Year 20

May 3, 2023

Odyssey Oracle

Celebrating the Graduating Class of 2023

www.odyssey.wisc.edu

We are the Odyssey Class of 2023!

We have worked as a caregiver, loan agent, rental car manager, busboy, tire company receptionist, escape room lead, warehouse laborer, homeless support specialist, CNA, cook, construction worker, painter, cashier, barber, DJ, bouncer, special education assistant, lash technician, nanny, model, waitress, butcher, custodian, doula, captioning assistant for the hearing impaired, Hooters girl, field worker, and hand embroiderer; holding jobs at FedEx, Target, McDonalds, Champs Sports, US Postal Service, Dean Health Care, Starbucks, Walmart, and Chuck-e-cheese.

We hail from Madison, Wisconsin; Chicago, Illinois; Gary, Indiana; Benton Harbor, Michigan; Charlotte, North Carolina; Brooklyn, New York; Atlanta, Georgia; Fort Worth, Texas; Waterloo, Iowa; Tucson, Arizona; Hobbs, New Mexico; Orlando, Florida; and from Zacapechpan, Cholula Puebla, Mexico and from Pujil, Otavalo, and Quito, Ecuador;

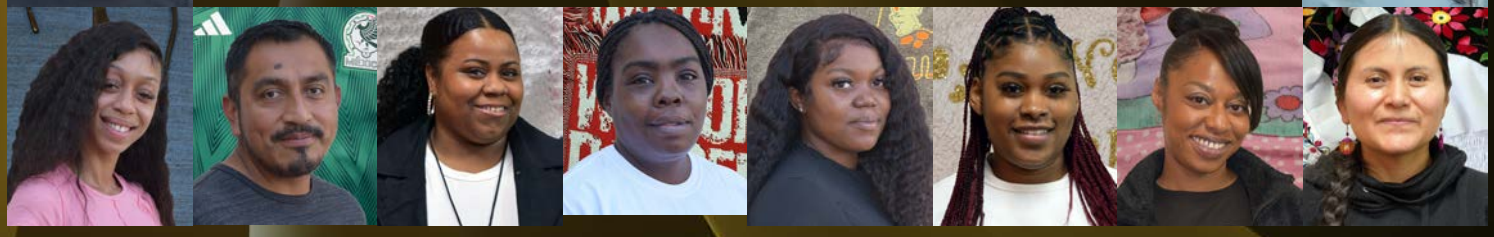
With ancestors coming from Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee, Arkansas, New York, Alabama, California, Louisiana, and Georgia; and from England, France, Belgium, Mexico, Spain, Puerto Rico, Nigeria, the Philippines, Italy, Germany, India, and “somewhere in Africa.”

Speaking Spanish, English, Gaelic, Welsh, Scottish, French, Nahuatl, Italian, German, Hindi, Creole, Teton Sioux, Tsalagi, Pukina, and Kichwa;

Worshipping as Baptist, Catholic, Jehovah’s Witness, Buddhist, Lutheran, Muslim, Mother Earth Love, and spiritual.

We call ourselves busy, independent, fun-loving, outspoken, nervous, wandering, tall, handsome, cheerful, helpful, slim, beautiful, hardworking, friendly, strong, solid, brave, jolly, polite, chocolatey, free, happy, quiet, shy, splendid, successful, changemaking, little, active, resilient, different, reserved, tough, caring, thoughtful, tender, smart, desired, determined, curious, clever, fortunate, joyful, loud, kind, loving, and inspiring.

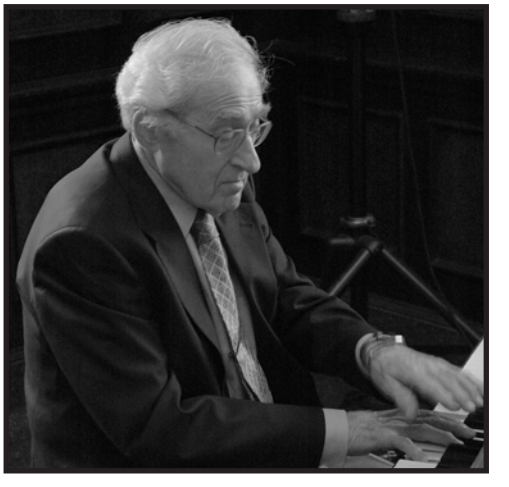
We are the Odyssey Class of 2023!



UW Odyssey Project Class of 2023 Graduation Ceremony

Wednesday, May 3, 2023, 6-7:30 PM
Great Hall, Memorial Union, Madison, Wisconsin

Order of Events



Introductory Music
Bob Auerbach, Piano

Welcoming Remarks
Emily Auerbach
Odyssey Executive Director

Congratulatory Remarks
Jeffrey Russell
UW-Madison Division of Continuing Studies
Dean and Vice Provost of Lifelong Learning
Winner of the 2023 Friend of the
UW Odyssey Project Award

Odyssey Class of 2023 Presentations

Reception
Greetings from Bucky Badger
Refreshments
Photographs (Hedi Rudd, Odyssey '12)
and More Music!

Odyssey Graduates
Class of 2023

Mia Allen

Odyssey – a long and eventful or adventurous journey or experience.

I have been through just what the definition of Odyssey is. I lost my sister in 2018 and then lost my mom in 2022. Odyssey has come into my life and changed me for the better. After dealing with loss after loss, my next move had to be my best move. I had to wipe away my tears and get motivated. That's exactly what I did. I put my head in the game and am knocking out those goals. Odyssey helped me do just that. I will forever be thankful for being a part of this adventurous experience.

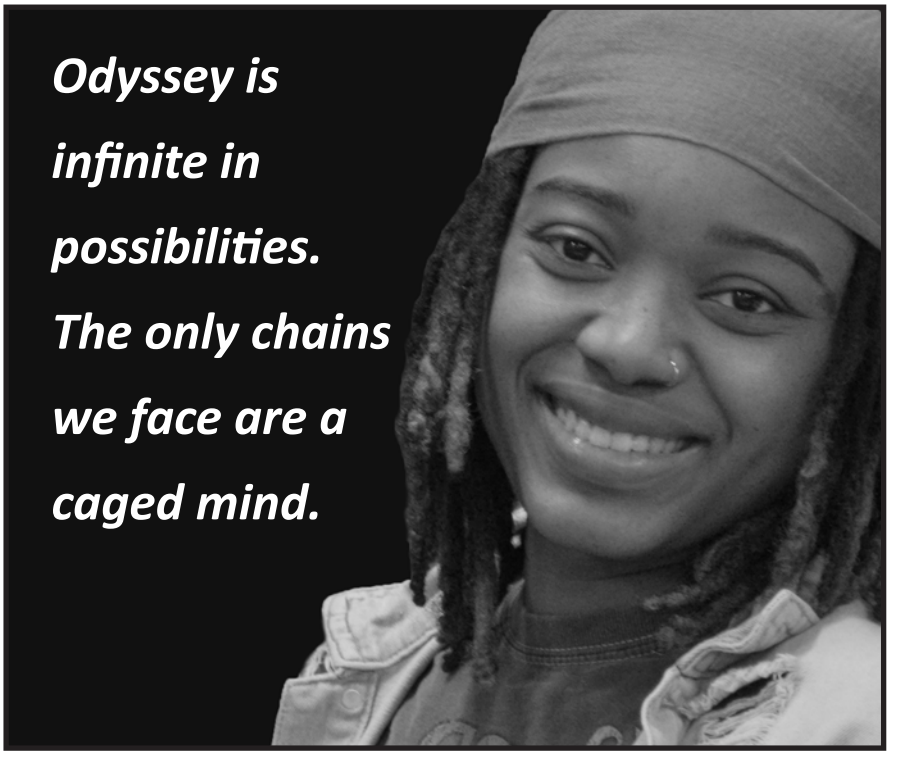
Monel Antut

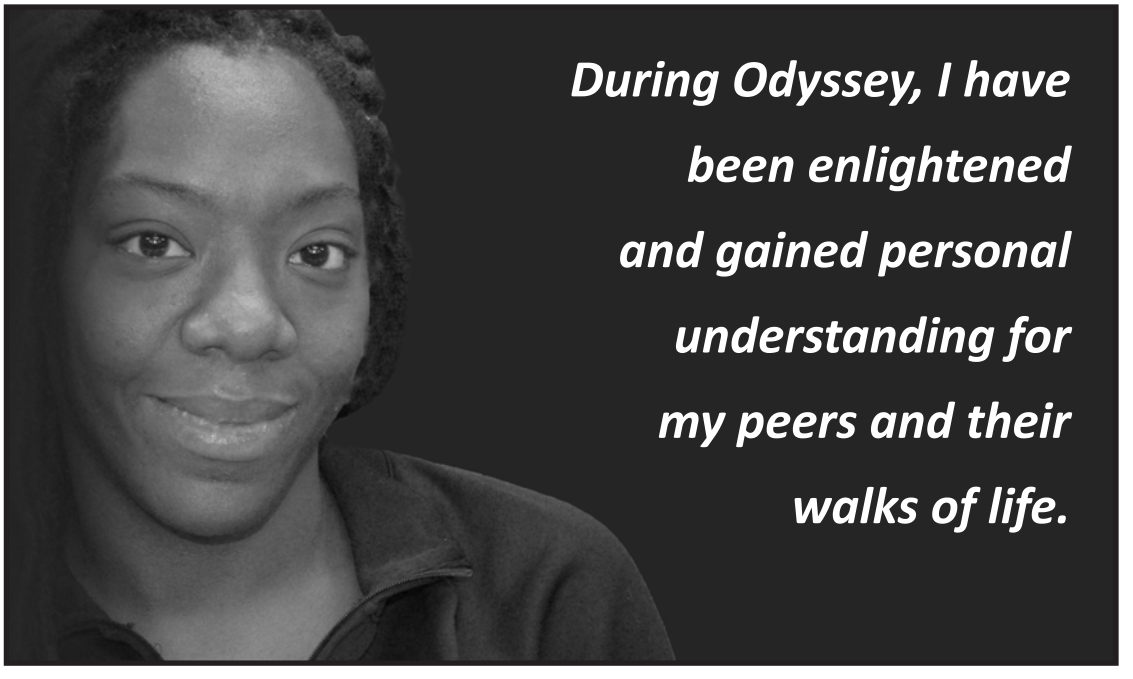
I was able to see farther than my regular day-to-day because of being a part of Odyssey. My ability to commit myself to an organization and utilize the entire community within this program was one of my best investments so far. I am a wise student who can perform well naturally in any environment, and I'd like to thank Odyssey for pulling out my strong suits and sticking around long enough to see the progress. I wish success onto all of you, and the quickest road to get there is through Odyssey.

I plan on taking certain classes to gain the knowledge and skill needed to open up my own wellness retreat on my acres. I will welcome any individual that is seeking healing, guided meditations, and grounding ourselves through nature and detoxing to cleanse our mind, body, and soul. I am excited to fulfill my dream goals, and I now have enough durability to obtain anything I set my mind to.

