

Taking a risk can be rewarding.

That was one of many life lessons Black Hawk College 2020 graduate Abigail Wadsworth learned while earning her degree.

The Silvis resident started at Black Hawk because she didn't know what she wanted to study, and the college was close by and affordable.

You might recognize Wadsworth from a BHC commercial or from photos taken around the Quad-Cities Campus used to promote the college.

Making the switch to engineering

Initially, she decided to study business since it was a broad field with many options.

While Wadsworth enjoyed being at Black Hawk, it took her awhile to discover the right educational path for her.



"The Black Hawk advantage for me was the opportunity to take my time to find out who I am while still pursuing my education," she said.

In her third semester, everything fell into place.

"I took a business calculus class that changed my whole mind set," she said. "I enjoyed math a lot and ended up thriving in the class."

Wadsworth started exploring the idea of switching majors to something math-intensive.

She hesitated about engineering since it is a male-dominated field and she wouldn't be able to earn a bachelor's degree in four years.

Ultimately, though, she decided to take the risk and switched her major to engineering.

"It ended up being one of the best decisions I have made," Wadsworth said. "I enjoy what I am learning and going to my classes."

She attended Black Hawk College for a third year to complete more prerequisites and graduated with her Associate in Science degree in May 2020.

Jana Koch, BHC Director of Student Life and Engagement, admired her willingness to adjust her focus and tackle a new challenge.

"I was impressed by her resilience and determination," Koch said. "She set out a plan to make that happen, and she has been crushing it ever since."

Wadsworth transferred to Iowa State University where she is majoring in industrial engineering.

Staying active at Black Hawk College

Wadsworth served on the Student Government Association, participated in the Math Club and was inducted into Phi Theta Kappa honor society.



“Go in with an open, positive mind,” Wadsworth said. “Black Hawk offers way more opportunities than people expect and you choose what your college experience will be.”

For her last two years, she worked for Student Life as a student worker. Her favorite moments were setting up events and then seeing students having fun at them.

Wadsworth said she also enjoyed getting to know faculty and staff. Her favorite instructor was assistant professor of mathematics Chris Appuhn because she liked his teaching style and how he considered student feedback.

“My favorite person at Black Hawk is Jana Koch. She was the first person I met on campus and has been next to my side throughout my whole journey,” Wadsworth said. “She has always been there to help and inspire me.”

Her last few months as a BHC student were during COVID-19, ending in a virtual commencement celebration where she delivered a student speech. One of her messages then and now for other students is to stay positive and to know that your effort and achievements are valuable.

She also has a message for students who are undecided about their educational goals: “I want to be that person that encourages them to see the value in taking a risk and exploring different options.”

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