

Wisconsin Achievers

Vol. 20, No. 6

January 2020

About Wisconsin Grants

The twenty-four 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 56,000 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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Mount Mary student overcomes extraordinary barriers

Mako Shidad and her family are refugees from Somalia who have settled in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Mako spent six years of her childhood growing up in a refugee camp in Dadaab, Kenya.

Now, Mako is on her way to earning a degree in fashion design at Mount Mary University.

Mako says that Mount Mary University has always been close to her heart. Her sister graduated from the university a couple of years ago and is a living testament to how Mount Mary helps a woman grow not only academically, but also as an individual. "The more diverse my surroundings, the more comfortable I felt, making it easier for me to succeed and grow," said Mako.



Mako Shidad

Receiving financial aid has helped Mako more than words can describe, she explains. "Thanks to the Wisconsin Grant, Mount Mary's Grace Scholars Program, and other scholarships and grants combined, I am able to focus more on my studies over having the burden of having to pay off thousands of dollars in student debt," said Mako. She is an advocate for student financial aid with WAICU's Wisconsin Grant Student Ambassador Program and has traveled to the state capitol to tell her story to her elected officials.

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Carroll computer science major juggles many interests

Preston Winowski is a man on a mission.

At only 19, he's in a dual degree program – pursuing accelerated bachelor's and master's degrees in computer science, works on Carroll University's IT Help Desk, has a part-time job at UPS, and has co-founded a nonprofit called Beautiful Feet, a missionary project to Japan.

Oh, yes, and he's married to fellow Carroll student Lily King.

Under the accelerated degree program, Preston expects to receive his master's at age 21. Although the program is a lot of work, he is having fun.

"I'm a little overwhelmed, but I enjoy the content. I'm not worried about that – I'm worried about having time to do that, my extracurriculars, and having time to maintain my sanity," he said with a smile.



Preston Winowski

While he remains open as to what he wants to do when he graduates, Preston said "the goal of this degree program (for me) is to have experience a mile wide and an inch deep, because in the field of computer science, you can't learn everything – things become obsolete so fast."

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Financial aid played a huge role in Mako's decision to attend college. Coming from a refugee family, money had always been a deciding factor in any decision-making. Mako is honored to be a Mount Mary University Grace Scholar recipient. The Grace scholarship covers 85 percent of her tuition at Mount Mary for all for four years. "When I, an African refugee who never even imagined going to school, was given that opportunity, the sky was the limit," said Mako. "Then when I got news of receiving the Wisconsin Grant, which would give me up to \$1,000 each semester, the possibilities were endless. I knew that with Grace and the Wisconsin Grant combined, I could do and be anything I wanted to."

Born in a country where women are persecuted for getting an education, Mako has made it her goal to be a leader and advocate for women's educational rights. With her college degree, she hopes to start a nonprofit organization and open an all-girls boarding school in Kenya, to prove to her students that success can be more than a dream. Mount Mary University's mission statement includes values of justice and leadership and has influenced Mako to be a leader for others even thousands of miles away.

In addition to starting a nonprofit organization and open an all-girls boarding school in Kenya, Mako hopes to be a fashion designer with her own clothing line. The profits from her designs would go back to the all-girls school.

FACT OF THE MONTH

Seventy-three percent of the average undergraduate financial aid package at WAICU members is made up of scholarships and grants that do not need to be paid back.

Source:
WAICU Institutional Survey,
2016-17

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Preston said the fact that Carroll was a liberal arts school gave it an edge over others on his top three list. "If I'm leaving with a liberal arts background, it shows that I have a range of abilities rather than just computer experience. The liberal arts background adds to it," he explained.

He says that financial aid, including the Wisconsin Grant, has been a tremendous help in paying for his education. "Figuring out how to pay for college was a big deal in high school; it was something I was consciously working toward. The grant is very helpful. That's money I don't have to find on my own. This will be the second year I have had it."

Outside the classroom, Preston says he is very involved in Intervarsity Christian Fellowship on campus. "I run a commuter Bible study with my wife, I participate in a men's group Bible study, and I help run outreach events to get new students involved."

If that isn't enough, he recently made a third trip to Japan with the nonprofit he co-founded, called the Beautiful Feet Project, which performs spiritual outreach there. "We just did our third trip. It was about 2.5 weeks long, and we hit four cities: Sendai, Hanamaki, Tokyo, and Shingu," he said.

Preston has other diverse interests – among them curling. "I enjoy curling, but haven't been able to do it recently," he said. In what spare time he has, Preston enjoys playing video games and hopes to entertain friends soon with game nights in the apartment he shares with his wife.

*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
Holy Family College - Manitowoc
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