



Parent and Family Newsletter

DECEMBER 2023 Issue 2

December 15, 2023

Dear parents and families,

Finals ended yesterday and our Fall Term has come to a completion. It is time to enjoy the holidays, family, and regroup and reenergize for Spring Term which begins Jan. 9, 2024. On Dec. 5, we celebrated and recognized our students who earned their degrees after the Fall Term. This event is one of the highlights of the year for me as we get a chance to see first-hand the pure joy that the entire family experiences as their student graduates from Minot State University. We celebrated our graduating students, their families, and we also recognized their favorite professors. These connections amongst all people will last a lifetime. It is a befitting way to end their academic careers.

It has been a great semester filled with many activities for our students. I hope you find this newsletter as a positive way to stay engaged with Minot State University. I always appreciate any feedback about newsletter content, as well as any suggested topics or potential engagement activities for families. I would love to hear your ideas on improving the family experience at Minot State.

Happy Holidays,

Kevin Harmon,
Vice President for Student Affairs

Be seen. Be heard. Be empowered.

MSU Q&A: An interview with Gideon Tuffour Amponsah

By Nengi Daminabo, University Communications student assistant

EVANSTON, Ill. – Gideon Tuffour Amponsah '19 found his way from Ghana to beautiful Minot in 2016, where he earned his bachelor's degree in accounting and finance.

He developed a love for advocacy at an early age and pursued opportunities to give back to his society in Ghana. This passion stuck with him even after he moved to the United States and though he went on to excel in the accounting and finance world, giving him numerous skills and experiences, he was assured that one day, he would get the chance to utilize them in the field of law.

As fate would have it, he recently became the recipient of a \$150,000 Northwestern Pritzker School of Law Scholarship and now, more than ever, he is able to go after that dream with the knowledge and experience he has gathered over the years in his previous endeavors, putting him at the forefront of success.

Minot State University Communications contacted Amponsah via email to discuss the scholarship, law school, and his path to MSU.

Congratulations on your impressive achievement! Can you tell us about your journey from studying accounting and finance at Minot State to receiving a scholarship for Northwestern Pritzker School of Law?

GA: Thank you very much. It's been a long journey but I'm happy to be here. I moved to the US as an international student in 2016. When I first arrived in Minot, I knew I wanted to go to law school. I engaged with my professors, attended office hours and stayed active with many school activities. I graduated from Minot State University in 2019. Studying accounting and finance at Minot State was a good time in my life. The professors were great and willing to help students succeed.

What motivated you to pursue a legal career?

GA: When I was 10 years old, I was fortunate to have



been part of a group advocated for children's rights, young people, and women's development in Ghana, that led programs on radio and television.

During this time, I had the opportunity to engage with the government of Ghana, the United Nations, its agencies, and other stakeholders, in designing policies and initiatives for children, young people, and women. I quickly came to the realization that many of these policies and laws that were passed were left on the shelves of government offices with no enforcement. This and many injustices I saw happening to people is what sparked my interest in pursuing a career in law.

How do you think your background in accounting and finance will influence your legal education and career? Are there any specific areas of law where you hope to apply your financial expertise?

GA: I believe it will help me a lot. I have gained a unique perspective through my studies in accounting and finance as well as my experience working in the accounting industry. In my previous job, I worked as an auditor and got to experience how businesses operate and the laws governing them. I'm hoping my experience in finance will help me excel in corporate law.



Could you share some of the key experiences or skills you gained during your time at Minot State that have prepared you for success in law school and beyond?

GA: At Minot State, I was taught how to give back to the community. Through many leadership programs the school encourages students to participate in, particularly, the Roger Looyenga leadership program.

In this program, you are taught that it pays to give back to the community. I was taught how to take initiatives to lead and how to be the change you want to see. I was encouraged as a member of the student government association to bring students' issues to the leadership of the school and demand action. At Minot State, I was taught to pay attention to details through research assignments and projects. Overall, the school encouraged students to be good people; the need to be kind, respectful, and thoughtful about others.

As you prepare to embark on your legal education at Northwestern, what are you most excited about? Are there any specific courses or opportunities you're looking forward to exploring?

GA: Law school has been a long-term dream and I'm so excited I have the opportunity to attend now. I hope to explore clinical opportunities in education, justice, and legal reform.

Can you talk about the significance of receiving a generous scholarship to attend Northwestern Pritzker School of Law? How does it feel to be recognized for your achievements and potential?

