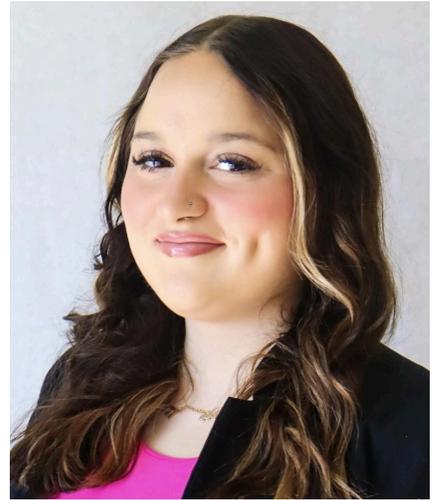


Scholarship Empowers First-Generation Student to Lead with Purpose

As a first-generation college student, Kaydence H. has always known that education would be her path to a better future. “Since I was a little girl, I was motivated to go to college,” she said. But her journey was far from easy. Growing up in a low-income household marked by instability and domestic violence, Kaydence faced challenges that might have discouraged many others. Instead, she turned those hardships into determination.

After exploring other majors, Kaydence found her true fit at Illinois College, where she studies Business Administration and Organizational and Strategic Communication—fields that, she says, reflect her values of integrity, leadership, and creativity. “Those three characteristics are ones that I own, religiously,” she explained.



Kaydence transferred to Illinois College in 2023 after starting her college career at Culver-Stockton College. Scholarships played a defining role in her decision to transfer. “When I visited campus, it felt comfortable—like home,” she said. “And the scholarships Illinois College offered made it possible.”

Now a senior, Kaydence balances an intense schedule that includes three jobs, a student leadership role, and a full academic load. She says the scholarship she received has been nothing short of transformative.

“This scholarship came at a very important time in my college career,” Kaydence said. “It has eased my financial responsibilities and allowed me, as a low-income first-generation student, to continue my last year and complete my degree. It cut out some of the stress of wondering how I could afford to stay in school.”

Beyond helping her stay on track academically, the scholarship opened doors for new experiences and growth. Last summer, Kaydence traveled abroad to the Netherlands through a national TRIO program, an opportunity she describes as life-changing. She now serves as a TRIO Marketing Intern and is president of the First-Gen Club on campus. “Studying abroad was always on my bucket list,” she said. “Because of this scholarship, I could focus less on financial stress and more on making the most of these opportunities.”

Looking ahead, Kaydence plans to pursue a Master’s in Business Administration, with long-term goals of earning a Ph.D. “This scholarship has allowed me to save for graduate school applications and the GRE/GMAT exams,” she said. “It’s helping me take real steps toward the future I’ve dreamed of.”

Kaydence is quick to express gratitude for the donors and supporters who make scholarships like hers possible.

“Thank you for bettering my opportunity, lessening my stress, and building my foundation,” she said. “As a low-income first-generation college student, this scholarship truly made an impact on my senior year and my ability to continue my education.”

She also shares advice for other students facing financial or personal challenges: “The process is difficult and overbearing, but push through and continue. Don’t fear the financials—there are resources and people ready to help you every step of the way.”

Outside the classroom, Kaydence continues to give back through volunteer work and community action, committed to becoming the best leader she can be. “This scholarship didn’t just help me stay in school. It helped me grow into the person I’m meant to be.”