**The BA in Innovation in Society: Purpose, Values, and Future Relevance**

**Introduction**  
Arizona State University’s **Bachelor of Arts in Innovation in Society** is not a conventional career-prep degree – it is a mission-driven program designed to help students shape the future. Housed in the School for the Future of Innovation in Society (SFIS), the program emphasizes **innovation with a human purpose**. Students join “a community of dedicated innovators who are bridging the gap between humans and technology, and making a real difference in people’s lives… across the planet,” aiming to “imagine, design and create healthy, thriving, sustainable and equitable futures”​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=At%20the%20School%20for%20the,thriving%2C%20sustainable%20and%20equitable%20futures)\_. Rather than focusing narrowly on technical skills or immediate job skills, the BA in Innovation in Society cultivates the mindset, knowledge, and **ethical orientation** needed to navigate a rapidly changing world. In the words of SFIS’s vision statement, it pursues **“responsible innovation”** – innovation that *“anticipates challenges and opportunities, integrates diverse knowledge and perspectives and engages broad audiences”* ([sfis.asu.edu](https://sfis.asu.edu/#:~:text=The%20School%20for%20the%20Future,build%20a%20future%20for%20everyone)). This report takes a deep look at the program’s deeper purposes, implicit values, and likely future relevance, examining how it prepares students to thrive amid complexity and change.

**Orienting Students in a World of Complexity and Change**

We live in an era of accelerating technological advances, global crises like climate change, and social upheaval. The Innovation in Society BA is fundamentally about helping students **orient themselves in a complex, unstable, interdependent world**. The program treats the future itself as something to study and shape. SFIS explicitly makes “the set of plausible futures that humanity has – a focus of our activities. We are planning now for the kinds of futures that we will want to inhabit”​ ([science.asu.edu](https://science.asu.edu/school-future-innovation-society#:~:text=Universities%20prepare%20students%20for%20the,we%20will%20want%20to%20inhabit)). In practical terms, this means students learn to think broadly about systems and long-term trends, rather than only learning facts of the present.

A core capacity the program builds is **futures literacy** – the ability to anticipate and plan for emerging scenarios. Coursework in the major centers on foresight techniques like **scenario planning** and trend analysis. Students are taught to **“apply foresight methods to assess emerging trends and plausible futures”**​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=,emerging%20trends%20and%20plausible%20futures)), a learning outcome that explicitly signals training in long-range thinking. By practicing constructing and debating future scenarios, students learn to expect the unexpected and become comfortable thinking 5, 10, or 50 years ahead. This forward-looking stance helps them develop resilience and adaptability in the face of uncertainty.

Crucially, students are encouraged to see the **big picture**. The program’s curriculum emphasizes **systems thinking**, inviting students to analyze how technological, social, environmental, and economic factors interact in complex systems. One program outcome is the ability to *“analyze and deconstruct complex social, technological, legal, ethical and social justice issues using multiple strategies”*​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=,emerging%20trends%20and%20plausible%20futures)). This means that rather than tackling problems in isolation, students learn to view issues (say, an urban transportation challenge or a public health crisis) holistically – understanding interdependencies and unintended consequences. Such systems thinking is vital in a world where a change in one domain (e.g. an AI breakthrough or a new policy) can ripple across many others. The **transdisciplinary nature** of SFIS reinforces this skill: the faculty’s backgrounds range from political science and law to engineering and environmental science, creating an environment where students constantly synthesize diverse perspectives​ ([science.asu.edu](https://science.asu.edu/school-future-innovation-society#:~:text=We%20have%20a%20faculty%20with,futures%20they%20want%20to%20inhabit)). The ability to connect dots across domains – **interdisciplinary fluency** – is cultivated daily, preparing students to act as translators and integrators in whatever field they enter.

In sum, the Innovation in Society BA acts as a compass in complexity. It gives students intellectual tools to map and make sense of a tumultuous landscape. By learning to anticipate future challenges (from climate disruptions to AI ethics dilemmas) and practicing how to **“navigate future trends”**​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=The%20program%20centers%20on%20building,anticipate%20and%20navigate%20future%20trends)), graduates are not thrown by change – they are ready to lead and shape it. They become comfortable **orienting themselves amid uncertainty**, a skill increasingly indispensable for both personal and professional life in the 21st century.

