

# First convocation in Los Angeles marks graduation milestone for ASU

**Students in film and fashion walked across the stage of the Beaudry Theater in downtown LA**

By Katelyn Reinhart, ASU News  
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While audiences in the Beaudry Theater are usually encouraged to keep quiet, friends and family burst into cheers to celebrate graduating Sun Devils at Arizona State University's first-ever convocation in Los Angeles.

The milestone occasion, which took place on May 8, marks years of dedication — both for the students and for ASU's expanding role in the city's creative economy.

The convocation, held by ASU's Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, celebrated graduating students in fashion and film. Fittingly, the event took place at a movie theater located on Los Angeles' premier independent film production set, Los Angeles Center Studios, where ASU's Sidney Poitier New American Film School has a major presence.

"To those of you graduating here today, you are connected to each other and to ASU in ways you are maybe only just coming to understand," said [Renee Cheng](#), dean of the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts and senior vice provost at ASU. "My hope is that the bonds you made here will continue to enrich your life and challenge you to find new sources of inspiration and new ways to make positive impacts."

While this is not the first graduating class from Los Angeles, it is the first convocation to be held there, allowing Californian students to formally celebrate the occasion in their own backyards. On Friday's convocation, nearly 50 graduates walked across the stage in the city in which they've been living, working and studying.

[Cooper Goodman](#), who graduated from The Sidney Poitier New American Film School with a bachelor's degree in film and media production, has been working on film sets for the last several years while he earned his degree.

For someone who says he “never really set out” to get a bachelor’s degree, he made an impression during college. In her opening remarks at the convocation, Cheng called him out as an example of an extraordinary student in the program.

“I’m kind of surprised at how happy and how accomplished this makes me feel,” he said. “I get to graduate with my grandmother and mother, who are here, who supported me through all of this.”

After graduation, Goodman plans to continue working in the film industry on sets as a grip, electrician or sound mixer, and is currently writing a screenplay.

Many of the other graduates also already have jobs lined up. One such student is [Nicole Napoli Herkenhoff](#), who graduated from ASU FIDM and will work full time for Kimberly C, a wholesale brand that designs women’s activewear and loungewear. She took up sewing during the pandemic, and the hobby blossomed into a career in the fashion industry.

“I’m really excited to take everything that I’ve learned here and continue my professional career,” she said. “When I graduated with my associate’s degree, I knew I still had two years to go. Being here now and being done, it’s surreal.”

Herkenhoff got her start in the fashion industry at legacy FIDM, where she earned her associate degree. When ASU’s fashion program expanded to LA as ASU FIDM, she stayed in the heart of the Fashion District and continued her studies to earn a bachelor’s degree in fashion merchandising. At the convocation, she was celebrated by her family, who flew in from Brazil for the occasion.

“It’s awesome to have my family here, who have always supported me so much through every crazy decision I’ve made,” she said.

When Cheng mentioned Herkenhoff as yet another example of an extraordinary student, her family, seated several rows back, erupted into cheers.

It was a milestone moment, for both students and the university alike. ASU first established a presence in California in 2003 with the founding of Zócalo Public Square, part of the ASU Media Enterprise, to offer valuable public programs and journalism to the nation.

The university’s presence has grown since.

ASU now offers a variety of educational pathways to ASU for Californians, has two physical centers in the heart of downtown Los Angeles, and offers Los Angeles-based degrees in film, fashion and game studio production.

And while the convocation was a first for ASU, it is poised to make a lasting impression as the students step forward to impart positive change in their communities.

“We can’t wait to see how you use all you have gained in your time here to change lives, build culture and contribute to public happiness,” said [Peter Murrieta](#), interim associate dean and deputy director of The Sidney Poitier New American Film School, as he addressed the students and

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## **Student creations take the runway**

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closed the ceremony. "The world needs your talent."

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

## Main image



Students in the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts celebrated graduation in Los Angeles during ASU's first-ever California convocation, held at the Beaudry Theater at Los Angeles Central Studios on May 8. Photo by Monica Orozco/ASU