

ASU grad credits curiosity and self-care as keys to success on the path to a PhD

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

[Brad Koplitz](#)'s astronomy and academic journey began with a backyard telescope.

The first time he used it, he saw Saturn and Jupiter from his own yard. That moment inspired him to change his major to astronomy, eventually leading him to earn a PhD in astrophysics from Arizona State University's [School of Earth and Space Exploration](#).

A perfect fit: Advisor, community and sunshine

Koplitz chose ASU after quickly connecting with his advisor, Associate Professor [Sanchayeeta Borthakur](#), during his interview. Shared research interests, a welcoming lab community and, he jokes, the warm Tempe weather after winters near Seattle all helped him make his decision.

"When I met her current students, I knew that I'd enjoy my time at ASU. They made me feel very welcomed, and the group seemed like a supportive environment," Koplitz said.

One of the most important lessons Koplitz learned from Borthakur was that asking questions, even simple ones, is the best way to learn.

"I started getting a lot more out of classes and presentations when I was actively participating," Koplitz said. "I experienced a big shift once I started asking questions."

Borthakur said the results of Koplitz's efforts were clear.

"It is rare to see a student produce work of this caliber so consistently — Brad's dissertation is effectively a collection of high-impact papers, each demonstrating deep insight and scholarly maturity," she said.

Self-care as an academic strategy

When giving advice to current students, Koplitz emphasizes the importance of physical and mental health for academic success. He learned this lesson through his own experience.

“The best thing you can do for yourself and your work is to take care of your health, both physically and mentally,” he said. “I feel like I became much more productive and successful once I started taking care of myself.”

When he felt stressed, Koplitz found comfort in a simple routine: walking around the Tempe campus. He encourages students to explore beyond their usual buildings, saying the campus has more beauty than many people realize.

After graduation, Koplitz will stay at ASU for a postdoctoral research position to finish his current projects. Then he plans to apply for additional academic roles and continue his astrophysics research.

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

Main image



Brad Koplitz is earning a PhD in astrophysics this May from the School of Earth and Space Exploration.