

WTG *Achievers*

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About the WTG

The twenty private, or independent, colleges and universities of Wisconsin operate without taxpayer support, but provide an invaluable public service to the state, educating more than 58,000 students a year. Many of Wisconsin's best and brightest need financial help to attend the college of their choice.

The State of Wisconsin created the Wisconsin Tuition Grant (WTG) in 1965 to help qualified Wisconsin citizens to succeed. Fully one-third of the low-income students who apply for the WTG are turned away every year for lack of funds. Each month WTG Achievers brings you success stories of Wisconsinites for whom the WTG has made a significant difference.

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WTG helps Stritch student become a leader



Nikia Davis of Milwaukee, a junior at Cardinal Stritch University

Nikia Davis kept to herself and spent a lot of time alone in her room during her freshman year at Cardinal Stritch University. She had a high grade point

average in high school and wanted to continue to push herself to excel at Stritch.

"I came to Stritch with the same attitude," said Nikia, who focused primarily on academics and internship opportunities, rather than extracurricular activities, while a student at Milwaukee's James Madison High School and then at the New School for Community Service. "I'll get the good grades, and I'll get out of here. I'm not getting involved in anything. I don't have time for that. Well, that changed."

Now in her fourth year at Stritch with a double

major in psychology and communications, Nikia serves as president of the Black Student Union, is a resident assistant, works as co-manager of the residence hall front desk, and served as an orientation leader for three years. She credits Jenni Kiekow, Stritch's director of Student Leadership and Involvement, for giving her the nudge she needed to realize her leadership potential.

"She's one of the larger influences in my getting involved," Nikia said. "She would ask me to do stuff or tell me about things she thought I'd be interested in."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Northland student maintains academic focus in the face of challenges With aid from WTG,



Jen Chen of Ashland, a senior at Northland College

Jen Chen, a senior majoring in sociology at Northland College in Ashland, is not your run-of-the-mill college student. In fact, Jen has always taken her own

path, and now the Wisconsin Tuition Grant is helping her continue to follow it.

Originally from California, Jen had moved with her mother nine or ten times (she can no longer remember the exact number) before she even started high school. By the time she graduated from high school in 1997, she wasn't interested in going to college right away. Instead, she jumped at an opportunity to travel. For a little less than a year, she lived on a kibbutz in the Negev Desert in southern Israel.

"It was quite a wonderful experience," says Jen. "But I

knew I had to come back and start my college career."

Jen was drawn by the promise of an environmentally focused education, and first enrolled at Northland College in the fall of 2000. She was involved in a variety of campus activities including a grassroots organization that encouraged students, trustees, faculty and administration to stick to their environmental ethics in all things and in all ways possible.

After two and a half years at Northland, Jen had a daughter. For a while, she tried to juggle the pressures of school,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

NIKIA DAVIS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Despite her involvement and leadership roles, Nikia continues to earn good grades. While her career goals fluctuate at times, she hopes to get experience in advertising, public relations, or event planning once she graduates in 2009 before going back to school for advanced degrees in counseling and clinical psychology. One day she envisions opening her own practice as a family psychologist.

“My plans change every day,” Nikia said with a laugh.

As the first in her family to pursue a bachelor’s degree, Nikia appreciates the love of her family and said her success would not be possible without their support.

“My family has had a big part in getting me where I am,” Nikia said. “Friends and relationships can come and go, but for the most part, it’s been my family, and especially my

grandmother, who have been key to my success. They help me keep my head up and encourage me; they are with me, behind all my decisions, no matter what they are.”

Nikia is grateful that she could go to school so close to home (“yet not too close”), and said part of her decision in choosing Cardinal Stritch University was the favorable and easy-to-understand financial aid package she received, which includes a scholarship, a federal subsidized loan, and grants, including the Wisconsin Tuition Grant.

Beyond all the things she’s learning at Stritch, the activities she is enjoying, and the people she has met, Nikia said her greatest achievement is “just being me and growing as a woman, since it’s so hard to do Just growing and knowing what I’m good at and not good at. It’s knowing what I have to work at and just progressing from year to year.”

FACT OF THE MONTH

The return on higher education is increasing. In 1980, each year of college raised a person’s wage by 7.6 percent. In 2005, each year of college yielded an additional 12.9 percent.

Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, The Race Between Education and Technology (Harvard University Press, 2008)

JEN CHEN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

parenthood, and work, but the schedule became too much to handle.

“I decided I would have to put my education on hold for a while,” says Jen. “Four and half years later, I’m back in school and absolutely loving it! Now that I am older, I feel like I have a much better grasp on my education. I have a goal and I aim to achieve it. In May of 2009, I will graduate with a bachelor’s degree in sociology.”

College hasn’t always been easy for Jen, as she deals with the demands of parenting, classwork, and her job at a local restaurant,

but she has managed to keep her academic focus—even in her most difficult course, statistics—while dealing with the other things happening in her life. She credits the faculty at Northland with helping her overcome obstacles and maintain a balance in the face of everyday challenges.

“I love the professors here,” Jen says. “They bring such a mixture of intellect and education to this school and continue to inspire young minds year after year. The faculty are what makes this an amazing place to learn.”

After graduation, Jen plans to find a job

that will allow her to work in Wisconsin with women and children in crisis—people dealing with domestic violence and sexual assault. She also plans to pursue a graduate degree in the same field; she hopes this will be possible in the near future.

“I am very thankful for the assistance I have received,” she says. As a student without any financial assistance from parents, Jen has found the support of the Wisconsin Tuition Grant and other financial aid to be crucial. It has given Jen opportunities she would not have had on her own—namely, the opportunity to keep walking her own path.

Wisconsin’s Private Colleges and Universities

Alverno College *Milwaukee*
 Beloit College *Beloit*
 Cardinal Stritch University *Milwaukee*
 Carroll College *Waukesha*
 Carthage College *Kenosha*
 Concordia University *Mequon*
 Edgewood College *Madison*

Lakeland College *Sheboygan*
 Lawrence University *Appleton*
 Marian College *Fond du Lac*
 Marquette University *Milwaukee*
 Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design *Milwaukee*
 Milwaukee School of Engineering *Milwaukee*

Mount Mary College *Milwaukee*
 Northland College *Ashland*
 Ripon College *Ripon*
 St. Norbert College *De Pere*
 Silver Lake College *Manitowoc*
 Viterbo University *La Crosse*
 Wisconsin Lutheran College *Milwaukee*

