

Brian Kaminski

During his academic career at Beacon College, Brian Kaminski has been a valued member of the community for his cheerful disposition as well as for his use of his obvious talents in the field of IT. Toward the end of his college experience, he has also proven to be tenacious, persevering in his academic studies even as he battled cancer.

Originally from Orland Park, Illinois, Brian attended two colleges before his parents introduced him to Beacon. In his prior college experiences, Brian often didn't bother to attend classes because he knew they were not right for him and his style of learning. When he arrived at Beacon in 2010, he was still a freshman academically. Drawn by the Florida lifestyle and the individual assistance provided at Beacon, Brian knew that he had finally discovered the college for him.

While Brian struggled at first academically because he was homesick and getting acclimated to a new college and life environment, a summer term class with Miss Patestides had a profound impact on his life. His mentality changed to the concept of "being a creator, not a victim," and he started taking responsibility for his own success. He became determined to reach his goals in life, starting by earning a college degree. His sophomore year, following this influential course, proved transformative in several ways.

At Beacon, Brian discovered his niche, majoring in Computer Information Systems and expanding his skills not only in the classroom, but in the work environment as well. Scott Hughes, Director of IT at the time, realized the potential in Brian and became a mentor to him. As a sophomore, Brian became a Tech Intern, a position that he loved. Brian says it was, "High stress, high pace...that's the kind of stress I like."

Starting his sophomore year, Brian expanded his skills socially as well, becoming president of a favorite campus club- Performance Club. Previously, he had never considered being in a club at all due to his shy nature. His experiences with Performance Club helped him gain confidence, and he appreciated seeing others increase their confidence as they put their talents and skills on display for the entire campus community. This experience has also placed a potential career path in mind for Brian- he now has a desire to work stage effects in a theatre.

In February 2014, Brian's smooth sailing toward earning a college degree hit an unexpected and devastating obstacle. Following a stroke, tests revealed that Brian had testicular cancer. Months of treatment and setbacks followed. Through it all- the prognosis, the battle to regain control of his limbs following the stroke, and the chemotherapy, surgeries, and radiation to treat the cancer – Brian remained optimistic, upbeat, and determined. He was confident that he would beat cancer, and he was equally set on completing degree fulfillments as quickly as possible. While in the hospital, Brian tended to his studies as much as to his health. Dr. James Fleming, Chair of the Business & Technology Department, says, "Through Brian's continuous battle this past year, I was truly impressed by his perseverance to remain on track towards completing his educational goals."

Being diagnosed with cancer has changed Brian's perspective on life. As usual, he focuses on the positive aspects, like the community support shown by Beacon College, with faculty, staff, and students creating a photo "Get Well" banner and President Hagerty personally visiting him during the most difficult times. Brian says, "There were times I wanted to give up but I had so much support that no one would let me...It made me want to work harder." Aside from the academic and emotional support of the College community, Brian also had the constant support of fiancée and fellow Beacon graduate, Marta Wendt.

Through all of the setbacks, Brian remained steadfast on obtaining his degree, and he is now at the finish line with both his health obstacles and his education. The cancer is in remission, and the degree is all but in his hands!

Brian is wasting no time in moving to the next stage of his life. He is looking for career possibilities and has even created his own business- BK Computers & Stage Effects. Services offered through this mobile business include completing computer repairs and system maintenance, recycling computers, and assembling computers. So far, Brian has had five customers in Illinois and three in Florida in just a few short months. There is no Web site yet, but there are satisfied customers and good word of mouth, and a Facebook page is in process. Brian has also considered the potential for careers in theatre and in the local theme parks and is currently looking for opportunities in those areas.

Whatever career path Brian decides to start down, we are confident that the traits displayed at Beacon will serve him well. To say that Brian is a strong person is an understatement. His qualities of perseverance and optimism in the face of difficulties have proven that he will succeed in life no matter what path he sets down following Beacon.