



Associated Colleges of Illinois

Madison Nickrent
Illinois College
McGraw Foundation Emergency Financial Aid



Like many students, Madison Nickrent decided to attend [Illinois College](#) because of its small campus and the small class sizes. Now a junior majoring in elementary education, Nickrent says her classes continue to be small. "I only have six students in four of my classes, so the teacher knows how we're doing, and they really know us," she says. "For me, that's what I really wanted out of school – to not just be a number, to be an actual student, and how someone could care about me and realize when we're not in class or realize when something's going on."

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Originally a psychology major, Nickrent, from Bloomington, Illinois, says she took many psychology classes. But she found her real interest was in becoming a teacher of fourth and fifth graders. She switched majors in her sophomore year.

In addition to teaching, Nickrent is a residential hall director at Illinois College, a learning experience related to teaching, she says. "It definitely teaches you time management, how to deal with conflict and how to deal with people who are struggling and how you can help them," Nickrent says. She is in the Literary Society at Illinois College, which does various literary productions and community service, and she works at a day care in town.

About a year ago, Nickrent's father died, the result of an infection after leaving the hospital. She needed financial aid help to remain in school and spoke to the Financial Aid Director Becky Birdsell, who helped connect with her a McGraw Foundation Emergency Financial Aid grant through ACI. "It's helped me this semester not having to work two jobs, to stay a student here," she says. "It freed up a lot of my time being able to get that money and keep going with my education and not always worrying about how I'm going to pay for it."

The McGraw grant was critical, she says. She is one of four children. One has Down Syndrome and her younger sister is also in college now, and there are many financial challenges.

"These scholarships help students stay at the school that they want to be at and they love," Nickrent adds. "It really helps the student that needs it. I would also like to say thank you so much for donating."