

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 54,000 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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Alverno College is a perfect fit for animal loving student

Animals are Janae Brister's passion. Whether they are the elephants at the Milwaukee County Zoo or a new kitten at the Humane Society of Wisconsin, Janae wants to care for them all.

Her love of animals has led her to pursue a degree in biology at Alverno College. Janae, a junior, hopes to one day work at either the zoo or the humane society. She transferred to Alverno from another four-year institution in the fall of 2020 because she was looking for a more experiential college environment and found a better fit at Alverno.

"I chose to transfer to Alverno because I knew a lot of women who attended or are attending Alverno. They made a lot of positive comments about the college, and I was excited to experience it for myself," Janae said.



Janae Brister

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Lawrence junior wants to pay back generosity by becoming a high school teacher

Ayla Walther, a Lawrence University junior with a double major in German and history, knew she needed to come to Lawrence after sitting in on a German class during her first visit to campus three years ago.

Having studied German through middle and high school, she loved the language and the culture and felt she was meant to pursue it as her area of study. She said history also has been a passion of hers, and she loves the idea of sharing her knowledge with others – especially kids – so her plans include becoming a high school teacher, perhaps one day back in her hometown of Wausau.

Lawrence inspired her on that first visit. The enthusiasm hasn't dimmed since. Ayla has found her classes insightful and challenging in the best of ways. Her professors, she said, have been accessible and helpful every step of the way.

"The academic side of things is definitely more challenging than high school, but all of my professors so far have been extremely accommodating and helped when I needed it," she said. Ayla said she knew from the start she would need some financial help to pursue her dreams at Lawrence, and she found a needed assist with the Wisconsin Grant.

"Because of the help the state has provided, I have been able to continue my education and pursue my passions of history and German," she said. She hopes to one day – through teaching – pay back the community that has been so generous to her.



Ayla Walther

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Janae, who is a graduate of Carmen High School of Science and Technology Northwest in Milwaukee, is a recipient of a Wisconsin Grant, and she said she is grateful for the financial help as she works toward her bachelor's degree.

“With financial aid, I am able to afford college. It has allowed me to get a good education,” she said.

Rebecca Kurter, a post-transition coordinator and college coach at Carmen, has known Janae since she was a high school junior. She has followed Janae on her journey to college and helped her through the transfer process to Alverno.

“Janae makes me hopeful for the future,” Rebecca said. “She is driven. She is a natural problem solver, and she truly cares about our world and other people. I know she is going to do great things.”

This past summer, Janae was part of the Mary Ellen Powers Research Fellowship Program, which pays stipends to Alverno STEM students for their participation in faculty-student research projects. The program allowed Janae and her classmates to develop hands-on experience and to build the skills necessary for graduate studies and STEM careers. Specifically, Janae and her team worked on testing the E. coli and phosphorus levels in three areas of the Kinnickinnic River in Milwaukee.

Janae also works at a veterinarian clinic as a pet care attendant.

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Her studies will take her to Freiburg, Germany. Studying abroad will be one more opportunity on what has been an amazing academic journey, Ayla said. Not only has she studied her passions of German and history, but she's also stayed connected to her musical interests by playing the bassoon in the Lawrence Conservatory of Music, an opportunity that wouldn't be readily available at most schools.

“I am incredibly grateful for the Wisconsin Grant because it has exposed me to so many opportunities, and hopefully one day I can give back with the skills I have learned at Lawrence because of it,” she said.

Ayla said she would eventually like to move back to Wausau to teach at a high school, but she would also like to spend some time living abroad and experiencing as much of the world as she can.

Despite a year of social distancing and masking amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Ayla said her time at Lawrence has been inspiring. Through her German classes and the bassoon studio, she has built positive relationships, with fellow students and with her professors.



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

FACT OF THE MONTH

The ROI of a college education is nearly 14 percent, far exceeding investment benchmarks such as the long-term return on stocks (7 percent) or bonds (3 percent).

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of New York, 2019