

# Fashion Forward project blends community action, sustainability by repurposing donated clothing

**ASU Staff Council, students collaborate on 2-day open closet event where the community can ‘shop’ for free clothing**

By Mary Beth Faller, ASU News  
April 7, 2026

Apurva Anand held up a striped shirtdress and knew exactly how to style it.

“I’m going to pair it up with a belt and make it look a little more formal,” she said.

Anand, an industrial design graduate student at Arizona State University, was looking for cute clothing to model. She’s a social media assistant for the International Students and Scholars Center and helped to create a video for the group.

---

## **Attend the Fashion Forward open closet**

**Tempe campus: Maroon Gym, Sun Devil Fitness Center**

Day 1: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Thursday, April 9 (One bag take-home limit.)

Day 2: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday,  
April 10 (Take as much as you

That shirtdress? Free. And the belt was free too.

want.)

The [ISSC video](#) is promoting Fashion Forward, a clothing donation and distribution event organized by the ASU Staff Council. Departments at all ASU campuses, plus Los Angeles, hosted clothing donation boxes in January and February. The clothing will be repurposed at an open closet event on April 9 and 10. Anyone in the ASU community can stop by and pick up free clothing.

**Los Angeles: Student Lounge, ASU California Center Grand**

1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday, April 22

---

During March, the Staff Council held several “sorting parties” to organize the clothing and Anand found the shirtdress while sorting through donated items.

She held up a tailored blazer.

“This is business formal. The quality seems really good and it doesn’t seem like it’s used at all,” she said.

The room was packed with students, staff and dozens of boxes of clothing.

Paige Jones Wells, Staff Council project coordinator, was also volunteering.

What’s the coolest donation she’s seen?

“Air Jordans. They weren’t my size,” she said.

A huge array of apparel was donated: sequined party dresses, all kinds of blazers, trendy long skirts, men’s slacks, Christmas sweaters and lots of shoes — many seemingly brand new.

This is Wells’ third year participating in Fashion Forward.

“It’s always so much fun. It is a ton of work but there’s nothing that’s not worthwhile in doing it,” she said.

This is the fifth year of Fashion Forward. In 2022, around 350 pounds of clothing was collected at 10 donation locations. This year, there were 65 donation boxes across the university, according to Halie Cousineau, who’s leading the event for the Staff Council. The final amount won’t be calculated until just before the open closet but the goal was to collect 6,000 pounds of clothing to be repurposed.

“It started as a passion project for a small group of us and I feel like now it’s an ASU passion project,” she said.

More than 20 departments across ASU, as well as several student organizations, have collaborated for months on Fashion Forward.

The event has two goals.

“One is the access to free resources to support all of our ASU community members, serving students, faculty, staff and scholars,” said Cousineau, who is the associate director for graduate student initiatives in the International Students and Scholars Center.

“And the second part, which is equally as important, is that it's a sustainability event. It addresses six out of the eight ASU sustainability goals.”

The drive collects clothing and shoes that are clean, like new or gently worn for all ages and genders, plus like-new accessories, hangers, backpacks and clean bedding and towels. Professional attire is especially welcome.

“The clothes become part of a circular system within this program and are repurposed and out of the waste stream,” she said.

Besides the open closet, the April 9 event will also be educational.

“We’ll have workshops at different tables where you can learn how to make grocery bags out of t-shirts or how to mend your clothes,” Cousineau said.

“The Coalition of International Students is making ‘passports’ so you can go around and get swag and giveaways at the tables.”

On April 10, “everything must go,” she said.

“Last year at the end, we had one shopping bag, less than 50 pounds, that we had to find another donation location to take it to.”

Also on April 10, the Coalition of International Students and other organizations will hold a fashion show of donated items.

New this year is training for the Fashion Forward volunteers.

“This is to empower our volunteer community to understand the big why, the sustainability aspect behind this. Ideally, they’ll talk more about it to people because they know the facts. And we’re hoping that increases that long-term behavioral impact on our community,” she said.

Cousineau hopes that participants realize that individual choices are meaningful.

“You feel like, ‘It’s bigger than me and I can’t do anything.’ But what’s really cool about this is that we’ll have hundreds of people taking personal action collectively.”

Christine Moe, a business analytics major and student worker for the Staff Council, has worked several roles in Fashion Forward for three years.

“We’ve built a community. There are people who come here and volunteer and become friends because they have the same mindset,” she said.

---

## Join sustainable Sun Devils

Fashion Forward is just one of many sustainability events being held at ASU during April. Check out the university's [Earth Day, Every day events](#).

---

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

## Main image



Industrial engineering graduate student Apurva Aanand sorts through clothing collected for ASU's Fashion Forward project on Thursday, March 12, at the Student Services Building on the Tempe campus. An open closet event on April 9 and 10 will provide ASU students, faculty and staff with an opportunity to "shop" sustainably by offering free recycled or unused donated clothing. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News

## Gallery





ASU staff member Andrea Pettit finds a Christmas sweater among the donated apparel for ASU's Fashion Forward clothing drive on Thursday, March 12, at the Student Services Building on the Tempe campus.



Staff Council treasurer Tiffany Rauch folds a pair of pants at the Fashion Forward ASU clothing drive on Thursday, March 12.





Sabrina Ebel, budget and finance manager for the Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions, folds women's tops during the Fashion Forward ASU clothing drive on Thursday, March 12.