

## 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.

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## Wisconsin Grant Allows Alverno College Student to Pursue Her Passion

Alverno College's Andrea Herrera aspired to become a nurse until a sophomore year microbiology class captured her interest and changed her career path.

"I realized I had a very strong interest in bacteria and doing all this cool stuff in the lab," says Andrea, now a human biology major. She wants to work in a laboratory focused on microbiology and plans to attend graduate school. Andrea is considering a career in either food safety or research.

Andrea was initially attracted to the nursing field because, "I had a passion for helping others." She has since discovered that lab workers also are essential to healthcare as well.

A first-generation student, Andrea comes from a family of six, where her father works long hours as a mechanic to support his family, and her mother stays home to care for Andrea's siblings. Andrea worked summers in high school to save for college, but it wasn't enough. Her parents were able to help her with some of her tuition costs. But, without



**Andrea Herrera**

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## Lakeland University Senior Passionate about Civic Engagement

Lakeland University senior Lauren Downs laments the lack of civics education in schools, and she's motivated to drive change.

The West Bend, Wisconsin native is an aspiring middle school social studies teacher. She's already using her time and influence to spread the word about the importance of U.S. citizens getting involved in their government and communities.

For the capstone project for Lakeland's Honors Program, Lauren created a Civics Fair last fall to get her peers and other participants informed and engaged. The event featured eight interactive stations that included a range of topics including how to register to vote, learning about midterm elections, how to vote absentee, and how to be active on campus and in the community.

Lauren surveyed Lakeland students in the spring of 2022 on their knowledge of civic engagement topics. Students who participated in the Civics Fair took an exit survey to assess its impact.

"It was well received," says Lauren, who is majoring in broadfield social studies and secondary education. She will be student teaching this spring in Plymouth and Sheboygan Falls.



**Lauren Downs**

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**Andrea Herrera** continued from page 1

the help of the Wisconsin Grant and other aid, she says, "I wouldn't have been in school. I'm grateful I get to have this opportunity."

Now a junior at Alverno, Andrea is constantly working toward her professional development. She was a participant in the Alverno Mary Ellen Powers Research Fellowship in the summer of 2022. In the program, she focused on finding new antimicrobials to improve and protect the quality of Alverno's greenhouse and aquaponic system.

Outside of her academics, she serves as the communication representative for both Alverno Minds Over Matter Association and Alverno Student Healthcare Association. She also is vice president of the Alverno Hispanic Professionals of Greater Milwaukee chapter and a member of Voces Unidas de Alverno. In addition, she is a STEM peer mentor, participates in Sisters in STEM, and helps prepare laboratory spaces for her fellow colleagues as part of her biology lab assistant responsibilities.

Andrea is a campus leader, due to her many involvements, which exemplify her nature as a helper. "Helping people is a big part of me, and I took that from my mom, who is the same way," she says. "It brings me joy. It's important that there are people like me in everyone's life, because we can make a big difference."

**FACT OF THE MONTH**

**Thirty-one percent of WAICU-member students are over the age of 25, compared to 19 percent at Wisconsin's public four-year universities.**

Source: IPEDS Fall Enrollment Survey, 2020-2021.

**Lauren Downs** continued from page 1

"Even if people didn't take away specifics, we talk about increasing exposure to this information and it forms a habit. More than likely, they're going to discover ways they can get involved on their own or hopefully use the leads you give them." Lauren receives a Wisconsin Grant as part of her financial aid package, which allows her to focus on schoolwork and other activities that are helping her build an impressive resume.

Her love for history was born in fifth grade when one of her teachers taught the battle on Bunker Hill by standing on her desk. "The passion just grew," Lauren says. "It's interesting to look at how the past influences where we are now. Civics plays into it. It plays such a large role, and we don't focus enough on it, which is why I want to raise awareness for the importance of it."

In these days of low public trust in elected officials and low voter participation, Lauren believes civics education for young people is critical. "It starts in the district I am working in and increasing their civics curriculum and having events like this in schools," she says. "I think that can lead to other districts seeing those activities and adding them. If someday I have an administrator role, I'll use my direct classroom experience to make changes and expand programming."

Lauren is a leader at Lakeland in many ways. She's been a contributor on the women's basketball team since her freshman year. She's a three-time Northern Athletics Collegiate Conference Scholar-Athlete Award winner. She is in her third year serving as a resident assistant in on-campus housing, and she's also served as a tutor for history, psychology, writing, and time management.



*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