

## About Wisconsin Grants

The twenty-four private, or independent, nonprofit colleges and universities of Wisconsin operate without direct taxpayer support, but provide an invaluable public service to the state, educating more than 57,000 students a year. Many of Wisconsin's best and brightest need financial help to attend the college of their choice.

The Wisconsin Tuition Grant, now known as Wisconsin Grants, was enacted in 1965 to help qualified Wisconsin citizens to succeed. Each month Wisconsin Achievers brings you success stories of Wisconsinites at WAICU member campuses for whom Wisconsin Grants have made a significant difference.

**Wisconsin Achievers** is published monthly by the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU), 122 W. Washington Avenue, Madison, WI 53703-2723; 608.256.7761; mail@waicu.org.

Rolf Wegenke, Ph.D.  
President & CEO

Rebecca Larson  
Senior VP for Advocacy

Cassandra Krause  
Director of Communications and Marketing, Editor

## St. Norbert senior expands worldview as preparation for future law career

Abigail Swanson, a senior political science major at St. Norbert College, says her experiences and education have led her to become a leader on campus – especially as an advocate for sexual assault survivors. Abby has been deeply involved in Greek life, campus organizations, and political initiatives. These experiences, plus the personal connections that only a small, private college can offer, have made Abby's years at St. Norbert a transformative experience and opened her eyes to the world around her. But more important, she sees that a private, liberal arts education has enabled her to move beyond simply talking about changing the world to taking an active role in that change.

“Education is of critical importance for identifying systemic issues in society,” says Abby, who is on track to attend law school after graduation from St. Norbert. She explains that, while education is one of the most valuable things she has received, it comes with a cost. As a recipient of the Wisconsin Grant while attending St. Norbert, Abby confidently says that financial assistance from both St. Norbert and outside sources



Abigail Swanson

continued on page 2

## From combat to clinical care: a nursing degree decades in the making

For Shane Ley, a senior at Columbia College of Nursing, the road to achieving a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree was far from traditional. Out of high school, he spent two years as a biology major at a Wisconsin public university in hopes of teaching high school biology and coaching baseball. He realized he was not taking college seriously, and with loans mounting, he decided to enlist in the U.S. Army to acquire discipline and help pay for college. Shane knew he wanted to get into the medical field, so he became a certified nursing assistant while stationed in Fort Hood, Texas. After his first four years in the military, he re-enlisted in the Army and hoped to be assigned to a role in the medical field, but positions were not available at the time.

After almost eight years in the Army, Shane was discharged from the military and started a civilian job as a welder. However, the desire to be in the medical field lingered, so he became a volunteer Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) for a local ambu-



Shane Ley

continued on page 2

**Abigail Swanson** continued from page 1

has been essential for her to attend one of the top 10 Catholic liberal arts colleges in the country. With that privilege comes responsibility, she emphasized.

"I never thought of myself as an advocate for anything. But now I understand how I can use my privilege to advocate for [survivors]," she explains. "To understand [disparity], I need to be in a situation to see and experience the challenges," she says, highlighting that she grew up in the small town of Kiel, Wisconsin and wants to expand on her global mindset.

Abby hopes to secure a two-year Teach for America placement in a major city to increase her understanding and exposure to these systemic issues and ways to address them. She wants to combine this experience with her law degree to be a better, stronger force of change as a civil litigator for sexual violence victims.

Abby feels that education is the way to make a significant difference in the lives of others. While friends and family may feel that teaching children in what some might call at-risk neighborhoods should make her nervous, she feels confident that it's necessary for her. By teaching there and getting first-hand experience with underserved children, she will be better prepared to enter law school and to start using her education to advocate for them. The Wisconsin Grant and a liberal arts education have inspired Abby to push the boundaries of her worldview and help others in the human family.

**Shane Ley** continued from page 1

lance service; he continued in that role for 12 years. In 2003, he re-joined the Army full-time and was sent to Iraq in 2005. He used his EMT knowledge to help medics in Iraq and stateside, and was inspired to take classes for the last five years in his military career to prepare himself for completing a BSN degree.

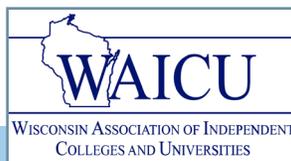
After retiring from the military in February 2016, after 26 years of service, he enrolled full-time at Columbia College of Nursing in the BSN program. In jest, Shane noted, "when I started in August, I was the oldest student in my class, even though I won't tell my classmates my real age." After holding on to his dream for many years, the Wisconsin Grant helped make his dream a reality. Due to the extended timeline of his educational pursuits, Shane's VA education benefits ended prior to graduation. The Wisconsin Grant helped him meet the financial demands to complete his journey. Shane plans to graduate in May 2018, and after working as a Registered Nurse for a few years, may continue his education and pursue a Master in Nursing degree.

"I chose nursing as a profession because the complexity of the human body in how it works, recovers, and adapts has always interested me. The path I took towards a career in nursing may not have been traditional, but with hard work, dedication, and the support of my family, I've been able to fulfill a goal in returning to school to obtain my BSN."

**FACT OF  
THE MONTH**

First-generation students are more likely to graduate on time from private colleges. 77 percent earned their degree in 4 years or less at private nondoctoral institutions, compared with 51 percent at public research institutions.

Source: Council of Independent Colleges, 2015

*Wisconsin's Private, Nonprofit Colleges and Universities*

Alverno College *Milwaukee*  
Bellin College *Green Bay*  
Beloit College *Beloit*  
Cardinal Stritch University *Milwaukee*  
Carroll University *Waukesha*  
Carthage College *Kenosha*  
Columbia College of Nursing *Milwaukee*  
Concordia University Wisconsin *Mequon*

Edgewood College *Madison*  
Lakeland University *Plymouth*  
Lawrence University *Appleton*  
Marian University *Fond du Lac*  
Marquette University *Milwaukee*  
Medical College of Wisconsin *Milwaukee*  
Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design *Milwaukee*  
Milwaukee School of Engineering *Milwaukee*

Mount Mary University *Milwaukee*  
Nashotah House *Nashotah*  
Northland College *Ashland*  
Ripon College *Ripon*  
St. Norbert College *De Pere*  
Silver Lake College *Manitowoc*  
Viterbo University *La Crosse*  
Wisconsin Lutheran College *Milwaukee*