

# 34-year-old exec chooses ASU Online to upskill while continuing to build career

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

Alex Lau grew up in many Americans' idea of paradise — Weston, Florida, is surrounded on two sides by the mystically primeval Everglades. Twenty miles to the east is Fort Lauderdale and the Atlantic, and Miami Beach is 90 minutes away.

The spring 2026 Arizona State graduate spent the first 19 of her 34 years in Weston “enjoying the sunshine,” but her career eventually took her to the Midwest. She’s been in Illinois for 11 years, and currently lives in DeKalb (the Lake Michigan beaches a couple of hours away are nothing like those in Florida). As a district manager for [Crocs Inc.](#), the multinational distributor of whimsical foam footwear, Lau oversees 18 stores across six states.

It’s a very good position to be in for someone in their early 30s, so when she was considering options for a return to school, she explored programs that would let her grow and challenge herself within her current career.

“I realized I needed a program that aligned with both my career and lifestyle, and that meant finding a university with a strong online option,” Lau said. “ASU stood out due to its reputation and accolades.”

At ASU, an advisor suggested Lau look into [organizational leadership](#) in the [School of Applied Professional Studies](#), part of [The College of Integrative Sciences and Arts](#).

“It immediately resonated with me because of its focus on transferable leadership skills and real-world application, making it a natural fit for my professional development,” she said.

(Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vJmrwLEFMs>)

Still, even a natural fit can take some getting used to, and Lau would be adding “coursework” to an already full to-do list.

"I worked full time while completing my degree," she says, "so I relied heavily on planning, looking ahead with my calendar to align travel schedules with assignment due dates. There were always a lot of moving parts," but she says the juggling act was as much of an education as her degree program.

"What really changed my perspective at ASU was learning how to be intentional and disciplined with my time. Balancing school with my career reinforced for me that we all have the same 24 hours. It's how effectively you use them that makes the difference. That mindset has carried over into my professional life, helping me prioritize, stay focused and consistently work toward my goals."

Lau says she hasn't been the only beneficiary of her ASU experience; her coworkers and direct reports at Crocs also gained, in part, thanks to [Brent Scholar](#). She says it is the assistant teaching professor who left a particularly lasting impression on her.

"He truly leads by example," she said. "He demonstrated that leading with empathy doesn't weaken your effectiveness; it actually strengthens your impact as a leader. Dr. B consistently creates an environment where students, faculty and staff feel seen and heard, which really shifted my thought process and created a culture I wish to replicate."

Other life lessons that made their way from Arizona to Illinois and stuck with her: "Don't be afraid to put in the work that others won't. And don't look for shortcuts. The effort you put in now builds the foundation for what you're capable of later."

For prospective students, she offers this advice: "Take everything in and be fully present in the experience. The skills and lessons you learn in school will show up again in your career. Working in teams, communicating effectively and meeting deadlines are all things you'll continue to rely on."

Additional advice for future Sun Devils: "ASU builds a strong foundation, and how you choose to engage with it can really set you apart. So don't just go through it. Lean into it so you can stand out when it matters most."

Lau will still be a Sun Devil next year. She's enrolled in the [master's in project management](#) program to continue building her skill set. She says she'll also remain in her role at Crocs, "applying what I'm learning and continuing to grow professionally."

While she's learning and growing in the Midwest, thanks to a top-rated online program beamed to her from the desert Southwest, part of Lau is still back in Florida. Asked what global problem she would solve if someone gave her \$50 million, she says, "I would focus on keeping our oceans clean and protecting marine wildlife, especially vulnerable species like manatees. I would invest in initiatives that reduce plastic waste, support conservation efforts and protect habitats. It's a cause that not only preserves wildlife but also supports the long-term health of our planet."

Lau is being recognized as a distinguished graduate from the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts, as a Dean's Medalist representing the School of Applied Professional Studies.

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

## Main image



ASU spring 2026 graduate Alex Lau is being recognized as a Dean's Medalist at the School of Applied Professional Studies in the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts. She has earned her degree in organizational leadership. Courtesy photo