

## **How Community College Has Changed My Life**

By Pedro Hall

Being accepted to Kishwaukee College changed my life by giving me the opportunity to resume my education after a 15-year hiatus. This break was not on purpose or due to a lack of desire to thrive. It was due to life circumstances that were out of my control. I have come to understand that things happen for a reason and at the right time. Kishwaukee College gave me a huge push of encouragement when they not only accepted my enrollment application but also validated the credits of classes I had taken in the past. Starting with half the credits required for graduation gave me excitement and motivation to restart my long-time goal of pursuing higher education. Kishwaukee College staff made me feel welcome and appreciated. They have been knowledgeable, kind, and helpful. I do not feel like a number that represents revenue via tuition. Proof of this is something as small as being greeted by staff at the door offering a bottle of water, a banana, or a granola bar along with a smile on their faces.

I entered this country as an unaccompanied minor. I left my family behind in search of opportunities and to give my family a better life. I graduated high school with honors and enrolled in college but was not able to continue because of my immigration status. This status changed thanks to former President Barack Obama's executive action, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, known as DACA. Despite now being legal, I did not qualify to attend college in the state of Georgia, where I had resided for over 10 years. Time kept going, improving my life in many ways. The most significant change was obtaining my permanent residency or "green card."

Life is full of "CAUSEualties," a term I define as occurrences that take place for a reason. I moved to Illinois to help a friend in need due to her having significant health issues. I

was oblivious to the fact that my dream of higher education was about to be awakened. A dream that had been dormant for many years was revived when my former guardian asked me if I still wanted to pursue higher education. I responded that I did. A few days later, I applied to Kishwaukee College and was accepted. I was more excited than I have ever been in my life because I knew that this time there would not be any obstacles to prevent me from reaching my academic/professional goals.

On January 18, 2023, I took a picture holding a sign that read, “First Day of School! ¡Primer día de clases! Kishwaukee College, Malta IL. #estudiandoporunsueño #gokougars!” In the background, a frame read “Bloom Where You Are Planted.” This picture paints a summary of how that day was the beginning of my dream of obtaining a doctorate degree in education. One day I will, and when I do, I will always remember that it all began with an opportunity given at Kishwaukee College in Malta, Illinois.