Antoneah Armour

I am so thankful to have been a part of the Odyssey program. I've had some struggles during the program, but the great thing about this program is Emily and the rest of the staff will do whatever they can to push you to never give up on yourself. I've wanted to give up so many times: being up all night with my kids, then turning around having to wake up at 6:30 a.m. to work until 4, then getting to class was a bit stressful, but I have definitely learned patience and determination. This has been such a challenging year for me, but I am so grateful to have had the support of everyone around me to push through.





This is my jumpstart to get the ball rolling on furthering my education. There is nothing I want more in life than to have a stable career and a better future for my children and me. Although it was a challenge, it's definitely been a wonderful experience. I've gotten to meet new people, see people grow, and hear about my classmates' lives and where they want to go in life. I would encourage anyone to apply for Odyssey. You will not regret it, and you'll build an unbreakable bond that will last a lifetime. Thank you for the opportunity and help for getting me back on track with my life.

Kaitlin Kyle Birdsall

Do not be afraid. Do not hold back.

I say this as a person who walked in through those doors trembling and barely able to speak, let alone look anyone in the eye. But never let the fear of failure stop you.

Try. Fight.

Bring all of you, open up and explore. Discover what your journey will bring you.

If you're scared, that's okay, because I can tell you from experience that if you feel too scared to push through, not only do you have the support of the classmates surrounding you but also the support of the alumni who came before you to help you up and the teachers to help guide you along the way.

Jon Booey

I want to start with thanking my mother, Ericka Booey Class of 2021, for guiding me to this program and making sure I actually signed up. Seeing her and my little brother (Jermaine Booey '21) complete this program gave me the courage to go through with it and have the confidence in myself to believe I could actually complete it.

The Odyssey Program has helped me be a more vivid and confident writer. Also, it helped me somewhat come out of my shell and talk in front of a group of people. I love how helpful the whole Odyssey team was and how comfortable they made me feel. Odyssey is filled with beautiful people, and I'm glad I got to meet them all.

Jekeiria Booker

I would like to give a huge thanks and shout out to my Odyssey family ALSO to every supporter who saw my light when it was dim and watered my roots when the soil was dry. Your efforts will never go unnoticed. In return, I will keep striving.

Sarah B

This journey through Odyssey has been so rewarding. I thank Emily and all who made this program possible. This program is a game changer that filled a gap in our community. I've witnessed and experienced the impact firsthand. I'm proud to be referred to as a UW Odyssey alumna.

Gabrielle L. H. Brown

First, I have to thank God because only He knew the weakness that I had at the start of Odyssey, the self-doubt I had about myself, my future, the lack of confidence within. But to know me is to know that version of myself, the old Gabby. But baby, I've made it. Thank you so much, Emily, and of course the entire Odyssey staff for believing in me, pushing me, giving me the chance to better myself, creating the best version of myself, bettering my future. I'm so proud of myself, and I know my family and babies are too. I am holding tears back while writing this. I still can't believe it.

Fredy Carcaño

"Gratitude is the memory of the heart."

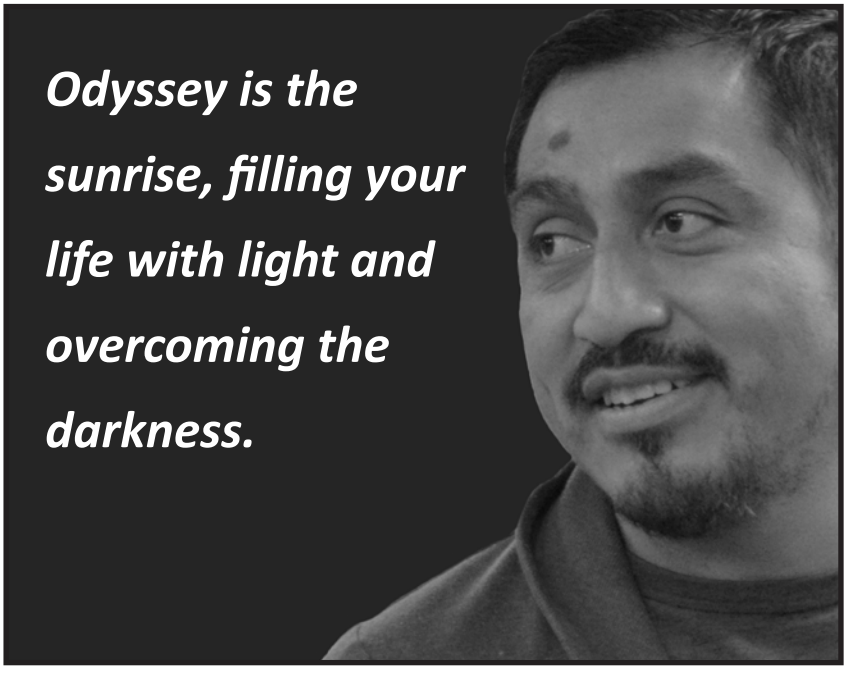
It is a pleasure to be able to thank anyone who has made the Odyssey program. I appreciate Emily and all her team for their time and patience. Without them, we would not have reached this moment. Thank you, Odyssey, for giving us an opportunity to change our lives. Thanks to Odyssey for allowing me to be part of this program, thanks to all those people who were part of this process, thanks to my classmates who always supported me, thanks to the tutors for their time and patience, but a very special thanks to the Auerbach family because without them the dreams of many families would never come true.

Odyssey has meant a lot to me. It has opened the doors to knowledge and a new hope. Thank you for having believed in me. Odyssey has been one of the best experiences in my life, and it will always be in my memory.

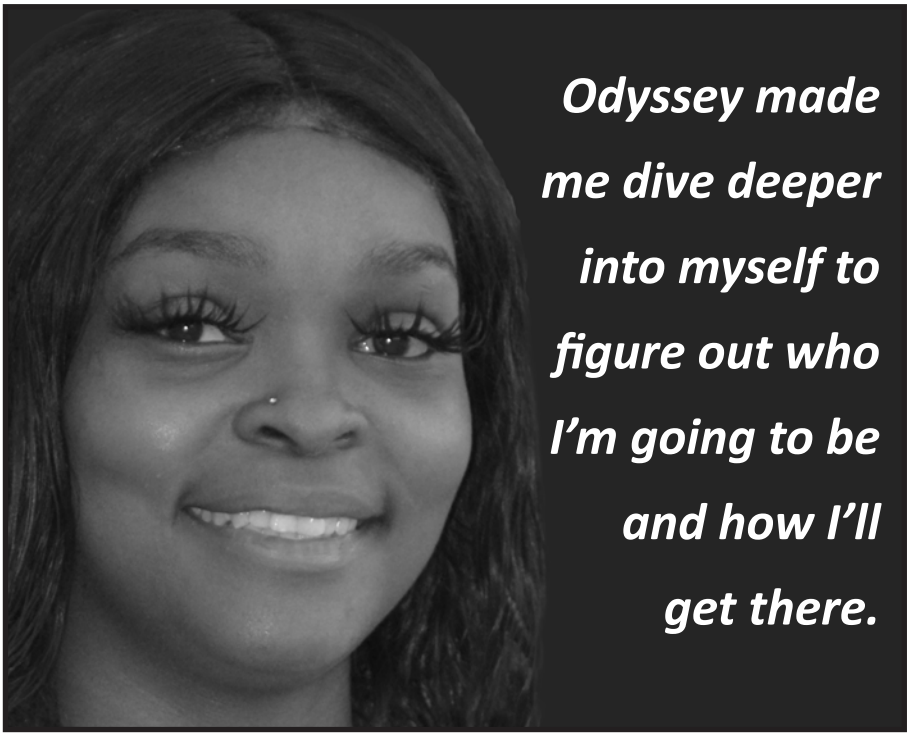
Mark Español

I started my Odyssey when I was serving prison time at Oakhill Correctional Institution. My instructor at the time was Kevin Mullen, and Kevin did more than a remarkable job at teaching our class. I was reluctant at first to put any of my personal life on paper; part of me did not want to open up to strangers or other felons with anything that anyone could use to see me as vulnerable. I had a prison mentality, and looking weak in front of others was a no no.

Before I could realize it, everyone in the class was crying, hugging, and becoming family. We couldn't get enough of our creative writing class, and



whenever class was cancelled we were bummed. I remember that what we were learning became so exciting that we would go to each other's doors (even though we were not allowed to) and would be like, "Aye, dude was a beast, he read the entire dictionary in the dock." (Malcolm X)



The program itself, how they taught us, and what they taught us gave us hope. It gave us courage and it gave us a new dream in life. I myself was in the middle of fighting for my freedom and didn't know when I would be a free man. Then it happened: I was released early. I got released on March 3rd, a Thursday, at 2 PM. On Friday, March 4 th , the very next day, I met with Peter Moreno (Director of Odyssey Beyond Bars), and here I am. My second Odyssey graduation. The Odyssey Project is a journey that you will travel alongside other amazing individuals who are ready for a breakthrough in enlightenment. You will experience that life-changing moment you always dreamed and wished for.

I have been ultimately inspired by my classmates and the level of dedication that they all demonstrated. Having my son Irie walk through this experience with me as a Junior Badger made every moment we got home from class a proud moment in the eyes of my fiancée, Rebecca. Knowing that I was doing this to better myself made it all the more worth it knowing that I had the support of those I love.

Curtrice Foster

It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are. New beginnings, new chapters in life, and new journeys. It feels amazing to share this happiness and excitement with my Odyssey family, giving me confidence in what I can achieve. I've always felt like an outsider and thought I'd never fit in. I'll admit I'm a slow learner and I'm not the smartest. Odyssey gave me courage that taught me I have a voice. There's never a wrong answer, and no one was here to judge. I'm grateful that I've joined this program because it showed me that learning has no limit and getting your education is never too late. Thank you, Emily and staff, for this great experience.

Geresa Homesly

Odyssey is one of the best opportunities I've chosen to take! This program is very supportive of all lifestyles. The professors are here to help with struggles in and out of the classroom. I am 25 years old with two young lives depending upon my success. The love-filled courses with our wonderful professors pushed me to be better--not only to be better, but to think BIGGER! Next year's class: I recommend connecting with the tutors, keeping an open mind, as well as having great time management skills. Be prepared to be welcomed with open arms!!

Tyrone Ozea Hudson Sr.

Being in Odyssey has helped me a lot in many different ways. I learned about a lot of poetry and authors that I never heard of. I am glad to learn that many of these poets write about freedom and women's rights back then in time. I am very glad to have this opportunity to be a part of the Odyssey class of 2023.

Odyssey has been a journey of learning and lots of reading. I never read about many of these poets before but enjoyed learning about them through Odyssey. Odyssey is an adventure for learning more to enjoy yourself and want more in life by educating yourself to never give up.

