



Vol. 25, No. 9
May 2025

WISCONSIN ACHIEVERS

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

With Grant Help Extraordinary Lakeland Student Graduates

Abby Runkel's time at Lakeland University was nothing short of extraordinary. A dedicated student, athlete, and



Abby Runkel

"The Wisconsin Grant has made it possible for me to attend college. I wouldn't have been able to pay on my own without it, and I am forever grateful that I was chosen to receive it."

leader, she fully embraced every opportunity the university had to offer, leaving a lasting impact on both the academic and athletic communities.

Hailing from Burlington, Wisconsin, Abby initially resisted the idea of attending Lakeland. However, everything changed when she visited campus. The close-knit atmosphere, the strength of the exercise science program, and the opportunity to continue playing soccer convinced her that Lakeland was the right place to

pursue her undergraduate degree.

Abby majored in exercise science with a minor in psychology, excelling in one of the most challenging programs at Lakeland. Her drive and dedication allowed her to graduate a semester early in December 2024, preparing her for the rigorous demands of graduate school.

As a member of the Lakeland University Exercise Science Research Team (ESRT), she actively participated in data collection and analysis across multiple sports teams. She presented her research at Lakeland's Research Day during her sophomore and junior years, and her contributions to the program continue, as her sister and a teammate are presenting Abby's findings in 2025.

Beyond academics, Abby was deeply involved in campus life. She played for the women's soccer team for all four years, demonstrating both athletic and leader-

continued on page 2

Graduating MSOE Computer Science Major Already Has Job

Joseph Beattie, a senior from Manitowoc, Wisconsin, was drawn to the small school atmosphere of the Milwaukee School of Engineering (MSOE) where he could get to know his professors and be around those with similar interests, all with access to academics that would set him up for a successful career.

"The top-notch curriculum at MSOE exposes students to major-relevant concepts early in their program and puts emphasis on applying what we learn," says Joseph. Application-based learning has always been at the center of an MSOE education, regardless of the degree program. As a computer science major, Joseph uses skills learned in class and directly applies them to projects, internships, and other hands-on learning opportunities, including extracurricular activities.



Joseph Beattie

"The Wisconsin Grant has helped take a load off financially so I can focus more on excelling in my classes and extracurriculars, and ultimately, acquiring the skills I need to make an impact in the industry going forward."

As his time at MSOE ends, he is thankful for his experiences and opportunities, which in part were made possible through the Wisconsin Grant Program.

"The Wisconsin Grant has helped take a load off financially so I can focus more on excelling in my classes and extracurriculars, and ultimately, acquiring the skills I need to make an impact in industry going forward."

Joseph is a member of MSOE's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Club. The student-run club teaches members about AI

through workshops, speaker events, and research groups. Joseph serves on a research group working on solutions

continued on page 2



WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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

Eric W. Fulcomer, PhD
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

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.

Abby Runkel

ship skills. As a member of the team's leadership council, she played a pivotal role in fostering team spirit and mentorship.

Her commitment to helping others extended beyond the field. Abby served as a student ambassador, leading campus tours for prospective students, and worked as an academic coach, tutoring students in over ten different courses. She also earned Cooperative Education credits through her work with the ESRT, gaining hands-on experience that prepared her for the next stage of her academic journey.

For Abby, attending Lakeland was made possible through financial assistance, including the Wisconsin Grant Program. Paying for her own tuition, she credits the grant with allowing her to pursue her education and achieve her goals. "The Wisconsin Grant has made it possible for me to attend college. I wouldn't have been able to pay on my own without it, and I am forever grateful that I was chosen to receive it," she shared.

After an impressive undergraduate career, Abby will continue her education at Palmer College of Chiropractic, one of the most prestigious chiropractic schools in the country. This is the next step toward her dream of helping others through chiropractic care. Abby's Lakeland journey embodies the spirit of a Wisconsin Achiever.

Joseph Beattie

for another club on campus, Raider Robotics. They are using lightweight simulations for reinforcement learning of their competition robots that compete in VEX, a program that teaches students to build and code robots.

Joseph's AI research group will take their proposed concepts that they test in virtual reality, lightweight simulations, and then test them at VEX competitions. Completing the reinforced learning in these simulated spaces helps the robot learn at a much faster rate and students get immediate feedback before testing the robot in the real world and taking them to competitions.

Joseph will graduate this May. He is planning to stay on as a full-time employee with the company where he has interned for the past three summers, Emerging Technologies LLC. The company makes test equipment for manufacturers and is in Two Rivers, Wisconsin, close to Joseph's hometown.

"My role there started with more basic software development and system verification, as I wasn't far into college yet and relied mostly on preexisting skills. I've lately become more involved with system design and working with vision and signal processing, as machine learning-based testing equipment has become more in-demand over the past couple of years," he said.

He is excited about continuing where he already has great comradery with colleagues and where he can use his skills to deliver solutions for their customers.

FACT OF THE MONTH

The average financial aid package at WAICU-member schools is 80 percent grants and scholarships, aid that does not have to be paid back.

Source: WAICU Institutional Survey, 2023-2024.