

# Wisconsin Achievers

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## 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.*

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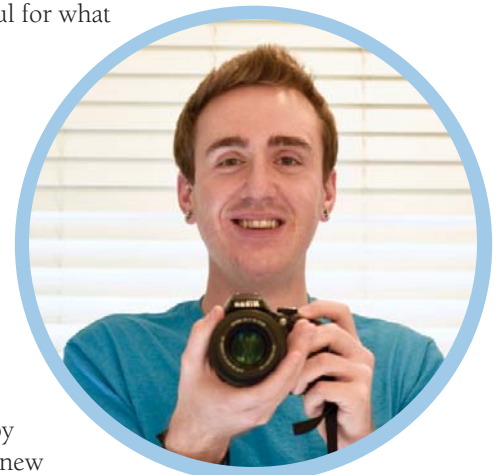
## Balancing school with photography helps Carroll student succeed

Marcus Schmidt is not your traditional undergraduate student. This student's path to choosing a major took a few extra years, but Marcus is grateful for what he's learned along the way.

In 2008, Marcus enrolled at a Wisconsin public university. He started his college studies in the usual way, taking general education classes and believing that this would help him decide what he'd like to study. Feeling out of place in the college environment, Marcus experimented with a few subject areas, but nothing resonated with his talents and interests. Eventually, Marcus left college and moved home to Waukesha. He hoped that there he could figure out his next steps.

Marcus spent the next few years working and enjoying his hobby of photography while thinking about his future plans. Marcus knew he wanted to finish his degree. When he looked for options close to home, Marcus discovered Carroll University in Waukesha. It didn't take long before Marcus realized that it was a natural fit.

"Once I stepped on campus, I knew that the close-knit community and small class sizes were going to be a big contributor to my success," said Marcus. "And, receiving the Wisconsin Grant helped make it all possible financially."



Marcus Schmidt

continued on page 2

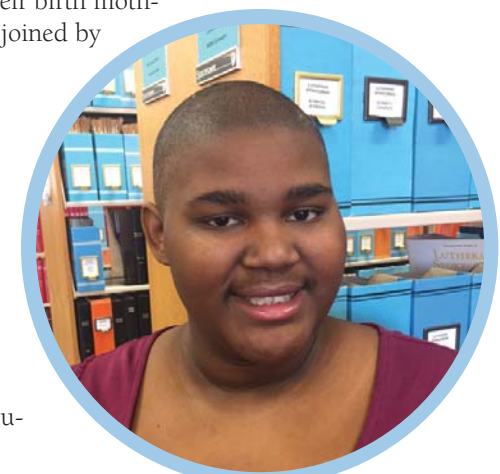
## Nursing student welcomes supportive environment

Taji Bergson never knew her birth mother. At two weeks old, she and her older half-sibling, Michael, were adopted by an Oconomowoc couple after their birth mother's parental rights were terminated. Taji and Michael were later joined by more adoptive siblings, bringing the Bergson brood to eight.

Growing up, Taji says the full house was a welcoming experience because it gave her many opportunities to practice her nursing skills – a career she has long wanted to pursue. "We'd always play rough and tumble," Taji says. "I liked patching up all our wounds when we were done. I always wanted to help."

Now, at age 20, Taji is taking steps to make her childhood dream a reality at Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW). The first of her siblings to attend a university, Taji is on track to graduate with her bachelor's degree in nursing in 2020.

When it came to choosing a school, Taji says CUW was a natural fit. The traditional undergraduate BSN program in Concordia's School of Nursing has a strong reputation and enrolls nearly 300 students. The program provides a rigorous education that develops and inspires highly skilled professionals who are prepared to serve their patients by promoting health and healing with excellence, integrity, and compassion.



Taji Bergson

continued on page 2

**Marcus Schmidt** continued from page 1

In 2013, Marcus enrolled at Carroll and is now well on his way to completing his degree in accounting. Carroll University faculty and staff reached out to Marcus as soon as he came to campus, providing guidance to Marcus on the choice of a major based on his strengths and interests as well as on potential job opportunities. Thanks to this advising support, Marcus has chosen a major (accounting) that has worked well for him.

Best of all, Marcus has been able to renew his passion for photography while at Carroll, which was a passion he developed during his time away from college. Marcus' accounting classes are rigorous and require a great deal of study, but was able to fit in a photography class with his schedule last semester. For Marcus, the balance of his tough accounting classes with the creative opportunities of photography have helped him to manage stress and remain focused on completing his degree.

He enjoys taking pictures of nature and with so many beautiful areas around Waukesha he always has many options. Most days he can be found near the Fox River Park, Retzer Nature Center, or Minooka Park. These areas are an especially peaceful and scenic respite in the spring. With many options available in his chosen accounting career, there is one thing he does know for sure – photography will always be part of his life.

"I'm grateful that I found a career path which will allow me to have financial security and independence while I continue to pursue my hobbies like photography in my spare time," Marcus explains. "The support I've received from my professors at Carroll has been the biggest influence for me, and I wouldn't have gotten to this point without them."

**Taji Bergson** continued from page 1

Concordia also boasts a robust interprofessional education (IPE) program that provides broad healthcare preparation across Concordia's School of Nursing, School of Pharmacy, and School of Health Professions. The benefits of this cooperative approach are readily apparent. Students regularly participate in shared learning experiences, and they learn to place patient needs first.

"I wanted to go to a school that emphasized Christianity, and I also wanted a good nursing school," Taji says. "Concordia matched up with both of those, so it was the obvious choice." Her choice would not be possible, however, without the assistance of the Wisconsin Grant and scholarship support from Concordia. Her adoptive father works multiple jobs, and any financial help that is available is a welcome relief to the family.

Financial challenges can come in many unanticipated ways. In addition to tuition costs, Taji and her family have accrued significant medical expenses. Recently, Taji faced an unexpected and ongoing health concern that required hospital care. She had to miss some class time, but Taji worked with her professors to address her class obligations. The caring Concordia community have continued to support Taji's academic success, and her Concordia professors have been "very understanding."

"I'm just really thankful to be at Concordia where the professors care about you and where I'm allowed to grow in my faith," Taji says. "I'm looking forward to the day when I can put what I've learned into practice and help others, just like I've been helped along the way."



*Wisconsin's Private, Nonprofit Colleges and Universities*

Alverno College Milwaukee  
Beloit 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

## FACT OF THE MONTH

The median family income of students attending WAICU colleges is about 6% lower than of those students at the UW system.

Source – Equality of Opportunity Project as reported by The New York Times