

Chancellor Brian Levin-Stankevich
State-of-the-University Address
Blugold Breakfast
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
August 23, 2011

Good morning and welcome to the sixth annual Blugold Breakfast. This is the traditional start to our academic year and I'm sure you'll agree with me that our campus has never looked better, with the new sidewalks on Garfield, new doors here in Zorn Arena and lots of new building happening next to Phillips.

I would like to begin with some introductions and with thanks. First, this morning would not be possible without the generous support of Sodexo, which has again underwritten the full cost of this wonderful hot breakfast.

The Sodexo team is truly our partner in serving our students and I want to thank Christian Wise and everyone on his staff for the work they do every day. Christian, will you please rise? Let's give all our Sodexo colleagues a big round of applause.

This morning I want to warmly welcome all our new faculty and staff to their first Blugold Breakfast. I hope this is the first of many in the years to come. This year, due to the large number of retirements, we are welcoming almost 100 new individuals to our campus. If you joined the University anytime during 2011, please stand so we can officially welcome you to our campus.

In particular, I'd like to introduce two new college leaders who arrived on campus this summer—will you stand when I call your name.

Dr. Linda Young is our new dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. She joins our University from the Milwaukee School of Engineering, where she was a founding faculty member of the School of Nursing.

I also want to welcome Dr. Marvin Lynn, the new associate dean in the College of Education and Human Sciences. He will oversee all aspects of teacher education at UW-Eau Claire. Welcome to both of you.

I also want to acknowledge the significant contributions of my Cabinet over the past year.

This group of faculty, staff, students, classified staff and administrators has provided insight and counsel to me, and direction to the University.

We have some important guests who got up early to be with us this morning and I'd like you to help me welcome them. First, someone who has been my co-host at countless University events and receptions, at every one of the past Blugold Breakfasts and breakfast at home for the past 36 years, my wife Debi.

Members of the Student Senate leadership team are with us today. Please stand when I call your name:

- Phil Rynish, Student Senate President,
- Jake Bernardy, Academic Affairs Director,
- And Senator Ben Streeter.

For those of you who are new to campus, you should know that UW-Eau Claire student leaders play a significant role here. They are a true part of our shared governance, not just on paper but also in daily practice.

Students supported and now play a key role in awarding and assessing Blugold Commitment differential tuition funds. They represent those who have become this University's largest single source of funding, namely tuition-paying students.

They have even piloted a Blugold student mascot that will appear this fall. I again look forward to working with all of you this coming academic year.

We're pleased to have several legislative and community friends with us today.

As I read your name, please stand—and let's hold our applause until everyone has been introduced:

- Tom McCarty, Eau Claire County Administrator
- Gregg Moore, chair of the Eau Claire County Board of Supervisors
- Brian Doudna, Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation
- Bob McCoy, President and CEO of the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce
- Representative and alumna Kathy Bernier
- Mark Aumann, representing U.S. Congressman Ron Kind
- Marjorie Bunce and Colleene Thomas, representing U.S. Senator Herb Kohl. You may recall that Colleene served as a student Regent several years ago.

- And board members from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Foundation: Chancellor Emeritus Dr. Larry Schnack, Vice Chancellor Emeritus Charlie Bauer and student Sarah Tweedale.

We in western Wisconsin are honored to be represented by a Chippewa Valley neighbor on the UW System Board of Regents. Ed Manydeeds, a graduate of both UW-Superior and Madison, and a local attorney with Richie, Guettinger & Manydeeds, is with us this morning and brings greetings from the Regents. [Regent Manydeeds' comments follow.]

Thank you, Regent Manydeeds, for the encouragement and support you have provided to UW-Eau Claire and all institutions in the UW System.

It's now my pleasure to invite UW-Eau Claire Foundation Board member and chair of the Audit Committee, Charlie Bauer, to the stage to bring greetings and, we hope, a little something else from the Foundation. [Comments from Charlie Bauer, as well as Mike Carney, chemistry department chair, and student Matt Winarski, follow.]

Thank you. I want to recognize all those of you who support our University through your financial donations as well as your time and dedication.

You have helped make the past two years the second- and third-best fundraising years in our history. I want to especially commend the Foundation staff members who have achieved so much during challenging economic times.

It is a Blugold tradition to recognize those individuals who exemplify our University's commitment to excellence. Before I do, however, I would like to take a moment to recognize the passing of a true University citizen, our colleague and friend to so many, Dr. Barbara Lozar.

As many of you are aware, Barbara suffered a stroke this past June and passed away on August 11. She will be dearly missed by her students and colleagues in the Psychology department and by all of us who benefited from her service to UW-Eau Claire and to shared governance.

During her final months, many of you visited her, spent hours at her bedside and truly rallied around Barbara. You exemplify what makes this campus a community. Please join me in a moment of silence in memory of Barbara Lozar. [Moment of silence follows.]

A ceremony honoring Barbara's life will be held here on campus next Tuesday, August 30, at 3:30 p.m. in the Council Fire Room.

