

May 2023



Hi, I'm Kody Funmaker, the son of Doctor Cheryl Funmaker. I go to Edgewood college right next to UW Madison and I am a degree seeking student. I am also a member of the Ho-Chunk tribe and a person with developmental disabilities. After graduating high school in 2019 I signed up for Project Search and worked at the Kalahari in WI Dells. I worked in the bakery section and was the first person through Project Search to get to be in the bakery. It was very busy and intense, but I loved working there. In 2020 everything changed with the pandemic and my position was laid off. I was just doing work related homework through Project Search when my mom asked me if I would want to apply for the Cutting-Edge program at Edgewood College.

In high school I was told that I wouldn't be able to get the same accommodations that I was getting in High school, so I just didn't think college was an option. I knew that I needed help but it seemed so overwhelming to apply and try to get the support that I need. College takes hard work and tenacity to follow through with it.

I never thought that I would go to college which is why I went into Project Search. I ended up applying for the Cutting-Edge program which I had only heard about briefly previously to 2020. Cutting Edge accepts people based on the college's overall graduation rates so it can be

somewhat competitive to get accepted. I worked so hard on my essay and was so nervous that I wouldn't get accepted especially thinking of all the other people who are applying to get in. I was very excited to find out that I had been accepted and I am now in my third year of school. I started off taking 5-6 classes a semester which everyone said was a huge class load.

I had to learn lots of different technology because of the pandemic and just the college experience in general. I only had one in-person class at first which was English. Classes like statistics were so much harder to pay attention to while online but other than that things were smooth. I tried to find a solution to staying awake and focused during statistics. I had to try taking a nap before class or drinking a soda at the beginning.

I asked folks at the school if there were any other indigenous people who had gone through the program, and they told me that I was the first. When I found that out I was both proud for being the first but also was shocked to hear that there hadn't been another indigenous person that had gone through cutting edge.

When I first started, I didn't know what I was going for since I hadn't really thought about school. I decided that I want to be a social worker or at least work in the field so I'm going to school for sociology with an emphasis on human resources. Next year I have an internship that I get to choose for credit. I decided to do my internship with LOV Inc. since my mom works with them. The work my mother does with the Ho-Chunk tribe makes me proud to see all the great things that she does for our tribe.

Right now, I am looking forward to finishing college and this semester in general. I know when I graduate that I want to work with people with disabilities or for the Ho-Chunk tribe. Honestly working with both would be the perfect fit for me.