

# ASU Online helps grad move forward, succeed on own terms

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

Hardie Kressler planned to stay in the Northeast for college, enrolling at a school not far from his home in Rumson, New Jersey. But, in 2020, before beginning his freshman year, Kressler experienced a major life change — he sustained a spinal cord injury and became quadriplegic.

The university's classes were remote during Kressler's first year, but returned to immersion courses once the COVID-19 pandemic subsided. Knowing he required a school that could still support a fully remote workload, Kressler altered his plans and enrolled in [ASU Online](#).

"What really drew me to ASU was its commitment to inclusion and innovation," he said. "It's a university that doesn't just make room for students with unique challenges, but actively empowers them to succeed.

"Choosing ASU wasn't just about academics; it was about finding a place where I could keep moving forward and thrive on my own terms."

And from day one, Kressler said ASU has supported his success — from [Accessibility and Inclusive Learning Services](#) ensuring he had access to proper resources and accommodations to his professors being flexible and understanding while continually pushing him to excel.

This fall, Kressler is receiving his [bachelor's degree in history](#) from the [School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies](#). Along with this degree, he is a member of [Barrett, The Honors College](#) and made the Dean's List in 2023, 2024 and 2025.

Kressler plans to apply to law school after graduation and pursue a career in corporate law. He hopes to aid in closing the gap between theory and practice, becoming the kind of lawyer who not only understands law conceptually, but can apply it effectively and ethically in complex and high-stakes environments.

We spoke with Kressler to learn more about his time at ASU.

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

**Question: What was your "aha" moment when you realized what you wanted to study?**

**Answer:** I have always been drawn to history. Even back in middle school, it was the subject that captured my attention the most — especially the parts that were not covered in the average American public school curriculum.

I found myself fascinated by the stories that were often left out or only briefly mentioned: the overlooked conflicts, forgotten figures and moral-gray areas that shaped the world we live in today. That curiosity to uncover what lies beneath the surface of familiar narratives is what led me to study history. It is also what drives my research now, as I try to give voice to the people and events that history too often leaves behind.

**Q: Which professor taught you one of the most important lessons you've learned at ASU? What was the lesson?**

**A:** [Sungik Yang](#), my thesis director, taught me to always ask “So what?” when analyzing history. It’s a simple question, but it forces you to think beyond facts and dates, to uncover why something matters and what it reveals about the human experience.

That approach transformed how I study and write; it pushed me to connect the past to larger moral and social questions rather than treating it as something distant. It’s a lesson that stays with me far beyond the classroom, shaping how I interpret the world around me.

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

**A:** I’d focus on accessibility, not just in terms of physical access, but economic access as well. Around the world, resources and technologies that make life more accessible for people with disabilities often exist, but they’re priced far beyond what most people can afford.

I’d invest in making accessibility both universal and affordable — funding innovations, education and infrastructure that remove barriers without creating new financial ones. True accessibility means equality of opportunity, not privilege through expense.

**Q: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your time as a student at ASU?**

**A:** My time at ASU has been truly life-changing. When I first transferred, I wasn’t just starting at a new school; I was learning how to navigate life in a completely new way. ASU gave me the flexibility and support to continue my education while still focusing on my recovery, but more importantly it gave me a community that believed in my potential.

Through Barrett, I found professors who challenged me to think critically and peers who inspired me to push myself further. I’ve grown not only as a student, but as a person who knows how to adapt, persevere and keep striving toward what matters. ASU didn’t just prepare me for law school; it taught me what it means to turn resilience into purpose.

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

## Main image



Hardie Kressler is graduating from the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies this fall with a bachelor's degree in history. Courtesy photo