

Desert school, ocean science: How an ASU student found her calling beneath the waves

School of Ocean Futures' Makena Krause leaves her undergrad experience with research published, reefs studied and grad school in her sights

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

Makena Krause came to ASU with dreams to change the world — but with no clear plan on how she was going to do so.

This spring, she graduates with a clear answer, found through coral reef ecology, collaboration, and the next generation of scientists and practitioners she hopes to inspire.

Coming from a family of Sun Devils, Krause has always had an affinity for Arizona State University. However, what ultimately solidified her decision to attend was ASU's focus on real-world application and impact.

As a junior at the [School of Ocean Futures](#), Krause was based in the [Hochberg Lab](#) at the [Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences](#), where she measured coral reef community metabolism and improved methods that help coral scientists quantify coral health.

Krause took full advantage of the impact-driven possibilities at ASU. In addition to her work in the lab, she was a member of the [NSF-REU at BIOS program](#), where she became scientific diving certified, built skills in coding and data analysis, and grew into a confident, well-rounded scientist.

Beyond the lab, Krause served as a School of Ocean Futures graduate representative, helping build community across the [Rob Walton College of Global Futures](#) through events and relationship building with both faculty and students. She was also a member of ASU's [Next Generation Service Corps](#), a program that deepened her understanding of cross-sector collaboration and service-oriented leadership.

Krause is committed to this work because she wants to leave the world better than she found it and believes that future generations deserve the chance to experience healthy, thriving ecosystems. After graduation, she will spend a semester at Duke University while applying to graduate school, where she hopes to explore the intersection of marine ecology, culture and public policy. Long term, Krause hopes to become a professor and inspire the next generation of scientists.

Ahead of graduation, we asked Krause about her time at ASU.

Question: What drew you to Ocean Futures, and what made you certain this was your path?

Answer: I had a really incredible teacher, [Amy Maas](#), who made learning about the ocean so engaging. The summer before my junior year, I took the ASU CRE course and absolutely fell in love with diving and science. That experience made me feel like I had found my calling. The ocean is also really important to me and my family, so pursuing a degree that I have such a personal connection to has helped keep me motivated.

Q: What's something you learned while at ASU — in the classroom or otherwise — that surprised you or changed your perspective?

A: Something I learned at ASU that has been incredibly valuable to me is how to participate in and lead cross-sector collaboration. I am leaving ASU with a strong belief that we cannot solve the world's problems individually and really have to work together. It is also incredibly important to listen, be creative, and stay open to different approaches.

Q: Which professor made the biggest impact on your time at ASU, and what's the best advice you'd give to students still in school?

A: [Eric Hochberg](#) was an incredible mentor during my time as an SOF student. I entered his lab really unsure of how I fit into the strange world of science. He pushed me to be comfortable with not knowing everything, and I learned how to jump right in even when I did not feel fully ready.

My best piece of advice would be to be comfortable with being uncomfortable, and to explore the emotion of embarrassment. Do it scared, do it uncomfortable, do it embarrassed. School is a space where you are supposed to take risks and grow.

Q: What motivated you to stay committed to this work?

A: Establishing a baseline for coral reef ecosystem function is incredibly important. If we have a better fundamental understanding of how coral reefs work, we can better inform conservation efforts and hopefully support healthier, more productive ecosystems. I also want future generations to be able to experience and enjoy our incredible ecosystems.

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

A: I would work on access to education. I believe that making school more affordable and accessible for people around the world would be a starting point for solving so many of the world's problems. Education gives people tools, choices and opportunities, and I think expanding access to it would have a huge ripple effect.

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Main image



Makena Krause