



WISCONSIN ACHIEVERS

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Daughter of Immigrants Honors Parents with Career Choice

Giselle Torres entered college amid the chaos of a COVID-altered learning environment. She was already at a loss for what she wanted to do with her life after college, and the disruption didn't help.



Giselle Torres

"The Wisconsin Grant has been a significant steppingstone in my educational journey."

Still, she managed to find her footing at Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW) when she enrolled in an introductory social work course. Prior to this class, Giselle admits that she had a narrow understanding

of the profession. "I thought it was just Child Protective Services," she says. "I didn't realize all of the different options a person had within the social work field."

She was newly learning about the profession when she traveled to her home in Horicon, Wisconsin, for Thanksgiving break. She joined her father for one of their favorite seasonal traditions—deer hunting.

Amid the quiet and calm of the morning, Giselle's father leaned over in the tree stand and asked a question that was uncharacteristically forthright for him: "What are you thinking of doing with your life?" Giselle began to share about her social work class. To her surprise, her father knew all about the profession. "He told me, 'You know, a social worker helped me on my citizenship journey,'" Giselle recalls.

Both of Giselle's parents immigrated to America as teenagers. Having left Mexico without graduating from high school, Giselle's father found work as a laborer. "He had to start from the bottom and work

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MIAD Product Design Senior Takes the Field in Shoe Design

From the age of seven, Benjamin Cole knew he wanted to design shoes. The Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design (MIAD) senior who majors in Product Design is well on his way to realizing this passion, returning to finish out his final year at the college fresh from a summer internship designing footwear at Under Armour.

"It was like a dream come true," says Benjamin of his internship on the Under Armour Innovation Team. "I come from a family that's huge on sports. I always really wanted to do shoes." In high school, in Fond du Lac, Benjamin was not aware of footwear design as a career field. "I had zero idea what I was going to do," he says. "I liked drawing shoes, and I liked playing sports. I had no idea where I was going to go to school."



Benjamin Cole

"Thanks to funding like the Wisconsin Grant, Benjamin is able to pursue his dream career at MIAD."

After seeing his drawings, his aunt suggested that he start applying to art schools.

"I'm the second oldest of seven kids, so I didn't think I'd be able to afford college," explains Benjamin. Thanks to funding like the Wisconsin Grant, Benjamin has been able to pursue his dream career through his experience at MIAD. "I'm grateful that they gave me that shot," he says.

"The biggest thing for me was people telling me I could do this if I wanted to," continues Benjamin. "I remember in my freshman year, I still hadn't figured out what was possible for me. Then, during one of my draw-

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About Wisconsin Grants

The twenty-two private, 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 Grant 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.

Giselle Torres

his way up," Giselle says. "Both my parents have gone through so much to get me and my sister to where we're at in our lives."

Her parents worked hard to navigate the citizenship process. Giselle's father shared with his daughter how much the help of a social worker had meant to him during that journey. This was enough to solidify Giselle's career plans.

Giselle will graduate from CUW in May 2024 with her bachelor's degree in social work. She's currently interning with Lutheran Social Services in Milwaukee, helping with their refugee resettlement program.

Thanks to generous financial support from programs like the Wisconsin Grant, Giselle has been able to make her dream of becoming a social worker come true. "The Wisconsin Grant has been a significant steppingstone in my educational journey. My parents worked extremely hard to provide the best opportunities for me and my sister. It is very important to them that we can earn degrees. I don't think that would have been possible without the financial support I received from the state."

Giselle looks forward to honoring her parents through her future work. "Everything I'm doing is partly for my parents," Giselle says. "It's because of their hard work that I'm here. It's their pride that I'm carrying."

Benjamin Cole

ing classes, a teacher sat down with me and said, 'Benji, if you want to design shoes, you can.' From that moment on in my life, I was going to figure out how to turn this into a career."

At MIAD, Benjamin took his time to figure out which program of study would meet his career goals, eventually deciding to study Product Design, also known as Industrial Design. "I really wanted to work on shoes, and I really wanted to work with athletes," he says.

Product Design, one of MIAD's seven areas of study, considers human-centered engagement and design research. Spanning everything from apps to medical equipment to fashion, Benjamin's major sets him up for success in a footwear design career. And after his experience at the highly competitive and selective Under Armour internship, Benjamin is already well on his way to breaking into the footwear design world.

MIAD resources like the Lubar Emerging Technology Center allow Benjamin to design well-researched footwear using cutting-edge technology, both in his Product Design classes and in personal projects. Equipped with the drive and tools he needs to succeed, Benjamin is ready to take to the field in footwear design.

FACT OF THE MONTH

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

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of New York, 2019.