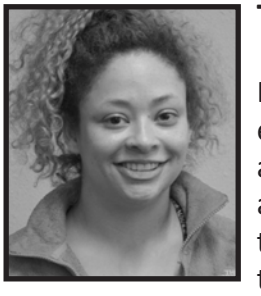
I made a promise to myself, my family, my mom, and uncle that I will not give up. We love and miss you, Mom and Uncle head. Keep watching over us. I keep hearing my mom and uncle telling me that I can do it and saying don't give up. I have met some awesome classmates. We have lots of fun in class; I am very thankful to have met all of them.

Aida Inunca Pijal

Odyssey is a safe place where everyone feels a sense of belonging. For many years, I dreamed of going back to school, but I did not know how to do it. One day I met Marisol Gonzalez (Odyssey '17) at the west side playground of Madison, and she invited me to try Odyssey. At that time, I was not sure whether to do it or not because I thought that I might not be eligible. However, my desire to apply for the program was living in my mind.

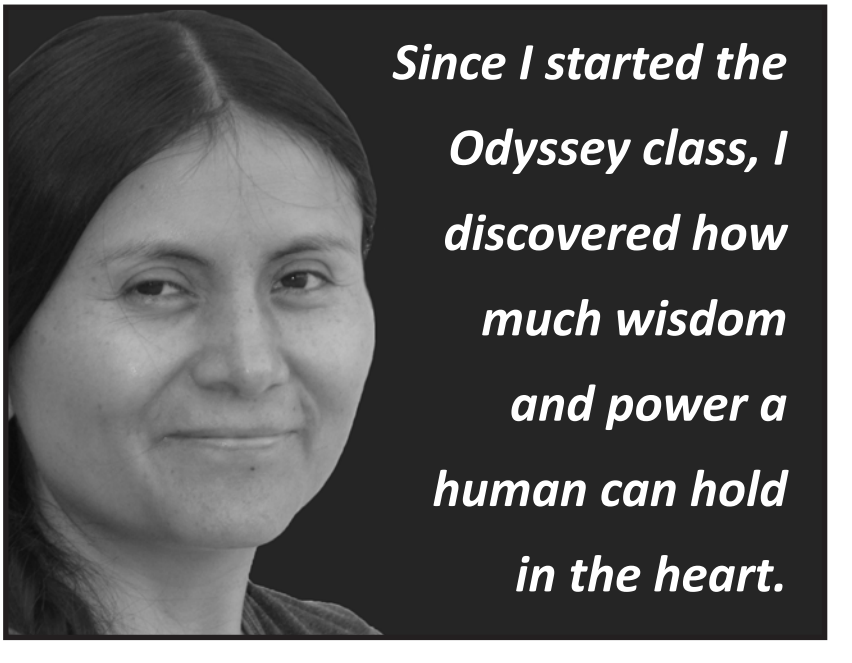
I express my gratitude to Emily because she believed in me, and I got into the program. Odyssey made me feel I belonged. Odyssey was a journey of discovering a lot of new tools, such as meeting new communities and cultures, sharing stories, gaining inspiration to continue studying and dreaming up high, and so on. No other programs or courses I have taken in my life have had such an amazing impact on my life.

Every class was full of great work materials going straight to enrich my knowledge, especially because English is my third language. Many of the tools I learned helped me to understand not just English culture and art but also the culture and art of the world. It was something I had never learned before since coming to this country. Thank you, Odyssey Project!



Tierra Kimbrew

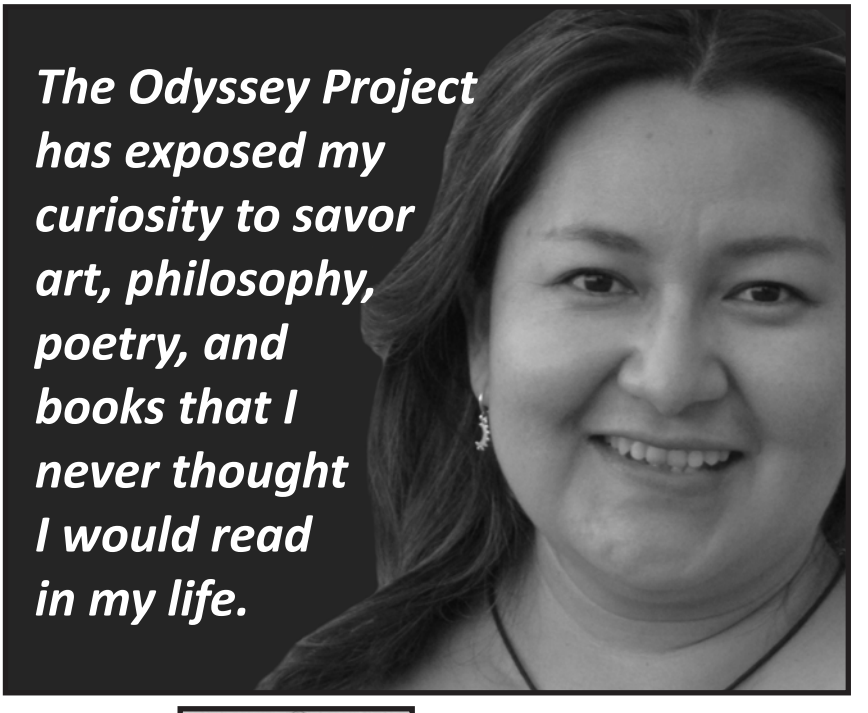
I want to thank Emily for her endless support. She truly holds a gift in her ability to not allow anyone to give up on themselves, ever! I applied for the Odyssey program during a confusing time in my life. I wasn't sure what was next for me, and my lifestyle was unhealthy and spiraling quickly. Odyssey put me back on track with my life goals. Odyssey has made me a more confident learner! I look forward to continuing my learning journey beyond the Odyssey Program.



Maricela Martinez Munguía

I am proud to be the daughter of parents who taught me perseverance and to move forward in life, even when times are difficult. My father used to tell me, "Hija, get together with people who have different perceptions and who have experienced tough times in life and learn from them."

Joining Odyssey has been exactly what my father used to tell me. Here in Odyssey, I found wonderful people as well as my classmates and teachers and also tutors. They always showed me perseverance. I also want to give thanks to my family and my friends: they have always been there for me to encourage me to never give up.



Lavinia Miller

Odyssey gave me the opportunity to give myself a better path from what was given to me from the day I was born. I was physically stalling because I had no one behind me, but soon that would change for me. In 2022, I got a call. With that call, I was asked, are you ready? Huh, ready, okay now. I understand I applied for Odyssey a couple years ago. Yes, I was ready. I was asked a couple of questions about if I was picked to be in class, will I put everything into finishing and graduating. My answer was all the truth within me. A couple weeks later, I was accepted, not knowing this class would help open my mind to life and what was in store for me, giving me the tools I was missing to start my journey on the road to success. I want to take this moment to thank all staff members of Odyssey and my classmates as well as friends. I want to thank both my mothers and thank my children for giving me hope and belief for myself.

Saul Naxi

I was looking for an opportunity to further my education and was looking in places where I felt out of place. Odyssey, on the other hand, gave me the opportunity to lift myself up. The project gave me the opportunity to visualize my future one more time. After trying and trying to educate myself and feeling like a failure because I could not overcome my anxiety, Odyssey changed the way I think about myself and helped me to overcome my fear to learn new things I have never experienced. For example, I was never exposed to black history. This is a connection I personally love because learning about black history I gain so much inspiration from these amazing people like Frederick Douglass, Malcolm X, and Dr. King. This enlightening part has forever changed the way I think about myself and how I see myself today and in the future.

So thank you, Odyssey, but more importantly, thank you to all the community that forms this wonderful project. Thank you for all your efforts to find the help all thirty of us needed while you watch us grow and go through our transformation. Thank you, Odyssey.

Keely Nelson-Gray

Odyssey has given me hope for my educational future. I struggled with school as a young adult. I was very unfocused and careless. Having children at a young age did not make it any easier. I had hopes to continue my education after receiving my HSED when I was nineteen. Odyssey opened up a path I didn't believe I'd ever have access to go down. As I am completing the Odyssey Project, I am so grateful for all of the wonderful resources, especially Emily and her parents for making this possible for me.

I am now enrolled to continue school in the fall as a liberal arts transfer with MATC in hopes to receive my bachelor's degree in the future. Today I stand here with so many emotions looking, seeing all of my classmates every Wednesday! I just hope they and anyone reading this knows it's never too late and you can do anything you put your mind to.

Gael Rodriguez

The Odyssey Program has opened many doors in my life, mentally and physically, and I would like to thank Emily for the opportunity to be in her class. Hopefully this motivates my little sister and gives her a boost. If I can do it, she can also do it. This program has helped me stay focused in life, make new friends, and learn something new every time I came and increased my writing and reading skills.

Kiana Sims

UW Odyssey, I will start off by saying, amazing! You want to grow, this is the place to be. This is the place to learn, and it's really fun. I never thought I would like college due to having challenges with writing. It helps mothers that feel like they're drowning find themselves and their confidence. It teaches me how to teach my kids. UW Odyssey taught me to never give up. Now I feel prepared to fight for a son that was taken from me when he was eight months hold. He is eight, turning nine March 31st, so UW Odyssey is more than school. It becomes more like family.

Dominique Smith

"Talent without hard work is only potential." Because of this opportunity afforded to me through Odyssey, I am able to utilize my talents to their full potential, constantly evolving and learning ways to implement my talents in my life. Before Odyssey, I had become complacent with just surviving…

Tiara Smith

I'm free; I'm human, but I'm comfortable with me. I'm capable, got everything I need.

I'm focused and I'm living out my dreams. I feel my family and the love surrounding me. There's nothing in this world I'd rather be, than me, I'm free!

Roxanna Sobrevilla

When I decided to join Odyssey, I was a month late. I waited until the following year, and look, here I am. "Overcoming adversity and achieving dreams through my higher education!" Thank you to the Class of 2023, and thank you to every single person who worked, helped, and assisted us. Thank you to my kids, the reason why I will continue to strive for a better future.

Guadalupe Valerio Aragon

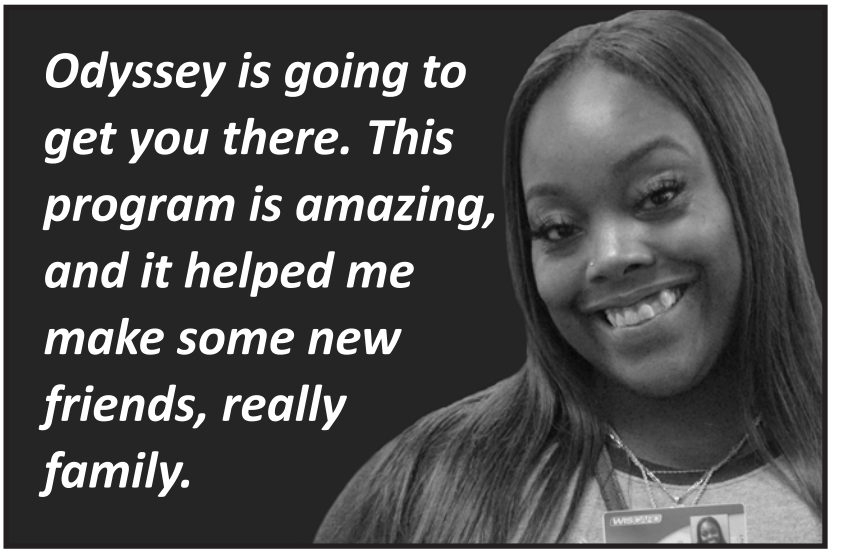
When I applied to Odyssey, I remember only telling a few people because if I didn't get in, I wouldn't have had to explain it. I first want to thank Emily for giving me an opportunity, a spot in this class. I've learned many things in this class, different backgrounds, perspectives, and a new family.

