

About Wisconsin Grants

The twenty-three 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.

Wisconsin Achievers is published by the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU):
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First Generation Carthage College Student Tackling Tough Majors

As a first-generation college student from Kenosha, Juan Gómez-Solis is creating his mark on the Carthage College community and leading his fellow students in academics, extracurriculars, and more.

Juan credits his mother, a Mexican immigrant, as his biggest supporter and mentor on his path to college. She instilled in him a strong work ethic, encouraging him to be an active member of his community and a leader.

In academics, Juan is a double major in Spanish and biology at Carthage with a minor in chemistry. Leaning toward genetics as a specialty, he plans to pursue a career in research and perhaps become a microbiologist. Despite the difficulty of his majors, he has enjoyed the professors.

"I am very grateful they go above and beyond to ensure their students succeed in class," Juan says. "Many of them make the environment comfortable, where you can be your true self." The sciences captured his interest back in middle school, and an advanced placement biology class at his Kenosha

continued on page 2



Juan Gómez-Solis

Northland College Perfect Home for Future Third Grade Teacher

Alyssa Hoffman is a first-generation college student from Park Falls, who loves being outdoors. When she discovered Northland College, she knew it was the perfect fit for her. But coming from a large family with six siblings, she knew she needed all the support she could get to make it a reality.

"The Wisconsin Grant gave me the opportunity to be able to come here, which was remarkable," says Alyssa. "I was kind of on the edge, but then as soon as I got the grants coming in, it was really the onset of, 'I really, really want to go there now.'"

Once Alyssa arrived at Northland, she quickly became involved in the community. She loves participating in Northland's organized events and appreciates the small campus that has allowed her to get to know everyone. Her favorite event so far was the Everybody Party at the beginning of the year. "It was nice to really get to know everyone, not just my peers, but the faculty, too. It was wonderful just to have made those connections there that made the first semester even more awesome than expected."

Having just finished her freshman year of courses, she has officially paired an elementary/middle school education major with a psychology minor. Alyssa's passion for teaching younger children was inspired by her experiences working with the Children's Church and Nursery when she was younger and her mother homeschooling her six siblings growing up. She has a goal to teach at the third-grade level and is

continued on page 2



Alyssa Hoffman

Juan Gómez-Solis continued from page 1

high school cemented it. His hometown college quickly became his first-choice school. “When I visited Carthage for the first time, the tour guides and professors welcomed me with open arms,” he says.

Worried that finances would force him to settle for a backup plan, Juan spent time filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and various scholarship applications. “For most people of a minority background, the biggest deciding factor of college is the price tag,” he says. Thanks to the Wisconsin Grant and significant financial aid the college awarded him, Juan could afford to attend Carthage as a commuter student.

To help him adjust to the college experience, Juan got involved in 1G, a club dedicated to easing first-generation student transitions. In 2022-2023, about 20 percent of Carthage’s undergraduate students were the first in their families to attend college.

Juan is now vice president of 1G. The organization puts on activities and provides tips on the intricacies of college life, which are unfamiliar to many high school students. Another way Juan transitioned into the Carthage community was by joining Mi Gente, Spanish for “my people.” Open to all students, the affinity group provides a safe space for students of Hispanic or Latino heritage to share their languages and cultures and make friends.

Juan also serves as vice president of the foreign language honors society Alpha Mu Gamma and is involved in Philosophy Club, Horticulture Club, biology honor society Beta Beta Beta, and chemistry honor society Theta Chi Delta. He works as a Spanish and chemistry tutor, as well as a lab assistant for the Chemistry Department.

As Juan continues his educational journey, the rising junior will indelibly make a mark on many students’ college experiences through his many contributions to Carthage’s community.

FACT OF THE MONTH

WAICU members produce 24 percent of all bachelor’s degrees and 34 percent of all advanced degrees in Wisconsin.

Source: IPEDs, Completions Survey, 2020-2021.

Alyssa Hoffman continued from page 1

excited to work with that age group this summer as the head coach for her hometown’s Little League softball team.

Despite the challenges of being a first-generation college student and balancing work and school, Alyssa is motivated to succeed. This past year, she worked thirty hours a week at the local supermarket to make ends meet. Next year, she is planning to play softball for Northland College, as well as being a resident assistant for the freshman dorm. She is grateful for the support of her advisor, Danny O’Brien, as well as the dean of students, Joe Cooper.

Reflecting on the challenges of figuring out how attend college without her parents’ financial support, Alyssa shares, “It’s built so much character, and it’s built so much motivation for me, especially since I’m going to be a teacher and will have to balance so many things, with little kids. I just feel like it’s a good thing to be figuring out now rather than later.”

Thanks to the Wisconsin Grant, Alyssa can pursue her dreams and attend Northland College— where she has found a home and a community she loves.



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