

# ASU grad committed to making a difference for students with disabilities

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

Making a difference on campus for your peers with disabilities is no small feat, but that's exactly what Athena Garcia, who studied at the [Mary Lou Fulton College for Teaching and Learning Innovation](#), accomplished during her time at Arizona State University.

Garcia, who studied special education with a focus in visual impairments at ASU's West Valley campus in her hometown of Glendale, said she always knew she wanted to pursue a career in which she could help others.

"When I found out that I had a disability myself, specifically a visual impairment — I always knew that I wanted to help other people — but my disability inspired me to jump into the field of visual impairments and become that teacher that provides their students with the accommodations that they need to be supported in the classroom, as I didn't receive that support myself when I was in public school," Garcia said.

So, in the fall of 2023, Garcia started a student organization to support students with visual impairments.

"I started a student club called Braille Devils on this campus because I knew that there wasn't enough representation of the disability community, specifically for those students with visual impairments," Garcia said. "I really wanted to help other students feel seen and heard through the student club, and we did so many fun activities."

In addition to leading the Braille Devils, Garcia is an involved member of the Accessibility Coalition, a student coalition representing the disability community at ASU. She also provided support for her peers by working in the Student Accessibility Office at the West Valley campus.

"I became a part of the Accessibility Coalition because I knew I wanted to continue giving back to the disability community at ASU," Garcia said. "I became the director of education, where I

educated different student clubs on campus, in addition to the broader ASU community, on what disability is like, how we support students in the Student Accessibility Office and those with disabilities, and how we can bring awareness to the disability community so that way they're represented and seen on campus.”

Garcia was also an active member of Devil's Adapt, a student-led training program for adaptive athletes based at the Tempe campus.

“It's really been an amazing experience for me because I've been going there three days a week to exercise, and it's really taught me that your disability doesn't have to be a barrier to fitness and that fitness is for everybody,” Garcia said.

In addition to working on campus and all of her extracurricular activities during her time at ASU, Garcia worked as a student teacher in the Gilbert Public Schools District.

“I started my student teaching experience in the (spring 2025 semester)” Garcia said. “I gained hands-on experience with an amazing mentor teacher who taught students with visual impairments. Through him, I really got to learn how to teach students every day, get to know students better, and ... accommodate them and make their curriculum accessible in the classroom.”

After her graduation, Garcia plans to apply to work in a nearby school district.

“My plan after graduation is to really become that teacher that makes a difference for students with disabilities who are in grades K-12 in a school district, specifically those with visual impairments, as I'll be able to relate to them and understand what their strengths and goals are.”

Her advice for her fellow Sun Devils still in school? Follow your passions and get involved.

“One piece of advice I would give to anyone starting out at ASU is to really get involved in the university because that's where you discover what passion you want to pursue or even find friendships you'll be making along the way,” Garcia said. “You're really supposed to make the most of your university experience because that's how you grow as a person.”

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

## Main image



Athena Garcia poses with "Forks Up" at the Arizona State University West Valley campus. Photo by Kaitlyn Beickel.