



Vol. 24, No. 2
September 2023

WISCONSIN ACHIEVERS

Wisconsin Achievers is published by the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU)

Serving Community is Factor for Marquette Sophomore

At 19, Mario Lopez-Saldana has solid plans for his future.

The Milwaukee native and rising sophomore at Marquette University is majoring in criminology and law studies. His eyes are set on becoming a homicide detective in District 2 of the Milwaukee Police Department and eventually working for the FBI.



Mario Lopez-Saldana

For Mario, the Wisconsin Grant helps alleviate some financial burden. "I've been able to afford books and housing, and it's taken a weight off my parents because now they don't have to worry about covering that cost."

Mario grew up on the city's south side, where District 2 is located, and he has a desire to give back. "It's an ambitious goal, but I know I can do it. I feel like it's my calling to help my community," Mario says.

Through the assistance of the Wisconsin Grant, some of the financial burden that comes with getting an education has been lifted.

"I've been able to afford books and housing, and it's taken a weight off my parents because now they don't have to worry about covering that cost," he says.

The second oldest of four siblings and a first-generation college student, Mario is paving a new path for himself and his family while being a role model for his siblings.

Witnessing his parents' dedicated work ethic through the years has instilled the character, qualities, and perseverance to achieve anything he puts his mind to.

My mom has worked for over a decade as a hair

continued on page 2

St. Norbert Sophomore Sets Out to Be 'Ahead of the Game'

Eva Westein, from De Pere, says she doesn't consider herself to be very outgoing. But initiative? She has that in spades.

The St. Norbert College sophomore, an English major with a minor in communication, is part of the honors program, is preparing to be on the leadership team of the college's newspaper, holds down jobs both on and off campus — and still plans to graduate in three years.

"It wasn't originally part of the plan," Eva says. "I thought I would be going in for the full four years. I had no idea that graduating in three years was even a possibility, really."

While registering for classes during her first year, Eva realized the AP and college-credit courses she took in high school helped give her a major boost.

"I think I mostly wanted to graduate early because it'll save me money," she explains. "I am kind of funding my own college journey, so anything that I can do to make that easier on myself, I'm going to take that opportunity."



Eva Westein

"If I didn't have this financial aid, college honestly probably wouldn't have been a very realistic option for me."

The Wisconsin Grant also makes it easier, Eva says, "If I didn't have this financial aid, college honestly probably wouldn't have been a very realistic option for me.

"I loved this school so, so much when I first toured. And now that I've been here for a year, I love it even more. I'm obviously very attached, so I definitely want to be able to finish my education here. This financial aid is making that a realistic option for me, which is amazing."

continued on page 2

122 W. Washington Avenue
Suite 700
Madison, WI 53703-2723
608.256.7761
editor@waicu.org

Dr. Eric W. Fulcomer
President & CEO

Rebecca Larson
Executive Vice President for External
Relations

Pamela Seelman
Director of Marketing
and Communications

Our Members

Alverno College
Bellin College
Beloit College
Carroll University
Carthage College
Concordia University Wisconsin
Edgewood College
Herzing University
Lakeland University
Lawrence University
Marian University
Marquette University
Medical College of Wisconsin
Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design
Milwaukee School of Engineering
Mount Mary University
Nashotah House
Northland College
Ripon College
St. Norbert College
Viterbo University
Wisconsin Lutheran College

About Wisconsin Grants

The twenty-two 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.

Mario Lopez-Saldana

stylist and nail technician, and my dad is a landscaper and has his own business on the side. He also works in construction. They both work so hard to support our family," Mario says.

But while he's still figuring out the balance between academics and his personal life, he knows his family's love and a home cooked meal are only five minutes away.

"They always call me and let me know that if I need anything, I can always come home. There's this meal that my dad cooks—it's called *papas con chorizo* and it's really good," Mario says. "It's nice to know the comforts of home are so close by."

Mario has plans to further his education after his bachelor's degree. He hopes to earn a master's degree in criminal justice and data analytics.

Ultimately, he says his parents have laid a foundation that led to where he is today.

"I'm really fortunate and blessed to have this opportunity thanks to the help of the Wisconsin Grant," Mario says. "I believe my hard work in high school really paid off. And to me, this experience means everything because my mom and dad have worked so hard to get me to this point, so I have to do my best."

Eva Westein

But graduating early meant she needed to use her time wisely.

"It was just really hitting me that if I was continuing on this path of graduating early, I had to be ahead of the game compared to everybody else who had entered college with me," Eva says.

"I felt like it was a good idea to start getting some experience I could put on my résumé for when I graduate, because I have one less year than everybody else."

In just her second semester in college, Eva inquired with the St. Norbert office of communications. She now edits the college's thrice-weekly internal newsletter, writes press releases, and supports college publications.

It allows her to put into practice the things she learns in her courses.

"There's so much more focus on what you want to learn about, which has been really exciting, because I think that helps me have more of my own initiative to spend time on things outside of class," she says.

"There are things that I care about and there are things I want to do and use in the future."

FACT OF THE MONTH

Adults with a bachelor's degree earn an average of \$2.8 million during their careers, \$1.2 million more than the median wage of workers with a high school diploma.

Source: Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce,
"The College Payoff," 2021.