

As retirement approaches, five siblings finish Berea College

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Eleven years ago — as I began my presidency at Berea College — Kaitlyn Reasoner was starting her own Berea College journey.

This month, as I approach retirement, her youngest sibling, Noah Reasoner, graduated.

Between Kaitlyn and Noah are three other siblings who graduated from Berea. Their mother, Wendy, wrote to express her pride and happiness that all five of her children finished college debt-free and to draw attention to the neat coincidence that the time at Berea of that whole group of siblings matches my own — exactly.

Kaitlyn graduated with a degree in biology.

While attending, she worked as a teaching assistant and as a referee for intramural sports. Kaitlyn took advantage of internship opportunities as well, accepting the Aspirnaut Research Internship at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville and the Shepherd Poverty Internship at Charleston Area Medical Center in West Virginia.

She completed medical school at Vanderbilt in 2020, is finishing her internal medicine residency in June, and is starting an infectious disease fellowship in July.

Seth Reasoner studied chemistry at Berea.

He also served as a teaching assistant and did the Aspirnaut Research Internship. Now enrolled in the Medical Scientist Training Program at Vanderbilt, Seth is on a path toward earning his doctor of medicine and doctor of philosophy degrees.

Emma Reasoner studied biology, like her sister.

She worked on the Berea College Farm and as a teaching assistant for the geographic information systems class. She did internships at the Indianapolis Zoo, the Alaska SeaLife Center, and the Cheetah Conservation Fund. Emma recently returned from Namibia, where she worked for the Cheetah Conservation Fund and earned her master's degree from the Namibian University of Science and Technology. Now she works at the Alaska SeaLife Center with stranded animals.

Clara Reasoner majored in chemistry and minored in biology and Spanish.

She also worked as a teaching assistant and did the Aspirnaut Research Internship at Vanderbilt. Clara is now enrolled in the combined doctor of veterinary medicine and doctor of philosophy program at Colorado State University.

And Noah, who just finished this month, earned his degree in agriculture and natural resources with a minor in philosophy.

He worked at the Berea College Farm and Printing Services, and ran on the track and field and cross country teams. He interned at Big Horn National Forest in Wyoming and at Colorado Fresh Farms in Colorado. This summer, he is joining two other Bereans for an internship at Edelen Renewables, a state-of-the-art solar energy company in Lexington.

Of course, I am proud of all the students who graduated from Berea over the past 11 years.

They all have accomplished greatness in their own ways and have overcome significant economic and social hurdles to get there.

I chose to share the story of the Reasoner family because it brings our mission into sharp focus and reminds us why we do what we do.

There is no other school like Berea College, a place dedicated to helping students of limited means, but unlimited potential achieve that potential and then go on to live productive lives and impact our society so positively.