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WISCONSIN ACHIEVERS

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Grant Program Funds Dreams for Alverno College Student

The Wisconsin Grant Program has been funding dreams, ideas, goals, and successes for numerous college students across the state.



Jennifer Gomez Soto

"The Wisconsin Grant is important to me because it means that as a first-generation student, I can attend college and graduate debt free. I did not want to be a burden to my parents when it came to college."

For one Alverno College student, the Wisconsin Grant has given her the opportunity to chase her career dreams and carve her own path.

Jennifer Gomez Soto is a current junior from Milwaukee, planning to graduate in May 2026. She is double majoring in Business & Management with a Digital Marketing specialization, and Spanish for the Professions with a minor in Media Design.

But her educational goals don't stop there. "After graduating from

Alverno, I want to work in the marketing field while obtaining my master's in marketing," says Jennifer. "I have dreams of opening a nonprofit that helps people with epilepsy."

Along with nurturing her educational goals, the Wisconsin Grant has given Jennifer peace of mind. "The Wisconsin Grant is important to me because it means that as a first-generation student, I can attend college and graduate debt free. I did not want to be a burden to my parents when it came to college."

She is proud to say she comes from a supportive, understanding family. Jennifer is one of three children, all currently attending or graduated from four-year institutions. However, while her older sister and younger brother selected Marquette University, Gomez Soto

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Concordia Senior Seeks to Make Community Impact

Growing up in Milwaukee, Zoe Buske witnessed firsthand the power of community support.

In 2006, when she was 2 ½ years old, her family moved from Washington to Wisconsin so her father could help establish Lighthouse Youth Center, a nonprofit providing free after-school and summer programs for youth ages 10 to 18. What began as a single location has now expanded to five sites across Milwaukee and Appleton, offering kids a safe space to learn, build relationships, and find mentorship.

"It's inspiring to see how something like that can spark people's initiative to take control of their lives," Zoe says. "Being able to walk alongside kids and teach them skills that will impact their future is something I'm deeply passionate about." This passion led Zoe to pursue a double



Zoe Buske

"For me, financial support like the Wisconsin Grant has made a huge difference."

major in Psychology and Social Work at Concordia University Wisconsin. After graduating this May, she plans to continue at Concordia for her Master of Social Work. Though still exploring specific career paths, she knows social work will allow her to make a meaningful impact.

"There's so much hurt in Milwaukee and in our world, but I want to help young people understand how they

can survive and lead productive lives, even when facing challenges," she says.

Zoe's leadership extends beyond the classroom. As Executive Director of Concordia's Falcon Outreach Group (FOG), she has spent two years leading a team focused on peer support and student engagement. Under her su-

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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.

Jennifer Gomez Soto

wanted to create her own path.

"I have always been in my sister's shadow, but at Alverno, everyone knows me because of my potential. Being known for being myself has made me feel more confident and made me believe in my intuition," she says. "During my senior year of high school, Alverno College was my top choice. I went to tours of other colleges, but when I went to events and tours at Alverno, I recognized that this college is meant for me."

"Alverno College has a lot of great aspects, like the professors, students, on-campus and off-campus events," Jennifer continues. "I love the various opportunities where students can connect with each other. Students can go to events and hang out in places around the campus. Everyone is really welcoming, which is why Alverno is special to many of us. It makes us feel like we are unique, and we belong."

The Wisconsin Grant has given Jennifer Gomez Soto the opportunity to set and obtain career goals on her own terms. It has allowed her to take steps toward her dreams to create positivity in her community. "When I am thinking about my future, I want to make a change, something that would impact the world in a different way," she explains. Along with fueling her career goals, the Wisconsin Grant introduced her to a community where she feels she belongs.

Zoe Buske

pervision, small groups meet weekly to foster meaningful conversations, explore coping mechanisms, and build emotional resilience.

Additionally, Zoe has played an active role in bringing the Green Bandana Project to CUW's campus. The initiative is aimed at supporting mental health awareness on college campuses and schools across the nation. Last year, she helped lead training sessions during Concordia's annual Mental Health Week, furthering her commitment to advocacy and student well-being.

At Concordia, Zoe has found the support she needs to succeed. Small class sizes, caring faculty, and CUW's Christian environment drew her to the university. Financial aid, including the Wisconsin Grant Program, has also made a crucial difference in her ability to attend.

"For me, financial support like the Wisconsin Grant has made a huge difference," she says. "Having scholarship and grant support gives me the freedom to step into leadership roles and extracurriculars that I probably wouldn't have been able to do otherwise."

Looking ahead to graduate school and beyond, Zoe remains dedicated to making a difference.

"The ability to work with people in different settings and see the bigger picture of what they need is what makes social work so powerful," she says. "There are so many ways to help, and I know I'll find the right place to do just that."

FACT OF THE MONTH

An estimated 92 percent of 2023 graduates from private, nonprofit colleges are employed or in graduate school within six months of graduation.

Source: NACE, First Destination Survey, 2024.