

# Starbucks scholar takes inspiration from heritage, the power of information

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

Donovique Castillo has a lot to celebrate as he prepares to graduate from Arizona State University. He's an Indigenous student from New Mexico who knew he wanted to be part of something bigger.

For Castillo, earning a bachelor's degree represents more than individual excellence. According to U.S. Census data, approximately [16% of American Indian and Alaska Native adults](#) over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree — lower degree attainment than for other racial and ethnic groups.

"My mere existence is a testament to the resilience of my grandmother and her grandmother before her," Castillo said. "They survived so I could have this moment. They are the reason I persisted."

Castillo knew he wanted to attend the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, and the [Starbucks College Achievement Plan](#) made it possible for him to afford it. The partnership between Starbucks and ASU offers 100% tuition coverage for employees completing their first bachelor's degree through ASU Online.

"I learned that a campus isn't made of brick and mortar, but of community and purpose," Castillo said. "I learned that a world-class education isn't about where you are, but about the community that supports you and the determination you bring to the table."

During his time studying entirely online, Castillo explored narrative discourse and how to use communication to persuade large groups of people.

"Information is vital. Knowledge is power, and both can propel us forward or hold us back," he said.

Castillo is graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in [mass communication and media studies](#) and a minor in [digital audiences](#), and he hopes to travel well beyond the Southwest. In the meantime, he shared his encouragement for future students.

“Having discipline and determination is one of the most fundamental qualities you will need,” he said. “With that in mind, don't forget to give yourself grace. There will be moments that aren't your proudest, but they should never deter you from getting back up and trying again. No matter what, if you can dream it and put in the work, it can happen.”

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## Text image(s)



Donovique Castillo, courtesy photo.