

# Outstanding forensic psychology graduate turns lived experience into community impact

**First-generation student Pavandeep Basra applies classroom knowledge in real time to support youth in the justice system**

By Mariana Lozovanu, ASU News  
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**Editor's note:** This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [spring 2026 graduates](#).

For Pavandeep Basra, an online student in Arizona State University's [New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences](#), earning a master's degree in [forensic psychology](#) is more than an academic milestone; it's the continuation of a deeply personal mission to help others heal and succeed. Recognized as an outstanding graduate, Basra's journey reflects both dedication and purpose.

A first-generation college student, Basra has already made a measurable impact in her field. As an intervention counselor with [Yuba County Probation Department in California](#), she works directly with youth in the juvenile justice system, providing psycho-educational tools and support to help them overcome challenges and reintegrate into society. Over the past year alone, she has worked with more than 200 clients, achieving a remarkable 97% success rate.

Her path to this moment has been shaped by both professional insight and personal resilience.

## Finding purpose through experience

Basra's "aha moment" came through her work in probation, where she witnessed firsthand the complex intersection of mental health and the criminal justice system.

"I saw the need for better understanding, intervention and rehabilitation," she said. "There is still so much more to learn about how to effectively help individuals become productive members of society."

That realization led her to ASU's New College, where she found a program uniquely designed to bridge psychology and criminal justice — preparing students to approach rehabilitation through evidence-based strategies.

Throughout her studies, Basra focused on applying what she learned in real time. From understanding mental health disorders in depth to implementing intervention and diversion programs, she consistently translated classroom knowledge into meaningful outcomes for the individuals she serves.

## Turning knowledge into action

Basra credits her coursework, especially her psychopathology class, with shaping her perspective.

“Learning about the spectrum of mental health disorders, their causes and how to treat them was incredibly impactful,” she said. “It showed me how important it is to approach this work with both knowledge and compassion.”

That mindset has defined her professional approach. By integrating research-backed methods into her daily work, she has helped young people navigate trauma, build skills and move toward healthier futures.

[Natalie Faber](#), an associate teaching professor at the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences who taught Basra, saw that commitment firsthand.

“Pavandeep stood out immediately,” Faber said. “She consistently went above and beyond — seeking feedback, engaging deeply with course material and encouraging meaningful discussion with her peers. What impressed me most was her ability to connect theory to real-world application and her dedication to improving people’s lives through evidence-based practice.”

## Strength through adversity

While balancing graduate school and a demanding career, Basra was also facing a personal battle, undergoing chemotherapy for more than two years. Despite the challenges, she persisted.

“My message is don’t give up,” she said. “The only limits are your mindset and how you see yourself. If you can overcome that, you can achieve anything.”

Her resilience, she says, is rooted in her faith, her family and the unwavering support of her fiancé, all of whom she credits for helping her reach this milestone.

## Looking ahead

Basra plans to continue her work in probation, with the goal of becoming a probation officer and eventually earning a doctorate in psychology to provide clinical care.

She is especially passionate about expanding mental health support, not only for individuals in the justice system, but also for the professionals who serve them.

“If I could make a broader impact, I would invest in mental health services for law enforcement,” she said. “They experience trauma too, and supporting them ultimately helps the communities they serve.”

## A legacy of learning and service

For Basra, education is more than a personal achievement; it’s a legacy.

“As a first-generation student, this journey means everything,” she said. “I want to show future generations that education can truly change your life and the lives of others.”

With her dedication to service, commitment to learning and passion for making a difference, Basra embodies the spirit of New College, where innovation meets impact, and where students are empowered to create meaningful change in their communities.

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

## Main image



Pavandeep Basra is graduating this spring with a master's degree in forensic psychology from ASU's New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences. Photo by Aron Sher/ASU

## Gallery



Pavandeep Basra works as an intervention counselor with Yuba County Probation Department in California, supporting youth in the juvenile justice system through guidance, mentorship and rehabilitative programming.





Pavandeep Basra at Yosemite National Park in California with her fiance.



A proud first-generation student who believes "the only limits are your mindset and how you see yourself."