

WESTERN FOUNDATION

Changing Lives

Claiming Purpose, Giving Generously: *Jamie's Path to a Full Life*

Jamie Warren's path to higher education was derailed long before college was even a possibility in her mind. Ten-year-old Jamie's troubles began the night her world was shattered by the loss of both parents. From that moment, life unraveled into a succession of trials, each pulling her further from the safety and innocence of childhood. Shock and grief were constant companions and made her feel that college was never an option for someone like her. Growing up in small town, Wisconsin, Jamie and her older sister were embraced by loving relatives who did their best to provide stability amidst the chaos. Yet even in this caring home, Jamie's childhood was marked by trauma, sadness, and the weight of survivor's guilt. The emotional toll of that night cast a shadow over her, shaping her inner world far more than any plans for the future.

Over the years, Jamie battled trauma, survived abuse, and overcame depression—all while working multiple jobs to support her son, Devon. For decades, she focused on everyone else, always pouring herself into the needs of others, never stopping to consider her own dreams or needs. The busier she kept, the less she had to think about herself, a purposeful diversion. As she neared her 40th birthday, she realized something had to change. She was burnt out, emotionally drained from years of giving and sacrificing without taking time for herself. That's when she made a



bold and “selfish” decision—to leave her career and pursue her education at Western Technical College.

With the support of her family—her husband, Kyle, her son Devon, and Grandma Margie—Jamie enrolled in the Web and Software Development program in 2022. It wasn't an easy choice. She gave up her income, and her family made sacrifices, both big and small, to make her dream possible. They cut back on luxuries and adjusted their lifestyle, and their encouragement never faltered. This opportunity meant everything to Jamie—a chance to rewrite her story and break free from the cycle of hardship that had defined so much of her life.

Western became more than just a place of learning for Jamie. It was a second home. She found herself embraced by a community that welcomed her and believed in her. Despite her initial fears of being surrounded by younger students, some the same age as her son, Jamie discovered that she effortlessly belonged. Instructors like Jason Rouvel helped her rediscover her love for math, while Emily Trenholm reignited her passion for writing. Each day, her confidence grew. She wasn't just another student—she was part of a supportive network that cared deeply about her success.



Jamie accepts her award from Western President Roger Stanford at the Foundation President's Reception.

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A critical part of Jamie's journey was the financial support she received through scholarships. For the first time in a long time, Jamie felt that someone outside of her immediate circle believed in her potential. That belief gave her the strength to work even harder, maintain a nearly perfect GPA, and prove to herself, her family, and those who believed in her that this risk was worth it.

THE SCHOLARSHIPS DIDN'T JUST EASE THE FINANCIAL BURDEN OF TUITION, BOOKS, AND HER HOUR-LONG COMMUTE, THEY REPRESENTED SOMETHING MUCH MORE PROFOUND.

Since graduating from the Web and Software Development program, Jamie has continued her education at Western, enrolling in both the Accounting and Business Management programs. But for her, this is about more than just a career. Jamie's education is tied to her deep sense of purpose. She dreams of giving back—using her skills to create free or low-cost software for public schools and helping underserved communities with financial literacy, particularly those facing challenges like the ones she has overcome. Her education at Western has given her the tools not just to succeed, but to help others find their way as well.

Jamie's decision to return to school wasn't the easy choice. It wasn't the safe choice. But it was the right one! Her journey is a testament to the idea that it's never too late to pursue your dreams, no matter how impossible they might seem.

WESTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE, AND THE DONORS WHO MADE HER SCHOLARSHIPS POSSIBLE, GAVE HER THE CHANCE NOT ONLY TO CHANGE HER LIFE, BUT TO INSPIRE OTHERS WHO MAY THINK COLLEGE IS BEYOND THEIR REACH.

As Jamie reflects on her journey, she knows her story is far from over. The challenges she faced were real, but so is the hope she now feels for her future. With more chapters yet to be written, Jamie stands stronger, more confident, and determined to give back to the community that helped her find her way. To the donors who made this possible, Jamie offers her heartfelt thanks. Their generosity is about more than money—it's about believing in someone's potential. For Jamie, that belief has made all the difference.

Through her journey at Western, Jamie has gained more than just an education—she's found the freedom to explore who she truly is. For the first time in her life, she can focus on what brings her joy, not just what benefits others. Whether it's discovering new passions or enjoying activities like baking—not for the task itself, which she considers a chore, but for the way it allows her to share appreciation through her treats. Jamie now has the space to ask herself, "What do I want out of life?" It's a shift in mindset that Western has made possible, empowering her to live with intention and fulfillment. No longer defined by past challenges and self-doubt, Jamie embraces a life where her choices reflect what she values most. It's a profound change—one that has brought her not just success, but the full, rich life she deserves.

Thank You!



