

One grad's research, resolve and dog named Fred

Suzette May didn't just come back to college, she came back to create change

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

Suzette May's pursuit of a degree is more than academic achievement, it's a testament to her dedication to creating change for others.

At 56, the Barrett, The Honors College graduate is earning her degree in disability studies from the New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences at Arizona State University. Her accomplishments are profound. So is her resolve.

A first-generation college student from Waco, Texas, May returned to school decades after starting her undergraduate studies.

"I decided, at age 54, to go back and finish my undergraduate degree from 30 years ago," she said. "This time around, while going through progressive vision loss."

Her academic excellence and drive to create lasting impact brought her to Barrett, where she found both challenge and deep connection.

"Barrett was the perfect place to land and expand my college experience by diving deeper in my honors classes and working closely with instructors on my research project and honors thesis," May said. "It truly added so much depth to my degree and my whole college experience."

May had never envisioned herself in an honors college. But a faculty member saw her potential and encouraged her to apply.

"I was never a great student before, so I couldn't imagine 'honors' would be attached to anything I did," she said. "But learning to do things non-visually, paired with a phenomenal German shepherd seeing-eye dog named Fred, were the beginnings of independence, success principles and running hard toward your goals and dreams."

Those dreams took concrete form in her thesis work. May designed a research project that addressed a critical issue affecting individuals with visual impairments. With mentorship from Barrett faculty and support from experts in the field, her work produced meaningful results that will lay the foundation for future study and solutions.

“I firmly believe we need more people with disabilities involved in research,” she said. “Because of Barrett, I was able to take a real-world problem and explore a part of the issue in ways that matter.”

May is already applying her knowledge and insight well beyond the classroom. As an accessibility consultant, she works across Texas and nationally, contributing her voice to statewide and federal committees. Her plans after graduation include continuing graduate education and expanding the advocacy and research she began at ASU.

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

Main image



Suzette May and her seeing-eye dog, Fred, attend Arizona State University's graduation ceremony. May earned her degree in disability studies from the New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences and graduated with honors through Barrett, The Honors College.