

## 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 53,000 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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## Northland College student addresses environmental issues in Wisconsin and abroad

Katrina Zimmer grew up in Germantown, Wisconsin. During her college search in high school, she selected three to apply to—one out-of-state and two in-state. Accepted to all three, she describes her decision to stay in Wisconsin and attend Northland College as an easy one. “I selected Northland College for so many reasons. I quickly ruled out the others based on distance and size.” Zimmer shared her enthusiasm for Lake Superior’s beauty just blocks from campus and how she finalized plans to attend Northland before even taking a tour.

As a student, Zimmer quickly became involved across Northland’s campus. In her first years, she jumped into research with a professor in the Center for Rural Communities, studying regional food security. Soon after, she started supporting her peers as a student staff member in both Northland’s Residential Life and Diversity Center, and also played the oboe in the Northland Symphonic Band.

Plans for Zimmer’s senior year took a new direction. She saw a poster in Northland’s Ponzio Campus Center for a study abroad program with the International Sustainable Development Studies Institute based

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Katrina Zimmer

## The natural world inspires Ripon College student

The goal of a higher education has always been a priority for Natalie McNeely, Class of 2025 at Ripon College. “My parents have always stressed the importance of furthering my education, and I have always wanted to attend a college—not only for the academics, but also to engage in activities and experiences such as running and clubs,” says McNeely of Neenah, Wisconsin.

“Nowadays, you can’t get very far with just a high school diploma. A post-secondary education builds character and experience that you might not have achieved without a college degree.”

McNeely calls herself “a plant kind of person” and enjoys working with plants and doing field work outdoors. She also is inspired by her mother’s career as a teacher. “Ever since I was really little, I’ve always wanted to be a teacher,” she says. At Ripon, she is majoring in biology with a minor in educational studies. She hopes to become a biology teacher or perhaps work in research or a nature program.

She came to Ripon because it is a smaller, more personalized school, and the financial aid package she received, which includes a Wisconsin Grant, allowed her to stay in Wisconsin to attend college. “My family is able to help me with buying groceries sometimes, but I’m on my own paying for school,” she says. “All of the help I can get is very important.”



Natalie McNeely

**Katrina Zimmer** continued from page 1

in Chiang Mai, Thailand—perfectly aligned with her studies and interests. She applied and was accepted to be the first Northland student to participate in the Institute for the winter 2022 semester. With this change in plans, she diligently completed her senior thesis a semester early, drawing from courses in religion and nature and Native American studies.

In January 2022, she departed for her eighteen-credit semester in Thailand, where she took courses such as Thai Language, Historical Political Contexts of Thailand, Sustainable Food Systems, Political Ecology of Forests, and Culture and Ecology of Oceans. Spending seventeen weeks across Thailand’s cities, villages, and natural areas, Zimmer was immersed in sustainable development. Her experiences embracing an environmentally-focused life included attending classes in structures built out of shipping containers, exploring food systems with organic farmers, learning about elephant conservation, participating in discussions with national park and community leaders about land rights, and engaging with people across Thailand’s many cultures.

Zimmer’s favorite part of the experience? Examining the impact tourism—particularly ecotourism connected with conservation efforts—have on the natural world and community. “I’ve learned how small local efforts can influence such change at a local level.” From plans for future community engagement to career aspirations, Zimmer will use what she has learned as a guide throughout her life.

What has made Zimmer’s remarkable learning experiences possible? Zimmer explains, “The Wisconsin Grant has enabled me to acquire a bounty of knowledge at college and expand my perspectives on life.” She returned from Thailand to graduate cum laude from Northland College with a Bachelor of Arts in humanity and nature studies (social science and leadership emphasis), and two minors: environmental education and outdoor leadership. She’s ready for what’s next.

**Natalie McNeely** continued from page 1

Natalie is taking advantage of all that a college environment has to offer. She participated in the cross country and track teams and joined many of her teammates in the Circle K service organization. “I was really into volunteering in the past, and I’ve been helping with service projects each week with Circle K,” she says. Service projects include making dog toys out of scraps from a different project and donating them to the local animal shelter, as well as making cards for every holiday to donate to nursing homes. “It’s a fun way to get involved on campus,” she says. “Each project doesn’t take a lot of time, but it does have an impact. It’s something I enjoy and look forward to continuing.”

She is also involved in EGOR, the Environmental Group of Ripon. Many of the group’s plans for this year were derailed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the group helped during spring cleanup at the campus’s Ceresco Prairie Conservancy, discussed major environmental issues via Zoom, and made ambitious plans for the next academic year.

This summer, she will participate in the off-campus Flora and Fauna class in the Boundary Waters area of Minnesota and carry out field work and research. “I want to get to know what it would be like to be a researcher to explore another alternative to what I would like to consider in the future,” she says.

**FACT OF THE MONTH**

**64,594 students from around Wisconsin attending institutions in all higher education sectors receive a Wisconsin Grant**

Source: Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB), 2019-20.



*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