

# Diverse paths, one milestone: Celebrating ASU Law grads

## Convocation keynote speaker tells graduates, 'You belong everywhere you want to be'

By Crystal Jimenez, ASU News  
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"It's because of my grandpa I'm here," Alyannah Buhman said. "He was my biggest fan."

Buhman, now a Juris Doctor graduate of the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University, said law school always felt out of reach.

"Despite my fascination with the legal and justice system, I didn't grow up with money. I was raised by a single mother for most of my life. I didn't have the connections I thought I needed, and I'm a woman of color," she said. "But he believed in me. He was always chirping in my ear that I'd end up in law school."

The path to ASU Law looks different for every student, but the destination remains the same — graduation. For Buhman, that walk across the stage carried extra weight. Her grandfather died the semester before she completed her bachelor's degree.

"Part of the reason graduating from ASU Law is so special for me is because of my grandpa," she said. "We were so close. Not having him here on this journey really sucks, but it makes this accomplishment that much sweeter. A part of this is for him specifically."

This May, more than [500 students](#) across five degree programs joined the growing ranks of ASU Law alumni. Whether their goal was to advocate for marginalized communities, pursue a judgeship or drive policy change, each student walked in with a dream and walked out with a degree.

Students in the [Master of Legal Studies](#), [Master of Human Resources and Employment Law](#) and [Master of Sports Law and Business](#) programs celebrated their graduation on May 13, while [Juris Doctor](#) and [Master of Laws](#) candidates celebrated on May 14 at their respective ceremonies.

"Without a doubt, these degrees will be invaluable to each of you, regardless of what career path you ultimately follow," Willard H. Pedrick Dean, Regents and Foundation Professor of Law [Stacy Leeds](#) told the crowd in her remarks at the JD convocation.

“The law degree is much more than a card that must be punched on your way to becoming a lawyer — it is the ticket to a lifetime of flexibility and innovation, as you’ll have the rare ability to reinvent yourselves as your passions shift and as duty calls.”

For JD graduate Shandiin Herrera, the moment was shared with a crowd of more than 20 family members who flew in to watch her walk.

“I’m very excited and proud,” she said. “Having them all here was important because it’s just as much their accomplishment as it is mine.”

While the day was full of joy and celebration, Herrera admitted it was also bittersweet.

“I’ll miss the [Indian Legal Program](#) community,” she said. “We were close-knit. But now I’ll be studying for the bar and staying in Phoenix to work at Zwillingen Wulkan in their Indian law department, where I will represent tribal entities.”

For Avere Deck, an online Master of Human Resources and Employment Law graduate, his degree has already made an impact. She worked in the HR department at John Brown University in Arkansas and said the coursework aligned perfectly with her job.

“The class content was always so relevant,” Deck said. “I would take the class, learn the content and apply it almost immediately at work.”

Just one day before receiving her diploma, Deck was offered a raise.

“There were moments that were stressful for her, I could tell,” said Sam Deck, her husband. “But there weren’t times she wasn’t fully captivated.”

Giselle Nakhid moved from New York for the Master of Legal Studies program and said the decision to leave home paid off.

“I was more excited than nervous to leave New York, but I know I made the right decision to come here,” she said. “I love who I have become at ASU Law, and I was able to network with people I never imagined I’d meet.”

After graduation, she accepted a role as a regulatory compliance officer at an engineering firm. Her family joined her in celebration of this major accomplishment.

“I’m very happy for her,” said her father, Noln Nakhid. “Education is very important for the future.”

From first-generation students to career changers and community advocates, each graduate carried a story of resilience and purpose.

As keynote speaker Marjorie Herrera Lewis reminded them during the MLS/MHREL convocation, “You don’t have to be the loudest or flashiest, but you have to be the steadiest and be resilient. You are here because you belong here. You belong everywhere you want to be.”

It was a message that echoed the spirit of the Class of 2025, where each student walked away with the confidence to shape what’s next.

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

## Main image



Juris Doctor graduates smile during the May 14 Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law convocation ceremony at Arizona Financial Theatre in Phoenix. Photo by Ava Hansen/ASU Law

## Text image(s)



Juris Doctor graduate Alyannah Buhman was inspired by her grandpa to pursue law school. Photo by Ava Hansen/ASU Law





MSLB and JD graduate Cesare DeLuca speaks with Stacy Leeds, dean of ASU Law, at the May 13 convocation ceremony on the Downtown Phoenix campus. Photo by Ava Hansen/ASU Law