Andrea White

I am a mother of two and now a 2023 Odyssey graduate. Since starting Odyssey in September 2022, my growth has been tremendous. Imagine being in the same career field for the past eight years to finding my voice in a classroom of 29 other people finding theirs as well, to end up nine months later being published in two separate news articles, getting comfortable with public speaking, and not only starting a new career path but basically getting my dream career. I can give myself all of the credit, but I owe a lot to the Wednesday nights spent in discussion, writing, laughter, encouragement and community at the UW South Madison Partnership building. Odyssey is a place where my children and I feel at home, loved and supported. All of my work and home problems can be left at the door, and I have the space to grow and learn. For those who are thinking about applying for Odyssey…. don't think…Just DO IT! Your mind and way of thinking will expand in ways that you would never even have thought.

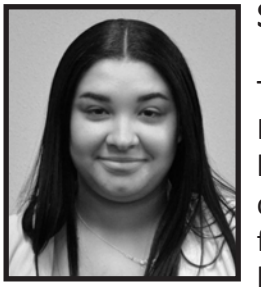
Mya Whitson

I knew that my educational journey was not over, but until finding out about Odyssey from my sister-in-law and meeting Emily, I didn't know how I was going to make it happen. Now I'm well into stride on this mental marathon. I have been tired and in desperate need of a nap. I have been afraid my work wouldn't be the best, but I didn't give up. Failure was not an option.



Amanda Willis

Odyssey has been a game changer in my life, giving me confidence to do things I wouldn't dare to do, and I like it. Not like it, love it! I have become a reader. I hear the words that I never knew, and knowing the meaning is everything. It has helped me get closer to my dreams. College should not be a dream; it should happen just like it does.



Sinetra Wilson

Thank you all, Class of 2023! I've learned so much about history and about my classmates! I found a new family full of different backgrounds. I got to expand my knowledge of writing and the humanities. I received so much support from Emily and my teachers, making sure I was caught up and never behind.

Zykia Wilson

Odyssey has been a big part of my life, and it helped me become a better me, not wanting to give up, to keep going and succeed. I never thought I could do it, but I did, and I'm so proud of myself.

On my first day being around 29 other people and expressing myself and my feelings, I was so nervous and afraid. I'm so grateful that I got to experience this opportunity, and I thank you for letting me achieve this.

"My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive, and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style."—Maya Angelou.

Odyssey's Six Programs

ODYSSEY COURSE

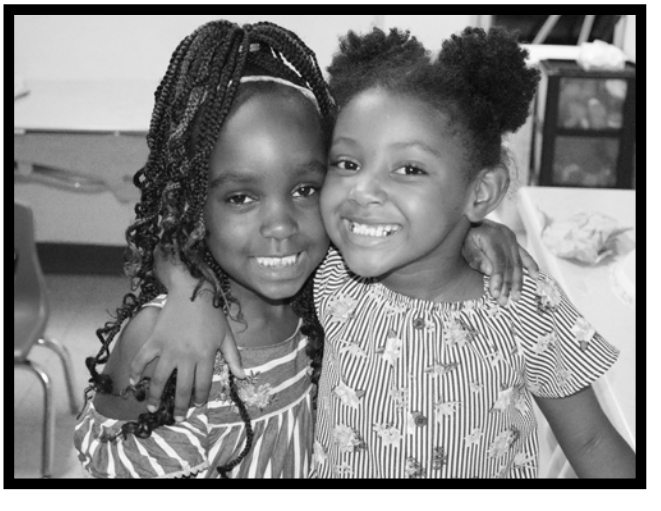
Each year since 2003, 30 adults facing financial barriers embark on a transformational two-semester journey empowering them to overcome adversity and achieve dreams through higher education. All students receive free tuition, textbooks, materials, childcare, and dinner and are registered as UW-Madison special students. Through lively discussions of literature, philosophy, history, theatre, music, and art in a classroom in South Madison, Odyssey students not only gain six UW credits in English Literature but also acquire skills in writing, reading, and critical thinking, a stronger voice, and greater confidence in themselves and their futures.

ONWARD ODYSSEY

If Odyssey helps to light a spark within students, Onward Odyssey feeds this flame through programming and wraparound services for its over 500 alumni. Odyssey supports its graduates through advising, tutoring, targeted courses, and financial resources as they pursue college degrees and other dreams. Onward Odyssey offers a supportive learning community that leverages the strong relationships that Odyssey Project alumni have with each other and with faculty and staff as they continue their education. Graduates of Odyssey have gone from homelessness to bachelor's and master's degrees; Onward Odyssey supports alumni both academically and personally throughout the journey.

ODYSSEY JUNIOR

Through a weekly literacy and arts enrichment program for 50+ children and grandchildren of Odyssey students, Odyssey Junior gets the next generation excited about learning and more hopeful about their futures. While their parents and grandparents are in class, children from newborns ("Baby Badgers") to teenagers participate in an enrichment program designed to develop their interest and confidence in self-discovery and expression through the arts, reading, writing, and speaking. Odyssey takes a multigenerational approach to learning, encouraging families to view all its members as "college bound" with gifts to unwrap.

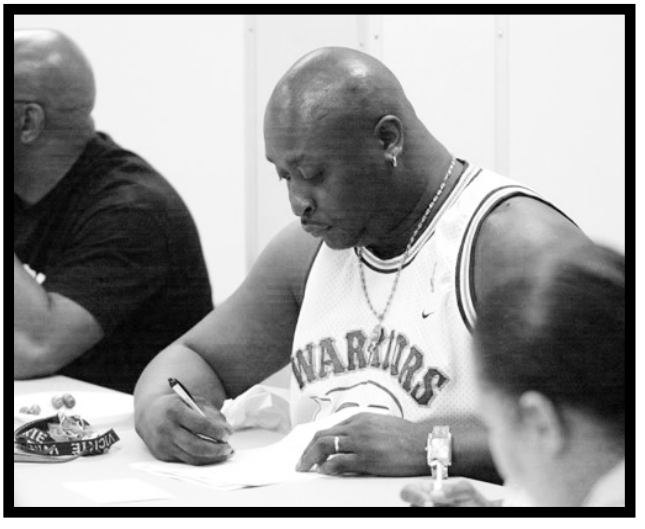


ODYSSEY SENIOR

Odyssey Senior offers enrichment to Odyssey students 60 and older OR a 60-or-older relative (parent, grandparent, aunt, sibling, etc.) of an Odyssey student. This program offers a warm-hearted, encouraging way to capture the unique stories of Odyssey elders. Students create (via writing or speaking) individual stories, read brief samples from autobiographical writings by Malcolm X, Maya Angelou, and others, learn how to do oral history, interview each other, and publish an Odyssey Senior Oracle making history come alive.

ODYSSEY BEYOND BARS

Odyssey Beyond Bars teaches life-changing credit-bearing and noncredit UW-Madison courses to students incarcerated in Wisconsin prisons. Students in prison improve their academic and communication skills, gain greater confidence and perspective, and receive academic and financial advising designed to help them succeed when they re-enter their communities. Like the community-based Odyssey courses, Odyssey Beyond Bars courses provide a newfound sense of hope and an on-ramp to higher education for adult learners. As Victor Hugo observed, “He who opens a school door closes a prison.”



ODYSSEY BEYOND WARS

Launching in Fall 2023, Odyssey Beyond Wars serves veterans who might be challenged by their transition from military to civilian life, are looking for an engaged community of peers, and would like a jump start in furthering their education. All military veterans -- regardless of time in service, deployment history, disability status, or discharge status -- are encouraged to apply. Graduates earn six transferable college credits in English at no cost and without using any VA benefits. This program is open both to Odyssey alumni who are veterans and to veterans from the community who have not completed the core Odyssey course.

In addition to our six programs, we offer the **ODYSSEY FAMILY LEARNING CENTER** out at our South Madison Partnership Space, 2238 S. Park Street, with tutoring, music lessons, advising, child enrichment, and family activities. We depend on a whole team of tutors, volunteers, staff, partners, and donors to make our programs succeed. If you are interested in learning more about any of our six programs and the Family Learning Center, contact Emily Auerbach at emily.auerbach@wisc.edu or 608-262-3733.

Meet the Odyssey Team for 2022-2023

Odyssey Project and Onward Odyssey

Executive Director: Professor Emily Auerbach

Director of Adult Education: Professor Kevin Mullen

Program Manager: Emily 'Em' Azad

Odyssey Assistant Program and Development Manager: Sarah Lensmire

Odyssey Coordinator: Christina DeMars

Odyssey Assistant Coordinator: Brienne Flaherty Betin

Odyssey Success Coach: Brian Benford '07, UW MSW

Odyssey Case Manager: Michelle Bozeman Odyssey '11, Lakeview College BSN

Director of Development & Community Partnerships: Jenny Pressman

Budget Manager: Roberta 'Bobbie' Wang

Classroom Assistant & Odyssey Ambassador: Char Braxton '06

Oracle and Yearbook Designer: Beth Auerbach

Photography: Kalli Anderson, Emily 'Em' Azad, Lilian Kreuser, Sarah Lensmire, Hedi Rudd '12

Odyssey Teaching Faculty: Nidia Banuelos, Erin Celello, Christy Clark- Pujara, Jean Feraca, Baron Kelly, Gene Phillips, Ben Shannon, Craig Werner

Academic and Financial Aid Advisors: JP Pfund, Martin Rouse, Ace Hilliard, Sarah Stilp, Autumn Sanchez

Odyssey Guests: Keena Atkinson '10, Bob Auerbach, Sanford Biggers, Wildcat Ebony Brown, Burgess Byrd, Amy Gilman, Alphaeus Green Jr., Mark Hines, Rich Medina, René Robinson '08, Lenore Routte

Onward Odyssey Guests: Burgess Byrd, Marina Cavichiolo Grochocki, Eliot Finkelstein, Leah Freeman, Alphaeus Green Jr., Nicolle Hill, Alfonso Morales, Jen Rubin, Ben Shannon, James Spartz, Darshana Sreedhar Mini, Jennifer Torres Barrera, PBS and Madison Trust for Historic Preservation (Linda Friend, Carol Griskavich, Jamal Jones, Margaret Nellis, JP Patterson, Vicki Siekert, Kevin Walters)