Thank you for giving me this opportunity and being an incredible resource for not only myself, but the La Crosse community. Because of your generosity, I am able to continue growing and learning my passion in Respiratory Therapy. Thank you again for your kindness, it will not go unforgotten.

—Aubree Banasik-Wuensch



"You're helping the little girl in me achieve things I never thought I could."

Western Technical College and the Ronald and Joyce Wanek Foundation: *A Legacy of Generosity and Innovation*

Western Technical College is excited about starting a new chapter in its longstanding and celebrated partnership with the Ronald and Joyce Wanek Foundation, Inc. (the Foundation). Thanks to the Foundation's continued generosity, Western will soon open the Wanek Center of Innovation in June 2025. This groundbreaking facility will shape the future of advanced manufacturing education that will benefit students and the larger Western Wisconsin community.

The Wanek Center of Innovation transforms the old Business Education building into a modern, high-tech hub for robotics, automation, and manufacturing. The new center will provide hands-on programs in Cyber Security, Web and Software Development, Data Analytics, Robotics, and more, all designed to prepare students for the cutting-edge jobs of tomorrow. Each

year, over 1,000 students will benefit from this state-of-the-art facility through its credentialed programs, partnerships with K-12 schools, and community events.

"The Ronald and Joyce Wanek Foundation's generosity has been a cornerstone of our growth and success," says Roger Stanford, President of Western Technical College. "Their support has allowed us to do so much—from enhancing our programs to building stronger pathways for K-12 students and providing top-tier training for the workforce. The Wanek Center of Innovation is their latest gift, and it's going to make a lasting impact on our students and the entire region. We couldn't be more grateful."

The Ronald and Joyce Wanek Foundation has been a key partner for Western since 2017, making major contributions that have



transformed the college and its programs. With their support, Western launched the Ashley Automation Lab, expanded its robotics program, and created dual credit opportunities through the Mobile Skills Laboratory. The Foundation's 2022 donation led to the Joyce Wanek Center for Art and Design, which further established their commitment to furthering educational excellence in the region.

COMING FALL 2025!
Wanek Center of Innovation

WIESER BROTHERS
General Contractor, Inc.

ARCHITECTURE
ENGINEERING
INTERIOR DESIGN
HSR ASSOCIATES

The Ronald & Joyce Wanek
FOUNDATION, INC.

Western
Technical College



“From our first trip to Germany with local high school leaders in 2017, we knew we needed to evolve our programs to meet the growing demand for technology skills. With the Ronald and Joyce Wanek Foundation’s support, we’ve created new programs, built high school partnerships, and introduced advanced automation

has made a meaningful impact on the entire community. Their contributions have enhanced educational access and opportunities, allowing students to gain valuable skills that align with the needs of today’s industries. The Foundation’s dedication to workforce development creates a stronger pipeline for K-12 students to move into technical education to prepare them for high-demand, high-skill jobs. Initiatives like the Whitehall Regional Emerging Technology Laboratory and partnerships with local schools like Luther High School offer hands-on learning experiences that set students up for success.

“THIS CENTER IS THE CULMINATION OF YEARS OF COLLABORATION, GENEROSITY, AND A SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION,” SAID JOSH GAMER, DEAN OF INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY AT WESTERN.

“We are incredibly proud to partner with Western Technical College to advance our shared mission of fostering educational excellence through K-20 partnerships and industry collaboration. The Wanek Center of Innovation represents a landmark achievement in our ongoing mission to advance education,” said Ron Wanek, Founder and Chairman of Ashley Furniture Industries. “By working together, we are providing students with unparalleled education opportunities that equip them with the skills and competitive edge necessary for the future.”

technologies. The Wanek Center of Innovation is the next step in making sure Western stays at the forefront of education and training, as we fully prepare students for great careers in manufacturing and beyond.”

Beyond supporting Western’s programs, the Ronald and Joyce Wanek Foundation

Through the generosity of the Ronald and Joyce Wanek Foundation, the Wanek Center of Innovation is more than just a facility—it’s a symbol of Western’s ongoing commitment to education, workforce development, and the betterment of the community.



Cavaliers Care Scholarship:

Helping Students Cross the Finish Line



Western Technical College's *Cavaliers Care Scholarship* was created with one goal in mind: helping students reach graduation. Inspired by students like Eric Twambale, who overcame financial challenges to complete his education, the scholarship supports students facing hurdles in the final stretch of their programs.

Eric, a student from Uganda, faced unique challenges while pursuing his degree in Medical Lab Technology. His financial support fell through just as he entered his last term, creating unexpected and urgent financial stress. Still, he remained determined and focused on navigating not only his coursework, but the cultural adjustments and logistical difficulties that many international students experience, often without the benefits or resources that other students can rely on.

“MY HARD WORK AND DEDICATION TO HAVE A COLLEGE DEGREE IN THIS FIELD THAT I LOVE COULDN'T BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE HELP WESTERN PROVIDED.”

