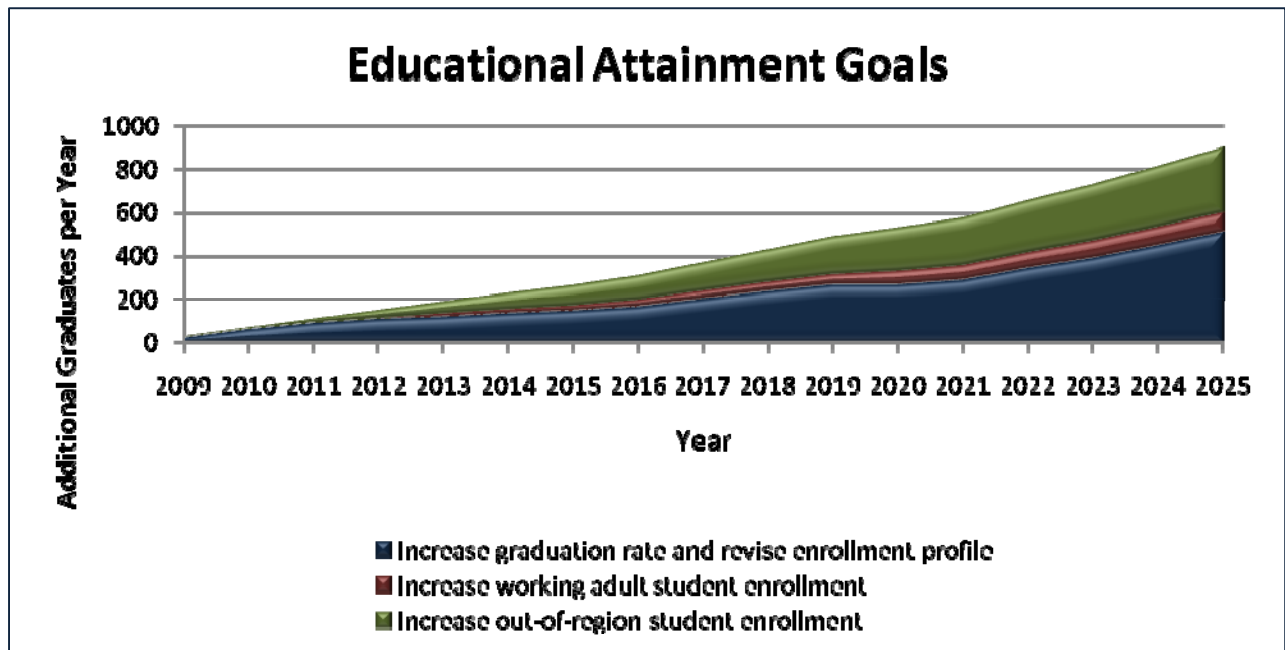


# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT PLAN

## UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire (UW-Eau Claire) is committed to supporting the educational attainment goals of the UW System Growth Agenda. UW-Eau Claire, with its special heritage and proven reputation for excellence in undergraduate education, is poised to contribute in uniquely meaningful ways. Over the next fifteen years, UW-Eau Claire aims to increase its production of baccalaureate-prepared graduates by forty-five percent through initiatives aligned with three attainment goals. The resulting educational attainment impact is summarized in the following chart.



## INCREASE GRADUATION EFFICIENCY AND REVISE ENROLLMENT PROFILE

UW-Eau Claire is currently operating at capacity for the physical campus. The geographic and financial constraints are such that rapidly expanding campus enrollment is not a realistic option. However, UW-Eau Claire will contribute to the educational attainment goals by accelerating degree progression for all students and leveraging the resulting available upper-division capacity through increased enrollment of students with prior earned credits. Data analyses of persistence rates at UW-Eau Claire have identified success in the “fifth semester” as highly predictive of timely graduation.

## ACCELERATED DEGREE PROGRESSION

(Increase Graduation Efficiency)

“Progression credits” are credits that contribute toward the satisfaction of degree requirements not already satisfied by a student’s academic record. UW-Eau Claire students take, on average, 9.15 semesters to graduate. Degree progression is accelerated when students earn more “progression credits” per year and/or are required to earn fewer credits overall. To complete more credits per year, students must *attempt* more, *complete* more, and/or *count* more credits per year.

