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Kankakee Mayor Casts a Vote for Governors State



Chasity L. Wells-Armstrong is the sitting Mayor of Kankakee and an alumna of [Governors State University](#) (GSU), who received her [Bachelor of Social Work](#) in 2007 and [Master of Social Work](#) in 2008. As a lifelong member of the Kankakee community, Mayor Wells-Armstrong witnessed the city and people she loved suffering from economic hardship and decided to take the initiative to help her hometown by running for office. Currently, she is creating initiatives to help ensure equitable access to programs and resources.

"GSU helped me understand the role of government and how you can be an agent of change that could benefit the lives of others," she said.

Why did you choose Governors State University?

I chose GSU because I knew it could help me improve the community I loved. While I was growing up, I realized that Kankakee was like one big family—everyone knew each other and were willing to lend a hand for their neighbor. Unfortunately, as I became an adult, the city experienced an economic downturn and saw an increase in violence. I knew things had to change. I enrolled at GSU to receive an education in social work, so I could give back to the community and help the residents in need. The diversity of GSU's student body, faculty, and staff that proved anyone—regardless of their background—could achieve their goals was definitely an appealing aspect that contributed to my decision to apply there.

What did you get from GSU that you couldn't have gotten anywhere else?

The indispensable tutelage I received from GSU's faculty, specifically Dr. Adelle Sanders. Dr. Sanders taught me the importance of public policy and how the subject is relevant to everything we do. She was always encouraging and believed in my potential to succeed; she also sparked my interest to get more involved politically by becoming the president of the Social Work program's student organization that took regular trips down to Springfield, in order to learn about how the government operates.

How did your GSU degree help you advance your career?

GSU provided the framework I needed to understand the implication of public policy and advocacy work. I learned the value of budgets and how they serve as documents that reflect the values of the community. I definitely attribute my academic courses, networks, and experiences I had at GSU to my success in becoming mayor of my hometown.

What's next for you professionally?

Right now, my focus is on continuing to serve my hometown of Kankakee. To ensure the changes I have incorporated into our community will have a significant and lasting impact, I will be preparing to run for another term as mayor. I look forward to the challenges that await me; however, I am excited for the opportunity to provide further improvements to our city.

What are you most proud of when you look back at your GSU experience?

When I think back to my time at GSU, I relish in the fact that much of what I learned from there is applicable to my current position as mayor. Not only did I find out how imperative public policy is at GSU, but I discovered how its implemented into a community. Public policy determines who is eligible to access services/programs, the duration in which services/programs can be accessed, as well as the importance of allocations to various programs/initiatives in a budget. With this knowledge acquired from GSU, I can proudly say that I have been able to utilize my resources accordingly to improve Kankakee.

What advice would you share with current GSU students?

I highly recommend current GSU students to volunteer and job shadow as early as possible—especially if they already know the respective career fields they want to pursue. It's never too early to gain experience that is invaluable to professional growth. By doing internships and volunteer work while students are still in school, they will be well-prepared after graduating to enter their field of work and make a difference immediately.