



# Associated Colleges of Illinois

**Erica Kemple**  
**Illinois College**

***McGraw Foundation Emergency Financial Aid Fund***



Erica Kemple was about to begin her final semester at [Illinois College](#) in Jacksonville. A single mother, Kemple had experienced the struggles of attending college while working two or three jobs and raising with a daughter and son. With the goal in sight, she faced a big problem: Kemple's eligibility for Pell Grants and Illinois MAP grants had run out. How could she finish a bachelor's degree in art and realize her dream of being a high school art teacher?

Kemple applied for a McGraw Foundation Emergency Financial Aid Fund grant through ACI. She was awarded a scholarship to help her finish and earn her degree in December 2017. "The scholarship was really amazing, she says. "I thought I was going to have to leave school again until I could come up with a way to pay the difference. Without the scholarship, I would most likely not be finished today."

Kemple, also from Jacksonville, had been out of school 10 years before entering the College full time, first as a biology major, then a psychology major. Ultimately, she chose art, a longtime personal interest. "When I was little, my grandfather, who retired from Illinois College, would draw, and he taught me how to draw when I was 3 or 4," Kemple said. "When I had my first class at Illinois College in the art department, it reminded me why art was important. It was always a part of me." Kemple says the inspiration to teach art came from Jeff Garland, associate professor of art. "His passion for art excited me about art," she says.

After high school, Kemple went to Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield, then to cosmetology school to earn a cosmetology license. She has been a nail technician/manicurist, and worked in a factory and in retail, among other things.

Being a student at Illinois College inspired other interests. Kemple was treasurer and co-president of the Colleges Against Cancer chapter at the College, an opportunity to act on a health issue that has affected many in her extended family. She was also a "pronunciation partner," helping students from Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan, improve their English skills as part of the College's Intercultural Exchange Program with the university.