

Political science grad earns academic recognition with Dean's Medal award

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

Arizona native Mirei Shikama will graduate this spring as the [School of Politics and Global Studies'](#) Dean's Medalist, obtaining degrees in global studies and English (creative writing) with a minor in political science.

Also a student in [Barrett, The Honors College](#), Shikama maintained a busy schedule throughout her undergraduate experience at Arizona State University. She served as a junior fellow for the School of Politics and Global Studies to develop curriculum on service learning and surveyed active student impact with Teaching Associate Professor [Henry Sivak's](#) geopolitics course.

Shikama was also a research fellow for the [Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict](#) and participated in the [Young Leaders Summer Institute](#), a civic education program.

Most recently, she worked as an assistant policy analyst for ASU's [Enterprise Policy Analysis Group](#), researching high-priority policy issues for the university's administrative leadership.

Shikama's time in Tempe taught her about leadership and team management while challenging her in a way that helped her find her voice.

"Between my part-time service job, various internships and school projects, I have developed a lot in terms of my capacity and ability to create project plans and oversee a team," Shikama said. "I have never thought of myself as outspoken in any way, but I believe this environment has allowed me to be more expressive in professional, academic and personal settings."

She will work on completing her accelerated master's degree in political science over the next year while working as a policy analyst at ASU.

Learn more about Shikama's Sun Devil journey.

Question: What was your “aha” moment when you realized you wanted to study the field you majored in?

Answer: I think the buildup of debates and conversations with my peers and professors gradually built my confidence and certainty in my interest in both creative writing and political science.

Q: Why did you choose ASU?

A: ASU was the most attainable financially, and it allowed me to be close to my family. That being said, being at such a large institution allowed me to access many programs and opportunities that wouldn't have been possible had I not attended ASU.

Q: Which professor taught you the most important lesson while at ASU?

A: Undoubtedly Professor Henry Sivak. I am forever indebted to how he has impacted the way I consume knowledge. Over the course of four years, I have taken over five of his classes and was his teaching assistant in one of them. All of them contributed to my confidence in pursuing my master's degree at ASU and my interest in academia as a whole.

Q: What's the best piece of advice you'd give to those still in school?

A: Utilize the resources available exclusively to students. There are so many student services, jobs, internships, etc. that you don't have to compete with people outside of ASU as a benefit of being at such a large university. I think it's a waste not to use these opportunities.

Q: What was your favorite spot on campus, whether for studying, meeting friends or just thinking about life?

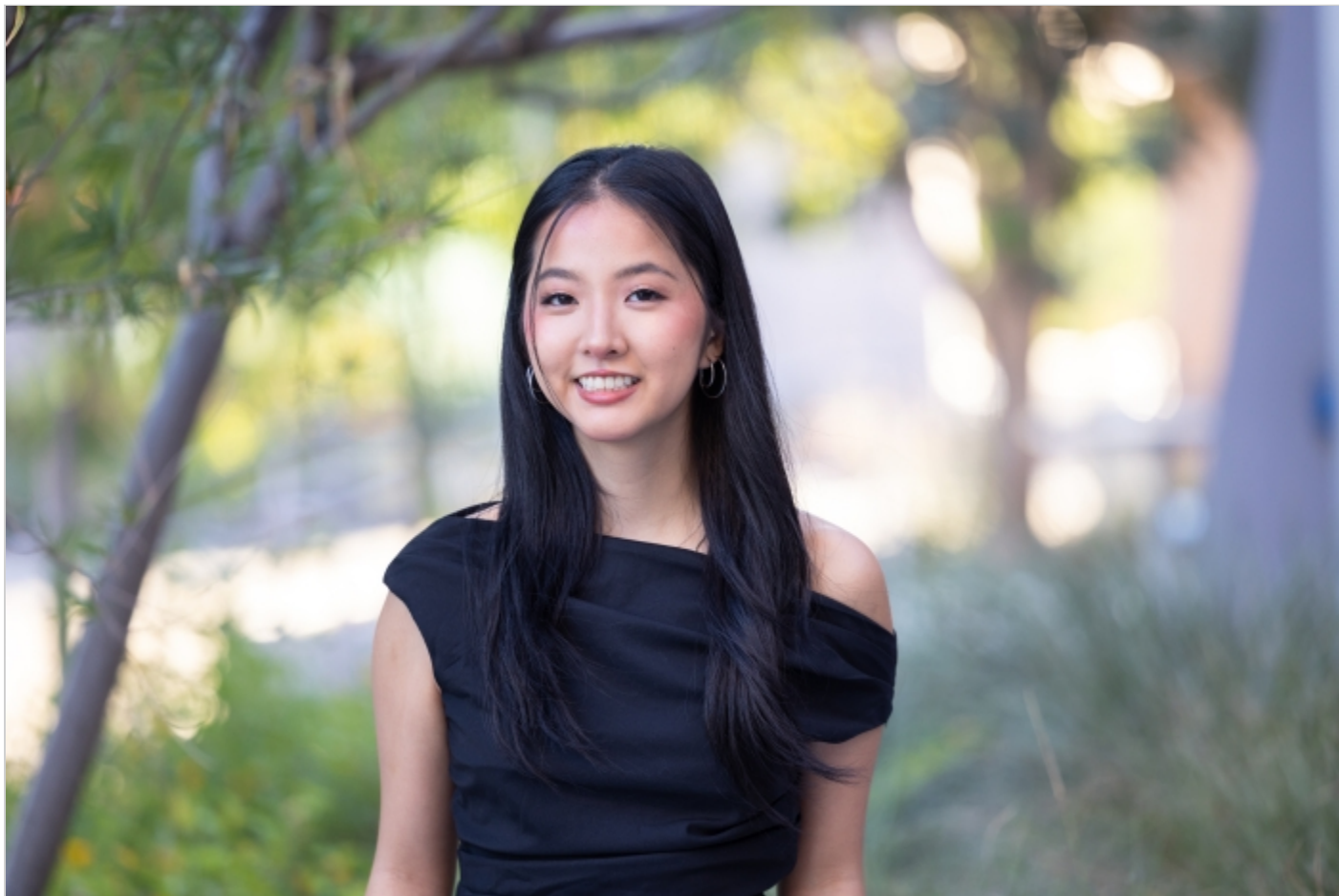
A: I am partial towards [Coor Hall](#) because that's where the School of Politics and Global Studies is. I've spent a lot of time cramming in the computer lab or doing homework with my friends in the courtyard. It has become a special place for me.

Q: If someone gave you \$40 million to solve one problem on our planet, what would you tackle?

A: I think I would invest into education attainment for low-income communities of color. While it might not be enough to give everyone access, I think it could be a start to create a foundation for community health and economic mobility.

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

Main image



Mirei Shikama will continue working on her master's degree at ASU this fall. Photo by Meghan Finnerty/ASU