

Self-Sufficiency Program

Locally Grown Scholarship Breakfast

**October 30, 2025, 7:30 a.m.
The Bluffs, Student Union
UW-La Crosse**



**ALUMNI & FRIENDS
FOUNDATION**





Courage and Encouragement

Xia Yang, 2025 Breakfast Speaker

Xia Yang, then a mother of six, completed SSP in 2016, enrolling in UWL as a transfer student and education major. In December 2020, Xia earned a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood/Middle Childhood Education at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. She began her teaching career with the La Crosse School District, in kindergarten and fourth grade class, where she is now a first-grade teacher at Northside Elementary School. Xia recently earned her Reading Licensure from Viterbo University.

In her SSP Scholarship essays, Xia described the significant challenges in being a parenting student: lack of time, competing demands, small and larger emergencies, self-doubt. In each essay, she eloquently expressed what motivated and moved her forward:

I envision myself five years from now in front of a classroom as a teacher.

When I think of giving up, SSP scholarships encourage and give me a reason to keep going.

It takes a lot of courage and encouragement for me to keep moving forward.

Xia Yang is married to Kou Vue. They are parents of seven sons and two daughters. She and her family enjoy spending time together and traveling across the country. The family's road trips to California are legendary. Xia has also driven in the other direction, east across the continent to North Carolina! Xia describes herself as a lifelong learner who takes any chance to grow for herself, her family and her students.

Breakfast Program

- Gathering** The Driftless Dulcimers
Erin Hussey, Cindy Selin, Madelyn Sheldon, musicians
- Welcome** James Beeby, UWL Chancellor
Terry Lilley, Chair, UWL Race, Gender and Sexuality Studies
- Gratitude** Andrea Hansen, SSP Director
- Music** *Rise Up* by Andra Day, Zoe Gibson, soloist
Tycho de Boer, accompanist
- Inspiration** *Courage and Encouragement*
Xia Yang, B.S. 2025 Breakfast Speaker
- Celebration** 2025 Locally Grown Scholarship Award
Josselyn Sabillon Rodriguez, WTC
- Recognitions** Terry Lilley and Andrea Hansen

*Thank you to the entire staff of the UWL University Centers,
Campus Dining and Catering Services.*



SSP is a community engagement program of the Race, Gender and Sexuality Studies Department at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.



I Am Poem

By Xia Yang, 2016

I am ambitious and impatient
I wonder if I am making the right choices
I hear words of encouragement
I see success at the end of this journey
I want happiness for myself
But I really want success of my aspirations
I am ambitious and impatient

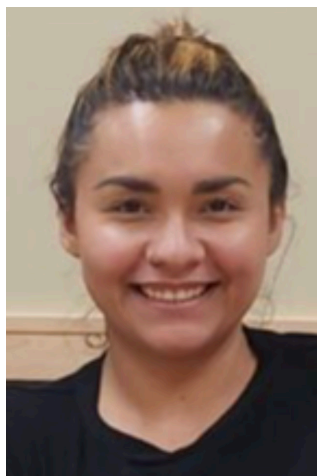


I pretend everything is ok when it's not
I feel the anxiety for people's safety
I worry I could fail
I cry because I tried
I am ambitious and impatient

I understand things happen for a reason
I say life isn't easy
I dream of a successful ending
I hope to reach my goal
I am ambitious and impatient.

Your gifts to the SSP Locally Grown Scholarship Fund support the college aspirations of student parents and other adults from our community. Funded through your generosity, the scholarships support SSP participants in their first semesters in college. You help turn dreams into degrees, changing individual and families' lives, and our community, too. Thank you!

Fall 2025 Locally Grown Scholarship Awards



Josselyn Sabillon Rodriguez

Western Technical College
Human Services Associate Degree
SSP Fall 2023

Nothing's Going to Stop Me

(Excerpts, Josselyn's Scholarship Essays)

I'm on track to complete my Human Services associate degree in August 2026. My long-term goal is to become a counselor with a master's degree. My motivation is for my children. I want to do the best for them and be an example for them. I'm the first person in college in my family, which is huge. I feel very proud of myself for all the struggles and challenges I have. I'm still trying, and I will not finish until I accomplish my goals.

