

Re-entry student honored with Dean's Medal for community impact

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](#).

A re-entry student, Native American leader, and student success coach, Cassandra Roush (Snohomish) has built a college journey grounded in inclusion, purpose and community impact.

As an undergraduate, Roush was deeply involved in campus life — from serving on the Pow Wow planning committee to mentoring others through the Student Success Center and [American Indian Student Support Services](#), or AISSS.

This spring she is earning her bachelor's degree in philosophy, religion and society from Arizona State University's New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences on the West Valley campus.

After graduation, she will continue her studies at ASU's College of Global Futures, having just completed her final acceptance into the Master of Sustainability Leadership program. She hopes to expand her work building community healing initiatives, including those with the Navajo Nation, on a broader scale.

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

Answer: The [philosophy, religion, and society](#) major offers a great opportunity to bring together a lot of subjects I find really interesting. I was genuinely excited to start this degree — it really stood out after exploring other paths. What makes it so unique is the flexibility to focus on different areas. I'm especially drawn to the philosophy side because it pushes me to think critically and solve problems, but I also love the religion component. With my background in religious studies, it's been a great fit that ties everything together. Overall, it's a well-rounded and unique program that perfectly matches my academic interests.

Q: Why did you choose New College?

A: I chose New College because of the community that it has. I really enjoy West Valley campus, and New College offers so many opportunities that you just cannot find anywhere else.

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

A: Something that was really eye opening for me is finding out just all of the other opportunities that are available here at West campus and New College besides academics. I really enjoyed engaging with the community and with the students and everybody here on West Valley campus. And there is so much to do, so much to get involved with. I've really enjoyed that.

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

A: A professor that has been extremely influential for me here at New College is [Professor Bertha Manninen](#). She's been an incredible mentor. She taught me so many things and really propelled me forward. She's been a huge supporter of my work and of me as a person. She saw something in me when I didn't see anything in myself at the time. She believed in me and gave me so many opportunities. She pushed me to strive harder and go further than I could've imagined on my own.

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

A: If I had any advice for anyone thinking about applying to New College, I'd say: just do it. You're not going to regret it. I've attended other schools before transferring here, and this is by far the best college experience I've had. The community here is amazing. You actually feel like you belong — like you're at home. It has a small-town feel, but with all the big ASU resources behind it. The opportunities are endless.

Q: What are your favorite locations on campus? Where do you like to study or hang out with friends?

A: For me, my favorite place on campus is definitely [Fletcher Library](#). I think of it as the crown jewel of campus. It has so many study spaces and resources — plus, the Success Center and Pitchfork Pantry are in there too. You'll usually find me there!

Q: Where do you see yourself in 10 years or more — and how do you think New College has helped prepare you to get there?

A: In 10 years, I see myself continuing to give back — locally, statewide and potentially globally. My experiences at New College and plans for grad school have equipped me with the tools to scale the kind of community work I'm already doing. My main focus has been through different projects aimed at assisting our Native American communities. One thing we do, in partnership with Janelle Allen, ASU's elder-in-residence, we travel to the Navajo Nation to do projects that help "rez dogs" rescue efforts, while creating connections alongside community building events. Though I'm not Navajo, I've been embraced by the community, and these efforts have even inspired youth involvement. This work has been deeply meaningful, and I hope to expand its impact on a much larger scale.

Q: Can you share how your experiences at ASU reflect one or more of the core values of the ASU Charter?

A: I believe my work exemplifies the ASU Charter through community outreach and student success. The events we organize at AISSS, on campus and even off-campus events on the Navajo Nation all contribute to community engagement. At the Student Success Center, the work we do there — supporting students in their academic journeys — also directly ties into student success. I'm also involved with my peers on a day-to-day basis, helping them succeed in both their personal and academic lives.

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

Text image(s)



No caption

Gallery



One of Cassandra's favorite hobbies is meditating and enjoying peaceful moments.



Cassandra Roush works with students at American Indian Student Support Services.