

From the lab to your headphones, new podcast brings ASU research to you

'Lab Coat Optional,' from Knowledge Enterprise, translates advanced academic research into relatable conversations

By Pete Zrioka, ASU News
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What do you get when an evolutionary biologist, an engineer and an anthropologist walk into a recording studio?

At Arizona State University, it turns out you get "[Lab Coat Optional](#)," a new podcast that brings you the latest impactful research in conversations you don't have to be a scholar to understand. Produced by [Knowledge Enterprise](#), the show invites ASU researchers and their collaborators to talk about their work with host Pete Zrioka while leaving the lab coat — and complex academic language — at the door.

"Our team excels at turning complex research into creative, digestible narratives," says Kate Howells, executive director of strategic marketing and communications at Knowledge Enterprise. "This podcast extends that work into a new medium, and we aim to reach a broader audience outside ASU to showcase how university research creates tangible benefits for our communities."

Since debuting in August, the first season of "Lab Coat Optional" has spanned the breadth of ASU research and the curious minds behind it.

Biodesign Institute researcher Carlo Maley kicked things off by exploring [what evolution can teach us about treating cancer](#) — and even how it can inspire better fantasy worlds for tabletop gaming. The podcast also delved into topics close to home, like how Patricia Solís and Dr. Nick Staab [connect research and public policy to protect Arizonans from extreme heat](#). Other episodes explore the science of aging through two different perspectives. Ramon Velazquez explained how diet and environment may influence dementia, while Ben Trumble shared [findings from a 20-year research collaboration with a Bolivian hunter-farmer community](#) that has shockingly low rates of dementia and heart disease.

Other episodes explore global and social issues. Biodesign researcher Lee Voth-Gaeddert discusses [how invisible systems — from water infrastructure to the human microbiome — affect public health](#), while PhD candidate P.J. Allin [unpacks China's narrative influence campaigns in Southeast Asia](#). Psychology Professor Michelle “Lani” Shiota [reframes addiction](#) not as a moral failing but as a social condition shaped by brain chemistry, community and connection. The latest episode features Joshua Garland exploring how [generative AI is affecting media and the information landscape](#).

Upcoming episodes can be found at labcoattoptional.asu.edu, [YouTube](#) or wherever you listen to podcasts.

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Main image



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