GA: Law school is expensive and it costs hundreds of thousands of dollars. Having the opportunity to attend one of America's top law schools with a generous scholarship makes me feel fortunate and blessed. I'm grateful to the donors.

Northwestern Pritzker School of Law is renowned for its strong faculty and diverse student body. How do you anticipate these factors will contribute to your learning experience and personal growth during your time there?

GA: The more diverse a community is, the better it is for development. Being around a diverse community will help shape my views, I will learn from other people's experiences and work. Also, a strong and diverse faculty will help professors to understand students' perspectives and their backgrounds. I believe that will encourage me to reach out more comfortably to my professors and colleagues.

Pursuing a law degree is often seen as a significant investment. How do you plan to leverage your legal education and career to make a positive impact, both professionally and in your community?

GA: I'm hoping I can use my career in law to impact my community positively. I plan on being the voice of the voiceless. I plan on taking up many pro bono cases to assist the less fortunate in my community.

Is there any advice you would give to current students at Minot State who may be considering a career path similar to yours? What steps or strategies would you recommend to maximize their chances of success?

GA: I think the best they can do is to listen to their professors and make genuine relationships with faculty, staff, and other students. I'm a dreamer. I will encourage everyone to believe in their dreams and work towards them. Many people have done whatever you are trying to do to an extent. Find what you want to do, talk to people in similar fields, figure out what you need to do to get there and work diligently towards it. I believe by God's grace things will work out for anyone if you put in the work.



You emphasize the importance of the student-professor relationship in university, was there any professor(s) that helped you through this process, post-graduation?

GA: Yes actually, Dr. Andy Bertsch and Jerry Stai wrote my recommendation letters and I'm very grateful for the role they played in this success.

Looking ahead, what are your long-term goals and aspirations within the field of law? Do you have any specific plans for specialization or potential career paths you are considering?

GA: My long-term goal is to have a great legal career and help as many people as possible. I still have time to figure out exactly what type of law I will be practicing. My goal is to explore many areas and be good at whatever I end up doing.

Finally, as an accomplished Minot State alumnus, how do you think your experiences and achievements can inspire and motivate current and future students at the University?

GA: I believe the school is as great as any other university in the United States. So many of my friends from Minot State University have ended up going to medical school and other graduate schools in Ivy League schools and some of the best colleges in the country. Minot State University prepares students to do well in any field we find ourselves in.

I'm hoping my story and that of the many alumni doing well will inspire current and future students to understand that they can go anywhere from Minot State University and they will be great.



UPCOMING DATES & DEADLINES

DECEMBER

- DEC. 17 – JAN. 5** – Sodexo dining closed
- 25** – University closed
- 15** – Last day to withdraw from second 8-week classes and receive a 50% refund

JANUARY

- 1** – University closed
- 8** – Classes begin after 4 P.M.
- 9** – First full day of spring classes
- 15** – Martin Luther King Day, University closed
- 18** – Last day to add a class, drop a class or withdraw from all classes and receive a 100% refund

View more dates, deadlines, and events at [MinotStateU.edu/calendar](https://www.minotstateu.edu/calendar).

Is it okay if my freshman is undecided?

By Shari Bender, [CollegiateParent.com](https://www.collegiateparent.com)



My son came out of the womb destined for a career in hospitality.

Baby Joe was miserable at home. Any sort of excursion, even to the supermarket, filled him with stimulation and joy.

As he grew into toddlerhood, one of his favorite games of pretend was “waiter,” where I found myself the recipient of elaborate imaginary meals. The tip? A kiss on the cheek and a big squeeze.

As soon as Joe got his working papers, he applied for a job at our favorite local Indian restaurant. Joe immersed himself in tandoori and samosa and knew the spice levels of all the dishes. He made every effort to make the customers happy and was rewarded in the real world with monetary tips. In 10th grade, he joined DECA (future business leaders) and continued working at different restaurants. He learned to make pizza and to refill condiment stations, and he was fulfilled.

When the Hotel School at Cornell University took him off the waitlist, he was ready to pursue his destiny. Two summers ago, at the height of the pandemic, Joe worked as a DoorDash driver, joining the ranks of restaurant deliverers. He also worked as a private waiter, catering to small, socially distanced backyard gatherings (including his parents’ 30th anniversary celebration). Most recently, he secured a summer internship at the JW Marriott in beautiful Marco Island. This kid is hospitality to the core.

