

First-generation graduate seeks to understand ‘why and how’ of health conditions

By Eden Miller, ASU News

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Editor’s note: This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [spring 2025 graduates](#).

Tierra Muse embodies persistence and passion. After spending much of her career immersed in the health care industry, she now holds a bachelor’s in [International Public Health](#) — a degree she completed online while fulfilling her many other responsibilities.

“Tierra is an inspiring example of dedication and perseverance. As a first-generation college graduate, a returning older student balancing family responsibilities and a full-time clinical professional, she has excelled academically while managing multiple roles,” said Associate Teaching Professor [Lauren Savaglio](#).

“Her commitment to her education and passion for her field have set her apart, proving that determination and hard work can lead to incredible achievements.”

With a deep care for understanding how illness affects patients, Muse is ready to learn more at the graduate level, pursuing a Master of Public Health at Kent State University.

Question: What was your “aha” moment when you realized you wanted to study the field you majored in?

Answer: My “aha” moment was when I was deep into patient care at my job as a phlebotomist, and I wanted to know the “why and how” of how my patients would develop the health conditions

that they live with. I wanted to know how we could educate and prevent health problems in underserved and minority communities.

Q: Why did you choose ASU?

A: I chose ASU because the [international public health](#) program intrigued me so much, and my employer had a tuition partnership with ASU.

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

A: I learned skills at ASU such as data analysis and how populations develop and navigate health issues. I knew that there were problems in the way health care is delivered in the world, but diving deeper opened my eyes to issues and advancements that I couldn't imagine.

Q: Which professor taught you the most important lesson while at ASU?

A: Dr. Lauren Savaglio Battles, hands down! She was always a beacon of light. She taught me that you can really pivot and do anything that you put your mind to with a little bit of hard work and determination.

Q: What's the best piece of advice you'd give to those still in school?

A: Never give up on yourself. Even when it seems impossible or the work seems difficult or unfamiliar, keep going and challenge yourself.

Q: What are your plans after graduation?

A: My plans after graduation is to go straight into my Master of Public Health program with a concentration in epidemiology.

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

A: If someone gave me \$40 million to tackle one problem on our planet, it would absolutely be addressing health disparities. I believe that every person in the world should have access to adequate health care. A lot of health issues can be addressed or even prevented by implementing the proper health policies and resources.

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Main image

