

From second chances to Sun Devil success

Earned Admission grads redefine the college journey

By Samantha Becker, ASU News
May 9, 2025

College isn't always a straight path. For some, it starts later. For others, it starts again.

This spring, more than 150 students are graduating from Arizona State University through a pathway designed to support learners with diverse life experiences and education journeys. They're part of a growing community — more than 7,000 learners to date — who have been admitted to ASU through the university's [Earned Admission program](#).

Designed to remove traditional barriers to higher education, EA provides a flexible route to admission. There's no GPA requirement, no transcript and no standardized test. Students enroll in online, self-paced [Universal Learner Courses](#) taught by ASU faculty and only pay if they're satisfied with their grade. Credits can be applied toward more than 100 degree programs at ASU.

The result is a model that makes space for learners to succeed on their own terms, and the graduates crossing the stage this May are proof of what's possible.

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[How ASU helped this returning student rewrite his story](#)

Ryan Abernethy didn't finish college the first time, but through Earned Admission and the ASU-Uber partnership, he got a second chance

From academic dismissal to the dean's list

Griffin Snider had given up on college after being academically disqualified in 2022.

"I was at rock bottom," he said.

Then he discovered ASU's Universal Learner Courses.

Now, Snider is graduating with a degree in data science and a 3.81 GPA. This fall, he begins a master's program in business analytics at the [W. P. Carey School of Business](#).

"This isn't just a degree," Snider said. "It's proof that one setback doesn't define your journey. Earned Admission gave me the chance to move forward — not based on my past, but on what I could do right now."

"I used to think I wasn't college material. Now I know I just needed a path that worked for me."

A new purpose after injury

Joshua Bell had long been fascinated by genetics. But after a traumatic brain injury and a poor fit with a previous college, he needed a new start.

[ASU's biological sciences program](#), with a concentration in genetics, gave him that path.

“ASU gave me the opportunity to pursue something I've always felt deeply connected to,” Bell said. “Earned Admission was a turning point. It helped me rebuild my confidence and taught me life lessons that went beyond the classroom.”

Never too late

Danielle Seymour didn't follow a typical college timeline. A driver with Uber and a participant in [ASU's partnership with the company](#), Seymour earned her degree in [liberal arts studies](#) at age 64.

“Graduation means if you want something, you can get it,” she said. “I take pride in the fact that I got my degree. The program helped with everything — questions, grants, encouragement.”

Perseverance, redefined

For 24-year-old Daniel J. Perry, the journey to graduation was marked by stops and starts — and a determination to keep going.

He earned his degree in technological entrepreneurship and management after years of balancing work, uncertainty and personal setbacks.

“Graduating from ASU to me signifies the end of a long, arduous undergraduate journey,” he said. “It feels like I finally finished what I started.”

Creating space for first-gen students to thrive

Sheila Dimitriadis, a first-generation college student in [graphic information technology](#), said the program helped her balance school, work and family.

“Graduating from ASU is deeply meaningful to me,” she said. “It represents not only my own success, but the hopes of generations before me. Earned Admission made it possible to keep going on my own terms.”

A model designed for access

Earned Admission is part of ASU's Universal Pathways portfolio.

In 2024 alone, more than 12,000 learners enrolled in over 26,000 credit-eligible courses through the program.

[Marco Serrato](#), vice president of [ASU's Learning Enterprise](#), said the program reflects a larger shift in how institutions must support diverse learners.

“True access is about more than inclusion. It’s about designing pathways that adapt to people’s circumstances, goals and timelines,” Serrato said. “These graduates are proof of what happens when learning systems are built for real life.”

The program isn't a shortcut but a bridge to help rewrite unconventional students' academic stories.

Whether they’re launching a career or finishing something they once thought was out of reach, these graduates show that progress doesn’t require perfection — just a real chance to begin again.

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

Main image



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