

Reshaping worlds: ASU Online grad finds new worldview through biomimicry program

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

Biomimicry is a practice of learning and finding guidance from nature. It proposes solutions to complex challenges that are designed to bring harmony between humans and nature.

Fiona van Haeringen discovered biomimicry a decade ago and was immediately drawn to the philosophy and ideology of the practice. Over time, she realized biomimicry was the path for her.

"I began to have the distinct realization that there was something intrinsically out of step with the way businesses, organizations and economies were operating in society," van Haeringen said. "Biomimicry, as an emerging discipline, continued to intrigue me, and I discovered the master's program at Arizona State University."

Van Haeringen is the fall 2025 Outstanding Graduate for the [School of Complex Adaptive Systems](#) at the [Rob Walton College of Global Futures](#). She's graduating with a Master of Science in biomimicry from [ASU Online](#).

After establishing a career in business and professional education in Europe and Australia, where she designed programs that challenged how people think and act, van Haeringen couldn't shake the feeling that there was a better way for business to operate in symbiosis with Earth.

"I kept feeling that there must be a better way to do business on this planet," van Haeringen said. "I moved to working in Australian university research centers dedicated to sustainability, regenerative business models, social innovation, Indigenous enterprise, corporate social responsibility, impact investment and disaster management. But it still wasn't far enough for me."

As a mother and wife who has already completed an MBA, van Haeringen was mentally prepared for the challenges of returning to school and is grateful to her family for supporting her throughout her educational journey.

Despite the 17-hour time difference from Australia to Tempe, Arizona, van Haeringen felt connected to her peers and professors through the ASU Online ecosystem.

“There is the sheer enjoyment and fascination in the learning, the connections and camaraderie with my team, cohort and classmates, the interactions and support of the faculty and the unique experience of the program,” van Haeringen said.

Now, van Haeringen is a founding member of Biomimicry Australia and a certified biomimicry professional, continuing her career with a new perspective on life.

“The emphasis is no longer on me as an individual, but rather how I might serve as a nodal point in a network that ‘creates conditions conducive to life,’” van Haeringen shared. “I want to be working in nature and be a voice for nature.”

ASU News spoke with van Haeringen to learn more about her experience at ASU.

Question: What’s something you learned while at ASU — in the classroom or otherwise — that surprised you or changed your perspective?

Answer: The whole master’s profoundly shifted my worldview. I am acutely aware now of nature as a dynamic living system and cannot help but see the interconnectedness of all that sustains us as a species and have a deep reverence for it. There is not an organism, process or system that I studied throughout the master’s that did not leave me in awe of it. It is like unlocking previously hidden dimensions. A simple walk in the Australian bush now becomes an epic adventure across time and place. At a personal level, I was also very surprised by just how much I enjoyed learning again and receiving regular feedback. In this age of constant distraction, I found that focusing in depth and delving into all the research was like “spring cleaning” for my mind. I hadn’t expected that.

Q: As a certified biomimicry professional, where or from what in nature do you find your greatest inspiration?

A: This is an easy one. Just put me out in nature — particularly in a wilderness location — and I am content. As part of marking the completion of the master’s, I undertook a “Great Walk” with my intrepid sister — a 95km trek across the island of K’gari (Fraser Island). K’gari is the world’s largest sand island and a (UNESCO) World Heritage Site listed for its precious natural beauty. When you are walking there, you may not see another human for quite some time, but there is so much other life around you. Some of the trees, particularly in the area known as “The Valley of the Giants,” are more than 1,000 years old. Being in the presence of these mighty sentinels and spending large tracts of time within a fully functioning and thriving ecosystem inspires me.

Q: Why did you choose ASU?

A: I wanted to study biomimicry, and ASU was the only place in the world that offered it within a Master of Science. It was also the gateway into the biomimicry professional program ... and the highest level of qualification in the world. I also checked the reputation of ASU with a few professors I have worked with, whose opinions I respected, and found that it was highly regarded, particularly for its innovation in online learning.

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

Main image



Fiona van Haeringen on a biomimicry professional expedition at the "Top of the World" scenic area in Peru's Sacred Valley. Courtesy photo