

About Wisconsin Grants

The twenty-three 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 52,000 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 by the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU):
122 W. Washington Avenue
Madison, WI 53703-2723;
608.256.7761;
mail@waicu.org.

Rolf Wegenke, Ph.D.
President & CEO

Rebecca Larson
Senior VP for Advocacy

Cassandra Krause
Director of Communications
and Marketing, Editor

Kahlil D'Acquisto writing his own story at Stritch

Kahlil D'Acquisto has found a learning environment and campus community at Cardinal Stritch University that not only supports his creativity, but is helping him thrive.

The junior, who was born in Cedarburg and grew up in Milwaukee, is a graduate of Kradwell School and a writing major with a focus on creative writing and screenplay writing.

"From the first time I stepped foot on campus, it felt like I belonged," shared Kahlil. "Everyone was so kind, encouraging and welcoming. I imagined college would be impersonal and overwhelming, but I've never felt that way at Stritch. Everyone has been so accommodating. The faculty and staff are here to help you succeed."

"One of the things I appreciate most about Stritch is that the Franciscan values we talk about are genuine," Kahlil continued.

"I feel like Stritch faculty, staff, and students truly live those values.

Stritch is very inclusive and diverse. It's been great having international students in so many classes. And I've found the school to be very supportive of LGBT+ people, especially transgender people."

Kahlil credits Stritch's multitude of writing courses for the improvement and expansion of his work. He has broadened his experience by taking an art class and learning video editing.

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Kahlil D'Acquisto

St. Norbert College student Ruthie Tucker aims to help future Native students with her research

Learning to be a researcher isn't easy, says St. Norbert College junior Ruthie Tucker.

"I don't think I'm excellent at it," Ruthie says, "but I'm improving at how to do it. That's what I think the research fellowship is: learning how to do research. And that's what the SURF [Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship] program is ... learning what research entails."

Ruthie's work as a research fellow with St. Norbert College's SURF program — operating with a student-and-mentor model — will study the relationship between ethnicity and education, a matter close to her heart. She began her work in summer 2019 and hopes to get approval to continue with mentorship from Alexa Trumpy, associate professor of sociology at St. Norbert.

Ruthie believes that among multiple lessons in research protocol, the process for Institutional Review Board approval is a most important one.

"You have to get approved to work with human subjects before you even do the research," Ruthie says. "I wanted to research high school students, and they are typically under 18 years old. It was all these different documents and hoops I had to jump through."

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Ruthie Tucker

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Kahlil has established a strong foundation for his pursuit of a writing career in his first two years at Stritch. He has participated in campus-wide readings coordinated by the English Department, submitted his work to national competitions, and had an original play that addressed immigration produced by the University's Theater Department in the "Stritch Shorts" series.

The move to online instruction as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic did not deter Kahlil. "I still had access to my professors and other resources to help me be successful. Every faculty member whom I've interacted with or had for a class has helped me succeed." Kahlil singled out Dave Riordan for being particularly encouraging and helpful.

A residential student during his sophomore year, Kahlil hopes to return to the residence halls on Stritch's suburban Milwaukee campus next spring after completing a semester of online courses in the fall.

"Life at Stritch has been welcoming," said Kahlil. "Although I'm not big into socializing, no matter what time of day or night, someone is always doing something somewhere, so I never truly feel alone. I love to walk around the campus, usually at night, to take in the different environment when the campus is quiet."

Before he graduates from Stritch, Kahlil hopes to complete a screenplay, either a working rough draft or a final version. No matter what the future holds for Kahlil D'Acquisto, it is sure to be a compelling story worth following.

FACT OF THE MONTH

Of the 11.6 million jobs created after the last recession, 11.5 million went to workers with at least some college education.

Source: Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, "America's Divided Recovery," 2016

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Ruthie's hometown is Keshena, Wisconsin. As a member of the Menominee Nation, Ruthie's experience in schools with mostly white populations raised questions for her about students in that setting.

"Does the fact that they are surrounded by peers of their own race or peers that are not of the race affect the educational outcomes?" she says. "It's a personal question for me."

After two weeks of considering options, she found her project's focus. "SURF allowed me time to develop a question, how I wanted to go about the research process and just learn about the research process in general," she says. "I just sat down and did a lot of thinking about it, by the Fox River flowing through the campus. I felt like I was just thinking about my experience. That's when I realized I always had that question [about the peer population surrounding Native students] and that I could research that sort of thing just by talking to the students."

At the end of the eight-week program, Ruthie presented her findings. "I just presented what I did for eight weeks, and what I was working on for the conclusion," she says. She held her audience.

Ruthie, an elementary education major and double minor in early childhood and art, founded the Council for Indigenous People on campus in her first year at St. Norbert. She hopes her research, as it develops, will help future Native students. "I can't wait until I can sit down with students, collect what they tell me, and present it to the school board or a tribal government," she says.

"Being a recipient of the Wisconsin Grant has meant a lot to me. My education has always been important and I'm thankful the state has been helpful in achieving my aspirations," Ruthie added.



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
Concordia University Wisconsin - Mequon
Edgewood College - Madison

Herzing University - Milwaukee
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
Nashotah House - Nashotah
Northland College - Ashland
Ripon College - Ripon
St. Norbert College - De Pere
Viterbo University - La Crosse
Wisconsin Lutheran College - Milwaukee