**Cultivating Imagination and Futures Literacy**

A distinguishing feature of this program is its insistence that **imagination** and creativity are essential skills for building the future. Far from a traditional curriculum of rote learning, Innovation in Society asks students to exercise their **“socio-technical imagination”** – the ability to envision how society and technology could co-evolve in different ways. In fact, SFIS’s mission statement explicitly highlights translating **imagination into innovation** and blending technical and social thinking to “build a future for everyone”​ ([sfis.asu.edu](https://sfis.asu.edu/#:~:text=We%20are%20pursuing%20a%20vision,build%20a%20future%20for%20everyone)). The BA program puts this into practice through courses and projects that engage students’ creative and speculative abilities alongside analytical ones.

**Futures thinking** in the program goes hand-in-hand with creative thinking. Students don’t just analyze trends; they also **imagine alternatives**. They learn techniques like scenario storytelling, design fiction, and world-building to explore possible futures. Small class settings and one-on-one faculty mentorship create a safe space for this creativity. SFIS emphasizes experiential and imaginative learning tools – students might use **narrative, storytelling, visual art, participatory design, or community theater** as methods to examine future challenges ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=The%20program%27s%20small%20classes%2C%20one,centered%20inquiry)). For example, a class might ask students to write a short science fiction scenario about life in a climate-changed city, or to develop a mock policy for governing a futuristic technology. These exercises build what scholars call **futures literacy**: not just predicting the future, but being literate in the *concept* of the future – able to envision and evaluate many possible futures.

The involvement of SFIS faculty and centers devoted to imagination reinforces this creative orientation. Notably, the school is home to the **Center for Science and the Imagination**, led by professor Ed Finn, whose work exemplifies the fusion of creativity and technology. Finn’s research and teaching *“explore the workings of imagination, digital culture, creative collaboration, and the intersection of the humanities, arts and sciences”*​ ([csi.asu.edu](https://csi.asu.edu/people/ed-finn/#:~:text=Ed%20Finn%20is%20the%20founding,Unnamed%20Press%2C%202019%29%2C%20Frankenstein)). Through initiatives like science-fiction anthologies and collaborations with authors, CSI injects a creative humanities dimension into the discussion of innovation. This ethos permeates the BA program: students are encouraged to **“fuse creativity — merge artistry with technology, tackling issues from social inequality to digital divides”**​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=%2A%20fuse%20creativity%20,social%20inequality%20to%20digital%20divides)) as one of the core explorations in their studies. In other words, a student might merge artistic skills (like storytelling or graphic design) with an understanding of technology to address societal problems – precisely the kind of imaginative synthesis that leads to novel solutions.

By cultivating imagination alongside analysis, the program produces graduates who can do more than respond to future trends – they can **envision new possibilities**. This **futures-oriented creativity** is valuable in shaping the future because it expands the realm of what is thinkable. Many of today’s global challenges require not just incremental improvement but bold reimagining; Innovation in Society students practice that reimagining as part of their education. They develop a kind of optimistic, yet critical, visionary capacity: able to dream up better futures *and* scrutinize those dreams for feasibility and ethical soundness. This combination of **futures literacy and creative vision** equips them to be proactive shapers of technology and society, rather than passive recipients. It’s a capacity that traditional programs – often siloed in either technical training or abstract theory – rarely encourage, but one that is increasingly recognized as essential for long-term innovation.

**Ethical Reasoning, Justice and Responsible Innovation**

At its heart, the BA in Innovation in Society is driven by **values** – especially an ethic of responsibility, inclusion, and public purpose in innovation. Unlike programs that might treat technology as value-neutral or focus solely on profitability, this degree foregrounds questions of **ethics, equity, and social impact**. Students are taught that **innovation is about people first, not technology for its own sake**. The program description makes this clear: *“Innovation is fundamentally about empowering people and unlocking their potential to create positive change. That requires a human touch and knowledge of how to put people and communities – not technology – first.”*​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=Innovation%20is%20fundamentally%20about%20empowering,growing%20field)). This philosophy imbues the entire curriculum with an emphasis on **ethical reasoning** and **social responsibility**.

