

## WSU News

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# First-generation student named Wichita State's 2023 Barton Scholar

By WSU Strategic Communications



The W. Frank Barton School of Business at Wichita State University has awarded Isabella (Bella) Kilman, a Valley Center High School senior, the 2023 Clay Barton Scholarship. The \$50,000 scholarship is one of the largest business scholarships in Kansas.

“Bella’s involvement, perseverance and quest for excellence made her a deserving recipient of the college’s most prestigious scholarship,” said Dr. Larisa Genin, dean of the Barton School. “I have no doubt that she will continue to overcome challenges and grow throughout her collegiate experience with the Barton School.”

Kilman, who plans to major in marketing, was named the 2023 Barton Scholar after competing against numerous other high school seniors in a series of speeches, group exercises and other activities. The scholarship was founded in 1991 by the late Rent-A-Center co-founder, W. Frank Barton, established the scholarship in his son’s name. Clay Barton died from cancer in 1988 at the age of 20, cutting his promising life short. While the Clay Barton Scholarship does not replace Clay’s presence, it is a powerful legacy.

“As a first-generation student, I may not have been able to attend college without this scholarship,” Kilman said. “I felt immense relief knowing that I could go to college with very little debt, and I was very proud of myself and what I accomplished.”

The legacy of Clay Barton speaks to the richness of the Barton tradition at Wichita State. Barton Scholars are expected to be the best of the best, excelling in academics, leadership and service, fitting the pieces of their lives intricately into a structure that has lasting value.

Along with securing a perfect 4.0 GPA, Kilman is involved in cheer, DECA, Principal’s Advisory Council and Site Council at Valley Center. She also works as the business development intern with the USD 262 communication office. She will begin taking classes at WSU in fall 2023.

“I made great connections during the competition and am excited to see them through,” Kilman said. “I have high hopes of feeling prepared for the workforce after college. Barton is the best business school in Kansas and offers phenomenal opportunities to its students.”