

Dean's Medalist pursues psychology to save lives

Jixin 'Anna' Zhou found healing, community and a calling to support others through mental health research at ASU's New College

By Mariana Lozovanu, ASU News
December 10, 2025

Editor's note: This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [fall 2025 graduates](#).

After her daughter died by suicide, Jixin “Anna” Zhou became determined to better understand mental illness and learn the tools she needed to support others.

She enrolled to the [Master of Science in psychology](#) program at Arizona State University's [New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences](#). Her studies, faculty mentorship and the cross-generational community she built in the West Valley have shaped a journey she describes as a path toward “saving lives.”

A longtime English teacher from Shenzhen, China, and first-generation college student, Zhou graduates this December as a New College Dean's Medalist. She said New College's inclusive, student-centered environment helped her feel supported “across ages, cultures and languages.”

Zhou credited a capstone instructor and New College staff with teaching her how to design research studies, think critically and gain confidence in conducting independent work.

Her research explores older adults' mental health, mindfulness-based interventions and suicide prevention, connecting her lived experience with New College's emphasis on research that serves communities.

Zhou plans to return to China after graduation but hopes to continue combining psychology with education to support others. She dreams of teaching, publishing and implementing community-based interventions that reduce isolation and suicide risk among vulnerable groups.

“It's never too old to learn,” she said. “I want to use what I learned to help more people.”

Question: What was your “aha” moment, when you realized you wanted to study the field you majored in?

Answer: Many people around me have suffered from mental illness. My daughter struggled and died by suicide. That loss made me want to help myself heal and learn how to help others. If I can't save my daughter, maybe I can save others.

Q: Why did you choose New College?

A: The program is flexible, well-structured and very supportive. Faculty and staff are empathetic and practical. Courses are well designed, and instructors guide students step by step.

Q: What's something you learned while at New College that surprised you or changed your perspective?

A: My capstone course helped me learn to design research and think critically. Family-systems theory and positive psychology helped me understand conflict and relationships. Quantitative methods strengthened my research skills.

Q: How has community life at ASU shaped your experience?

A: Everyday interactions with neighbors, students and staff made ASU feel like a family. Hosting a Mid-Autumn Festival for more than 20 guests helped build a sense of belonging across ages and cultures.

Q: What do you do outside of coursework?

A: I garden in the [West Valley community garden](#), practice mindfulness, visit campus libraries and join campus events. These help me practice English, meet people and feel calm.

Q: What's the best piece of advice you'd offer to someone considering applying for college?

A: New College is inclusive and supportive. If you follow the program plan and study consistently, you can succeed — at any age.

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

Main image



Dean's Medalist Jixin "Anna" Zhou will graduate this fall with a master of science in psychology from ASU's New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences. Photo by Danielle Castillo/ASU

Text image(s)



Jixin “Anna” Zhou’s favorite place to study and conduct research is Fletcher Library at ASU’s West Valley campus.