Odyssey Interns and Student Hourly Helpers: Chelsea Bivens (Boltz Center fellow), Jayvon Davis, Jerome Dizon (Social Work Intern); Summer Kleppek, Sasha Kryazh (general assistance), Zawadi Ozulamoi

Odyssey Facilities: Brenda González (Director of Community-University Engagement) and Merry Farrier-Babanovski/Tanika Apaloo (Assistant Director), Candace Patterson (Coordinator), UW-South Madison Partnership

Class Meals: Ellie Beck, Michelle Bozeman ‘11, Angela Morgan ‘11, Abby Kearns, Bobbie Wang and Mary Circle, St. James Lutheran Church

Volunteer Tutors and Teaching Assistants: Holly Anderson, Nate Godfrey, Erika Gonzalez, Rachel Hutchinson, Stanley Jackson, Gabbi Kelenyi, Lisa Marvel Johnson, Joe Linstroth, Heidi May, John Morgan, Cindy Poe, Carol Poore, Jen Rubin, Berit Thorson, Seth Umbaugh

Odyssey Junior

Director: Karen Dreyfuss

Odyssey Junior Teaching Staff: Angie Bazan, Brian Benford ’07, Ellie Breitfeld, Ron Burford ’20, Leigh Button, Christina DeMars, Carolina Diaz, Raquel Diaz, Jerome Flowers, Marisol Gonzalez ’17, Fabiola Garcia Miranda, Karla Holguin, Michelle Mack ‘22, Mackenzie McDermit, Haley J. Weaver

Odyssey Junior Volunteers, Tutors, and Guests: Keena Atkinson ’10, Amy Basel, Katie Blanchard, Savion Castro, Sasha Debevec-McKenney, Lazaro Enriques, Tala Fawwaz Shaibi, Jerome Flowers, Amy Garvoille, Will Glenn Sr., Qiana Holmes, Tiffany Malone, Ella Rogers, Mars Subola, Seth Umbaugh, Chris Wagner, Pat Walsh, Mary Wells ’07, Ed Wreh, ALL Stories, Badger Volunteers (Junhyuk Son [Will], Trista Anderson, Jenna Wagner, Megha Brahmbhatt, Anna Ravis, Caley Wilson, Colin Hemme, Tooba Ahmed, Andy Chang, Aanika Parikh, Sydney Urben), Central Library (Nate Clark, Jesse Vieu, Rob DZ Franklin), Cultural Connections (Pat Dillon, Terrance Adeyanju), Drum Power (Yorel Lashley), Go Team Therapy Dogs, Literally Arts (Jamie Henke, Dr. Hailey Love), Madison Circus Space (Hildy Bee, Rob Summerbell, Lilah Summerbell), Madison Reading Project (Melissa Hornung, Gloria Heiss), UW Mead Witter School of Music (Carrie Backman), UW Space Place (Kay Kriewald)

Odyssey Beyond Bars

Director: Peter Moreno

Associate Director: Jennifer Fandel

Academic Program Manager: Lauren Surovi/Taylor Kirby

Program Coordinator: Rachel Ritacco

Success Coach: Mike Exum

Research and Outreach Coordinator: Pearly Wong

Instructors: Jean Feraca with Jerry Hancock, Dana Oswald (Racine Correctional), Jennifer Fandel (Columbia Correctional), Charles Rybek (Green Bay Correctional), Jennie Young (Green Bay Correctional), Ivan Babanovski (Oakhill Correctional), Ben Shannon (Oakhill Correctional)

Volunteer Tutors: Erin Ackerson, Gavin Bovre, Connor Cheever, Anne Durst, Jaime Edwards, Jillian Jacklin, Hannah James, Susan Kaye, Megan Kennedy, Kayla Markus, Kaden Paulson-Smith, Vignesh Ramachandran, Liliana Rosen, Erika Spivak, Seth Umbaugh

Storytelling Coaches: Nestor Gomez, Jimmy Gutierrez, Danielle Hairston-Green, Noel Mariano, Ali Muldrow, Brendon Panke, Jen Rubin

Oracle Volunteers: Paige Henning, Lilly Trkla

Guest faculty: Eliot Finkelstein (UW librarian), Alex Stark (UW librarian)

Academic and Financial Aid Advisors: JP Pfund, Martin Rouse, Ace Hilliard

Odyssey Senior

Instructor: Emily Auerbach

Guests: Sandra Adell, Jean Feraca, Ben Shannon, Sarah White

Division of Continuing Studies

Jeffrey Russell (Dean & Vice Provost of Lifelong Learning)

Hope Simon (Associate Dean of Administration and Finance, Budget & Financial Reporting, Human Resources & Payroll)

Donna Gastevich (Associate Dean of Development & Business Engagement, Growth Strategies, Strategy & External Relations)

Colleen Johnson (Director of Development & Business Engagement)

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Letters to the Class of 2024 from the Class of 2023

Dear Odyssey Class of 2024,

You have been accepted into a fantastic class. This class will challenge you in many ways. You have to ask yourself, are you up for the challenge? Now, when I say challenge, you probably are thinking to yourself, like, what have I gotten myself into? But trust the process; you've gotten yourself into a class that wants to see you successful, a staff that will do anything in their power so that you can be successful. The real challenge is, are you going to put that work in?

The daycare is set, the food is there, the transportation is only an ask away. All the resources are here! It's your chance to put that work in. That's the challenge.

Don't forget that Ben Shannon (or next year, Kevin Mullen) is here every Tuesday for tutoring. Keep asking yourself, are you going to put the work in to be successful and to complete the program? The advice that I have for you all is to go to tutoring, get the work done, ask questions, and don't fall behind. The class is still going to go on with or without you. Don't be afraid to ask. In the back of the class are welcoming men and women ready to teach, ready to answer any question you have.

The beginning of the school year was rocky for myself. That's because I was afraid of asking, but a closed mouth doesn't get fed. Remember to ask yourself, are you up for the challenge? And go to tutoring! **(Tameia Allen)**

Damn, I guess I want to be as honest as possible. Trust that Emily is a scout goddess (good at selecting students for Odyssey), and your voice is worth being heard so use it… a lot. Most of us only have a select few people we can trust. Well, just know today is the day you touched gold. Everyone invested in Odyssey is a person you can trust through and through.

This experience reminds me of a time when I was in college and we had received a book at the beginning of the semester. We didn't read it until the near end of the course, and I was so angry. I had this gem for so long and didn't read it five times already. *Tuesdays with Morrie* (read it if you're interested) was life changing, just like Odyssey. Love and light, **(Monel Antut)**

Are you ready for a life changing experience? Get ready to be pushed to your full potential and build bonds that will last a lifetime. Odyssey is one of the BEST programs in Madison—a program where you get to learn and actually have fun while doing it.

When I was accepted into the Odyssey Program, I was so excited, but after my first day of class I got a little nervous. How was I going to juggle my 10-hour work days on top of coming home to my boys and then find a way to set aside some time for me to complete homework? It gets tough, but I can say that Emily and the other staff will not let you give up. So ASK QUESTIONS. If you fall behind, reach out to get help. And no matter what, come to class. They give you amazing support, and doors are always open. They will set you up to succeed and not let you fail.

So congratulations on your first step on your journey to a brighter future, and welcome, Class of 2024. You can do it, and you will succeed! (**Antoneah Armour**)

"Never trust your fears, they don't know your strength."
-Athena Singh

If you're scared, you are not alone. I was too when I first walked into class. Actually, that's an understatement. I was petrified cowering in the corner, too scared to look anyone in the eye and I barely spoke above a whisper.

But the beautiful part of this space that's been created between these four walls is knowing that it's perpetually patient and welcoming. Even if you're scared and trembling, trust me, it'll be okay because there is always a helping hand to guide you along the way. Sure, the path ahead may be rocky, but you have not only the shoulders of your fellow classmates to lean on but also the amazing professors and countless alumni all around you to help brace you along your journey. **(Kaitlin Birdsall)**

I would like to first say that UW Odyssey is more than just a course and more like a second home. Everyone affiliated with this program, from the students to the staff, is very supportive and understanding, making it feel more like a family. On this journey you'll be tested to come out of your comfort zone, and the respectful environment makes it easier to do so. In this program you'll learn that everyone has a voice, and if you don't, they'll give you the confidence to find it.

Odyssey was nothing short of a melting pot with all the diverse cultures surrounding it. I really loved being around different cultures that spoke different languages. If Emily and her amazing team select you to be a part of the Odyssey family, just know it's an honor and take full advantage of the opportunity given. I promise you won't regret it.

The UW Odyssey Project changed my life like it did for many other students, and I'm positive it will do the same for you. (**Jonathan Booey**)

Welcome, Odyssey 2024! You have been invited to a safe space and lifelong family. My best advice to you is to use your gift—your voice. Know that you were chosen because you're important and special. Take advantage of every opportunity that's given as in UW IDs, bus passes, theatre tickets, tutoring, free childcare, etc. Most importantly, stay on top of your homework. It's easy to get behind. I wish you the very best of luck. Know that this is just the beginning of your journey filled with success. (**Jekeiria Booker**)

Welcome to the next chapter of your life. This journey will be filled with many life-changing experiences and aha moments. I know right now some of you are nervous, but I promise you, you got this, so just relax! Odyssey is built around a supporting environment, which will encourage you to succeed. Odyssey is more than an educational program, it's a support system, it's a family, it's a lifeline, it's an opportunity for growth. Emily and staff are here to support you each step of the way.

And I know you're thinking… what if it's hard, or what if something in my life comes up that prevents me from giving this family my all? No Problem!! Odyssey will support that as well; all one must do is ask. When or if things get challenging, don't be afraid to ask for assistance because this program supports the whole person. Enjoy every moment of learning with your peers because in the blink of an eye you'll be finished. As I write this letter, I'm reminiscing over the great times I had. In this family, learning becomes exciting and interesting; there are so many great articles, poems, and stories to be read.

We've created so many great memories together, and I know you are going to do the same. We had several opportunities to partake in extra curriculum activities outside the class with Odyssey. In these moments our class became family, forming a bond that will last a lifetime.

Welcome, Class of 2024. Your ships await.
(Sarah Branch)

Get ready and come ready because Emily does not come to play! But I wouldn't have had it any other way. Don't worry about what others think: just know what you came to do, and that's to become a successful and better you! You can do it, and you will.

I'm so thankful for this opportunity that I was able to be a part of. I wish it would never end, but Odyssey has prepared me for my journey that I'm destined for. It has prepared me, and I grew to become a more confident woman. I'm no longer scared to succeed. I'm ready for my future. I'm ready to conquer it all, and you will too! You got this.
(Gabrielle Brown)

Welcome to a new adventure and a new challenge. My name is Fredy Carcaño. I am from Mexico. Being an ESL student made it very difficult for me. Balancing school, family, homework, and work is very tough, but you can do it!

