

"We want students to have that cognitive link as strongly as possible between what they do in the classroom to what is done on the street," said Whiten. "The academy is about intensive training – it's the next to best thing to on-the-job training."

Dr. Jackie Love, Dean of Campus Affairs and Protective Services and Hospitality Division, said the new academy will

Agencies would be able to send their current, new employees, to the program as well. Kenosha County Sheriff David Beth said the academy will benefit his department by reducing costs and making the process simpler and easier for the recruits. Having an academy in the Gateway Technical College District also couldn't come at a better time, too – his office is looking at hiring 20 officers in 2008, its largest-ever hiring year.

hotel there. Like many other law enforcement agencies, Beth's agency bears those travel and hotel costs.

Beth said recruits will also benefit from being trained by local officers knowledgeable with the tri-county area.

"The officers who will be doing the training will be local and aware of any situations locally and how departments work together," Beth said.



Gateway Technical College graduate Freda Barkley works recently in her position as an accountant at The Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order in Milwaukee. Barkley credits Gateway and its staff with helping her graduate with an accounting degree and start her new career.

Graduate urges others to 'pursue your dreams now'

Barkley accounts for success through college programs and staff

Freda Barkley says being ready should never be mistaken for being fully prepared.

Seize the opportunity now, she says, because school is a part of life and not something that happens while life is put on hold.

"You are never 'ready' for school," says Barkley. "The first thing that everyone says is 'I'm going to go back when I'm ready.' You are never ready. The money is never going to be right. The day care will never work out. You will never be ready – you just have to do it."

And Barkley, indeed, did do it. The married, mother of four took it upon herself to gain a Gateway Technical College education and turned the page in a new chapter of her life because she didn't wait until she was "fully prepared."

The road wasn't an easy one – it was pretty tough, actually. Barkley fought through finding time to succeed while still finding family time for her husband and children, working part-time jobs and dealing with financial issues that resulted in a car being repossessed and causing her to nearly become homeless her final semester in college.

But Barkley says it was worth it because she took the step to enroll at Gateway Technical College – and now she's reaping the fruits of her labor.

"All the hard work paid off," she says. "I now have a job with good benefits, good pay. Everything came full circle."

Ready to begin college life

Barkley, 29, started her accounting degree at Gateway in 2005 after two stints of enrolling and dropping out of college. She was a certified nursing assistant at the time and believed she had reached the peak of her wage earning potential within that career.

Barkley says she wasn't technically yet ready to enroll – but knew she had to do something to change her situation. She knew she had to return to college then, whether or not she was fully ready.

"I had four kids and a husband and we just weren't making it," she says. "I knew I had to do something different."

But going back to school proved to be tough. She was shy, questioning whether she fit in. Barkley says her first instructor cured her of that and pulled her out of her shell of shyness by making sure to include her in classroom discussions.

"I had the most absolutely wonderful teachers you could ever have," says Barkley. "But that first

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class, income tax accounting, it was so hard and the teacher was on me every day. Now I know why – she was helping me to come out of my shell. She told me I probably felt like I didn't belong. She told me that wasn't true – that everyone belongs.

"She said she would call on me every single day I didn't participate in the class discussion. And she did. I got used to her calling on me every day. It got to be that time in the class, and the other students would say 'it's time for Freda's question of the day.' It helped me to come out of my shell and interact with people of different cultures and races."

A diverse learning environment

College officials work hard to foster cultural diversity on all of its campuses through the Multicultural Program and other efforts. Barkley says she has taken what she's learned at Gateway and applied it to her life and her new job as an accountant with the The Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order in Milwaukee.

"Up until that point in college, my only interaction with other cultures was bad," Barkley says. "I grew up in an all-black culture, so I didn't know how to interact with any other ethnic group than African-American.

"I sat back and said 'maybe I don't like accounting.' My teacher set me aside and told me 'I know you go to church. Maybe you will find a job with a church, or with the government, or a nonprofit, health administration – it doesn't have to be Wall Street.' She gave me so many options that I began to think that I did fit and I could use this education to further me along."

Gateway lead accounting instructor Linda McGee taught Barkley in some of her classes. She says she was impressed with how much Freda had grown as a person and a student since her start at Gateway.

"Her confidence, her level of achievement, everything about her ... she has turned into a stronger person with some great accounting knowledge," McGee says.

"At the beginning she told me she picked accounting and I said 'let's give this a try.' I felt a sense of growth within her, a sense of ownership to the accounting degree as she progressed."

The further she went in her education, the tougher it got. Time management became a critical issue for Barkley, one that Gateway helped her work through. The Multicultural Program helped set her up with an individual action plan that charted her time, helping her to prioritize the many tasks of her life.

"I was working part-time hours between several jobs, my husband was out of work and I had four children, two were in school," she says. "That individual action plan helped me. I had to spend my time wisely and still have time to kick the ball around with the kids or make dinner and work a part-time job to make ends meet."

She notes that her children also helped her with her homework.

"They were my biggest cheerleaders," says Barkley. "They did all they could to help me. They even reminded me to do my homework."

Even with the plan chart, finding all that time was a daunting task. She claims it all nearly came crashing down the final semester at Gateway, causing her to nearly become homeless. Her church, Glorius Light, helped her stay afloat and even allowed her to use the church van after her car was repossessed.

"My job with the Capuchins in Milwaukee allows me to be a help to those who are in the same situation that I was in just a few months ago," says Barkley. "It feels good to be able to give back."

Barkley's instructors helped her, too, although they made sure she kept on task and graduated – and land her current job.

"My teachers were there for me all the way, but they weren't giving me any breaks," Barkley says. "They said 'we know what you are going through, but we still need those assignments.'"

Having that harsh reality, but knowing my teachers cared, helped me to know that I can make it through anything now."

McGee characterized Barkley as energetic and caring for other students.

"She is a hard-working student who amazed me by how she kept everything together," McGee says.


One final benefit of Gateway was the transfer agreements between the college and Carthage College, where Barkley is finishing up her four-year degree. She was able to transfer into the private college in Super Sophomore standing – one class away from junior standing – and will be able to finish that degree in two years of 11 credits per semester. Her final bill between Gateway and Carthage will total about the same amount as one full-time year at Carthage, she says.

"Freda reminds me very much of this Jim Watkins quote shared with me by a friend: 'A river cuts through rock, not because of its power, but because of its persistence,'" says Janet Days, Gateway Multicultural Program Coordinator, Non Traditional Occupations (NTO) Program Coordinator and Displaced Homemaker Program Coordinator.

"Using her financial savvy, Freda has figured out a way to get the biggest bang out of her buck by taking advantage of Gateway's 2-plus-2 Program with Carthage College, and is currently working towards earning a BA in Accounting."

Barkley's parting advice to Gateway Technical College students carries almost as much weight as her advice to begin their college journey.

"Get into your major, ride out those tough times. Take yourself out of your comfort zone and take on new challenges. Meet people who you thought you would never meet in a million years. Be part of the culture of the college. Chase the unknown."



amaze yourself

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