I love most about ASU and studying theater here is that even though we have a major map of the courses you need to take in order to graduate, you're still able to cater your education experience to what you want to learn and what you want to focus on. There have been a lot of times where I'm like, "Oh, I've never used this tool before." But I know I can go up to our scene shop supervisor, and be like, "Hey, could you teach me how this works?" And I just love that I can come in and learn and explore other areas without having that be connected to a class necessarily. And so I really, I feel that really allows us to explore many different areas within our own career and what we are trying to achieve.

Q: What are your plans after graduation?

A: I have a lot of plans. My long-term career goals are to tour, work on Broadway and then hopefully settle down and teach once I've explored the world through theatre and touring. After graduation I want to get into touring. If that doesn't happen right away, I'm planning to explore theaters around the U.S. and do freelance contract work, moving around from place to place and work.

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Main image



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