

# Thunderbird at ASU grad turns family legacy into global journey

By Mary Hess, ASU News  
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**Editor's note:** This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [fall 2025 graduates](#).

Growing up in a family full of T-birds — or what Anna Laine calls a “Thunderfamily” — the [Thunderbird School of Global Management](#) at ASU student jokes that the question “Where are you from?” is nearly impossible to answer.

Born in the United States, raised across Europe and multiple states, and holding dual citizenship in Finland and the U.S., Laine's identity reflects the global spirit that defines Thunderbird.

Laine grew up watching the lifelong friendships her parents formed at the school, and she knew she wanted to experience that same connection. The “Thunderbird Mystique,” as she describes it, was something she witnessed firsthand, woven into her own family's story. Coming to Thunderbird, she says, felt less like a choice and more like the continuation of a legacy.

During her time in the [Master of Global Management](#) (MGM) program, Laine embraced every opportunity. From club events to pub nights to serving as a teaching assistant, to even hosting a panel on AI and innovation at the Embassy of Finland in Washington, D.C., her Thunderbird experience has been filled with curiosity and courage.

“The reason I felt comfortable hosting, planning and moderating that panel was because of Thunderbird!” she said. “AI used to intimidate me but, coming to Thunderbird, I learned how to use it as a tool. I love that Thunderbird teaches us not to be scared of innovation and change.”

Now, this fall, Laine is graduating with plans to gain experience in a traditional career role while also building her entrepreneurial dream: a nordic wellness center and “sauna empire.” She says her motivations are rooted deeply in family, community and the future she's determined to build. Above all, she says she's grateful for the rare gift of waking up each day excited to learn at a place she loves.

“I was definitely meant to come to Thunderbird. I have grown and learned so much and have built an incredible community that will last a lifetime,” she said.

Read the below Q&A to learn more about Laine's Thunderbird journey and plans for the future.

*Note: Answers may have been edited lightly for length and/or clarity.*

**Question: If someone gave you \$40 million to solve one problem on our planet, what would you tackle?**

**Answer:** One of my biggest goals in life is to give back to the community. There are lots of problems I would like to tackle, but I think the biggest one is the climate crisis we are in right now. That, and helping everyone have basic food and shelter and to end homelessness. I know all of these can be done; it just needs the right people with the right resources.

**Q: Which professor taught you the most important lesson while at Thunderbird?**

**A:** Professor [Susan Harmeling](#). I had the pleasure of being in two of her classes this year, and she ends each class with 30 life lessons. Each of those lessons are something I now implement into my daily life. Professor Sy also taught me so much as I was her teaching assistant for two years! She has taught me that you can find joy and fun in the little things while also making an impact.

**Q: What advice would you give to a student just starting a program at Thunderbird?**

**A:** Speak to alumni or those in the cohort above you. They have insider knowledge and tips and tricks to survive. But also, get involved! Being involved truly made my experience and gave me the community that I came to Thunderbird for.

**Q: What motivates or inspires you?**

**A:** My family and my future! Everything I do is so that I can build myself the future that my parents helped set me up for and also give back to my family and my community. Helping people is one of my greatest passions!

Also, my mom. She is one of the coolest people I know and is such an inspiration, especially as a woman in leadership. I am so grateful for her and my dad for always supporting me and putting up with my spontaneous decisions and indecisiveness. [My mom will be speaking at my graduation](#) and that is just so special, and a moment my family and I will always remember.

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

**Main image**



Anna Laine. Courtesy photo

**Text image(s)**





Anna Laine poses with the Foundations cup as leader of the Scorpions cohort during the action-packed orientation week for T-birds. Courtesy photo

## Gallery



As a Campus Ambassador, Laine had the opportunity to share her passion for Thunderbird with prospective students eager to learn more about their programs of interest.



The Case Scholars Club was another student organization that Laine participated in. She says the club, and their monthly Cases and Coffee events, brought her some of her closest friends at Thunderbird.