

Dual major earns Department of Economics' Dean's Medal

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](#).

Arriving from New Delhi, India, Achintya Jha wanted to challenge himself academically while finding room to grow into different areas and discover new interests. Arizona State University stood out to him not only for its computer science program but also for the flexibility offered to explore more than one field.

Jha had taken courses such as game theory and financial economics, where he grew more drawn to the field of economics. What stood out the most to him was how economics connected data, theory and real-world application, feeling both intellectually engaging and practical for him.

Having had the opportunity to expand on exactly why he came to ASU, he will graduate with degrees in economics and computer science this spring and as the [Department of Economics' Dean's Medalist](#) in [The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences](#).

"Economics gave me a foundation in understanding people, markets and decision-making, while computer science gave me the technical tools to analyze data and solve problems systematically. Together, those perspectives prepared me for experiences like the Student Investment Management Fund, where I was able to engage more directly with markets, manage \$1.7 million in funds and see how analytical and technical thinking come together in practice," Jha said.

"That experience deepened my interest in quantitative finance and showed me how meaningfully my two majors could intersect."

After graduation, Jha will begin his career in quantitative finance at a hedge fund.

"I am particularly excited to apply the perspective I developed through economics alongside the technical skills I built in computer science. It feels like a natural next step and a strong reflection of the interests I was able to develop at ASU," Jha said.

Learn more about Jha's Sun Devil journey.

Question: What's something you learned while at ASU — in the classroom or otherwise — that surprised you or changed your perspective?

Answer: What surprised me most at ASU was realizing that opportunities do not just appear on their own. You have to actively look for them. Because ASU is such a large school, there is truly something for everyone. There's a club, course, research opportunity or an event for almost any interest.

That changed my perspective because I learned that being in a big environment is not overwhelming if you approach it with curiosity and initiative. The more I looked for experiences that matched my interests, the more I found people, ideas and experiences that helped me grow. ASU taught me that success often comes from seeking out the right spaces and being willing to take the first step.

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

A: Professor [Rajnish Mehra](#), who taught my financial economics course, had one of the biggest impacts on me at ASU. This was the first class where I felt challenged by the material, and I really enjoyed what I was learning. Professor Mehra taught me how to think about markets in a deeper way and how to build intuition. As I move into the financial world, I see how valuable that lesson has been and how much it has shaped the way I approach finance.

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

A: Stay open-minded, try new things and give yourself the chance to grow in ways you do not expect. College goes by very quickly, so it is important to take advantage of opportunities that push you outside your comfort zone. Most importantly, never disqualify yourself before giving it a chance. It is always worth trying. Some of the best experiences come from combining different interests and discovering what kind of work or impact genuinely excites you.

Q: How do you feel your dual major sets you apart from other candidates for jobs/careers?

A: Having both backgrounds helps me approach problems from more than one angle. I can work through technical and quantitative details, while also thinking about the economic logic, incentives and broader context behind them. In fields that rely on data, research and decision-making, that balance is valuable because good work depends not just on analysis, but on asking the right questions and interpreting results thoughtfully.

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

A: I would focus on expanding access to quality education in underdeveloped parts of the world. Education creates opportunity, yet so much potential goes unrealized simply because people are never given the resources, support or exposure they need to grow. That is what makes this issue so important to me. Meaningful investment in education, especially in areas that build analytical and technical skills, can create lasting change not only for individuals, but for entire communities. To me, it is one of the most powerful ways to create long-term impact.

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Main image



Achintya Jha says his degrees helped him learn how to approach problems from multiple perspectives. Photo courtesy of Meghan Finnerty/ASU