

## Questions and Comments We've Received About the Blugold Commitment

*Thank you for sending your questions and comments about the Blugold Commitment. Your feedback will help to make our proposal better. Below are responses to questions and comments we've received through our online comment form. To add your comment, [click here](#).*

**I am against this proposal because of the economic conditions and the fact that the State of Wisconsin is not providing the money that it used to.**

There is no doubt that these are challenging economic times, for families and for our state. This is precisely the time, however, when an investment in education has never been more important. The jobs that will help Wisconsin prosper in a global economy require the very skills that UW-Eau Claire provides — the ability to communicate effectively, work with diverse individuals, be at home in a global workplace, and think critically and independently. The Blugold Commitment is vital because these are the outcomes that the additional tuition is directly targeted toward sustaining—for *all* our students. Currently, we are able to offer the high-impact experiences that support these skills for only a portion of our students. It is more critical now, in this economy, that we be able to provide this high-quality education for all our graduates.

Like many states, Wisconsin has reduced its proportion of expenditure in higher education over the past several decades. A Feb. 26, 2009, report by Wisconsin's Legislative Fiscal Bureau noted, for example, that between 1993-94 and 2008-09, the proportion of the state's General Fund investment in the University of Wisconsin System *decreased* from 11.1 percent of the total funding to 8.4 percent. Reallocation away from higher education is a reality, much as we wish it were not so — and we see no indication that will change in the future. As state funding is reduced, we have the difficult choice between reducing quality or asking students to bear a greater tuition burden.

It's important to note that the Blugold Commitment will be *phased in* over four years. This means that, if approved, the increase in fall of 2010 would be \$187.50 per semester. Families will not be asked to invest the full \$1,500 increase until 2013-14. As our UW-Eau Claire alumni will attest, a Blugold degree is still an investment that pays dividends long after graduation.

**UWEC is an excellent institution and my son is benefitting greatly. But ... in the private sector and within our own families we have been forced to "cut back." Shouldn't UW-Eau Claire have to do the same? Do you really expect to be able to afford everything you have enjoyed in the past without some cuts somewhere?**

We agree that if we are asking our students to pay more, we need to be responsible for every dollar we receive. Over the past 10 years, UW-Eau Claire has seen cumulative reductions of

more than \$35 million, reductions we've largely taken from administrative funds in order to protect student instruction. When compared to our national peers we spend approximately 50 percent less on administrative support so we can invest more on instruction, academic support and student services. This past year alone, we have made base budget and salary reductions of \$2.1 million. Our faculty and staff have not received a salary increase and are taking eight furlough days without pay this year and next. We're committed to living within our leaner budget and to do so, we've undergone a yearlong assessment of every unit and department on campus to determine where we should be investing and where we can consolidate.

The Blugold Commitment is not a proposal to increase faculty and staff salaries or even to make up for furlough days (those decisions are out of our control and are determined by the state Legislature). The Blugold Commitment will enable us to invest in additional faculty and staff so we can continue to provide more individualized student instruction. It is an investment in the practices that have made and will continue to make a real difference in the competitiveness of our graduates. We don't believe that we can wait to help our students prepare to take their place in helping Wisconsin's recovery.

### **How will Eau Claire's tuition compare to other UW schools, not just other Midwestern universities?**

If the Blugold Commitment were fully implemented *today*, the annual cost for tuition, fees, room and board at UW-Eau Claire would still be almost \$2,000 less expensive than UW-Madison and more than \$5,000 less than at UM-Twin Cities, two of the three top institutions to which our students currently apply. A third alternative for some of our students is UW-La Crosse. Were the Blugold Commitment implemented today, UW-Eau Claire would be only \$620 more than UW-La Crosse in total cost. These numbers assume, of course, that none of those institutions increase their fees or room and board costs over the next four years as the Blugold Commitment is phased in.

