



Associated Colleges of Illinois

Danielle Brantley
Saint Xavier University
ACI General Scholarship



Danielle Brantley returned to Chicago's [Saint Xavier University](#) this year for graduate school, studying to be a learning behavior specialist in special education. From Chicago's south side, Brantley says what first drew her to study English as an undergraduate at Saint Xavier was that the school welcomed students from all backgrounds. "They offered encouragement of being yourself, " she says. "And, be proud of being yourself. That's the thing that brought me here when I was an undergrad."

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"I believe that literacy is very important," she says. Brantley says people who can read and write well can become poets, short-story writers, journalists, critics, teach the classics or formulate legal arguments, regardless of the language. She's also an avid reader. "There's a running joke in my family: 'Books are her favorite indulgence, they say.' That, and Oreos," she says.

Brantley returned to Saint Xavier for graduate school for the same reasons she attended as an undergraduate, and encourages family members to consider Saint Xavier, too. Literacy led to her interest in special education, so that everyone can participate and learn. Brantley hopes to work as a special educator in the Chicago public school system, where she can mentor students who may not have access to sufficient resources.

An ACI General Scholarship recipient, Brantley explained she had an outstanding balance on her undergraduate bill as she grew closer to graduation. Her mother was seriously ill and had been hospitalized. She recovered, but the situation took a financial toll on the family. Without the ACI funds, Brantley would not have been able to graduate in the spring. "Receiving that scholarship – it was divine intervention because I was very unsure of how I would have paid that outstanding balance," Brantley says. She also had enough left to help her brother buy textbooks so he could attend summer school at a community college. Brantley says she is grateful for donors who donate their time and money to make scholarships possible.

Outside the classroom, Brantley is a writing consultant, assisting students in the university's Learning Center/Writing Studio. She's also a teaching assistant on campus and takes notes to help accommodate students who may not be able to take notes for themselves. "I advocate for people who may have disabilities or require some sort of accommodation to seek out help, whether it be on campus or off campus," she adds.