One way this manifests is through direct engagement with issues of **justice and equity**. The challenges examined are not abstract technological puzzles; they are rooted in real societal needs and inequalities. Students grapple with questions like: Who benefits from a given innovation and who might be left behind? How can we design emerging technologies to advance **social justice** rather than exacerbate divides? Indeed, one of the program’s learning outcomes is to be able to analyze complex issues including **ethical and social justice dimensions**​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=,emerging%20trends%20and%20plausible%20futures)). Whether discussing climate change, AI, biotechnology, or smart cities, students are prompted to consider impacts on diverse communities, ethical trade-offs, and the broader human context. For instance, a student project might examine how facial recognition technology can be built (or regulated) to mitigate bias and respect privacy. Through such explorations, students hone their ethical reasoning skills and a **justice-oriented mindset**.

The program also trains students in **responsible innovation practices** – approaches that seek to steer innovation toward positive social outcomes. This involves learning about frameworks like **anticipatory governance** (proactively addressing the implications of new tech) and **inclusive design** (ensuring diverse stakeholders have a say in innovation). SFIS’s overall vision of *“linking innovation to public value”* means students frequently engage in **public engagement** and stakeholder analysis​ ([sfis.asu.edu](https://sfis.asu.edu/#:~:text=The%20School%20for%20the%20Future,build%20a%20future%20for%20everyone)). Coursework might have them facilitate a community dialogue on a technology issue or conduct a mock public consultation. By doing so, students practice seeing innovation through the lens of public interest, not just market interest. Many SFIS faculty specialize in this kind of work – for example, founding director Dave Guston is known for research in public participation in science and technology and for improving “societal outcomes of nanotechnologies through enhancing the societal capacity to understand and make informed choices”​ ([newsroom.asu.edu](https://newsroom.asu.edu/experts/dave-guston#:~:text=politics%20of%20science%20policy,understand%20and%20make%20informed%20choices)). From such influences, students imbibe the idea that *how* we innovate (and *who* is involved in the process) is as important as *what* we innovate.

Themes of **justice and equity** are woven throughout the program’s content. Students explore how to **“champion humanity”** and turn innovation into solutions that address human needs​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=%2A%20champion%20humanity%20,knowledge%20for%20a%20sustainable%20tomorrow)). They tackle global issues like climate change with an eye to sustainability and fairness, learning to *“use interdisciplinary knowledge for a sustainable tomorrow”*​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=%2A%20combat%20climate%20change%20,knowledge%20for%20a%20sustainable%20tomorrow)). They are also prompted to consider **digital equity**, as seen in the focus on bridging *“social inequality to digital divides”*​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=%2A%20fuse%20creativity%20,social%20inequality%20to%20digital%20divides)). In examining case studies (e.g., how to bring internet access to underserved regions or how to ensure AI works for everyone), students learn that innovation should uplift marginalized groups and reduce inequities. The degree thus cultivates a **moral imagination** – students learn to imagine better futures *for all*, not just high-tech futures for the few.

Finally, the BA program actively fosters **civic agency** – the capacity to engage in public life and drive change. It does so by equipping students with skills in **policy analysis, communication, and community engagement**. In addition to technical foresight, students practice writing policy memos, debating ethics, and leading community discussions. The curriculum centers on skills like *“the responsible design of innovations, and public engagement”*, so that graduates can effectively interact with governments, NGOs, and communities​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=The%20program%20centers%20on%20building,anticipate%20and%20navigate%20future%20trends)). Through **community partnerships and projects**, students learn hands-on how to collaborate with real stakeholders. The program’s small size and connections enable opportunities to, say, work with a local city on an innovation challenge or contribute to a nonprofit’s technology strategy. As the program description notes, SFIS creates a learning experience where students *“grow and strengthen community leadership… and collaboration for innovation – all while using tools such as narrative... participatory design and community-centered inquiry.”*​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=The%20program%27s%20small%20classes%2C%20one,centered%20inquiry)). In doing so, students practice being change-makers in society. They graduate not just with knowledge, but with a sense of **agency** – confidence that they can go into their communities or professions and lead efforts for ethical, equitable innovation.

