Like many young people, Brandon Casey spent most of his 20s trying to make a living without a college degree. As the years rolled by, he learned how difficult that could be.

“It became obvious that there were many more opportunities and good job prospects for someone with a degree,” said Casey, 33. “I realized those opportunities weren’t going to be available to me without one.”

Also like many young people, Casey didn’t have the financial resources to pay for college. When he saw that Wichita State University was offering scholarships for returning adult learners through its Osher Reentry Scholarship Program, he applied and was selected to participate in the program’s inaugural class.

Now, the Osher Reentry Scholarship Program will be available to returning adult learners for many years to come. The Bernard Osher Foundation has endowed the Wichita State program through a $1 million grant. Endowment means the 2-year-old program will become a permanent one, offering an estimated total of $50,000 each year to 20 to 25 students.

“There’s no doubt that I couldn’t have returned to school without significant financial assistance,” says Casey, who graduated in May with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree. “The Osher scholarship made it possible for me to achieve something that has always been a goal and a dream for me.”

The Osher Foundation selected Wichita State in 2012 to launch a scholarship program for returning adult learners and renewed a $50,000 grant for it the following year. It then approved the WSU Foundation’s request for endowment, also providing a $50,000 transitional grant to support the program for the 2014-2015 academic year.

“The university was an attractive candidate for endowment support thanks to its substantial number of nontraditional students, ample support services for that population and fine administration of two earlier Osher Reentry grants,” said Mary Bitterman, president of the Bernard Osher Foundation.

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Susan Norton, the WSU official who oversees the Osher Reentry Scholarship Program, called the endowment “hugely significant.”

“Many times, the difference between adults returning to college or not is based on financial reasons,” said Norton, director of WSU satellite campuses, workforce development and adult learning. “This is a renewable scholarship, so it can be utilized by the student every semester until they graduate as long as they remain in good standing.”

Casey, who lives in Hesston with his wife, Kodi, and 5-year-old son, currently owns his own lawn service company, called Ground Effects. He hopes to use the education he received at Wichita State to either grow the business or pursue other business opportunities.

Wichita State has the only Osher Reentry Scholarship Program in Kansas. This academic year, 21 WSU students ranging in age from 26 to 57 received Osher scholarships of up to $2,500 each per year, depending on their course load. Many began the program together in its first year.

The Bernard Osher Foundation was founded in 1977 in San Francisco by Bernard Osher, a businessman and community leader. One of its chief goals is to provide scholarship support to colleges and universities across the country, with special attention to reentry students.

“With the help of the Osher Foundation, Wichita State is in a great position to serve the large population of nontraditional students who want to return to school and build better lives for themselves and their families,” Norton said.

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**Media note:** Photographs of three Osher scholarship recipients and of Susan Norton can be found at [www.wichita.edu/foundationphotos](http://www.wichita.edu/foundationphotos).

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