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Funding the Finish Line: Couple creates scholarship to clear graduation hurdles

If there are two things George and Betty Seifert believe in, they are philanthropy and finishing what has been started — namely, college.

“Wherever we go, we try to find a way to get involved and give back to the community,” said Betty about herself and her husband, George. The couple has partnered with Oakland University for the past 30 years.

Committed advocates of higher education, the Seiferts have launched multiple scholarships for incoming freshmen from Oakland County-area schools. When they heard about the financial need of Oakland University students getting ready to graduate, they decided to step in.

“A lot of times, financial aid only covers four years of college,” said George, former president of Ameritech

Publishing Enterprises and adjunct professor for several major universities, including OU. “We created the CAS Finish Line Scholarship to help people at the back end who are taking longer to graduate.”

Established in 2011, the CAS Finish Line Scholarship is a variable amount awarded to students “to provide financial assistance to College of Arts and Sciences majors who have made significant progress toward their undergraduate degree but are having serious financial constraints preventing them from staying on track with their courses or preventing them from enrolling in the final course(s) toward degree completion.”

For Dunya Barash, a junior studying social work, the scholarship was what allowed her to stay in school after a change in her family’s financial situation.

“It was such a relief,” said Barash, who will now be the first in her family to graduate from college. “It gave me the option to focus on the LSAT and take extra courses before my senior year.”

Tanisha Andrews, another scholarship recipient, echoed Barash’s sentiments.

“It has given me a lot of peace of mind,” the senior criminal justice major said. “Finishing (college) is pushing me to achieve what I want to achieve. I want to run for Detroit councilwoman one day and this has helped me move one step closer to that dream.”

It is not a mistake that the Seiferts’ name is left out of the CAS Finish Line Scholarship fund’s title. The move is intentional, to encourage other donors to contribute to the cause and expand the fund.

“It’s not about us; it’s about the students, and we want to provide them with as much help as possible,” Betty said. “Our interest in this is to get others interested in doing the same.”

“It doesn’t have to be a big amount,” added George. “We hope people see the power of this (fund), and we hope past students return to become financial supporters of the college. Sometimes, it’s a little bit that can change a student’s life.”



Five years later, Betty and George Seifert see the impact of the scholarship they established in 2011 to help College of Arts and Sciences majors finish school.