

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 nearly 55,000 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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MSOE student shares passion for STEM with community

When Tara Rahmani was a high school student in South Milwaukee, Wisconsin, she found herself as one of only two girls in some of her classes. "It was sad to see that more girls weren't interested in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)," she said.

At MSOE, through the Society of Women Engineers (SWE), Tara is working to help change that. She started the first SWENext session in Wisconsin and has returned to her old high school to encourage students to explore the engineering field.

"A lot of students shy away from engineering because they think it's boring, or it's only math and science, or that it's too hard, and they can't do it," Tara said. "I get to talk to them and tell them, 'No, you can do it. It is worth it.'"

Tara, a first-generation American, chose to attend MSOE because she thought she would learn better in smaller classes. She also wanted to challenge herself and liked the hands-on approach of the teaching. Because of the university's smaller size, Rahmani said it was easier to find her niche and pursue her interests. Attending MSOE would have been cost-prohibitive, however, without the Wisconsin Grant.



Tara Rahmani

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Shaquella Johnson: 'Someone Who Cares'

"I like to stay busy."

Shaquella Johnson, a senior psychology major from Madison, isn't kidding. She recently helped organize Freshman Orientation for the new students who arrived in August 2018. All told, she holds four jobs – in addition to being a fulltime college student at Edgewood College.

The first in her family to attend college, Shaquella will graduate in 2019. She says her freshman year, without the context of all that a college education can be, she held back a bit. "I knew I was good at speaking," she says. "I'm a very well-read person. But I didn't know that I was good at *leading* people."

Shaquella has served as the President of Black Student Union for the past two years. She works closely with the Office of Student Inclusion and Involvement, and with Dominican Life.

"I like working with students to improve their experiences here. I see myself as someone who is an advocate, someone who is caring and wants to help people. That's why I do as much as I do."

But it's what she does with much younger students that really stands out. "I work at Elver Park Community Center (on the west side of Madison) with underrepresented teens from low-income families," she says. "I really enjoy



Shaquella Johnson

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“The Wisconsin Grant has helped me immensely,” she said. “I would not be able to afford my dream school (MSOE) without it. It allows me to attend MSOE and graduate without a crazy amount of debt.”

As outreach chair for SWE, Tara hosted Literacy Night for kindergarten through eighth-grade students to learn about engineering. Another event, Engineering: A Hands-On Future, offered high school students three sessions with an MSOE professor. She also created Siblings in STEM Days so students’ family members could experience different fields of engineering through hands-on activities.

Now, as president of SWE, Tara wants to create a mentoring program for members that partners upper-level students with first-year and sophomore students or brings mentors in from Johnson Controls. She is also treasurer for the Lambda Zeta Nu Sorority. Last year, she served as educational chair, holding study groups and creating plans to prevent academic failure.

“I like helping people,” said Tara and added that a lot of her MSOE experiences have pushed her toward using her degree to give back to the community. “I want to be an industrial engineer at a hospital to reduce the number of medical mistakes and improve processes in hospitals.”

Tara’s latest venture is joining the University Innovation Fellows (UIF) program. “Being a Fellow is about being innovative and creative and design seeking. It’s what engineers should do and should be.” As a Fellow, Tara hopes to give a voice to students and push for ways to better campus life. “I want to help MSOE be more inclusive and provide unity between majors, between organizations, and between people in general.”

Because of her work inspiring younger students, creating a positive impact in the community and promoting STEM, Tara was honored by MASA, Milwaukee Area Science Advocates in 2018. She was among 10 local STEM women being celebrated for their contributions.

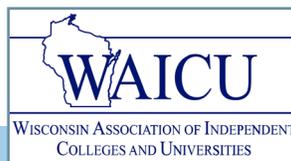
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that: counseling, programming, supporting them and their families. That’s something I really care about – holistic approaches to help families do better and be better and stronger together.”

Without some of the pre-college programs she enjoyed, and without financial aid that includes the Wisconsin Grant, “I wouldn’t have gone to college,” she says. She says graduate school is in her future – either for a law degree or for Clinical Psychology or Neuroscience, so she can expand the work she does with young people – especially young people of color. She says her ultimate goal is to launch her own non-profit community center.

“I know how important it is for these students, who are first-generation, who come from low-income families to be in these programs,” she says. “I let them know, ‘I was you at 12 and 13 years-old. I was you having a hard time, and you can get out of that, and I’m a person who did it, and it’s possible.’ I know how important it is to be that person to look up to. I don’t want to say I’m a role-model, but I try to be. I hope ‘my kids’ see me as someone who cares.”

“I know what my purpose is: it’s to help people, to help kids and families,” she says. “I’m in a position now to give back – not as much as some people are, but if it means giving my time, I will.”



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*
 Neshotah House *Neshotah*
 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

Ninety-six percent of undergraduates at WAICU-member colleges and universities receive financial aid.

Source:
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