

# ASU Online veteran awarded Udall Scholarship for focus on Native community impact

By Luz Capiral, ASU News  
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Fernando Gutierrez, a third-year Arizona State University student majoring in earth and environmental science through [ASU Online](#), has been awarded the Udall Undergraduate Scholarship, a federal fellowship recognizing college sophomores and juniors who demonstrate leadership, public service and commitment to issues related to Native American nations or the environment.

The [Udall Undergraduate Scholarship](#) is a nationally competitive award administered by the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation, an independent federal agency established by Congress in 1992 to honor the Udalls' legacy in environmental policy, public lands stewardship and advocacy for American Indian and Alaska Native self-governance.

Gutierrez is one of 65 students selected nationwide for the scholarship, which provides up to \$7,500 for eligible academic expenses and access to the Udall alumni network.

"ASU is a top-performing institution for the Udall Undergraduate Scholarship, with Fernando named the university's 43rd Udall Scholar," said Shay Masterson, program manager in the [Lorraine W. Frank Office of National Scholarships Advisement](#) at ASU. "I believe one of the reasons Sun Devils do so well in the national competition for this scholarship is that the mission and focus of the Udall Foundation align closely with ASU's charter and culture."

A Marine Corps veteran and member of the Navajo Nation, Gutierrez said his military service and upbringing shaped his commitment to environmental advocacy and community-focused solutions.

"Growing up on the Navajo Nation, I saw how environmental issues directly affected my family and community," Gutierrez said. "Limited access to fresh food, depleted farmland and infrastructure challenges contribute to serious health issues. The contrast showed me that these outcomes are

not inevitable but are shaped by environmental decisions and policy.”

A six-month experience in Kefalonia, Greece, further influenced his academic interests and long-term goals. While living and working on a small organic farm, he saw how healthy lifestyles were connected to clean food and sustainable land practices. The experience deepened his understanding of how environmental systems shape everyday life and reinforced his belief that lasting solutions must emerge from within communities themselves.

Gutierrez said receiving the Udall Scholarship reinforces his commitment to pursuing meaningful change. It also connects him to a network committed to public service and community impact.

The award is open to full-time sophomores and juniors at accredited academic institutions across the U.S. Students may apply in tribal policy, Native health care or environmental categories. Applicants in the tribal policy and Native health care categories must be enrolled members of a federally recognized Indian Tribe. Udall Scholarship applicants must be nominated by their institution, with each college or university limited in the number of students it may nominate.

At ASU, the application process is managed through the Office of National Scholarships Advisement, which organizes a faculty committee to review and approve applications for nomination. The office collaborates with many ASU units, including the [School of Sustainability](#) and [American Indian Student Support Services](#), to identify and prepare candidates for the Udall Scholarship.

Masterson said that an increased number of ASU Online students have applied for national scholarships in recent years. In the previous two Udall Undergraduate Scholarship cycles, two ASU Online students were named honorable mentions, and Gutierrez is the university’s first ASU Online student to be named a Udall Scholar.

ASU students interested in applying for the Udall Scholarship in a future cycle are encouraged to connect with the Office of National Scholarships Advisement in October or visit [onsa.asu.edu](https://onsa.asu.edu) to schedule an advising meeting.

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**Text image(s)**



Fernando Gutierrez