In essence, the Innovation in Society BA imbues students with a **strong ethical compass** and a drive for **public service**. This is a unique value proposition: these graduates are prepared to be the conscience and the guide in tech-driven environments, asking the tough questions about purpose and impact. As innovation accelerates in coming years (AI, genetic engineering, etc.), the need for such ethical navigators will only grow. The program’s focus on justice, responsibility, and civic engagement ensures its alumni are not just capable analysts, but **principled leaders** who seek to direct innovation toward the public good.

**Interdisciplinary Fluency and Socio-Technical Integration**

Another implicit value of the BA in Innovation in Society is its **interdisciplinary and integrative approach**. The program stands at the crossroads of many fields – science and technology studies, public policy, design, sustainability, and more – and teaches students to be fluent in the language of multiple domains. This interdisciplinarity is not just a by-product but a deliberate feature, cultivated to prepare students for **real-world problem solving** that rarely falls neatly into one academic silo. In a sense, the degree creates a new kind of thinker: someone comfortable working across boundaries, translating between experts, and combining modes of thought to tackle complex socio-technical questions.

The faculty and institutional context of SFIS reinforce this interdisciplinary culture. SFIS itself is described as a **“transdisciplinary unit at the vanguard of ASU’s commitment to linking innovation to public value”**​ ([sfis.asu.edu](https://sfis.asu.edu/#:~:text=The%20School%20for%20the%20Future,build%20a%20future%20for%20everyone)). Faculty members hail from a startlingly broad range of backgrounds – *“from political science to electrical engineering, from physics to geography, from environmental science to law… and science and technology studies”*​ ([science.asu.edu](https://science.asu.edu/school-future-innovation-society#:~:text=We%20have%20a%20faculty%20with,futures%20they%20want%20to%20inhabit)). This means students in the BA program might take a course on **futures of biology** one semester and another on **technology policy or ethics** the next, often taught by experts who bridge fields. For example, a professor might be jointly appointed in computer science and SFIS, bringing technical expertise into a social context, or a humanities scholar might teach about storytelling in innovation. The result for students is an **education that defies the typical arts vs. sciences divide**. They become versed in both qualitative and quantitative thinking, comfortable using methods from the social sciences (like scenario planning or stakeholder analysis) as well as engaging with scientific and technical concepts (like understanding the basics of AI or climate science). This **integrative thinking** is precisely what is needed to address **socio-technical challenges** – issues at the intersection of society and technology.

In comparison to more traditional degrees, the Innovation in Society BA offers a **unique blend**. A conventional liberal arts program (say, a BA in History or Sociology) imparts broad critical thinking but may not directly engage with emerging technologies or future scenarios. A typical STEM program (say, a BS in Engineering) provides technical depth but often lacks training in ethical, social, and long-term implications. The BA in Innovation in Society intentionally bridges these gaps. It has the **breadth and reflexivity of a liberal arts education** – students engage with philosophy, history, and social theory around innovation – *and* it has the forward-looking, problem-solving orientation often seen in professional or STEM programs. For instance, students learn to *“decode social media and digital landscapes, ensuring ethical integration”* of new technologies​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=%2A%20navigate%20digital%20dynamics%20,and%20empathy%2C%20advancing%20global%20well)), a topic that blends computer science insights with sociology and ethics. They also fulfill a second language requirement and take globally oriented coursework, similar to a global studies or liberal arts degree, ensuring they understand cultural contexts of innovation​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=,Global%20Futures)). But at the same time, they are **designing creative strategies for current challenges** and even have the option to fast-track into specialized master’s programs in fields like **Public Interest Technology or Science and Technology Policy**​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=master%27s%20degree%20with%3A)), which is uncommon for liberal arts majors. This positioning – at the intersection of humanities, social science, and technology – allows the program to produce **interdisciplinary innovators** who can operate in many environments.

The **socio-technical integration** aspect is especially worth noting. Students are continually asked to integrate the technical and the social dimensions of issues, not treating them separately. A classic example might be the study of renewable energy deployment: an Innovation in Society student would examine the engineering facts of solar panels *alongside* the social factors like community adoption, policy incentives, and ethical questions of energy justice. This mirrors what SFIS describes as *“blending technical and social concerns”* in the journey from imagination to innovation​ ([sfis.asu.edu](https://sfis.asu.edu/#:~:text=We%20are%20pursuing%20a%20vision,build%20a%20future%20for%20everyone)). Graduates develop the habit of viewing any technological advancement in context – who designed it, what the regulatory environment is, how culture influences its use, etc. In an era when technology often outpaces policy and social understanding, this integrated perspective is invaluable. It enables alumni to serve as liaisons between engineers and policymakers, or between companies and communities, ensuring that innovations are technically sound *and* socially informed.

