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# WISCONSIN ACHIEVERS

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## Senior and Future Math Teacher Blazing a Trail

First-generation college student Miranda Briones is passionate about becoming a math teacher and inspiring others along the way. Mi-

randa is currently in her senior year at Concordia University Wisconsin where she is pursuing a double major in mathematics and secondary education, and a minor in theology.



**Miranda Briones**

*“Financial support like the Wisconsin Grant Program has made it possible for me to attend Concordia without as much worry about my financial situation.”*

Raised in a family that emphasized the value of education, the Milwaukee resident was determined to find a school that supported her unique ambitions. For her, Concordia was the perfect fit.

One of the things that stood out to Miranda about Concordia was the smaller class sizes, which allowed for more meaningful interactions with professors. “The professors here actively reach out to me and offer support,” she says. “It’s not just about teaching from the front of the classroom. They genuinely care about my success.”

This personalized attention has given Miranda the confidence to excel academically, and as a result, she’s become more involved in extracurricular activities.

In 2022, Miranda was among the first members of Concordia’s newly formed Latino Student Union (LSU). She remains active in the group today, sharing her cultural heritage with peers and fostering connections. “I love teaching my friends how to play *Lotería* or introducing them to *conchas*, a childhood favorite treat,” she shares.

In addition to LSU, Miranda is a member of the Wisconsin Math Council, and, at Concordia, she’s involved in

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## Future Sports Broadcaster Off to Promising Start

Sophomore communication major Andrew Czysz Jr. has maintained a 4.0 GPA at Carthage College while getting a massive head start on a career in sports broadcasting. Due to a medical condition, the Racine native knew early in life that playing football wouldn’t be possible, so Andrew identified another way to craft a livelihood around his passion for the sport. His goal is to work in an NFL announcer’s booth.

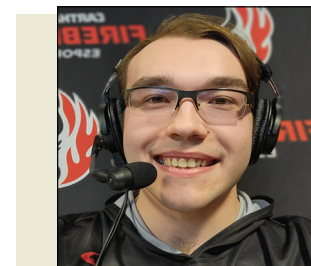
Less than halfway through college, he has already compiled an impressive resume. Part of the reason Andrew chose Carthage was the opportunity to provide live commentary for the Firebirds’ thriving program in Esports, something he began in high school. Like the talkative tandems that inform and entertain millions of pro football fans on telecasts each fall, these broadcasters provide play-

by-play and analysis for competitive video gaming matches via channels like Twitch and YouTube.

Well-established peers quickly took note of Andrew’s potential. The Wisconsin Broadcasters Association awarded him and Carthage broadcast partner TJ Buchmann third place in the Best Sports Play-by-Play category for their exciting call of an Overwatch 2 match. Andrew accepted the award during a student forum at Lambeau Field in February 2024, where he made some extremely

valuable network connections.

The busy student has also made valuable inroads into traditional athletics. A graduate of Horlick High School in



**Andrew Czysz Jr.**

*“My financial aid package, including the Wisconsin Grant, helps ensure I can take desired classes, pay for textbooks, and continue my pursuits of strengthening my announcing career.”*

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## The Wisconsin Grant Program

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 the Wisconsin Grant Program has made a significant difference.

## Miranda Briones

intramurals and CREW, the university's program for first-year students. As a CREW peer leader, Miranda works with incoming and transfer students to help make their transition to Concordia as smooth as possible. She's served as a CREW leader for the past three years, and within that time, she was part of the launch of Falcon Feed, an app that allows CREW leaders to interact with new students virtually. The app also makes it easier to identify and support first-generation students, says Miranda.

Attending Concordia would not have been as feasible for Miranda without financial aid, however. "Financial support like the Wisconsin Grant Program has made it possible for me to attend Concordia without as much worry about my financial situation," Miranda says. "This has given me the permission to be involved in extracurriculars and focus on my studies, which are ultimately so valuable to my future career."

"I want to show other first-generation students that with hard work and dedication, anything is possible."

## Andrew Czysz Jr.

Racine, Andrew has been the public address announcer for many of the Rebels' football and basketball home games and serves as a sideline reporter for the 11-time semi-pro football national champion Racine Raiders.

Of course, he balances all of that with his ongoing studies on Carthage's lakefront campus in Kenosha. Andrew is extremely grateful for a financial aid package, including the Wisconsin Grant Program. "My financial aid package, including the Wisconsin Grant, helps ensure I can take desired classes, pay for textbooks, and continue my pursuits of strengthening my announcing career."

Recognizing that it's his responsibility to keep up with his various commitments, Andrew has mastered the art of self-discipline. Individual guidance from a holistic team of advisors and professors has helped immensely, too, setting him up for academic, financial, and career success.

"Carthage's faculty members have greatly impacted my career and life," he says. "All the professors I have had so far possess a willingness to develop an awesome working relationship with their students."

With continued hard work, it's quite possible Andrew's voice will someday be synonymous with touchdowns on Sundays.

## FACT OF THE MONTH

**Twenty-six percent of all WAICU undergraduates are first-generation students.**

Source: WAICU Institutional Survey, 2023-2024.