

First-generation ASU grad found opportunity and community through networking

Mariana Torres dreamed of attending ASU since eighth grade; now, the double major credits her network and mentors with setting her on the path to success

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

Mariana Torres always knew college was in her future, but the path to get there was uncertain.

"As the first in my family to go to college — here or in Mexico — I never understood how to get there," Torres says.

But get there she did. She graduates this December with two Bachelors of Science, in business data analytics and business entrepreneurship, from the W. P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University.

Torres, the Turken Family Outstanding Graduating Senior, grew up in Casa Grande, Arizona, and credits her high school STEM teachers with encouraging her to pursue higher education. Following high school, Torres spent a year at Central Arizona College before transferring to ASU as a sophomore.

"As soon as I stepped onto the CAC campus, I walked into my advisors' office and told them to scrap whatever associate's degree program they wanted me to pursue," says Torres, who hopes to one day follow in her father's footsteps by founding a business. "I wanted a degree from ASU in entrepreneurship, so I completed as many transferable classes as I could at CAC."

Navigating ASU was initially difficult for Torres, but she quickly began to thrive, participating in the [Management Leadership for Tomorrow](#) program and the [SEO Career](#) program, and holding internships at Walmart and Google. She also got involved with several student organizations, serving as IT director for the [Hispanic Business Students Association](#), president of Los Diablos

Scholar Board, and president of the Association of Latino Professionals for America.

“Those organizations changed my trajectory; it's where I found mentors,” she says.

Following graduation, Torres plans to pursue a role in consulting or product management and eventually found her brand.

Here, she shares more about her college journey.

Question: What was your “aha” moment when you realized you wanted to study business data analytics and entrepreneurship?

Answer: My dad was an entrepreneur, so the fruit doesn't fall far from the tree. However, as a first-generation student, I wasn't familiar with the various degree programs. It wasn't until my sophomore year at ASU that I learned about other opportunities and began investigating ways to make myself more competitive, and decided to pursue a second major in business analytics.

Q: What's something you've learned while at ASU, in or outside the classroom, that surprised or changed your perspective?

A: Networking is so important. As a first-generation student, I had to be exposed to so many people to discover different opportunities, so I tell everyone that your network is your net worth. Being at a university, education is important, but what will be pivotal to someone's success is how they utilize their time at university, and that's through the network they create.

A peer of mine encouraged me to run for a student organization executive board position, which was outside my comfort zone. However, her encouragement pushed me to run for that position, which unlocked that network. That network was constantly making me aware of different opportunities and asking questions about whether I'd applied for an internship or what my resume looked like.

You need to utilize your time by networking, attending events and putting yourself out there, even if you're scared.

Q: Why did you choose to study at ASU?

A: We took a school field trip to ASU in eighth grade, and that was the first time I'd ever seen a school and could envision what a university looked like. We spent the day on campus, and I loved it. In high school, when it came to choosing colleges, I saw that ASU had a great business school. It has a good ranking, has the best overall cost savings for my family and me, and is close to home.

Q: What professor taught you the most important lesson while at ASU?

A: Information systems Professor of Practice [Michael Guggemos](#) was a pivotal instructor for me because I took his class when I became interested in the business data analytics path. He had a unique approach to teaching and conceptualizing ideas. That was transformational, not just for navigating my major, but my life.

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

A: I'm passionate about students having access to a good education. I come from a low-income area, and my mom began her career as a preschool teacher for [Head Start](#) before transitioning to K–12 education. I am the person I am today because of all the mentors and teachers I had throughout my education, so I would invest that money into teachers.

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

Main image



Mariana Torres is the W. P. Carey School of Business' fall 2025 Turken Family Outstanding Graduating Senior. Photo by Deanna Dent/ASU

Text image(s)



Mariana Torres participated in several clubs and organizations during her time at ASU, including the Management Leadership for Tomorrow and the SEO Career program, the Hispanic Business Students Association and the Association of Latino Professionals for America. Photo by Deanna Dent/ASU