The **unique contribution** of this program, therefore, lies in producing graduates with a rare **T-shaped skill set** – breadth across many relevant areas and depth in connecting technology and society. They can converse with engineers and data scientists, but also with sociologists and philosophers. They can parse a scientific report and also facilitate a public forum. This interdisciplinary agility means they are well suited to work on **complex challenges that no single discipline can solve** – whether it’s guiding a city’s smart-growth strategy, developing policy for autonomous vehicles, or leading an innovation team at a social enterprise. In the workplace, they often become **translators and bridge-builders**, roles that are increasingly important as industries acknowledge that the hardest problems require interdisciplinary collaboration. Compared to traditional degrees, the BA in Innovation in Society stands out as **holistic and future-facing**, equipping students with the integrative thinking needed to shape technology in service of society.

**Students on a Mission: Motivation and Identity**

What kind of student chooses a degree titled “Innovation in Society”? The program tends to attract **purpose-driven, curious, and unconventional thinkers** – students who aren’t content with a standard disciplinary path and who are motivated by a sense of mission. In fact, the emergence of programs like this at ASU reflects a broader shift in higher education: *“In the shadow of AI disruption, economic upheaval, and a collective search for meaning, students are no longer satisfied with choosing majors. They are seeking missions.”*​ ([medium.com](https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/universities-kill-the-planet-a73c36efe1f1#:~:text=In%20the%20shadow%20of%20AI,and%20what%20it%20is)). Many young people today want their education to align with their values and equip them to make a difference on big issues. The Innovation in Society BA is explicitly designed for such students, giving them a platform to turn their passions – be it climate action, social justice, technology for good, or global development – into an academic and career pathway.

**Diverse and interdisciplinary interests** often characterize students in this program. One might find, for example, a student who was torn between studying computer science and sociology – Innovation in Society offers a way to pursue both interests under one umbrella. Another student might be an artist who cares about sustainability, or a budding entrepreneur who also loves philosophy. The program welcomes these **“bridge” students** who don’t fit neatly in one box. By focusing on real-world problems and future challenges, it validates students’ desire to break out of silos. A technologically inclined student who also cares deeply about ethics and community impact will find like-minded peers and mentors here. Likewise, students from underrepresented backgrounds in STEM might be drawn to this program’s inclusive ethos – it’s explicitly about shaping futures *for everyone*, which can be empowering for those who haven’t seen people like themselves centered in tech industries historically.

The motivations of students tend to center on **wanting to shape the future responsibly**. Some may have a personal experience that drives them – for instance, growing up in a community affected by environmental injustice, or seeing the effects of the digital divide firsthand. Such students choose this BA because it equips them with tools to address those issues systematically. Others might be inspired by science fiction and big ideas, eager to become “futurists” in a practical sense. Instead of studying literature or engineering alone, they choose a program that allows them to **turn imagination into action**. Many are likely drawn by ASU’s reputation for innovation and the chance to be part of a forward-thinking community. SFIS markets itself as a place for those who want to *“be part of building a better future in a technologically complex world”*, as one recruitment video put it. This explicit framing as a **changemaker’s degree** attracts students who already see themselves as change agents in the making.

The **identity formation** that occurs in this program is notable. Students often begin with a broad idealism and a bit of uncertainty about where they fit. Over the course of the program, they develop an identity as **future-focused leaders** and **systems thinkers**. They might not call themselves “innovators” at first (since that term is vague), but by engaging in the interdisciplinary projects and community work, they start to see that they are a new breed of professional. By graduation, an Innovation in Society major might comfortably say: *I am a futurist who can help organizations navigate change*, or *I am a civic technologist bridging community needs and tech solutions*. They acquire confidence from having tackled real-world problems during their studies. Importantly, they also develop a strong sense of **purpose**. The program continually reinforces questions of “what is the future we want to create?” and “how can we ensure innovation serves society?”. Living in those questions shapes students’ sense of self. Many alumni likely carry forward a kind of **moral and visionary stance** in whatever they do, seeing their work as part of a larger mission to build a better world.