My daughter, on the other hand, dabbled in arts and science and music and sports throughout elementary, middle, and high school. She chose a college with a strong liberal arts background and tried her hand at magic and computer competitions. After numerous starts and stops and changing likes, dislikes, majors, and potential paths, she graduated with a degree in engineering.

She is currently working in data science and getting a master’s degree. Her initial graduate degree path wasn’t to her liking, so she changed to a different program, and she is loving it!

If you’re the parent of an undeclared/undecided student, here’s what it can help to know.

1. Many kids are unsure about their college path.

During my initial time as a Stanford admissions interviewer, I would ask the candidates, “Do you know what you’d like to study at Stanford?” Those “sure” of their path would tout the engineering school or cite the lauded computer science program. For those unsure, this question often evoked a stressed response. Soon thereafter, I started to ask the applicants, “What topics get you excited?” The answers were never “engineering schools” or “computer programs.” Instead, this question probed students to share what they loved — building 3D models for the local animal shelter or designing a computer program to help senior citizens with their medication schedules.

Asking a teenager what they want to “do” for the rest of their life can be a very heavy question. Kids do better with exploratory questions. Taking different courses during their first and even second year of college can help students find their passion and best-fit major. If your student needs additional guidance, encourage them to make an appointment with their academic advisor — advisors can play an important role in guiding and assisting students to find themselves.

2. You can help them think about what they love.

Addison, a family friend, and a particularly motivated and bright young lady, entered college determined to be a doctor. It was ingrained in her from a young age, and she felt comfortable and happy on this path. Once at college, however, she realized she didn't actually love biology, despite a 5 on her AP exam in high school and her enjoyment of a summer bio research program.

When her college advisor asked her what she loved most about the university, Addison cited the beautiful buildings, along with her freshman experience with set design for her dorm play. A more in-depth conversation revealed that Addy had always expressed a passion for architecture, starting when she was a young girl

happily organizing the family pantry. When Addison was looking for colleges, she would comment whether or not the buildings had "good brick." Yes, studying architecture was her new destiny.

For those young people who have their future in focus from an early age, that's awesome. But maybe your high school senior or first-year college student doesn't have to have it all figured out. Your teen may enter college with a plan in mind, only to change their major numerous times and announce a new career path at seemingly every turn, and that's okay. Life is full of moving parts and pieces, with opportunities for change. Even for us grown-ups!

Financial Aid Information

Spring fees

Spring semester tuition, residence hall fees, and meal plan fees will be posted to student accounts in Campus Connection in early December.

Spring semester fees are due to be paid in full by Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024. Students can view a detailed list of their charges for a specific semester by clicking on Account Summary under the Financial Account tile in Campus Connection.

Bookstore charging

Students who have enrolled for Spring 2024 classes may choose to charge their books at the [MSU Barnes & Noble Bookstore](#) from Tuesday, Dec. 26 through Thursday, Jan. 18, regardless of whether the student has financial aid available or not. This change makes it possible for all students to easily acquire textbooks needed for academic success.

Direct deposit of excess financial aid

Students who expect to receive a refund of excess financial aid, which occurs when the total of the student's financial aid is greater than the amount owed to Minot State, are encouraged to sign up for direct deposit rather than receiving a paper check. With direct deposit, the funds are deposited directly in the student's bank account and the check is never lost in the mail. Students can enroll in direct deposit

in Campus Connection by selecting the Financial Account tile, and then choosing Direct Deposit. Additional directions are available at [MinotStateU.edu/busoffic/pages/direct-deposit-of-financial-aid.shtml](https://www.minotstate.edu/busoffic/pages/direct-deposit-of-financial-aid.shtml).

2024-25 Minot State scholarship application

The Minot State general scholarship application will open to accept applications for the 2024-25 school year in early December. The application form will be available online at the Minot State Financial Aid Office website at [MinotStateU.edu/finaid](https://www.minotstate.edu/finaid). The application deadline is Feb. 15, 2024. All returning students are encouraged to submit the general scholarship application every year.

2024-25 FAFSA

The 2024-25 FAFSA will be available by Dec. 31, 2023. The FAFSA is undergoing a significant overhaul of the processes and systems used to award federal student aid, including changes to the formulas that determine student eligibility. We encourage students to watch for [the launch of the 2024-25 FAFSA](#) and submit the new FAFSA when it becomes available. More information about the changes can be found at the studentaid.gov website and on our [website](#).

When your college student wants to live off campus

By Vicki Nelson, CollegiateParent.com

It's not inevitable, but the topic comes up in many college families. Your student wants to [move off campus](#).

