

A journey decades in the making and a passion for chemistry

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

For Betsy Tesanovich, graduating with a Bachelor of Science in chemistry from Arizona State University's [School of Molecular Sciences](#) isn't just an academic milestone. It's the fulfillment of a lifelong promise to herself, nearly 30 years in the making.

Her path to this moment wasn't linear. It was filled with detours, responsibilities, rediscovery and resilience. But through it all, one thing remained constant: her deep-rooted connection to chemistry.

"I think I was genetically predisposed to loving chemistry," Tesanovich says with a smile. Her grandfather was among the nation's first chemical engineers, contributing to the Manhattan Project, and her father earned a PhD in chemistry. Inspired by that legacy, Tesanovich first began pursuing chemical engineering back in 1995 at the University of South Carolina. But life, as she puts it, had "many different plans."

Those plans included raising two children, navigating years of change and stepping away from her academic goals — more than once. ASU marked her third attempt at earning a degree, but this time, the circumstances aligned.

"With kids still at home, I needed something flexible," she said. "ASU offering chemistry as a fully online degree was a dream come true. It was the only way I could make it work."

What she didn't expect was how transformative the journey would be, not just academically, but personally.

Betsy was diagnosed with ADHD as an adult, a revelation that reframed much of her past. "It explained so many of my missteps and side quests," she says. "I had to relearn how to learn, and rebuild confidence in myself."

The online learning environment became her ally. Working at her own pace, in her own space, what she fondly calls her "cave," a guest room turned personal study haven, Betsy found focus and clarity. "It became my world, a place where I could grow without distraction. I'll actually miss those intense, hyper-focused sessions."

Despite being an online student, her connection to ASU felt real and meaningful. Summers spent on campus for lab work were especially memorable. "Walking into the labs in Bateman felt like coming home," she says. "Even being surrounded by strangers, it was familiar. It reminded me I was exactly where I was supposed to be."

Her interactions with professors, though often through recorded lectures, left a lasting impression. "When I met them in person, it felt like seeing old friends. That's how immersive the experience was."

Her journey has also shaped her perspective on perseverance. Her advice to current students is simple but powerful: "Don't ever give up. Life might not go the way you planned, but that doesn't mean you're off track. Your path is just different, not wrong."

Tesanovich's story is not just about earning a degree. It's about persistence, rediscovery and the courage to keep going, even when the path is long and uncertain. And in the end, it's proof that sometimes, taking the scenic route leads you exactly where you were meant to be.

Here, she shares more about her ASU journey.

Question: Why did you choose ASU?

Answer: This was my third attempt at earning a degree. I had two children and still needed to "mom" but there was so much down time I found myself with that I wanted to be productive and do something for me. ASU was a dream come true because they offered chemistry as a degree online, which was the perfect and only solution for me. Until this program, my degree was an in-person/on-campus-only option.

Q: What was your favorite spot on campus, whether for studying, meeting friends or just thinking about life?

A: The labs in Bateman. I felt like I was home! I hadn't been in a laboratory in so long, but it's familiarity, even among strangers, reaffirmed that I was doing what I love.

Q: What are your plans after graduation?

A: I jokingly tell people I'm going to be a mad scientist, of course! Chemistry was my first love but engineering was a close second, so I would love to work in industry or manufacturing. We have a huge liquid natural gas exporting hub, which is the largest on the Eastern seaboard, which has always fascinated me. That is where I am setting my sights to begin with, but I will be happy with any hands-on, industrial, laboratory work I can find. I've waited so long to get my hands and brain busy that I think I will find any job fascinating!

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

A: I would tackle finding a cure or, at least mitigating risks, for cancer. My father was diagnosed with leukemia about 10 years ago and it was not a hereditary form. It was environmentally provoked, to which he was not surprised at all, acknowledging his prior years as a chemist and what they didn't know were carcinogens at the time and their exposures. Safety is a much bigger issue today than in my father's time but we can always learn more. Luckily, he has been in

remission for three years, but to cure cancer or simply lessen someone else's risk would be my focus.

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Main image



Betsy Tesanovich and her husband and sons. Courtesy photo