

# Class of 2026 sets record with more than 22,000 students graduating this May

**Legendary actor and conservationist Harrison Ford to deliver spring commencement speech on May 11**

By Elena Bras, ASU News  
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A stellar graduation is set for Arizona State University this spring. More than 22,000 students will earn degrees from ASU, headed for a dynamic range of in-demand careers in health, engineering, astrophysics, teaching and more fields that advance Arizona, the United States and the world.

The graduates' commitment to real-world problem-solving is reflected in this year's undergraduate commencement speaker: acclaimed actor and longtime conservation advocate [Harrison Ford](#).

Ford has been a champion of global conservation for more than three decades. He joined Conservation International's board of directors in 1991 and is currently the organization's longest-serving board member. As vice chair, Ford has played an instrumental role in shaping Conservation International's mission to protect nature for people — ensuring that the vital ecosystems humanity depends upon are preserved for future generations. His work aligns with the [ASU Charter](#) commitment to assume responsibility for the economic, social, cultural and overall health of the communities it serves.

Ford will be recognized for his work in conservation with an honorary Doctor of Arts and Humane Letters. Also receiving an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters at undergraduate commencement is businessman and philanthropist Howard Graham Buffett, who will share remarks.

The record-setting class of 22,631<sup>1</sup> is a 6% increase from last spring's graduating class. More than 8,000 of those graduates are online students, up 16% from last year. Nearly 10,000 graduates are Arizona residents.

Also in the May 2026 graduating class are 1,968 are military-affiliated students — including veterans, active duty, guard/reserves or dependent family members.

Spring graduates are heading into high-demand fields such as health care, sustainability and cybersecurity.

Thomas Hancock-Bacon, for example, is a W. P. Carey Outstanding Graduate who is combining a love of sustainability and finance with the Peace Corps. Another is Nicole Herkenoff, a graduate who transferred to ASU FIDM in Los Angeles for a degree in fashion merchandising and has been hired full time for a major brand.

ASU is [ranked](#) No. 2 among public U.S. universities in employability, ahead of UCLA, the University of Michigan and Purdue. Among all U.S. institutions, ASU is ranked No. 14.

The spring class of 2026 is joining the ranks of more than 680,000 Arizona State University alumni.

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

<sup>1</sup> These figures represent the number of students who have applied for graduation as of April 10. The exact number of degrees may change up to two weeks after graduation.

## Main image



ASU photo