When I started this class, I was very scared because I didn't know what to expect coming into the Odyssey program. Odyssey will show you how to be a successful person. My advice to you is to keep coming to the class and do not miss any days. Also, try to always do your assignments on time. If you miss something, that means you missed a lot.

Let me tell you how happy I am for you that you got accepted. Believe me, it will be the best decision and opportunity for your life. You will learn many things and you will be a different person by the end of the year. Enjoy every moment. **(Fredy Carcaño)**

You made it, you are one of the 30! Life-changing opportunities don't come often, and right now is your moment. You are sitting in the seat you are in because it was meant for you. I may not know any of you personally, but I know what it is like to struggle, and I know the thoughts and dreams that come to mind while you are in the middle of a storm. This is the answer to many of your questions and wishes. In this Odyssey (journey), you are going to have the love and support you wish you had to get where you want to be in life.

Before your experience is over, you will have the answer to your question of whether or not school is for you. Enjoy this experience and give it your all. Investing in you is the most important thing you will ever do in life, and right now you have a lot to gain. Stay focused, be proud of yourself, and always keep in mind that you are worth every beautiful thing life has to offer. Congratulations and God bless. Respectfully **(Mark Español)**

Congratulations, you have just begun to take a new journey in life, getting set for getting a college degree. I'm not special, but I've almost let a lot of my feelings destroy my spirit. We have challenges we face; whether it's relationships, bank accounts, housing, or grief of losing a loved one. There were plenty of times I could have given up but didn't. I have gained a family and opened up to relationships that I could have chosen not to build.

The world is about to open up for you in magnificent ways, with new adventures and a whole new world of freedom previously unexplained or explored. The real world is even bigger and includes even more opportunities in life. Along the way in this new chapter with the Odyssey program, there are a few things I hope you will hold close to your heart. Never give up. This will be an experience you'll enjoy and a family you'll never forget. I gained faith and a family, and I want to say I'm grateful and blessed that I've completed this program. **(Curtrice Foster)**

You are chosen! This opportunity is life-changing! Be ready to learn a handful of useful knowledge, eye-opening experiences, and discussion. Odyssey made me dive deeper into myself to figure out who I'm going to be and how I'll get there.

Don't be afraid to ask for help! Emily makes sure none of her students go unheard. My classmates are all different, unique, and I was open to learning more about them in and out of class. Thanks to Emily and her team! I'll be going bigger than phlebotomy! I'm going to be a registered nurse. Be passionate, motivated, and, lastly, loving! **(Geresa Homesly)**

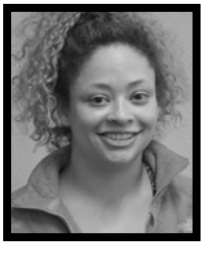
My name is Tyrone Ozea Hudson Sr., student of the Odyssey Class of 2023. No matter what you may be going through, remember that you are all worthy to yourself and loved ones. Always believe in yourself and never quit trying to improve yourself because there's nothing more important than when it comes to wanting more out of life by getting an education. The Odyssey Project can help you in many ways to further education. During my adventure in Odyssey, I met some wonderful classmates that are like family. We bonded as a whole class and had fun in class. **(Tyrone Ozea Hudson Sr.)**

Welcome to a new Journey of experience. Let me tell you that at the beginning I was not sure how I was going to make it because English is my third language and my understanding was limited during the class. Suddenly, class after class I felt on board and part of the crew. So don't be afraid at the beginning if you feel confused or feel that you don't know how it is going to be. Every class is so welcoming and easy to feel part of it.

Also, I felt more confident when Emily said, "no matter what life is, come to class. If you have not completed your assignment, come to class, call me any time, if you need help." She really means that. Take it for granted that they are right there to help you, so don't hesitate to ask them for help any time you need, even just to talk with them. And if you are falling behind with late assignments, take your time to catch up with them, so you don't get overloaded. Talk to them and together you can make a plan that best works for you.

One biggest tool that helped me in Odyssey was taking advantage of tutoring. You can either do it online or in person. In person, they have Tuesdays 5 to 7:30 pm for tutoring, and they are very helpful. If you don't have time to come on Tuesdays, you can talk to them and set up another time that works best for you.

Follow the path of your dreams, and know you are in the right place. **(Aida Inuca)**



Welcome to an experience of a lifetime! Today, a new chapter has begun. What you get out of it is completely up to you! Participate! Speak out! The sooner the better, because you are all family here.

Odyssey has been a wonderful experience not only for myself, but also for my three children, who also really have looked forward to the time spent here.

My biggest advice is to take advantage of all of the many opportunities. Everyone is here to support and see everyone realize their true potential! Don't let yourself fall behind on homework or get discouraged… But if you do, don't worry: Emily's true talent is her ability to push others to believe in themselves and never give up!

Congratulations on your newest journey. Here's to the Class of 2024! **(Tierra Kimbrew)**

I am Maricela Martinez Munguia. I'm from Atlixco Puebla. I was a student of the Odyssey Class of 2023. It is a pleasure to greet you in these lines. I want to congratulate you for being part of Odyssey. Several questions will probably arise, and I know that many emotions are invading you right now. One of them is if, perhaps, you can achieve it, or maybe you do not see yourself fitting into this great adventure towards knowledge. I want to tell you that all these emotions will appear very often and that sometimes fear, excuses, work, and family commitments will wish to entertain themselves through your objective of why you started this Odyssey because the path of education is not always easy. If it were easy, many more would start doing this. Keep in mind that the result of your effort will be rewarded in different ways, like intellectual and emotional growth. You will look at life from another perspective and with flexibility, and you will not give up on your dreams. I wish you a year of excellent educational enrichment.

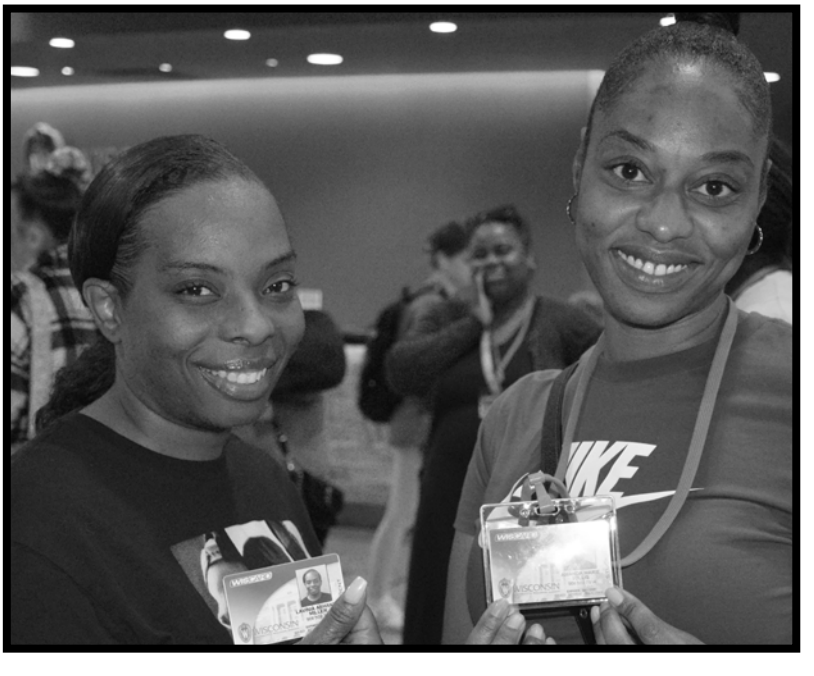
At the same time, you make new friends in your classroom where you create a supportive community because in life, to continue and get ahead, we always need to create a good group that encourages us and adds to our life, as it was in my case. I want to mention that this Odyssey Project has a phenomenal team of a teacher like Emily, tutors, professional caregivers in childcare, and activities for your teenagers who will always be willing to help you and take the backpack with you. So don't give up, and continue this challenging but rewarding Odyssey adventure. **(Maricela Martinez Munguia)**

Take the opportunity to understand your purpose. Today is the day that's going to change your life. Odyssey is a journey to never forget.
(Lavinia Miller)

On the one hand, be happy that among lots of applicants, you were a lucky one, having this life-changing opportunity given to you! On the other hand, try to relax and enjoy the ride, and if things get hard, do not get discouraged. If you come across the reading assignments and you are having a hard time or you do not know what to write in the writing assignments—and especially if English is not your first language—, please make good use of the dictionary or the tutoring offered here.

Do reach out to the whole Odyssey team. Moreover, open your mind and let your mind be inspired by the guest speakers, and go to the events Odyssey offers. All this experience is designed for you! This is your opportunity to do the inner growth you have not been able to do in the past. This is the moment to shine, the moment to make yourself proud, and to make your kids and family proud. More importantly, this is something you get to do to better yourself and open new opportunities within you.

Good luck, and inspire others when the time comes to write this letter for the next dreamers.
(Saul Naxi Perez)



This is an amazing opportunity. Take advantage of every moment! Enjoy the time spent with classmates and all of the wonderful knowledge and opportunities. Throughout Odyssey, I met so many amazing people and was also granted a scholarship from the Business Forum!

Before Odyssey, I didn't see a chance at receiving higher education, but I will now be continuing my education in a liberal arts transfer program with Madison College in the fall. What felt impossible is no longer the impossible! Never give up.

My advice is to stay on track with homework, participate in class, and know that attendance is very important. I only missed one in-person class due to COVID, but I still attended on zoom. Let me tell you, zoom is not the same as in person. I missed the atmosphere of the classroom. I wish you all the best in your Odyssey journey! **(Keely Nelson-Gray)**

You guys might be strangers for now, but once you get to know your classmates, you guys are going to have a special bond. Odyssey is one of the best things that could happen to you, and now that you are in, take advantage of it. Not everybody got the opportunity you have right now to be in your spot.

If you ever need help with anything, literally anything, please let Emily know. She will definitely help you. Don't hesitate to ask her for help with anything happening in your life. Emily and all the staff are extremely nice and great people to talk to. **(Gael Rodriguez)**

Don't question your purpose; just know God knows your purpose. Don't worry about others. Keep your head in the game, focus on your work, and master who you want to become. Stay focused. Keep your head held high and push forward. Dreams will come true. Have patience. UW Odyssey Projects is a creation and a step to elevate. Appreciate every moment, even if it may come with pain or happiness. Just know that you are on the right path, and focus on your purpose.

You are greater than your past. You're not your mistakes. Close out any old chapters. You're worthy of knowledge, and stay resilient. Believe in yourself. Love you. Be who you want to be, and give what you're supposed to give. You have the power and the best ability to be who you want.

Thanks, UW Odyssey. You showed me to fight and never give up. Thank you for believing in me. I am very grateful for this wonderful experience. I want to thank my classmates as well as my teachers. Emily, being a mother to us, your love is so unconditional. Brian, thanks for always being an ear to listen and for supporting me. Thank you for the tutoring classes every Tuesday. (**Kiana Sims**)

I come to you with the best intentions and sincerest advice, as you are about to embark on the opportunity of a lifetime. Be prepared to experience an eclectic variety of literature, amazing artistic talents, and a support system like no other. Open your mind and be prepared to grow beyond your wildest dreams.