### ATTEMPT MORE

UW-Eau Claire students, on average, attempt 28.74 credits per year which is below the 30 credits per year needed for timely degree progression. To increase the number of credits attempted per year, UW-Eau Claire will implement the following strategies.

#### BEGINNING WITHIN THE NEXT 2 ACADEMIC YEARS

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- UW-Eau Claire will increase the use of four-year graduation plans. While most departments have four-year graduation plans, few students take advantage of them thereby significantly reducing their effectiveness.
- Based on the book *Crossing the Finish Line: Completing College at America’s Public Universities* by William G. Bowen et al., UW-Eau Claire will disseminate “smart debt” information to all incoming students describing the myriad of factors for students to consider before attempting fewer credits per semester because of perceived employment needs.
- With resources from the *Blugold Commitment*, UW-Eau Claire will invest faculty positions to improve disciplinary advising. Dedicated faculty advisors will emphasize timely degree completion; offer targeted advising for students switching between majors; and provide specialized advising for transfer students and sophomores who have not yet selected a major.
- Currently, UW-Eau Claire enrolls approximately 6% ethnically underrepresented students which is lower than even the local school district percentage (15%). UW-Eau Claire will undertake an aggressive enrollment plan targeting underrepresented populations. The enrollment plan will include a comprehensive precollege access plan and an amplified Blugold Beginnings program. In addition, the Admissions Office will implement an “application follow up” program to reduce the number of incomplete applications from underrepresented groups. Currently, the incomplete application rate for majority students is 4% whereas it is near 30% for certain ethnic minority populations. The Admissions Office has hired a dedicated recruiter specializing in recruitment of underrepresented ethnic populations. All these efforts are aimed at increasing enrollment of underrepresented groups.
- On average, mini-session (summer, interim and winterim sessions) enrollments at UW-Eau Claire account for only about 5% of annual credits earned. UW-Eau Claire will invest in moving the majority of mini-session offerings online to maximize availability for students.

### COMPLETE MORE

On average, UW-Eau Claire students complete only 94% of the credits in which they enroll (including withdraws and repeats). To increase the number of credits completed per year, UW-Eau Claire will implement the following strategies.

#### BEGINNING WITHIN THE NEXT 2 ACADEMIC YEARS

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- UW-Eau Claire will design and deliver student success services specific to courses and programs that demonstrate high levels of withdrawal, repeat, and failures; and to programs that have greater proportion of students transferring to other institutions from UW-Eau Claire.
- UW-Eau Claire will implement an aggressive early detection system to provide effective intervention for students in academic difficulty.
- Nationally, high-impact practices such as study abroad and undergraduate research have shown to significantly improve student retention and success. At UW-Eau Claire, first generation students participate in these experiences at much lower rates than the general study body. Focus groups indicate the inability of these students to make and keep long-range plans as a significant cause. UW-Eau Claire will develop detailed cost information and associated timelines and funding plans to assist low-income and first generation students to participate in study abroad and/or undergraduate research

#### BEGINNING WITHIN THE NEXT 5 ACADEMIC YEARS

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The 2<sup>nd</sup>-to-3<sup>rd</sup> year retention rate (73%) at UW-Eau Claire is above national averages but still leaves some room for improvement. UW-Eau Claire will invest in sophomore retention initiatives designed to improve the retention rate to 80%. These initiatives will include high-impact retention mechanisms such as sophomore learning communities, programming in majors, and immersion experiences.

## COUNT MORE

Many students carry reduced credit loads to allow them to participate in academically-enriching co-curricular experiences (e.g., student government, research, etc.). To increase the number of credits earned each year that count toward unsatisfied graduation requirements UW-Eau Claire will implement the following tactics.

#### BEGINNING WITHIN THE NEXT 2 ACADEMIC YEARS

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- UW-Eau Claire will reduce unnecessary credits by making bottleneck courses more readily available. This will include investment in additional class sections as well as online options. Students often take “extra” credits while they wait for these bottleneck courses to become available.
- UW-Eau Claire will remove a campus-instituted 6-credit limit on independent study courses to allow more academically-enriching co-curricular activities to count toward major/minor requirements.

#### BEGINNING WITHIN THE NEXT 5 ACADEMIC YEARS

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UW-Eau Claire uses lower-division performance to establish enrollment caps in maximum capacity, high-demand areas like nursing. Nursing accepts far fewer students than demand would support. Students take additional, often unnecessary, coursework to improve their lower-division performance while hoping for admission into this program. Through the Blugold Commitment, UW-Eau Claire will increase capacity in nursing. Further, UW-Eau Claire will revise admission policies for the Nursing program to grant admission upon enrollment as an incoming student.

