

# First-gen political science student named New College Outstanding Undergraduate

**Motivated by her parents' hard work and sacrifice, Emra Muslim aims to pursue law and serve her community**

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

Emra Muslim, a first-generation college student graduating this spring with a [bachelor's degree in political science](#) from Arizona State University's [New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences](#), has been named the college's Outstanding Undergraduate.

Known for her leadership, commitment to community and passion for public service, Muslim has built her college experience around advocacy, academic excellence and meaningful involvement both on and off the West Valley campus.

As she prepares to begin her Juris Doctor at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law this fall, Muslim leaves a lasting impact on the West Valley campus community.

"Students listen to her," said [Seth Rachlin](#), assistant teaching professor in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. "She's a born leader. The way she communicates, builds consensus and connects ideas — it really stands out."

## Finding her path through purpose

A Phoenix native, Muslim chose political science as a natural extension of her early interest in speech and debate and public policy.

“I’ve always loved the policy side of government and bettering society,” she said. “I knew I wanted to go to law school, and political science felt like the right path.”

That sense of purpose guided her decision to attend New College, where she was drawn to the interdisciplinary approach and close-knit community on the West Valley campus.

“I loved how small and supportive the campus felt,” Muslim said. “It gave me the opportunity to really get involved and grow.”

Muslim embraced that opportunity fully. During her time at ASU, she served in multiple leadership roles within Undergraduate Student Government, including chief of staff and vice president of services. She also founded a dance club on campus, creating a new space for student expression and community.

Beyond campus, she gained hands-on experience through internships with the League of Women Voters of Arizona and the Office of Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego, where she worked on voter education and constituent services.

“These experiences allowed me to apply what I learned in the classroom to real-world issues,” she said.

Rachlin, who taught Muslim in five courses and served on her honors thesis committee, said her ability to connect academic learning with practical impact sets her apart.

“She doesn’t just talk about making the world better — she focuses on concrete solutions,” he said.

“The emotion I feel most working with Emra is hope. She represents the promise of the next generation to solve problems and make meaningful change.”

## **A voice that brings people together**

In the classroom, Muslim became known for her thoughtful contributions and ability to elevate discussion.

“She speaks with clarity and intention, and she creates bridges between different perspectives,” Rachlin said.

Muslim attributes that to her focus on empathy and open-mindedness.

“I try to understand different viewpoints and connect with people on a human level,” said Muslim, also a 2024–25 [Undergraduate Research Fellow](#) at the [Center for the Study of Religion and Culture](#). “We all share common experiences, and that helps bring people together.”

The daughter of immigrants from Bosnia, Muslim says her work ethic is deeply rooted in her family’s story.

“My parents came here with very little and worked incredibly hard to build a life for us,” she said. “Seeing that motivated me to make the most of every opportunity.”

Scholarships played a key role in making her education possible, allowing her to focus on internships, leadership roles and research rather than financial pressures.

This fall, Muslim will continue her ASU journey at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law, where she plans to explore interests in public service, human rights and international law.

In the long term, she hopes to advocate for those whose voices often go unheard.

"I want to be in a position where I can represent and support people who feel marginalized," she said.

As she graduates, Muslim encourages future Sun Devils to fully embrace their college experience.

"Get involved, build connections and take advantage of every opportunity," she said. "That's what makes the experience truly meaningful."

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

## Main image



Emra Muslim, shown outside the Paley Gates on the West Valley campus, is a first-generation college student graduating this spring with a bachelor's degree in political science from Arizona



State University's New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences. Courtesy photo

## Text image(s)



Emra Muslim at West Valley campus. Courtesy photo