### **Are you going to increase our financial aid and grants in order to cover this spike in tuition?**

The Blugold Commitment includes a financial assistance component for low- and middle-income families. All students who are Pell-grant eligible will receive a grant for the full amount of the increased tuition (\$375 in the first year, up to \$1,500 when the tuition increase is fully implemented after four years). In addition, students whose Estimated Family Contribution is \$10,000 or less will be eligible for a grant of 50 percent of the increased tuition (\$188 the first year, up to \$750 in year four and following). Students need only complete the FAFSA form by April 15 to be considered for the grant.

To see if you or your student would qualify for a Blugold Commitment grant, you can calculate your Estimate Family Contribution at <http://www.uwec.edu/finaid/vsa/vsa.html>.

**I am graduating next year, and I will not benefit from any improvements that may or may not come from the Blugold Commitment. I feel that upper classmen should be exempt from the increase because the majority will not receive any benefits from it.**

As a senior, you'll only be asked to contribute toward the first increase in differential tuition — \$375, or \$187.50 a semester — next year. While you won't be able to take advantage of some of the longer-term Blugold Commitment benefits such as enhanced advising and more efficient graduation requirements, we do expect that there will be improved course availability. Perhaps even more important, you will benefit from the Blugold Commitment as it helps to preserve and improve the reputation of your UW-Eau Claire degree. Our alumni tell us that one of the most valuable assets they have is their degree, which employers tell us sets our graduates apart. The Blugold Commitment will help to preserve that asset for you in the decades to come.

**There's no mention of differential tuition increases as they relate to graduate students.**

Under the Blugold Commitment, graduate students will not be asked to pay differential tuition. This proposal is for undergraduate students only.

**Will the university provide a higher tuition waiver for international students if the Blugold Commitment passes?**

The tuition waiver for international students is based on the difference between the nonresident and resident base tuition. Because the majority of our international students do not have high financial need, there are no plans at this time to provide additional Blugold Commitment financial assistance for the differential tuition increase.

**Is the Blugold Commitment cost divided up over two semesters? Example : \$1500 = \$750 per semester, so a student only attending one semester isn't paying for the full-year Commitment cost?**

Yes, the Blugold Commitment would be charged by semester. The first year, for example, each semester's cost would be \$187.50 (half of \$375). In addition, part-time students pay a pro-rated amount, depending on the number of credits they are taking.

**How will you distribute the funding among the different colleges?**

Currently proposals for differential tuition funding come from across campus and are funded based on categories established by the Student Senate. Under the Blugold Commitment a similar process will be followed. Every department and unit will have the opportunity to submit proposals for initiatives that meet the guidelines established by the Student Senate, in consultation with the provost. At this time, proposed categories are:

- Undergraduate research
- Experiential learning and internships
- Capstones
- International and domestic multicultural immersion experiences
- Learning and teaching enhancements

- Innovative projects

Proposals will be reviewed by the deans and vice chancellors, and then committees of students and faculty will evaluate the proposals before the provost and Student Senate representatives determine how the funding is distributed.

In addition, the provost will identify specific divisionwide initiatives that may require funding to enhance academic quality, such as investment in enhanced advising or adding faculty positions to address identified course availability bottlenecks. Those initiatives will be presented to the Student Senate along with the department proposals.

**Doesn't increasing funding for study abroad, internships and research seem counterproductive to getting students out in four years?**

Making sure that students are able to progress efficiently to graduation while also being able to take advantage of the high-impact experiences that set them apart as graduates is the core of the Blugold Commitment. That's why the proposal asks UW-Eau Claire faculty and staff to commit to revising our graduation requirements — including general education requirements — so that more students who choose to take advantage of these experiences can graduate in four years. That will require that we find ways to integrate study abroad, research, service-learning, internships and intercultural immersion into the graduation requirements of our majors, not make them “add-ons” that add time to degree. This takes ongoing faculty and staff time to revise curriculum, organize and lead immersion experiences, and advise and mentor students.