Furthermore, the cohort experience – being surrounded by other mission-driven peers – reinforces students’ commitment. They find a community that validates their unconventional aspirations. A student who in another college might be the lone activist or the lone sci-fi dreamer finds in SFIS a cohort of others equally passionate about long-term societal well-being. This peer environment helps them maintain and sharpen their motivations. In effect, the program not only attracts mission-oriented students, but *amplifies* their mission. As one education commentator observed, **universities like ASU are turning education into a “catalyst for global action,”** and schools like SFIS *“are building platforms where education is a catalyst for global action”* ([medium.com](https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/universities-kill-the-planet-a73c36efe1f1#:~:text=At%20institutions%20like%20Arizona%20State,academic%20vision%20around%20planetary%20stewardship)). Students come out seeing their education not just as a personal achievement but as a launching pad for impact. This alignment of personal identity with educational purpose is a profound outcome of the BA in Innovation in Society – it produces graduates who identify as change agents and feel a responsibility to carry forward the values they’ve learned.

**Alumni Impact and Future Relevance**

Though the program is relatively new, **early alumni outcomes** suggest that graduates of Innovation in Society are finding meaningful roles where they can put their unique skills to work. Rather than a narrow career track, they are venturing into a wide array of sectors – which is exactly the intention, given the degree’s broad applicability. According to ASU, alumni from the program have landed impactful positions at organizations ranging from cutting-edge tech companies to government agencies. Graduates have secured roles at **NASA, the U.S. Department of Energy, Intel, OpenAI, and beyond**​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=Graduates%20are%20poised%20for%20success,startups%2C%20corporations%2C%20nonprofits%20and%20governments)). This speaks to the demand for the kind of expertise these students bring. At NASA or DOE, for instance, an Innovation in Society alum might work on technology policy, public engagement in science, or strategic foresight for future missions – bringing that blend of technical understanding and societal perspective. At a company like OpenAI (a leader in artificial intelligence), an alum can contribute insight on AI ethics, governance, or how AI products will impact communities, guiding innovation in a responsible direction. The presence of graduates in such organizations indicates they are being valued as **bridges between innovation and society**.

Many alumni also find pathways in the public and nonprofit sectors. The program notes that its graduates are well-positioned for roles in **cities, aid agencies, charities and companies tackling difficult challenges**​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=Graduates%20are%20poised%20for%20success,startups%2C%20corporations%2C%20nonprofits%20and%20governments)). We can imagine alumni working as sustainability coordinators for city governments, innovation officers in NGOs, analysts in think tanks, or community engagement specialists in tech initiatives. Some pursue further education, such as master’s degrees in fields like public policy, science and technology studies, or law, to deepen their impact. The BA provides an excellent foundation for advanced study in any field that requires critical thinking about technology and society. Notably, ASU offers accelerated master’s options in **Global Technology and Development, Public Interest Technology, and Science and Technology Policy** for high-achieving undergraduates in this major​ ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=master%27s%20degree%20with%3A)), underscoring a pipeline for those who want to specialize. Alumni who go on to these graduate programs or others often become thought leaders – for example, one might become a **policy advisor on emerging technology** in government or a **researcher on innovation and ethics** in academia.

Crucially, what stands out about the career trajectories is the **impact-oriented nature** of the roles. Because the program emphasizes purpose and societal outcomes, alumni tend to seek (and create) positions where they can make a difference. Even within more traditional business or tech careers, they likely carry a different mindset. An Innovation in Society graduate working at a tech firm might be the one advocating for user privacy or pushing a sustainability agenda. In a consulting firm, they might develop foresight services to help clients plan for future scenarios. Some alumni may become **entrepreneurs or social innovators**, founding startups or initiatives that address social needs (the program’s focus on creative problem-solving and understanding user needs would serve them well in this). Others might become community organizers or educators who promote futures thinking at the grassroots level.