#### BEGINNING WITHIN THE NEXT 10 ACADEMIC YEARS

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UW-Eau Claire will investigate ways in which students may earn credits outside the traditional “15 hours in a classroom for one credit of learning” including credit-for-life, credit-for-work, and credit-for-prior-learning mechanisms.

## REQUIRE FEWER CREDITS IN MAJORS/MINORS AND UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS

The national standard for a baccalaureate degree is 120 semester credits. At UW-Eau Claire, the 120 credits involves 60 specialization and 60 broadening credits. The 60 broadening credits include general education (called the liberal education core at UW-Eau Claire), mathematics and English competency, service learning, and other degree requirements. The 60 credits of specialization include a 24-credit minor plus a 36-credit major or a 60-credit comprehensive major. Over time, majors, minors, and liberal education core requirements have increased incrementally. Currently, 15 comprehensive majors require more than 60 credits, 15 majors on campus require more than 36 credits, and 8 minors require more than 24 credits. To ensure a focused and efficient collection of degree requirements, UW-Eau Claire will implement the following strategies.

### BEGINNING WITHIN THE NEXT 2 ACADEMIC YEARS

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UW-Eau Claire has eight types of university-wide graduation requirements that constrain the way in which students must choose their 120 credits to graduate. To date, these requirements have been treated as standalone requirements, not integrated with the overall curriculum. UW-Eau Claire will streamline our university graduation requirements by more intentionally integrating them into the broader university curriculum.

### BEGINNING WITHIN THE NEXT 5 ACADEMIC YEARS

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- UW-Eau Claire will integrate high-impact experiences into majors and minors rather than treating them as outside the specialization credit load.
- At UW-Eau Claire, many majors and minors carry specific liberal education core and/or prerequisite course requirements. While many of these requirements are due to accreditation standards, such specific general education requirements decrease the degree progression rate for students who declare a major late or switch majors late in their academic careers. UW-Eau Claire will reduce the number of majors and minors requiring specific liberal education core courses in favor of other means to comply with appropriate accreditation standards (e.g., broadening course requirements to learning outcome requirements that can be satisfied by many different courses).

## REVISE ENROLLMENT PROFILE

With a smooth and consistent degree progression rate, one would expect approximately 25% of enrolled students per classification (freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior) with perhaps slightly higher rates at the freshmen/sophomore level. However, just over 30% of current UW-Eau Claire students are seniors; which follows from the low four-year graduation rate (23.8%) compared to our six-year graduation rate (64.5%). Improving degree progression will result in available capacity at the junior and senior levels. To accommodate this increased capacity, UW-Eau Claire will implement the following strategies.

### BEGINNING WITHIN THE NEXT 2 ACADEMIC YEARS

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- UW-Eau Claire will re-assess credit transfer policies to make the campus more transfer student friendly.

- Transfer students at UW-Eau Claire have a 56.3% six-year graduation rate compared to 64.5% for non-transfer students. UW-Eau Claire will improve transfer student advising with an emphasis on timely degree completion.
- Currently, transfer students retention to the second year (70.7%) is below that of the general study body (85.7%). Academic departments and academic support units will deploy transfer student “transition” experiences designed to more effectively assimilate transfer students into the academic and social life of a program.

#### BEGINNING WITHIN THE NEXT 5 ACADEMIC YEARS

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- UW-Eau Claire will develop “seamless transition agreements” with technical colleges, community colleges, and UW Colleges that will allow transfer students to complete their baccalaureate degree at UW-Eau Claire under a “2+2” model.
- UW-Eau Claire will investigate Housing and Residence Life policies to make them more transfer student friendly.
- Each department at UW-Eau Claire will identify a transfer student advisor with the expertise and time to support transfer student success within that department’s programs.

