

Katie Johnson loves her job, so it is no surprise the associate professor of speech encourages prospective students to attend Black Hawk College.

“Black Hawk is a great start to your higher education career,” she said. “The class sizes are small and you will really get to know your teachers.”

What you might not realize, though, is Johnson is speaking from experience: that is exactly what she did.



Johnson is a Sherrard High School graduate who grew up in Matherville, Illinois. She graduated from Black Hawk College with her Associate in Arts degree in 2006.

She chose Black Hawk for many reasons: it was close to home, she had cousins who enjoyed attending, and she knew she could complete her general education courses there.

Another big reason was being a Presidential Scholar. The top 10 percent of graduating seniors at in-district high schools receive full-tuition scholarships through the Presidential Scholars program.

“My tuition was paid for, so I knew that Black Hawk was going to be the best choice for me,” Johnson said.

She enjoyed the small class sizes, getting to know other students, and seeing her friends from high school between classes. Johnson also liked interacting with her instructors.

"I took a history course with Dr. Jay Pearce and it was one of my favorite classes I took at Black Hawk," she said. "He was such a great storyteller and it made the material come alive in our class discussions."

Johnson transferred to St. Ambrose University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in public relations and marketing communication. She said transferring went smoothly and Black Hawk prepared her for SAU classes.



This photo was taken of a College Experience and Success class before COVID-19.

After completing her bachelor's degree, Johnson earned her master's degree in communication from Illinois State University. She now also has a master's degree from the University of Illinois in education in education policy, organization and leadership.

In 2010, Johnson began teaching adjunct at both BHC campuses while also teaching at three other colleges.

"It was a crazy time in my life, but I am so thankful for all the teaching experience I gained," she said.

Johnson also was grateful for the opportunity to work at her alma mater full-time after a position became available at the Quad-Cities Campus. She started that position in January 2012.

Her current classes are Principles of Speech Communication, Interpersonal Communication and College Experience and Success.

"I absolutely love teaching. I enjoy interacting with my students and discovering new things

to try in the classroom,” Johnson said. “I am very thankful for all the students I have had in my classes over the years.”

She knows public speaking is a scary thing for many of her students, but also that it is a very beneficial skill. Johnson enjoys seeing students’ progress throughout the semester.

“Seeing their confidence in their last speech of the course is so rewarding for me,” she said.

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*Community College Month, or #CCMonth, is coordinated by the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT). This feature was written for the BHC Blog by Lindsay Hocker, Marketing Specialist at Black Hawk College. Enjoy more posts at [www.bhc.edu/blog](http://www.bhc.edu/blog).*

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