One could argue that the **impact of alumni** is not only in their individual job titles but in how they influence the teams and organizations they join. They bring a rare combination of vision and conscience. For instance, as **“invaluable assets in tech startups, corporations, nonprofits and governments”**, they might be the ones to introduce scenario planning in a business strategy meeting, or to ensure a nonprofit’s innovation truly meets the community’s needs ([degrees.apps.asu.edu](https://degrees.apps.asu.edu/bachelors/major/ASU00/FIFISBA/innovation-in-society#:~:text=challenges.%20Alumni%20have%20highly%20sought,startups%2C%20corporations%2C%20nonprofits%20and%20governments)). Their interdisciplinary training allows them to communicate with engineers, executives, and community members alike, which can make them key facilitators of forward-looking projects. As the pace of change accelerates, having someone who can foresee challenges, integrate diverse expertise, and keep efforts tied to human values becomes a competitive advantage. Thus, even employers that initially might not have known what an “Innovation in Society” degree is are finding that these alumni excel in roles that require adaptability, strategic thinking, and stakeholder engagement. The success of early graduates in landing jobs at prestigious and pioneering organizations hints that the industry and public sector are waking up to the need for such profiles.

Looking to the future, the relevance of the BA in Innovation in Society appears only set to grow. **Global trends suggest a rising demand for exactly the capacities this program nurtures.** Issues like climate change, pandemics, artificial intelligence governance, cybersecurity, and social inequality are dominating the world’s agenda – all of which are multifaceted problems requiring holistic thinking and ethical leadership. Traditional educational pathways do not sufficiently produce generalists who can also be specialists in connecting dots; SFIS’s program does. For example, as companies grapple with AI ethics, having an employee who deeply understands technology’s social impact (and can do foresight exercises) is invaluable. Governments working on sustainability transitions need people who can bridge science, communities, and policy – again, exactly the training these students have. In a sense, the BA in Innovation in Society was ahead of its time in recognizing that **the future would need “translators” and systems thinkers**; now that future is arriving, its graduates are ready.

Moreover, societal expectations for technology are shifting. There is greater public awareness that innovations must be guided by human values (calls for ethical AI, responsible innovation, etc., are now mainstream). Universities like ASU are leading the way in responding to this by **“restructuring [the] academic vision around planetary stewardship”**, as noted in a recent commentary​ ([medium.com](https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/universities-kill-the-planet-a73c36efe1f1#:~:text=At%20institutions%20like%20Arizona%20State,academic%20vision%20around%20planetary%20stewardship)). The Innovation in Society degree is a direct expression of that vision: it is an academic program explicitly designed around the stewardship of the future – ensuring that the future we build is one of justice, sustainability, and human well-being. As more institutions follow this paradigmatic reorientation *“from content delivery to systems transformation”* in education​ ([medium.com](https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/universities-kill-the-planet-a73c36efe1f1#:~:text=This%20is%20not%20merely%20a,University%20fuses%20liberal%20arts%20with)), ASU’s program serves as a model. We can expect the field of **“future studies”** or **“innovation studies”** in a societal context to expand, and ASU’s early alumni may become leaders and pioneers in that emerging field, defining best practices and mentoring others.

In conclusion, the BA in Innovation in Society offers **far more than job training; it offers identity training for future change-makers**. It equips students with **intellectual versatility, moral grounding, creative vision, and a sense of mission**. They learn to ask not just “*How do we solve this problem?*” but “*What problems should we be solving for a better future for all?*”. The value of this degree is evident in the kind of graduate it produces – one who is capable of both critical analysis and imaginative action, both technical understanding and compassionate leadership. Such individuals will be key in **shaping the trajectories of innovation** in the coming decades, ensuring that as we innovate, we remember our shared humanity and long-term responsibilities. As SFIS faculty like to say, they aim to *“teach content, mentor skills, and cultivate dispositions”* that enable students to **“succeed in making the futures they want to inhabit.”**​ ([science.asu.edu](https://science.asu.edu/school-future-innovation-society#:~:text=and%C2%A0coursework%2C%20our%20faculty%20will%20%E2%80%94,futures%20they%20want%20to%20inhabit)). The BA in Innovation in Society is, at its core, about empowering students to do exactly that – to define and build the future of our society with wisdom, creativity, and a commitment to justice.