### **INCREASE WORKING-ADULT ENROLLMENT**

There is considerable demand for an “Eau Claire degree” from working adults in Wisconsin and beyond. The heritage and renown of UW-Eau Claire lies in the premier, liberal education of a traditional-aged, largely-residential student body. The existing curriculum and student success infrastructure is designed to serve the particular needs of this student population. To divest in this niche would draw away from UW-Eau Claire’s greatest strengths. That said, the expectations of traditional-aged students and those of working adult students continue to become more similar than different. Each population desires “high-tech, high-touch, and on-demand” access to educational offerings. Each population brings to the table significant prior learning experiences for which they expect credit. Each population seeks a human connection with their institution that makes them feel both appreciated and supported. UW-Eau Claire has a significant infrastructure in place for providing traditional-aged students with a “high-touch” education. UW-Eau Claire will contribute to the educational attainment goals by retooling curriculum and faculty to support the “high-tech” and “on-demand” expectations of traditional-aged students and leverage the same resources to serve a broad spectrum of working adult students. To appropriately accommodate adult students, UW-Eau Claire will implement the following strategies.

#### BEGINNING WITHIN THE NEXT 2 ACADEMIC YEARS

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UW-Eau Claire will implement a fully online degree-completion program under the umbrella of the Bachelor of Liberal Studies (BLS) degree.

#### BEGINNING WITHIN THE NEXT 5 ACADEMIC YEARS

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- Currently, UW-Eau Claire has no fully online undergraduate program. UW-Eau Claire will develop five new fully online undergraduate programs in addition to the BLS degree-completion program mentioned above.
- UW-Eau Claire will expand existing credit-by-demonstration mechanisms and establish a prior-learning assessment (PLA) mechanism to attract and retain more adult working students.

#### BEGINNING WITHIN THE NEXT 10 ACADEMIC YEARS

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UW-Eau Claire will expand off-site, face-to-face support for place-bound, working adult students enrolled in our on-line programs.

### INCREASE OUT-OF-REGION ENROLLMENT

UW-Eau Claire has a national reputation for leadership in high-impact educational practices such as immersion experiences, faculty/student collaborative research, and internships. Taken to the next level, these signature experiences have the potential to attract students from around the nation and even the world. UW-Eau Claire seeks to broaden the student population that can experience the quality learning afforded by these signature experiences by establishing and marketing itself as a “destination college” targeting national and international students. To accomplish this goal, UW-Eau Claire will implement the following strategies.

#### BEGINNING WITHIN THE NEXT 2 ACADEMIC YEARS

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- UW-Eau Claire will increase its outreach to national student markets via Return to Wisconsin and Midwest Student Exchange (i.e., Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota). (Currently, UW-Eau Claire enrolls less than a dozen students each year under the Midwest Student Exchange Program. This program provides an important source for out-of-region students and will be more effectively leveraged.)
- UW-Eau Claire will partner with international placement agents in establishing ongoing relationships with international student markets.
- UW-Eau Claire will promote targeted undergraduate programs (e.g., Environmental Public Health, Materials Science, etc.).

#### BEGINNING WITHIN THE NEXT 5 ACADEMIC YEARS

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- UW-Eau Claire will pursue other initiatives/options linked with “discounted tuition” to incentivize out-of-region students to enroll at the university.
- UW-Eau Claire will design and conduct a national student recruitment effort using purchased distribution lists.

## OUTCOME MILESTONES BY 2015-2016

All told, over the next 5 years, the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire seeks to grow by approximately 260 the number of degrees awarded. Of the 260 additional degrees, 145 will result from success in accelerating degree progression and leveraging resulting capacity at the upper-division with increased transfer student enrollment; 20 will result from increased adult student enrollment; and 95 will result from increased national and international student enrollment.

Efforts to accelerate degree progression will focus on an improved third-year retention rate (from 69% to 74%) and a concomitant improved four-year graduation rate from (23.5% to 32.5%). Four-year graduation rates for underrepresented groups will become closer to equitable (30.4%), increasing from 19.3% in 2008-2009.

Thursday, May 20, 2010

Seats made available from the accelerated degree progression will be filled with increased number of transfer students entering the University at the junior and senior levels; growing to 250 from approximately 200 in 2009-2010. Enrollment of underrepresented groups will increase to 460 from 411 in 2009-2010.

Online degree programs and degree-completion programs will increase adult working student enrollment to 900 (from approximately 800 in 2009-2010).

While the above outcomes can be produced with no additional resources, increasing out-of-region enrollment will require a substantial investment of both dollars and positions. Assuming adequate new resources, out-of-region student enrollment, including international student enrollment, would grow to 250 from roughly 130 in 2009-2010.