

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.

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Rolf Wegenke, Ph.D.
President & CEO
Rebecca Larson
Senior VP for Advocacy
Cassandra Krause
Director of
Communications and
Marketing, Editor

Biology student appreciates supportive and encouraging environment

Sophomore Catalina Gonzalez, is going through a process of personal growth that her on-campus supervisor, Debbie Duff, has seen many times before at Mount Mary University.

Catalina, a biology major, is a student worker in the Office of Financial Aid, helping with administrative and customer service duties.

“I’ve known Catalina since her freshman year, and I am watching her grow in confidence and knowledge,” Duff said. “Last year Catalina was quiet and reserved, now she is beginning to find herself, to see who she is. This is truly the power of transformation.”

Catalina has received a Wisconsin Grant for the past two academic years. Without the Wisconsin Grant, she would be unable to devote as much time to her studies and her job – both of which are on the top of her priorities.

Catalina, who also attended the all-girls St. Joan Antida High School prior to enrolling at the all-women university, appreciates the encouragement that has come from a supportive environment and close-knit community from all-female institutions. This support has given Catalina the confidence she needs to succeed. Encouraging and empowering young women like Catalina reflects the University’s mission, to transform lives and communities.

“Our students come to Mount Mary seeking a place that believes in them,” Duff said. “And we do believe.”

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Catalina Gonzalez

Lawrence senior explores the world before pursuing career in hometown

When it came time for Ben Meunier to choose where to go to college, it wasn’t just the family connections that gave Lawrence University the inside track.

“Lawrence always felt like home,” said Ben, a senior from Marshall whose father Brian is a 1977 Lawrence graduate and whose older brother Zech graduated in 2015. “It was where I felt I should be, where I felt I needed to be. I see Lawrence as the best school in the state, and I’m very honored to be a student here.

“Lawrence takes the extra steps needed to learn, and that’s really what attracted me,” he added. “For me, Lawrence was just the place to be.”

Coming from what he called “a middle class family, maybe lower middle class,” Ben said the financial support provided by the Wisconsin Grant has been critical.

“Certainly Lawrence would not have been nearly as affordable had I not received the Wisconsin Grant,” said Ben, who holds down a work-study job as a stage hand for Lawrence Conservatory of Music events to help pay his bills. “That grant has helped make my college education possible.”

An anthropology major with a focus on Biblical archeology, Ben spent the 2015 fall semester studying in Jordan. He was the beneficiary of a Benjamin Gilman International Scholarship, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. Immersed in the swirl of African, Asian, and European cultures that is Jordan, he considers the opportunity “a life-changing experience.”

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Ben Meunier

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“Everyone here at Mount Mary is very helping and supportive, especially the faculty,” she said. “Math is my least-favorite subject, so I reached out to tutors, which has really helped.” Whether she is persevering through the challenge of mathematics or asking professors to critique her resume as she applies for internships, Catalina has set her sights on success.

As part of her bio-chemistry seminar, she is currently seeking an internship in a biology-related field and is sending out query letters and resumes to local institutions such as the zoo and the public museum. Upon graduation, she would like to work as a wildlife biologist for a public agency such as the Department of Natural Resources.

This semester’s coursework includes the bio-chemistry seminar, college algebra, zoology, and limnology (the study of lakes and their ecology). Zoology is her favorite class, and she is enthusiastic about “learning about different types of organisms in the environment and seeing how we’re all interconnected,” she said. She is enjoying the lab work for this class, which involves dissecting and studying clams and squids.

“I decided to become a biology major back in high school, because I really like to do hands-on activities,” she said.

Catalina, the oldest of four children in her family, enjoys gardening, hiking, and observing plants and animals she sees around her. She is the first in her family to attend college.

“I appreciate the involvement and help I’ve received along the way,” said Catalina. “Thank you for believing in me, and for the mission that I am proud to represent.”

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“Studying abroad in the Middle East was fantastic as well as anxiety inducing. It was such a wonderful experience,” said Ben, who improved his Arabic language skills while living with a host family. “It’s just so rich and vibrant. And being a Christian in a Muslim nation and region, for once I felt like a minority. I was able to see the world around me in a different way. That was so beneficial and will influence my perspective on the world for the rest of my life.”

A long-time closet artist, Ben recently decided art is the perfect medium for expressing himself, especially when it comes to his religious convictions.

“My studies in archeology and in art are all centered around faith,” said Ben. “I try to give back to God, give back to my faith by trying to show His existence or to represent what He has shown either in the Bible or to other people.”

While his long-range plans include further study abroad and possibly graduate school to continue pursuit of his Biblical archeology interests, his near-term focus is on becoming a law enforcement officer following his graduation from Lawrence next June.

“I am planning on returning to my hometown of Marshall and enrolling in the Police Academy in Madison. That would be a way to get valuable real world experience and give something back to my community through public service. It would be a way to really make a difference in my hometown.”

FACT OF THE MONTH

Over a lifetime, graduates from four-year colleges earn \$1 million more than high school graduates.

Source: “Higher Learning, Greater Good.” Walter McMahon, 2009

*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 *Sheboygan*
 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*