Western staff members, including Dean Jobe, Associate Dean of Health & Public Safety, saw Eric's potential. Jobe described Eric as a "success story in the making," and he, along with instructors and support staff, worked closely with Eric to ensure he crossed the finish line. Eric remembers this support with gratitude, noting how much Western "was involved in my last year of college to see that I made it to the finish line." With the Cavaliers Care Scholarship, the Western Foundation helped cover a portion of his tuition costs, easing the pressure on Eric so he could focus on his final classes and clinical placements.

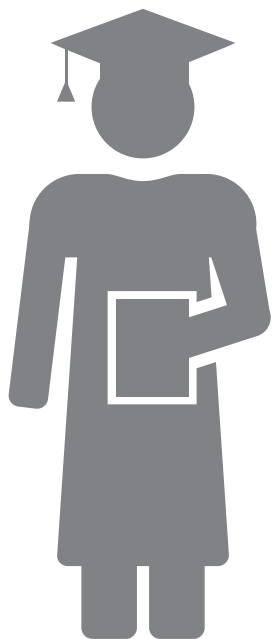
In April 2024, Eric graduated and was soon hired at Winona Health Hospital as a Lab Technician, entering a career field he's deeply passionate about. Eric is now making plans to pursue a bachelor's degree next year, continuing the path he worked so hard to reach. The Cavaliers Care Scholarship is a lifeline for students like Eric, providing immediate support when it's needed most. Many students arrive at Western with scholarships and savings, but balancing work, family responsibilities, and coursework often make the final steps especially tough. This funding provides immediate support to cover tuition costs, assisting those students who have no other option than to withdraw.

The Cavaliers Care Scholarship is just one part of Western's total commitment to student success. It's more than just financial support—it's a promise to help students like Eric overcome obstacles and step confidently into their futures.



\$578,752
GIVEN TO STUDENTS!

STUDENTS AT WESTERN WHO RECEIVE A SCHOLARSHIP THROUGH OUR FOUNDATION ARE TWICE AS LIKELY TO GRADUATE.

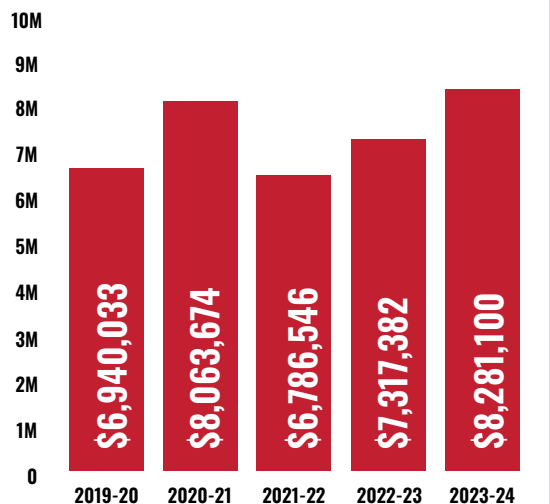


96%
GRADUATES EMPLOYED

1,019
SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

3 OUT OF 4
EMPLOYED IN WESTERN DISTRICT

ENDOWMENT FUND BALANCE



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS	2023-2024
Current Assets	\$965,729
Investments	\$8,817,236
Other	\$7,381
Total Assets	\$9,790,346

LIABILITIES	2023-2024
Liabilities	\$127,690
Net Assets	\$9,662,656
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$9,790,346

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

SUPPORT AND REVENUE	2023-2024
Contributions	\$1,339,672
Investment Income	\$885,999
College in-kind, Rental, Other	\$428,159
Total Support and Revenue	\$2,653,830

EXPENSES	2023-2024
Awards	\$578,752
Program Support	\$167,780
Contracted Services, Other	\$671,545
Total Expenses	\$1,418,077

FUND BALANCE	2023-2024
Beginning	\$7,317,382
Ending	\$8,281,100

WESTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBERS



George Kruck
President



Ray Slattery
Vice President



Jackie Gerke-Edwards
Secretary



Debra Johnson
Towner '77
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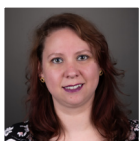
Jeff Wieser '83



Joan Sonsalla
Ph.D.



Ken Peterson



Megan Skarlupka '17



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Paul Bagniefski '94



Scott Iverson

Western
Technical College
FOUNDATION

FOUNDATION OFFICE
Coleman Center, Room 111
304 6th Street North, La Crosse, WI 54601
foundation@westerntc.edu | 608-785-9487
westerntc.edu/foundation

FOUNDATION STAFF

Jacquelyn Schreiner, Executive Director
Jaime Fortier '98, Donor Relations and Scholarship Coordinator
Leah Achterberg, Development Officer
Stephanie Knutson, Alumni Relations Coordinator

Are you interested in providing scholarship support for students entering technical careers?

Please contact the Foundation at 608-785-9487 to learn how easy it is!