

ASU students produce winning video showing dangers of fentanyl use

Competition sponsored by Arizona attorney general's office

By Scott Bordow, ASU News
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The message appears one second into the 26-second video: "Fentanyl is 50x stronger than heroin."

The wording is in white, except for "50x" which is bright red.

Then, immediately, another message: "Killing 3 people every day in Maricopa County."

Again, there's a purposeful color distinction, "3 people every day" in the same bright red, drawing your eyes.

At the end of the video, a final message appears, in white: "Never trust pills not prescribed to you."

Below, in red: "Expect Fentanyl."

There is nothing subtle about the video. It is a warning.

And it is so effective that the four Arizona State University students who produced the public service [announcement](#) recently won a competition sponsored by the office of Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes that focused on raising fentanyl awareness.

The student team — consisting of Leela Udupa, Nichole Escobedo, Jocelyn Romero and Emma Eckert — came from a Public Health Technologies class where students practiced developing social media posts for public health. The class is offered through the [School of Technology for Public Health](#), part of [ASU Health](#).

(Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3BK8Tq62zg>)

"This is exactly the kind of applied impact via technologies we want our students to achieve," said Marc Adams, interim program director of ASU's Master of Public Health program.

Adams, who teaches Public Health Technologies, said the students had been asked to produce a social media campaign when he learned of the competition, which was open to college and

university students over the age of 18. He told the students that, if they wanted, they could shift their efforts to the PSA.

“It made a lot of sense to ask students on a very relevant health topic to add something to the competition,” Adams said. “I’m very proud that they won.”

The four students, all of whom are pursuing either a Master of Public Health or a Master of Science in Public Health Technology, started working on the video in September, following the guidelines set by the attorney general’s office:

The video couldn’t be longer than 26 seconds.

It had to cut to black at the end.

It must be original work produced by the students and raise awareness of the dangers of fentanyl.

It could not include offensive or illegal content.

Escobedo said the first thing the team did was gather data on how fentanyl impacts gender and various age groups among Arizona residents.

They found, for example, that people ages 24 to 34 are most impacted but, as the video states: “It can happen to anyone. A friend who took a pill unknowingly laced with fentanyl. A teenager who bought counterfeit pills on social media. A child who thought it was candy.”

“One thing that was super important to us during the process is we wanted it to be emotional, be something that you would be thinking about afterwards and hit the people who didn’t even think they would be affected by this problem,” Eckert said.

Romero said they learned people have a “not me” mentality when it comes to the dangers of fentanyl. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 77,648 fentanyl-related deaths from March 2024 to March 2025.

“I think that’s how this fentanyl PSA really was impactful,” Romero said. “We highlight that it really can happen to you. It can be laced in a lot of things and it’s invisible. You can’t smell it, you can’t taste it, you can’t feel it.”

Jordan Miller, a professor in the College of Health Solutions and program director for the Master of Science program in population health, helped the students with the messaging. One challenge: How to get across the message that fentanyl is dangerous to a wide swath of society, from babies to high school students to adults.

“It definitely made it harder, and we had to be super specific with our wording so that it would have that emotional component but without being too confusing,” Eckert said.

“We wanted to make sure we had something for everybody so they could all have this ‘aha’ moment, where they thought, ‘This could happen to me.’”

Said Romero: “We wanted to represent some of those real-world experiences that people live. So, in the video, you can see families and a mother holding a baby and others in school. It really highlights those scenarios that you are put into sometimes.”

Udupa said the final image — a black screen with the text, “Even You” — was intended for people to see themselves through the reflection of their phone.

“It shows that it can happen to all these people, but eventually it may catch up and be you,” Udupa said.

How effective is the video? When Escobedo showed it to her husband, he said, “Wow, I thought that was professionally done. I didn’t know you guys did it.”

“I’m super proud of the results,” Udupa said. “And then to find out we won was just the cherry on top.”

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

Main image



ASU graduate students (clockwise from left) Nichole Escobedo, Emma Eckert, Leela Udupa and Jocelyn Romero celebrate their winning entry in the Arizona attorney general’s contest focused on

raising fentanyl awareness. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News