

About Wisconsin Grants

The twenty-three private, or independent, nonprofit colleges and universities of Wisconsin operate without taxpayer support, but provide an invaluable public service to the state, educating more than 60,000 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. Fully one-third of the low-income students who apply for the Wisconsin Grants are turned away every year for lack of funds. 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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Columbia College of Nursing Student Follows Parents' Strong Example

As refugees from the Vietnam War, the parents of Columbia College of Nursing student Maikongte "Mai" Lee struggled to find work and adjust to their new country. "Education was always a priority in my family," Mai reflected, noting that in addition to her parents' many strenuous odd jobs, there is a fervent commitment to education as the key to success. The strong reputation of Columbia's nursing program encouraged Mai to continue her education after completing two years at Milwaukee Area Technical College.



Maikongte Lee of Milwaukee, a senior at Columbia College of Nursing.

Now in her third semester at Columbia, Mai credits the Wisconsin Grant for making possible her dream to become a nurse and keep

on track for a Spring 2015 graduation. Thanks to the grant, Mai can focus on her studies full-time and dedicate the needed time to remain successful in her classes. Columbia College of Nursing, located in Glendale, has served the Milwaukee community since 1901.

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Community Involvement Central to Lawrence University Student

Whether it's helping out at Appleton's Building for Kids museum or volunteering at the area's warming shelter for the homeless, being involved in the community and making a difference is high on the priority list of Lawrence University junior and Wisconsin Grant recipient Jaime Gonzalez. An anthropology major, Jaime values the learning connections he makes as a resource and diversity coordinator for Lawrence's volunteer and community service center. "It's a really good way to put your foot in the door, address some of the issues that people are facing and lend a helping



Jaime Gonzalez, a junior at Lawrence University, is studying anthropology.

hand," says Jaime, who calls Milwaukee home. "It makes me feel good, being able to connect with different people and listen to their stories." Jaime is grateful for the assistance that the Wisconsin Grant provides. "It certainly

takes off a lot of stress and gives me one less thing to worry about," he reflected. This past year, Jaime did more than listen to stories. He helped raise community awareness about a

social issue as a novice documentary filmmaker through Lawrence's innovative Civic Life Project. Sharing the roles of writer, editor, producer, director and videographer, Jaime and

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Mai attributes her success to the Wisconsin Grant and to the supportive community of staff and students that she has found at Columbia. "The instructors are very knowledgeable and supportive," Mai emphasized. The instructors at Columbia have real world experience and understand the culture of the Milwaukee community.

Mai draws inspiration to succeed from her parents' example. For as long as Mai can remember, her parents have worked full-time jobs and also tended what used to be called a "truck farm" during the summer. "My parents always taught us the value of hard work and a good work ethic," Mai explained. During the summers, she works for her parent's family business, alongside her younger siblings. Mai and her family grow and sell produce at farmers markets around the city of Milwaukee.

Mai appreciates the opportunities made possible for her from the Wisconsin Grant. She proudly compares her new homeland to her mother's stories of growing up in a country where only the rich who could afford a higher education would be allowed to attend school.

Mai remembers the words of her parents when she needs encouragement to continue to follow her dreams. Mai's motivation comes from remembering the sacrifices that her parents and relatives have made to come to the United States so that she could get an education and have the opportunity for a better life. Looking beyond graduation, Mai is excited to see what a future in nursing will hold for her. She is looking forward to being able to help her friends and family and everyone who worked so hard to support her and help her get to where she is today.



The average four-year graduation rate at WAICU colleges is 68% higher than public institutions in Wisconsin.

Source: IPEDS Data Center, August 2013

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two classmates examined the challenges sex offenders face reintegrating into the community in the documentary "Labeled for Life."

"I wanted to do a film about stigma," said Jaime. "Sex offenders are often thought of as pariahs and as such are really stigmatized. We went into the project with a really narrow view of what we thought a sex offender was and came out of it with the understanding that it's really a very complicated issue." Jaime's film was screened on campus last May for an audience of 250 community leaders, including the mayor, police chief and school district superintendent. In

October, he introduced the film at a public screening that attracted a crowd of nearly 300 community members.

Jaime commented, "I had no previous experience with film production, so it was interesting to use film as a medium for discussing an important, complex topic and portraying different sides of an issue."

"Jaime is a true cultural anthropologist," said Kristi Hill, director of Lawrence's volunteer and community service programs. "His leadership, insight and dedication to issues minority populations face have led to important campus-wide discussions on equality.

His efforts also have been instrumental in sustaining our new Hmong Youth Pride and Empowerment program, which connects Hmong youth to college students, exposing them to other cultures, familiarizing them with their roots and showcasing their personal interests and talents. He is truly one of a kind and takes his responsibilities as a student and in the community very seriously."

Jaime has developed these talents and interests with support from the Wisconsin Grant. "Every time I think about it, I realize without that support, I wouldn't be able to be at Lawrence taking advantage of all these great opportunities."

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 Mequon

Edgewood College Madison
 Lakeland College 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
 Northland College Ashland
 Ripon College Ripon
 St. Norbert College De Pere
 Silver Lake College Manitowoc
 Viterbo University La Crosse
 Wisconsin Lutheran College Milwaukee