Continuing to honor that tradition of University citizenship so vividly lived by Barbara, would the following people please come forward for the presentation of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Excellence Awards:

- Sarah Forcier
- Linda Spaeth,
- Alan Rieck
- Thomas Lockhart
- Erik Hendrickson

Provost Patricia Kleine and Vice Chancellor Beth Hellwig, would you also please come forward?

Each Excellence Award recipient will receive the University Medallion and a \$1,500 check from the UW-Eau Claire Foundation. The UW System Excellence in Teaching Award is underwritten by the Arnie and Lois Domer Foundation of Eau Claire. The Markquart family endowment supports the Excellence in Classified and Academic Staff Awards and the Excellence in Teaching Awards.

The Markquarts have been a vital part of our community and University family for more than 40 years through their generous philanthropic giving and endowment of our faculty and staff excellence awards. [Excellence awards are presented.]

Congratulations to all of you. It is now my pleasure to introduce University Senate Chair Susan Harrison. [Susan Harrison's remarks follow.]

Thank you, Susan.

Susan has not only successfully steered the University Senate during both calm and stormy seas over the past two decades, but I understand she spent some time this summer navigating Lake Superior as well. Welcome back to terra firma, Susan. I hope you all had a summer that allowed you to recharge.

As many of you know, I'm an avid biker, and during part of the summer, I got to ride the mountain back-roads of New Mexico — a challenging but rewarding break for me. In a way, we've all been metaphorically pedaling uphill over the past several years — or at least the five that I've had the privilege of serving as your chancellor. As I stand here at the chronological midpoint between when I joined this campus in 2006 and our upcoming Centennial in 2016, I feel like I'm in the middle of a long climb, and with lots more hills ahead.

This is a good time, at our opening breakfast when we are all together, to pause and take stock of where we are, how far we've come and to assess the road ahead.

Looking back, we've ridden through quite a few steep sections: leadership changes, threats to facility funding, construction and its resultant parking upheaval and, of course, our budget. There hasn't been a Blugold Breakfast when I didn't have to talk about declining state-allocated resources.

Together we endured two years of furloughs — now replaced with greater health insurance and pension contributions — all of which continue to erode our paychecks.

This year's budget bill eliminated the faculty and staff right to collectively bargain gained just a couple of years ago, and implemented the largest funding reduction to the UW-System in the past two decades — representing an 11 percent cut in state funding allocation for UW-Eau Claire.

This past year the debate over the future of the UW System preserved UW-Madison's place as our flagship, but it has introduced new uncertainties. Everything from how our tuition revenue is allocated to how our human resource system is structured is now under review.

I'd like to be able to talk to you about the new administrative flexibilities outlined in the biennial budget, but many of these new potentials will take the larger part of the fiscal and academic year to work out and implement.

This past year has brought additional statutory changes that will impact life on this campus, notable among them the changes to the voter identification and concealed carry laws.

It is disappointing that our state has decided to make voting more difficult for some — notably our students — by implementing new voter ID requirements.

The concealed carry law also will affect this campus. Two years ago we struggled over the divisive issue of where to locate our new student center and the meaning of our Council Oak tree.

We resolved that struggle in favor of the fundamental values inherent in that iconic tree. It represents this campus's historical commitment to being a place of peacemaking, a haven where conflicting peoples and ideas can come together in safe and civil debate.

The concealed carry law passed this year now enables individuals to carry deadly force weapons on our campus and even on the Children's Center grounds. Because this

undermines our University's deeply held values, I will work with our legislators to seek an amendment to this law to exempt university and childcare facility grounds.

I do want to thank our local state legislators, who have gone out of their way to meet with me and my staff during the past year, to communicate with me even in the midst of caucus and floor debates, to listen to our concerns and to provide me with reasons for what was happening in Madison.

They worked to make sure student IDs were added to the voter identification bill, promoted a longer-term assessment of WiscNet, and advocated for new flexibilities for the campuses within the UW System. They continued the work of our previous delegation of legislators in supporting our new Education Building as it moved through the state approval process. I will continue to work closely with them as we begin to implement the new laws here on campus and to restore measured and responsible solutions to the problems they tackle in this coming year.

We did experience a lot of change last year — in fact over the past five years since I've been here — but we have also accomplished a lot, even in a challenging and sometimes drama-filled environment. In just the past five years we have:

- Grown in enrollment from 9,700 to more than 11,000 students;
- Awarded more than 11,000 degrees;
- Successfully completed our decennial reaccreditation, along with discipline-based accreditations as well;
- Inaugurated our first doctorate, in nursing practice;
- Received recognition for exemplary LGBTQ programming;
- Partnered with our students on a groundbreaking differential tuition that will ultimately provide more than \$12 million annually to the University. The Blugold Commitment has already funded 27 positions, an incredible investment in our faculty and staff.
- Received recognition as a veteran-friendly University;
- Broken ground on a new student center;
- Received final Building Commission approval for the Education Building, our first state-funded new building project in almost 30 years;
- Partnered in the renovation of Hobbs arena;

