

When C. Blaise Kinto arrived in the United States from Togo in 2016, he had trouble communicating.

For a self-confessed social butterfly, it was rough.

He was fluent in French and Ewe, an African language, and he knew some English, but not enough to make understanding or speaking it easy.

“Being at home all the time and not being able to socialize was hard for me,” Kinto said.

Soon, though, things began to change. He started at Black Hawk College and focused on learning as much as possible.



C. Blaise Kinto, a Black Hawk College student from Togo, Africa, relaxing on campus in April 2019.

Black Hawk College education



BHC student C. Blaise Kinto takes a break between classes on campus in April 2019.

Kinto moved to East Moline to study at Black Hawk College because his brother, Yawovi, recommended it.

“Yawovi got his GED from Black Hawk College, and that allowed him to have the better life and career he has today,” he said.

Kinto completed the Adult Basic Education program in 2017, and graduated from the English as a Second Language program in Spring 2019.

Now, he is fluent in English and completing college-level courses.

“I have learned and am still learning a lot through Black Hawk College,” Kinto said.

His dedication has resulted in scholarships and recognition, including a 2019 Student Commitment to Excellence Award.

Kinto is earning his Associate in Applied Science degree in Computer Information Technology - Network Administration.

He enjoys the hands-on aspect of his classes and likes the challenge of solving computer issues.

After earning his degree at Black Hawk College, he plans on transferring to Western Illinois University to pursue a bachelor's degree.

Getting involved and staying connected

As a work-study student for Campus Services, Kinto helps deliver mail. He is known for his positive outlook throughout the college.

“We joke with him all the time about him never having a bad day,” said Mike Meleg, director of purchasing and auxiliary services. “He always has a smile on his face, which in turn rubs off on whoever is around.”

When Kinto isn't in class, studying or working, he is busy with various clubs and organizations.

They include Student Government Association, ESL Mentors & Mentees Program, Math Club, Phi Theta Kappa, a Bible study group, and Big Brothers Big Sisters.

"I have met so many friends and new people through all the programs I joined," he said.

Kinto said he's enjoyed being involved with each one and that these organizations help him become a better version of himself.

Although he has learned and grown a lot while at Black Hawk College, he remains teachable – he is always willing to improve and asks questions.

Kinto also has found himself unexpectedly helping others learn, too.

"Just as Blaise is learning from us, we are learning from him," Meleg said. "We constantly receive compliments from the departments he delivers mail to on how pleasant he is."



BHC student C. Blaise Kinto, on right, spends time with a friend during Spirit Day in February 2020.

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