

About the WTG

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 61,000 students a year. Many of Wisconsin's best and brightest need financial help to attend the college of their choice.

The State of Wisconsin created the Wisconsin Tuition Grant (WTG) in 1965 to help qualified Wisconsin citizens to succeed. Fully one-third of the low-income students who apply for the WTG are turned away every year for lack of funds. Each month WTG Achievers brings you success stories of Wisconsinites for whom the WTG has made a significant difference.

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"Outstanding Student" eager to succeed

Ashley Doran recently completed an outstanding academic career at Lakeland College. Ashley graduated in May magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree in biochemistry. Ashley was also named Lakeland's Outstanding Student in Biochemistry and received the Wisconsin Tuition Grant. Ashley says receiving the Tuition Grant was critical to her success.



Ashley Doran was named Lakeland's Outstanding Student in Biochemistry.

Ashley studied abroad in Belize as part of Lakeland's tropical biology class. The trip helped prepare her

for her work this fall as a graduate student in one of the nation's top forensic biology graduate programs. "I stayed with a Mayan family who had no electricity and our house was the only one in the area with a flushing toilet," Ashley said. "It was the experience of a lifetime."

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Future engineer enjoys helping high schoolers

Yusef Vazirabad is starting his senior year at Milwaukee School of Engineering. He is part of the first class of students who will graduate from MSOE's newest degree program: biomolecular engineering. "I got very excited about organic chemistry and biochemistry my senior year of high school," says Yusef. "I saw that MSOE was offering biomolecular engineering, so I took the plunge, so to speak. I am very happy with my decision. The field itself



Yusef Vazirabad works in MSOE's Wet Biotechnology Laboratory.

is still developing, so there are many opportunities out there in nearly every industry."

"The biomolecular

engineering faculty at MSOE come from a diverse range of fields, such as cellular biology, bioinformatics, and protein engineering. They invest a lot of their time working with the students one-to-one," he notes. "I am confident that,

with the forward-focused education I am receiving in the biomolecular engineering program, I will be very well prepared for career

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Ashley Doran

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Ashley says she is thankful for the Wisconsin Tuition Grant. Without it, she says, it would not have been possible for her to receive an affordable yet high-quality education. The funding allowed Ashley to focus on her coursework, with some amazing results.

Lakeland's first annual chemistry and biochemistry symposium featured Ashley's senior honors course project that studied tryptophan, the chemical best known for making people feel "sleepy" after consuming turkey on Thanksgiving Day. Ashley argued that consumption of tryptophan calms people down, but does not cause them to sleep. She believes this creation of the sense of calm could be used in a variety of situations, if one can determine the amounts of tryptophan contained in processed and cooked foods.

Ashley worked with Jeff Schwehm, associate professor of biochemistry at Lakeland, to conduct a laboratory-based project focused on how different cooking methods affect the levels of tryptophan in foods. Tryptophan can be associated with both depressive and aggressive behavior. Ashley was interested in understanding how the preparation of foods commonly served at Lakeland might influence students' behavior.

"Her work is outstanding," said Schwehm. "Her project on tryptophan isolation was the best project I've dealt with since I've been at Lakeland. She's really conscientious about her work and wants to do things right."

Ashley made a big impact on everyone around her at Lakeland. Her education and ambition, along with her passion for science, ensure her continued success in her career.

FACT OF THE MONTH

Wisconsin's private, nonprofit colleges and universities have been keeping college costs manageable. For the third year in a row, average net tuition (full tuition minus financial aid) has been under \$5,000. In fact, the 2010-11 net tuition of \$4,888 is 16 percent lower than it was in 2006-07.

Source: WAICU research archives

Yusef Vazirabad

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opportunities that comes my way, whether in industry, research, or furthering my education in graduate school."

Yusef and his family are grateful for the support of the Wisconsin Tuition Grant (WTG). "My father is retired and my mother is a schoolteacher," says Yusef. "I am the oldest of three children, so the Wisconsin Tuition Grant truly has helped me pay for my education at a time when money is not otherwise available."

Yusef's on-campus jobs have revolved around helping high school students.

"My favorite experience at MSOE so far has definitely been working in MSOE's Center for BioMolecular Modeling with the SMART Teams program." The Students Modeling A Research Topic Teams, or SMART Teams, is a program where high school students work directly with a scientific researcher to create models of proteins. "It has been a great experience getting high school students excited about molecular biology and biological research before they get to college. I wish I'd had that opportunity when I was in high school," Yusef says.

After graduation, Yusef would like to work in the bioinformatics field possibly after receiving a graduate degree. "Bioinformatics deals with analyzing relationships between the structure and function of proteins, DNA, etc. via computer algorithms and tools, and how these relationships can be used to generate new knowledge. That knowledge can be helpful in drug design and prediction of interactions between various biomolecules. I find this field very exciting and eagerly await starting a graduate program which can further my career goals."

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 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 College *Milwaukee*
Northland College *Ashland*
Ripon College *Ripon*
St. Norbert College *De Pere*
Silver Lake College of the Holy Family *Manitowoc*
Viterbo University *La Crosse*
Wisconsin Lutheran College *Milwaukee*

