



# Associated Colleges of Illinois

**Austin Wheatley**  
**North Central College**  
**McGraw Foundation Emergency Financial Aid**

Austin Wheatley is aiming for a medical career in osteopathic medicine. From Sugar Grove, Illinois, Wheatley says his grandparents' careers influenced him to pursue medicine. His grandfather was a biology major at the University of Michigan, who planned to attend medical school and went into public health. His grandmother was a newborn intensive care nurse. Wheatley, now a senior, majors in molecular neuroscience at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois.



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What brought Wheatley to North Central was baseball, which he played for two years. "Once I came here, research was a big reason I stayed," Wheatley says. "It's very important for medical school applications." Wheatley has worked with a Naperville scientist, Dr. Jim Kaduk, Poly Crystallography Inc., on crystallography research. Together, they've published 10 papers, Wheatley says.

After starting as a biology major and then a biochemistry major, Wheatley chose molecular neuroscience because he was interested in the brain and its role in health, and also to meet some graduation requirements. He has already been accepted at the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic

Medicine in Erie, Pennsylvania. Wheatley says he'd like to complete his residency in Colorado, then work possibly in emergency room trauma medicine, oncology, cardiology or neurology.

Wheatley holds a presidential scholarship from North Central, contingent on his grades, which pays for a substantial portion of his annual tuition, along with government loans. Facing serious family financial issues and needing more tuition funds, Wheatley and his father reached out to Ann Benjamin, associate director of financial aid at North Central, who helped him secure a McGraw Foundation Emergency Financial Aid grant through ACI. "It's helped a lot along the way with paying for school and taking some of that stress off my parents in the process," he says. "It definitely helped. Having these grants really makes sure students can get through college with less stress, and in the long run, have less to pay back."

Though he no longer plays on the North Central team, Wheatley stays involved in baseball, working in a buddy-baseball program for children in special needs in nearby Wheaton. "I can't imagine I would have been in that program if it weren't for being in Naperville," he says. "I feel like this school has shaped me into who I want to be. North Central has taught me to get involved."