You may share their excitement about establishing a life off campus or you may have reservations. It can be just the right move for some students but not the best decision for others.

You can help your student think through a move by asking lots of questions. This will put both you and your student in a better position to make an informed decision.



What should my student think about?

1. Cost

Sharing rent with several roommates and doing your own cooking may mean lower costs than living on campus — or it may not. Make sure your student has a realistic [budget](#). They will need to factor in:

- Initial deposit
- First and last month's rent
- Application fees
- Monthly utilities (if not included in rent)
- Amenities such as internet, cable, laundry
- Transportation to and from campus
- Cost of food and supplies

- Potential unexpected costs

Key consideration: Talk about whether your student will be solely responsible for paying or whether you will help. If so, is there a limit to how much you're willing to contribute?

2. Privacy

Some students are anxious to get out of the residence hall for more privacy and quiet. Escaping the constant commotion (not to mention the communal bathrooms!) has a lot of appeal. But there's a flip side. Help your student think through what it will be like not to have easy access to other students and to campus life.

Key consideration: Will they be able to stay engaged with activities, friends, and campus departments?

3. Roommates

If your student has been sharing a small dorm room with one or more roommates, they may look forward to having some space to call their own. Ask your student these questions:

- Will you need to have roommates to be able to afford an apartment?
- How will you find them?
- How will the group of you divide up the space and responsibilities?
- What if one roommate fails to pay their fair share or decides to leave?

Key consideration: Make sure your student has a plan for handling potential difficult situations.

[Find tips on choosing and getting along with roommates.](#)

4. Responsibility

One of the wonderful outcomes of a good off-campus living arrangement can be your student's growing sense of independence and responsibility. But make sure your student is ready to take on this increased responsibility. They need to be able to:

- Pay rent and bills regularly
- Do their own shopping, cooking, and cleaning
- Deal with a landlord in case of emergencies
- Manage a commute to school

Key consideration: Off-campus life is very different from the comparatively carefree routine in the residence hall.

5. Year-round housing

Most leases are for a full year. But most students are not on campus over summer and winter breaks.

If your student needs to be on campus for the summer, an apartment can be an ideal arrangement as summer housing in the residence hall is not always available, but if they'll be home during breaks (or possibly away for a semester for study abroad) what arrangements will they need to make?

Key consideration: Is your student prepared to pay rent all year even though they may not be living there? Does the lease allow for a sublet?

6. Neighbors

One of the wonderful things about living off campus is the opportunity to get to know many different types of people. Depending on the location, the neighbors may also be students, but they may not. Your student needs to remember that non-students — perhaps older retirees, working professionals, or families with young children — may not be especially tolerant of the student lifestyle.

Key consideration: Your student needs to be prepared to be a good neighbor.

7. Transportation and parking

How will your student get to campus? Is it walkable? Is there public transportation nearby? If your student plans to have a car, does the apartment have designated parking or will your student need to find street parking? Will your student have to pay extra for a parking space or garage?

Key consideration: Make sure the commute will not present an obstacle to getting to class on time.

8. Safety

Most campus residence halls are relatively secure with a keyed entrance, a lock on each room, and campus security officers who patrol regularly.

Make sure your student considers the safety and security of any off-campus housing options. Is there a keyed entrance to the building as well as a lock on the unit? Is the apartment on the ground level or on an upper floor? Is the neighborhood well lit?

Key consideration: Will your student feel comfortable walking home late at night?

What's next?

If you and your student have thought through and talked about all these factors and your student is still interested in living off campus, what now? Here are some next steps.

1. **Make a written list of the pros and cons** based on the above factors and questions.
2. **Plan a realistic budget that includes all expenses.** Decide what this will cost and where the money will come from.
3. **Talk to other students who have lived off campus.** What were their experiences like? Do they have any advice?
4. **Be sure that your student understands your involvement.** Who will sign the lease? How much, if anything, will you contribute?
5. **Write out [a contract](#) that covers issues that may come up with potential roommates.**
6. **Start the process early.** In many college communities, off-campus housing fills up early. Be ready to move quickly if the right house or apartment turns up but remember that signing a lease early may mean paying for extra months of rent.
7. **Don't take a rental without looking at the space.** Check the conditions of the apartment carefully.

The decision to live in a first apartment is not an easy one. But it *is* easy for your student to get caught up in the excitement. Make sure you help them think carefully about all the aspects of living independently. Then, if the decision seems right, step back and watch as they take a huge step toward independence.