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"I would like to share my experience in winning the NAU Academic Excellence scholarship. My academic path is one that started back when I was 19 years old going in and out of college. My parents are financially dependent on a lot of community and state programs to survive and I have had to sacrifice my academic pursuits on a number of occasions in order to keep my family afloat. Often times this meant working a full-time job, a part-time job, and going to school. I fell into the health field with my parents' health issues and giving them medical care by being trained by emergency room staff and nurses. Any excess funds I would receive at the end of my financial aid disbursement always went to get my parents groceries, put gas in their car, or pay for their medical treatments in return for short periods of childcare for my young sons.

"When I had my own family I began working and being trained as pediatric MA. I had never gone to school or received certification for it. My employer took me on faith and it paid off. Afterwards, I enjoyed working with patients so much I had found my calling. NAU has allowed me to continue my academic pursuits and with this scholarship I am able to continue to complete my degree plan with less out of pocket. My story is not original, there are many students out there that struggle and make it through with sheer determination. I encourage everyone to work through those challenges, because we all know in the end, we ourselves and our families will be so much better for it. I earned my Associate of Applied Science in Medical Assisting, graduating in spring 2015 with honors and scored the highest in my class on the credentialing exam. I am now enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Health Care Management program to continue on. My ultimate goal is to secure a Masters in Physician Assistant Studies from NAU to become a physician's assistant and give back to those who have helped me along the way. I am humbled and grateful to be the recipient of this award. I know that others are more deserving and would hope that they would read this and apply and gain that financial help they so desperately need."