

Hugh Downs School graduate strengthens her leadership through online MA program

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

When Mariana Lozovanu began the [online MA in communication](#) program at the [Hugh Downs School of Human Communication](#), she already believed that communication was the foundation of how people build relationships, solve problems and create change. What she did not expect was how deeply the program would expand her understanding of communication, strengthening her personal and professional skills through the theory and research she gained.

Born and raised in Moldova, Lozovanu earned her undergraduate degree in journalism and public communication before moving to the United States. Her passion for helping others navigate difficult conversations and build stronger communities led her to the Hugh Downs School, where the online format allowed her to balance her full-time role as a senior marketing specialist for ASU's New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences with her commitments to family and community.

"The flexibility of the online format has been a lifeline," she said. "It allowed me to grow academically without losing the rhythm of my personal life. I could stay present for my family and community while still investing in my education."

Lozovanu said several courses in the program had an immediate impact on her daily life, including negotiation, training and development, and conflict transformation. She learned how to deliver a positive "no," how intentional training can shape real outcomes, and how strategic communication can prevent conflict before it escalates.

"These classes did not just teach theory," she said. "They gave me practical tools I could apply right away in my work, my family and my community. They helped me grow into a more confident communicator and a more thoughtful human being."

A turning point came during the research phase of the program, where Lozovanu conducted both qualitative and quantitative interviews. Through surveys, coding and analysis, she began to see how much information remains hidden in everyday communication.

“Active listening and intentional analysis opened my eyes to how meaningful data emerges,” she said. “My capstone brought everything together by giving me the chance to design a training program that I hope to implement in the future.”

Faculty mentors played a significant role in shaping her graduate experience. Lozovanu credits Instructor [Lori Bednarchik](#) for helping her master research methods and develop a full training proposal. She also worked closely with Associate Professor [Joris Van Ouytsel](#), her capstone mentor, whose guidance helped refine her training program on effective feedback.

“His steady support and thoughtful feedback gave me the confidence to trust my ideas and bring my project to life,” she said.

Even in an online environment, Lozovanu said she built meaningful relationships with classmates across different states and time zones. The program created space for authentic dialogue and collaborative learning that grew into genuine community.

Today, Lozovanu serves as president of the Moldovan Community of Arizona, where she applies her communication skills to support and uplift others. She hopes to continue developing training programs that strengthen teams and improve communication cultures in organizations.

“Education can transform not just a career, but an entire path forward,” she said. “This program helped me grow into a better communicator, a better leader and a better version of myself.”

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

Main image



Mariana Lozovanu, who born and raised in Moldova, is graduating with a master's degree in communication this December. Photo by Alin Sosnovici