Before embarking on this journey through Odyssey, I had shut out any hopes of being more than a wife and mother. Continuing my educational endeavors was out of the question. I'm too old, I thought. I had become comfortable with toning my potential down to the bare minimum—until Odyssey. Each week I attended class I was inspired to be more, to do more, and to pursue my passion. I began writing again and found the power in my pen. Poetry provided a lane for me to express my perspective creatively. People could hear and feel the emotions, and I could feel myself evolving.

I say this to say to you, allow yourself to be vulnerable with your feelings and trust your classmates, advisors, and Emily. This safe haven of support you will inherit will carry you to your desired destination, through any trials or obstacles you may face on the way. Don't be afraid to utilize your voice and be vocal in your vision, as it is important and valued.

Congratulations on being selected to attend Odyssey Class of 2024. I would wish luck unto you, but the potential is already in you. I just hope you see it too! Best and sincerest wishes,
(Dominique Smith)

If you're reading this, congratulations. You are one of the 30 deserving students who have been accepted into the Odyssey program. Don't take this opportunity for granted because it will change your life. I came into this program with an open mind and heart; you should too! Life comes with all kinds of challenges. Most are meant to bring you down. When I started this program, I was homeless, no car, and no real direction on where I wanted my life to go. Throughout the course of this program, I've gained everything that I didn't have. Emily and everyone on the staff supported me to great lengths, and I will forever be grateful. To be a part of something so powerful is something I will never forget. Everything I was taught here will be applied to my everyday life forever. My message may seem over exaggerated, but it's not.

Take every class seriously, push yourself to be more than who you were yesterday, and cherish the bonds you will create with your peers. They are people you will never forget. Through my trials and tribulations, everyone was there for me. In May, when you graduate, I will be graduating as well, again. From nursing school, that is, yes, a future nurse I am. So I am here to say, stay focused and dream big. You never know where this class may take you. Best of luck, Class of 2024! You made it.
(Tiara Smith)

It's an honor sitting here and congratulating the Class of 2024! I love this for y'all--the experience, the amazing people you will get to meet, and what you'll learn. It's one of the best lifetime opportunities. Enjoy every moment. Everything is possible if you put your mind to it.

Take advantage of Tuesday tutoring. They are so helpful. I'm thankful for the Class of 2023. Thank you for the great memories. Last but not least, thank you to Wanda and Robert Auerbach. Without them there would be no Emily Auerbach. Thank you for the best experience of my life, and thank you for including my kids! Also thank you for every person involved in Odyssey. We couldn't do it without you! Thank you, and enjoy this experience, Class of 2024! (**Roxanna Sobrevilla)**

My name is Lupita, and I welcome you to a year full of learning and fun. It is important to be yourself, make friends. Odyssey helped me get out of my shell of shyness and made me feel comfortable to talk in front of other individuals. Do your best, you got this! **(Lupita Valerio Aragon)**

You're walking into one of the most beautiful seasons of growth right now because you chose to start the Odyssey program. It's not going to be all easy—but well worth it. Over the weeks I hope you find your voice and get the full experience of being a University of Wisconsin student. Take advantage of the fact that the entire staff is 100% there to go on this journey with you and are there to help you every step of the way. You made the right choice by choosing this program. Good luck and congratulations on your new start! **(Andrea White)**

Welcome to the next adventure on your educational journey. If you're anything like me, you're excited about the prospects of learning more and being top of class, getting everything just right, but what I didn't expect is that my only competition in this class was myself! So get ready for you versus you every week; you will have to push yourself to be better than you knew you could be, and you'll be surprised to find out just how many new things Odyssey will unlock inside of you.

What I loved most about this class is that just when I thought I was all out of gas and didn't have enough steam left to finish, my classmates and Odyssey staff helped me push through. You have found a new family that is willing to help you in any way to make sure you succeed, so take full advantage of it and rise to your full potential. Welcome, Class of '24! **(Mya Whitson)**

There are so many people with different stories and different journeys, but there are also so many similar journeys and stories. When you read the Oracle (student newsletter), there are so many people you can relate to and who will inspire you in many different ways.

Reading the Oracle from the Odyssey alumni of Class of 2022 just sounded too good to be true. They were saying things like judgement-free zone, loving caring community, mind opening, amazing opportunities offered, healing your mind, body, and soul, therapy sessions, making meaningful connections with your fellow classmates and staff, making dreams come true, whether you want to be a reader, a writer, an artist, a painter, a construction worker, a nurse, a lawyer, a surgeon, a doctor—whatever it is you can think of the possibilities are endless, they got your back and they will support you 1000%. When I finally started Odyssey, their truths became mine!

All Mrs. Emily wants in return from you is the best you for you!!!! Sounds too good to be true, right? Now it's your turn to find out! So get ready to have your mind blown!!!!

Congratulations and welcome to the opportunity to go onward in the open-hearted oasis of Odyssey! **(Amanda Willis)**

Be you. Don't be scared to open up, cry, and share your story. I can assure you, everyone sitting in this room has their own battles they're fighting in silence. This will become another family you thought you needed. **(Sinetra Wilson)**

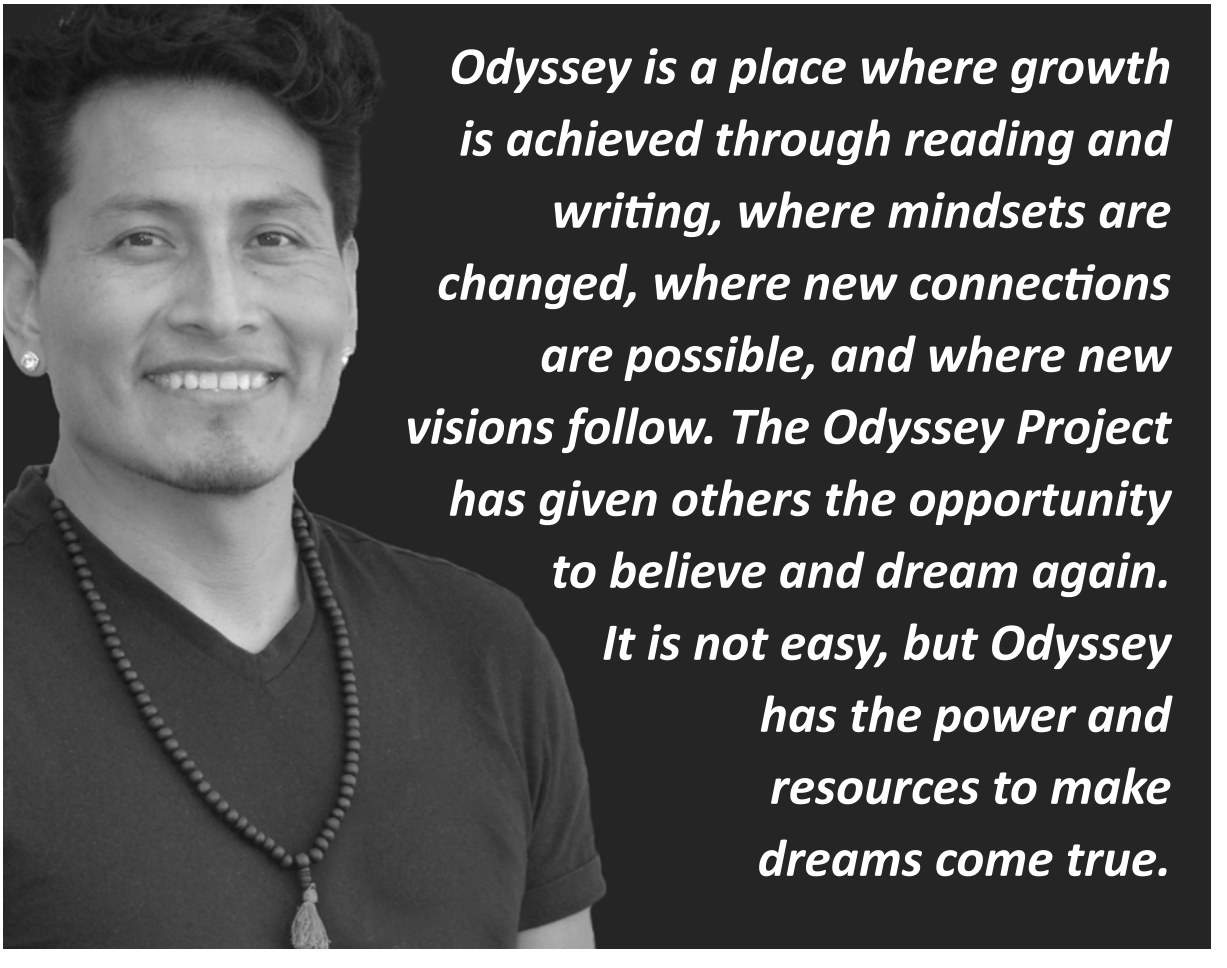
Hey now, you did it! Great way to start this journey; you are on the right path, and Odyssey is going to get you there. This program is amazing, and it really helped me make some new friends, really, family. I was so nervous to start at first, but don't be. You are going to do great, and Emily and her team are there to help you along the way. Always come to class every day; you don't want to miss anything, and do your homework. This really helps you in the end. Stay positive, never give up, and ask questions—it's okay. I learned so much and gained so much from this program. It helped me further my education and gave me confidence. You can do it, no matter what, and don't let anyone stop you. You got this.

Don't give up, and always remember, anything is possible. Never let anyone tell you that you can't do it because you can, and this is only the beginning. **(Zykia Wilson)**

Join the UW Odyssey Project

To be eligible for the Odyssey Project, you need to:

- be at least 18
- have a high school degree, G.E.D., or H.S.E.D. prior to July 1, 2023
- have financial need (income near the federal poverty level)
- possess the ability to read challenging books in English
- make a commitment to attend classes regularly



Email Emily Auerbach at **emily.auerbach@wisc.edu** with questions or for an application or apply online at **www.odyssey.wisc.edu/apply/**.

Please Support the UW Odyssey Project

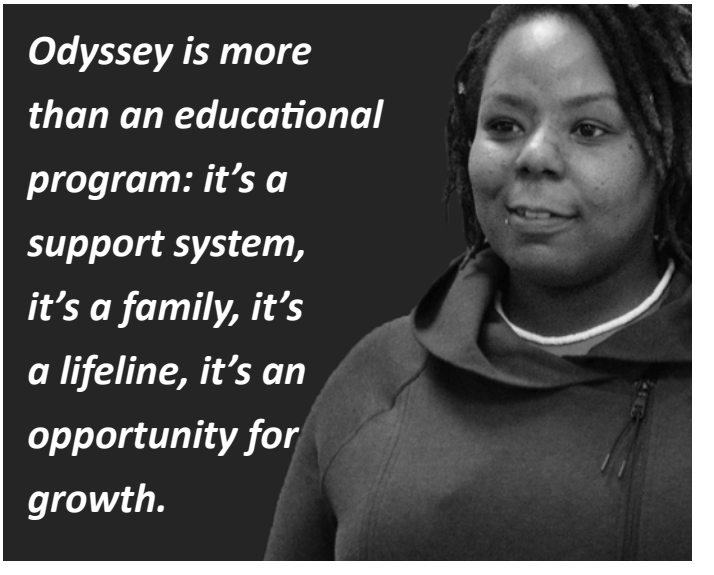
Odyssey changes lives. The following accounts enable us to help Odyssey students, graduates, and families with both their educational and personal expenses.

