

ASU Online makes student's dream of studying occupational therapy possible

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

Long before she ever set foot in a college classroom, Abby Rojas had her sights set on becoming an occupational therapist.

Rojas had discovered that her passion for helping people to do the everyday things that matter most to them was not as far off as it seemed, and that she could chase it without stopping her life.

Through the [Starbucks College Achievement Plan](#), Rojas pursued her bachelor's degree in [psychology](#) and [digital audiences](#) at Arizona State University through [ASU Online](#).

The Starbucks College Achievement Plan is a first-of-its-kind partnership with ASU that allows all eligible U.S. partners to earn their bachelor's degree through ASU's top-ranked online degree programs.

The opportunity was everything she needed: a path to a degree, with the flexibility to keep building her career.

What makes Rojas's journey especially remarkable is the way she took full advantage of the flexibility her online education provided.

While working at her local Starbucks, she channeled her coursework into managing her church's social media and marketing — learning about SEO, social media metrics and digital strategy in the classroom and applying them in real time. She also shadowed occupational therapists, keeping one foot firmly planted in the health care world she was training to enter.

"Managing social media for my church showed me that understanding people is just as important as understanding content," she said.

Everything Rojas studied and experienced at ASU Online pointed her toward the same conviction: Rehabilitation care should not be a rarity and everyone deserves the chance to regain function, independence and dignity, regardless of where they live or their financial situation.

That vision includes expanding access to mobile rehab clinics that bring physical therapy and occupational therapy directly to underserved communities, and making assistive technology like wheelchairs, hearing aids and mobility tools more affordable and accessible to those who need them most.

This spring, Rojas graduates from ASU and is ready to take the leap she has been working toward for years: She will head to Colorado State University to pursue her doctorate in occupational therapy.

"The Starbucks College Achievement Plan has allowed me to earn my undergraduate degree at no cost while saving for graduate school," she said. "I'm incredibly grateful for this opportunity. It has made it possible for me to prepare for the next step while completing my degree."

We spoke to Rojas about what she learned through ASU Online.

Note: The following interview has been edited for length and clarity.

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

Answer: Going into my undergraduate studies, I had no idea what I wanted to major in. The story is actually pretty silly. I Googled "What majors do occupational therapists study?" Based on the articles that came up, psychology was one of the top majors it mentioned, and it was a degree program that ASU offered online.

Q: Which professor taught you the most important lesson?

A: Faculty Associate [Morgan Lowe](#) has taught me some valuable lessons. His Media Law class has been fantastic. I've learned a great deal about the First Amendment, my rights and how to avoid legal issues. It's been a really great experience.

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

A: Find a hobby or a group of people you can spend time with outside of the classroom or work. Having a consistent activity can help reduce stress, and having people to talk to regularly can help you blow off steam and stay grounded. Being online or on a large campus can feel isolating at times, but having a support system makes a big difference.

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

A: I would focus on improving access to rehabilitation and disability services in underserved communities. Many people around the world, especially in rural or low-income areas, don't have access to basic assistive resources that could dramatically improve their quality of life and independence. With \$40 million, I would help fund mobile rehab clinics, train local providers and create low-cost assistive technology programs so people can receive care regardless of where

they live or their financial situation. My goal would be to reduce barriers to rehabilitation and help people live more independent, dignified lives.

This article was written by Sabrina Baker for ASU Online.

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Text image(s)



Abby Rojas, courtesy photo