My strategy for success is to keep moving and not stop. I push myself every day to do better, to be better. The services I use in my college are Financial Aid, Workforce Connections, the food pantry, and WTC Learning Support Center.

Financially, this semester has been a nightmare. I want to be able to feel alive and not just surviving while I attend college, but it can be hard being a single mother of 3 children. I'm very grateful that somehow, I managed to continue my education and not give up.

This semester, I discovered that things could get ugly before they get better. But nothing is going to stop me, I want to be a successful woman that can help individuals with the struggles, especially those single mothers that try so hard to be the best mothers for their children. Since my last scholarship application, I've remained committed to the Human Services Associate program. I'm thinking about maybe going for a 4-year program, but I'm hoping money won't be a struggle by then so I can continue my education.

Thank you for supporting students like me who are working to make a difference—both at home and in the broader human services field. Thank you for all your much needed support.

A heartfelt thank you to all our donors who help turn dreams into degrees!

We are grateful to the visionaries who created the Locally Grown Scholarship Fund and all who have given so generously over the years. Each donation, referral, encouragement, and advocacy for college accessibility matters more than you know!

We appreciate every gift and every giver. Every donation provides help, builds hope, and warms hearts. Your generosity inspires and encourages us. Thank you.

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Phyllis Ernst Trust

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Perpetual Adoration

Vanguard Charitable Fund

Many kind & generous friends

La Crosse Community Foundation

A special note of gratitude to Deb Hoskins, and Ron and Jane Rada who established matches for gifts through *One Day for UWL*. Thank you!

We are grateful to our SSP Advisory Board for their commitment and support

Jan Eriksen

Betty Kruck

D.A. Ferguson, Honorary

Sue Lee

Susanne Koehler

Barbara Pollack

Sandi Krajewski

Joan Schoenfeld

Thank you to our 2025 Breakfast Sponsors.





All in the Family:

Collins siblings – 7 of them alumni – create scholarship for student parents

Between 1960 and 1979, seven siblings in the Collins family graduated from UW-La Crosse, forging a lifelong affinity for their alma mater. Raised in poverty on La Crosse's North Side, the Collins siblings say getting a college education set them up for successful lives and careers. Now, in retirement, they are giving back to future generations of students.

The Gifford and Rita Collins Family Scholarship Fund was recently established through the UWL Alumni & Friends Foundation to provide student parents with financial support to help them through college. The fund is endowed, and it will be administered through UWL's Self Sufficiency Program.

"Growing up, we didn't have two nickels to rub together. But by going to school here and other places, we were all able to become financially stable and in good shape," says Timothy Collins, '79, who led the effort to establish the scholarship fund. They decided to support student parents, he says, to ease the challenge of juggling schoolwork with parenting, and because parents were among Timothy's favorite students when he worked as a technical college instructor.

"Some of my best students were single parents," he says. "They worked hard, and they didn't complain. They were busy, they had children, and they were in school to learn." Timothy's sister Jeanne, '70, remembers attending UWL as a single parent herself. "Everyone at the school was fabulous, fabulous to me," she says. "I was a single parent of a young child. I remember one of my professors saying, 'You mean to tell me you have a kid and you're going to college? You're phenomenal.' And I just said, 'I can't get any poorer. I might as well be here.'"

From Campus Connection article, posted 8 a.m. Friday, Aug. 29, 2025

***"The future belongs to those who believe
in the beauty of their dreams."*** Eleanor Roosevelt

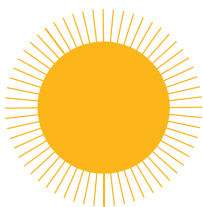
Dear Campus and Community Friends,

We believe your support of SSP is motivated by the dreams you hold close, not only for yourself but for the whole community. You have a heartfelt desire for every child and every person to be nurtured into a promising future. You send a powerful message with each gift and expression of support. With others, you say:

***"I see and believe in the beauty of your dreams.
Your hope for a brighter future is my hope, too."***

This is the central message of the annual SSP Locally Grown Breakfast, and the encouragement and help you give with your scholarships and presence. We are a community of dreamers and planners, tending to the beauty of individual and our collective dreams. Together, we dream, plan and make a way for what is possible.

With gratitude and respect,
Andrea Hansen, SSP Director



Self-Sufficiency Program

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