The Odyssey Project Fund

This fund supports academic programming, including tuition, textbooks, and other expenses associated with Onward Odyssey and the core Odyssey course.

*The Friends of Odyssey Family Fund

This fund supports Odyssey Junior and Odyssey Senior, funds tech access for students, helps families with basic living expenses and unanticipated emergencies, and addresses Odyssey's greatest needs.
*This is also our most flexible fund

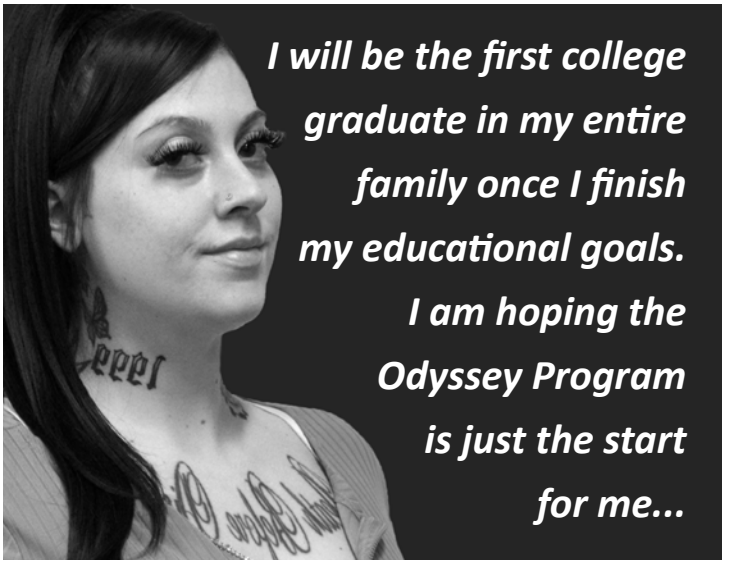


The Odyssey Beyond Bars Fund

This fund supports Odyssey's academic programming and opportunities for learners in Wisconsin prisons.

To see a list of Odyssey's endowment funds, please visit odyssey.wisc.edu/support.

Find uwodysseyproject on:



Ways to Give

Online: odyssey.wisc.edu/support

By check:
make payable to UW Foundation. Please be sure to write the fund name on the memo line.

Mail to:
UW Foundation, US Bank Lockbox Box 78807, Milwaukee, WI 53278-0807

By phone: 800-443-6162

To learn more, contact Jenny Pressman at jenny.pressman@wisc.edu, 608-287-8216.

Memorial and Honorary Student Prizes

Lisa Munro Two-Generation Scholarship

To honor career counselor and social justice activist Lisa Munro, former UW-Madison Dean of Students Mary K. Rouse proposed a two-generation Odyssey scholarship in Lisa's name. Mary Rouse also helped fund the scholarship along with some of Lisa's relatives and friends. Lisa's husband, Dick Goldberg, recently endowed this scholarship to ensure it can be offered to future generations. Awards go to an Odyssey alum and his or her child or grandchild.

The 2023 winner is Burnett Reed, Class of 2021. Burnett works as a special education assistant in the schools and hopes to become a teacher. He is a loving single father to his daughter, Aria, and will use part of the Two-Generation Scholarship to help his daughter succeed academically.

Wanda Auerbach Memorial Prizes

Wanda Auerbach (1927-2012) believed passionately that the richness of a liberal arts education should be available to all, regardless of income or background.

Born poor in Appalachia without running water, she became the first in her family to attend college. After graduating as the valedictorian of Berea College, she earned advanced degrees and became a reference librarian.

A devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, Wanda Auerbach was an ardent supporter of the UW Odyssey Project. In her name, the Auerbach family established an endowment to support prizes to all graduating students each year.

To donate to either of these scholarship funds or to create a new one in honor or memory of someone special in your life, please contact Jenny Pressman at jenny.pressman@wisc.edu or 608-287-8216.

Sharon Stark Scholarship

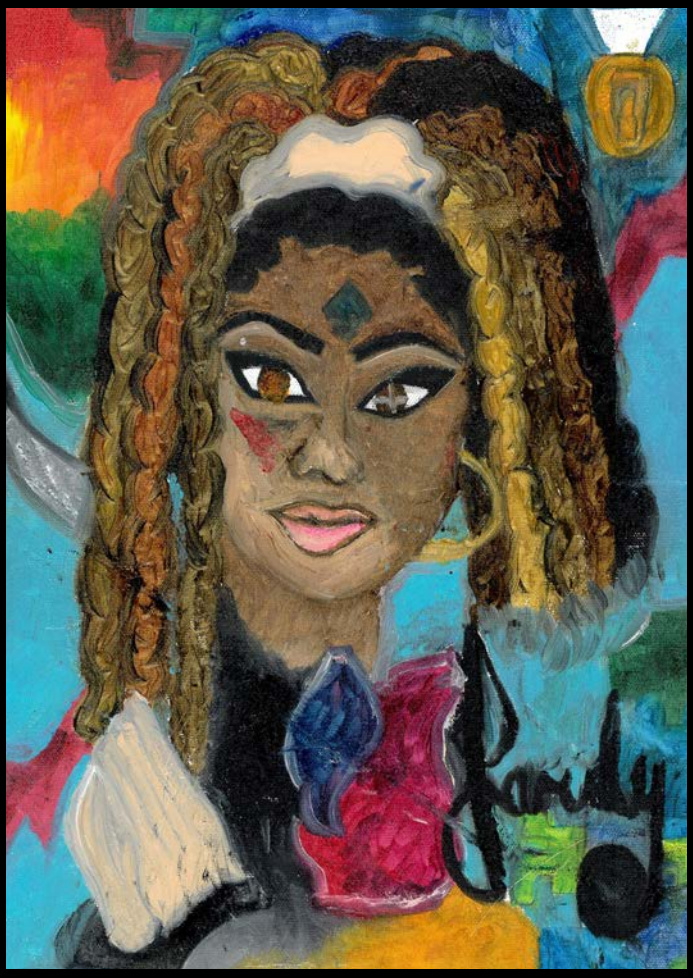
Sharon Stark and her late husband Peter Livingston established a Sharon Stark Scholarship in honor of Brianna Livingston-Lengyel, their granddaughter. This award covers the costs of books, materials, wraparound support, and other expenses for one Odyssey student each year. Sharon commented, “I’ve long admired Odyssey’s mission and accomplishments. It changes lives. When my granddaughter encouraged me to support low-income women of color more directly, I knew right away that Odyssey was the right fit given my passion for education. Creating a scholarship fund is a great way for me to help one student every year as she moves forward with her educational dreams.”

Over Zoom, Sharon met Dominique Smith, selected as the 2023 Sharon Stark Odyssey Scholar. “Dominique is amazing and should publish her writing,” Sharon said, after reading Dominique’s writing in Oracles. A mother of two, Dominique has overcome obstacles such as the early loss of her mother to cancer, putting her dreams of college on hold until Odyssey.

More Scholarships for Odyssey Students

Students in our Class of 2023 are Evjue, Brittingham, or Anonymous Committee scholars through sponsorships by those organizations. We also gratefully acknowledge scholarships from The Business Forum of Madison, the Rotary Club, and the American Association of University Women. To sign up for our monthly e-newsletters highlighting the successes of our alumni as they go on to win awards and earn degrees many were told would not be possible, visit our website.

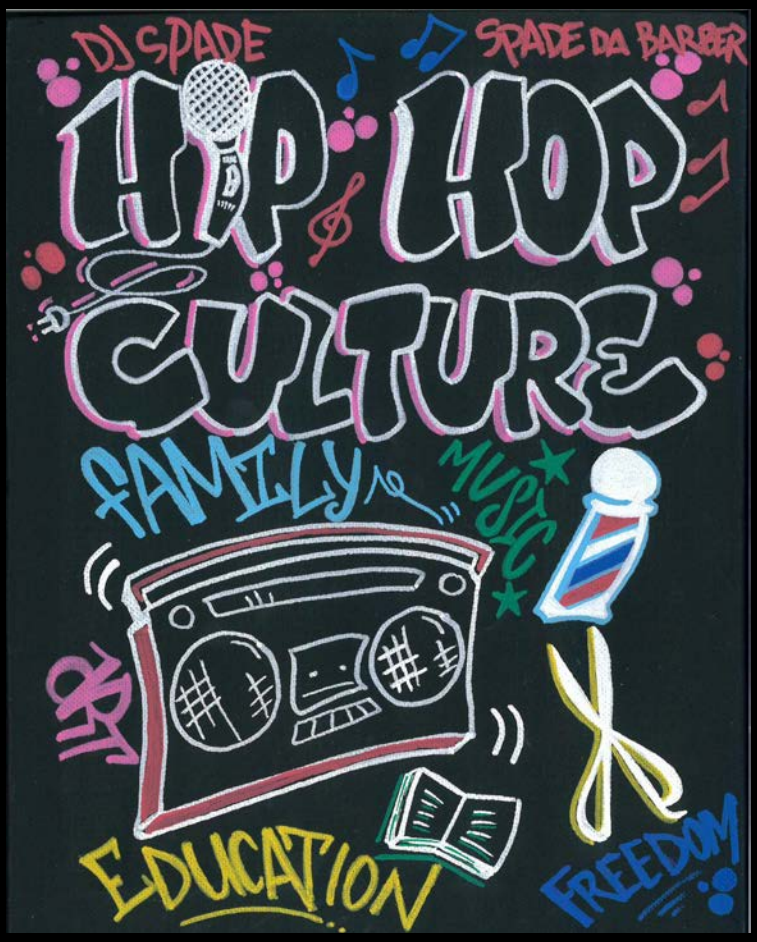
“Not knowing what the path brings is what makes the journey worth every step.”
~ Curtrice Foster



“My picture represents me as a woman floating in the air in a spiritual world. Family is everything.”
~ Kiana Sims

“The tall building embodies my expedition with the UW Odyssey Project. The unfinished buildings exhibit the mind under construction.”
~ Amanda Willis

"The roots are the birth of new life, representing who we are and where we come from."
~ Fredy Carcaño

"I've slowly been discovering new ways to break through the chains that hold me. Slowly but surely, I am finding my voice."
~ Kaitlin Birdsall

"Music, art, and family are the three things that make my world go round. And education—I've never felt so free in my entire life."
~ Mark Español