

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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Simple Job Search Led Adult Student to Transformative Academic Journey

Phinneous "Phinn" Markson, a student at Edgewood College, is a passionate advocate of diversity, equality, and inclusion. So you might be surprised to learn he's pursuing a biology degree. Phinn loves the unique approach to STEM education and aspires to impact the narrative of science education to one that is more inclusive, diverse in viewpoints, and perpetuates equity.

Far from his original major of classical studies, which Phinn explored after high school, he returned to college some years later with the goal of building a career in science. More specifically, Phinn is determined to become a research scientist exploring biomedical research. The confluence of his life events, including the COVID-19 pandemic, deeply changed the lens from which he views life and his ability to make a difference.

A first-generation college student from Madison, Phinn battled addiction, homelessness, and unemployment. When Phinn found himself in trouble, a process that repeated itself for several years, he was met with rock bottom.



**Phinneous
"Phinn" Markson**

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Viterbo University Senior Poised to Teach Her Passion: Music

Sharing what you love with others would certainly provide the basis for a rewarding career. For Viterbo University student Rhiannon Baasch, that love is music, and she'll be doing just that as a music educator after earning her degree in May.

"My goal is to teach high school choir," said Rhiannon, a senior from Minocqua with a major in music education and minor in English literature. "I'd like to stay close to the La Crosse area because there is so much to do here." Rhiannon recently completed her student teaching assignments in La Crosse, first at State Road Elementary, and then at Aquinas High School. A full month before graduation, she already has interviews lined up for teaching positions.

Growing up with music, Rhiannon learned to play the flute and alto saxophone, and to sing. She participated in her school band, choir, and theatre productions. The school music room became a place to go to feel better when she was having a bad day or to make a good day even better. Different music teachers exposed Rhiannon to a variety of teaching styles, which she will put to good use in her future career.



Rhiannon Baasch

She is very happy with the education she is receiving and said classes in choral methods are her favorites. "I absolutely love those classes because we're all so passionate about music and have great discussions," she said. "It's so much fun, and we're learning so much." As the daughter of an alumnae,

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With hope, Phinn radically changed his life. He achieved sobriety and began working with the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to find a job. An epilepsy diagnosis left him disabled and on a fixed income, and it was imperative that he find a job that didn't aggravate his seizures.

He worked with his case manager at DVR and decided what he needed was a career, rather than a job. Realizing the dream to continue his education and pursue a career that enables him to experience financial independence, ironically, still came with financial limits. Phinn is grateful to be a recipient of the Wisconsin Grant, to bridge the financial gap of becoming an adult college student. He shares, “Often it is the underrepresented and marginalized people that need (the Wisconsin Grant) most. This grant is essential in helping the students we most need in school.”

With Edgewood College accepting his transfer credits for prior learning and offering merit-based scholarships, combined with the support of the Wisconsin Grant, Phinn has found a path to overcoming these financial obstacles. Through the guidance of the financial aid team at Edgewood College, Phinn also has increased his financial literacy. Though his journey may be unlike many of the students he sits next to in class, Phinn shares in the same hope of an education that, for him, will break down barriers and open doors to possibility.

Eager to begin his summer internship, Phinn will be working at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. He plans to graduate in the spring of 2024. He will apply to a graduate program to continue his path to a doctorate degree. One day, he hopes to work for the largest biomedical research agency in the world, National Institute of Health (NIH), at their Institute for Minority Health and Health Disparities. Regardless of where his academic and career paths lead, Phinn is confident that the heart of his success is found in building a future, without limits, that embraces and empowers his passion, abilities, and life experiences.

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she was awarded a special scholarship, in addition to earning others from the music department, the university, and a Wisconsin Grant.

“Scholarships have been really important for me throughout my time at Viterbo. The scholarships that I qualify for here played a big role in my decision to attend Viterbo,” Rhiannon said. “The scholarships and grants that I’ve received—like the Wisconsin Grant—helped bring down the out-of-pocket cost so I’m actually paying about equal to what my sister pays in the UW system.” Rhiannon has concentrated on singing at Viterbo, taking voice lessons, and performing in the chamber opera’s Speed Dating Tonight! and the Gilbert and Sullivan themed I Have a Song to Sing! She is a member of the Viterbo concert choir and 9th Street Singers, active in the National Association for Music Education, and the co-president of the Viterbo chapter of the Student National Association for Teachers of Singing.

With the concert choir, she had the experience of a lifetime over the holidays, traveling to Vienna, Austria, for a memorable concert tour. “The scholarships and my work study award were extremely helpful, as I was able to pay for the Austria trip on my own without needing help from my family,” Rhiannon said.



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

FACT OF THE MONTH

The average financial aid package at WAICU-member schools is 77 percent grants and scholarships, aid that does not have to be paid back.

Source: WAICU Institutional Survey, 2021-2022.