- Celebrated as UW System named Paul Thomas Teacher of the Year and my own history colleagues teaching department of the year; and
- Created the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.
- We tackled General Education and integrating high-impact practices into curricular reform — a continuing work in progress.
- We cheered the women’s softball and cross-country teams as they won their respective NCAA national championships; our forensic team as they won their 17th straight state collegiate title and our Jazz Ensemble I as they accumulated six *Downbeat Magazine* awards for best undergraduate big band.
- We engaged in state and national programs to assess and improve inclusiveness at UW Eau Claire, and we continue to dedicate ourselves to closing the gaps on employment, access and achievement.
- Since 2006, when we became a founding signatory to the President’s Climate Commitment, we have involved our students in carbon reduction analysis and planning and achieved a 19 percent reduction in energy use — the second largest in the entire UW System.
- We also launched new degrees in liberal studies, international business, women's studies, materials science and professional studies;
- We completed our first comprehensive campaign, exceeding our goal of \$50 million;
- And together we created a new mission, vision and strategic plan that truly set us apart.

No wonder we are all tired! I am proud of what we have accomplished, all the while carrying out the teaching, scholarship and service missions of this University and fulfilling our public purpose.

Now, there may be others in my position or some of you here today who look at this record of accomplishment and say “enough.” It’s time to coast a bit, be satisfied with the status quo and just hang on for a few more years — maybe make it to retirement with a little less exertion. At times that’s a tempting thought. But as one of my staff said to me this summer, “Chancellor, I think you really LIKE riding uphill!”

I have to admit I do enjoy resisting gravity and pushing myself to the next level. It's fortunate that I've seen this trait also in many of you, because the choices we have for riding into the future do not include many flat routes.

Yes, we could leave the uphill climb to those who come after us, letting things like quality and reputation slide a bit.

But if we are serious about our commitment to the stewardship of this great University, it would be irresponsible to leave the challenging work for those who follow or shirk our responsibility to reach for excellence today.

While we're paused here at my halfway point to the centennial, I must admit the way up to 2016 looks just as steep as the road we've already come. For the first time in Wisconsin history, tuition now drives the majority of UW System's budget — in fact tuition and fees account for seven out of every 10 dollars in our annual budget.

That's a seismic shift, because it means, more than ever, that attracting, enrolling, retaining and graduating our students in a timely way is critical not only to our educational mission, but also to our basic institutional health.

This means that when stock markets plunge, unemployment surges and student enrollment fluctuates, we feel every bump. If just 100 students fail to enroll next year or 100 drop out this year — for whatever reason — we lose \$1.4 million in resources.

But it is precisely at times like this that our University and fellow UW campuses are so essential. These are the times our collective commitment to our public purpose is most needed.

Why do we devote ourselves to this University, pushing ourselves when there seem to be so many challenges in front of us and the rewards are so elusive?

I am here at UW-Eau Claire because I believe in the mission and vision of this institution. I also believe in you who created that mission and who implement it every day.

Before you this morning is a copy of our annual Gold Arrows and, on the reverse side, a summary of our University's mission, vision, values and strategic goals. It's printed there because while many of you worked very hard to create our Centennial Plan five years ago, many others of you are new to our University and may have only a vague notion of what this plan involves.

I'd like you to look closely with me at our University mission. UW-Eau Claire is not just an island of learning, but a vibrant, connected University with a public purpose to

challenge, shape and equip our students to be Wisconsin's and the world's future innovators, leaders, educators, parents, informed citizens and yes, job creators — regardless of the wealth or privilege of their backgrounds.

We do this in our classrooms, surely, but also on the athletic field, in the residence hall, and through the community we collectively create on this campus and beyond.

We are not only in the business of teaching our disciplines or providing student services, but we are in the business of developing talent that our state and our nation needs more desperately than ever. Our mission is bigger than our individual jobs and greater than any single department.

While this public purpose is noble, there are many institutions that share that mission. What distinguishes this University, and why I know many of you are here, is the distinctive vision we have set for ourselves.

The top of our aspirational mountain is nothing less than to be the premier undergraduate learning community in the Upper Midwest.

That is our goal, not for the self-serving purpose of prestige and reputation, but for the purpose of providing our students with access to the very best education and to make the Blugold degree more valuable every day.

In practice this means we are a University where faculty would rather present collaborative research with their students than author a paper alone. It's educators who see the world as their classroom — studying pesticides in Cambodia or helping to create a public radio station in Moldova. It's faculty, staff and students who embody the Wisconsin Idea here in Eau Claire, providing our community with international business expertise or care for autistic children.

It's staff who rise to the challenge of making this University run, whether faced with a campuswide software conversion, flooding in Brewer Hall or continuing state budget reductions. Staff who aren't satisfied with the Eau Claire Way, but always ask, "How can we do this better?"

Our vision is of a campus that extends beyond State and Water streets to embrace Eau Claire. We practice stewardship of place, recognizing that an Eau Claire area that is strong economically, socially and artistically will be an even greater benefit to this strong University.

We create partnerships with our community to enrich our teaching, living and performance spaces. For example, we are working with Clear Vision Eau Claire to plan and

develop a major arts and events center in our community. And, we reach out to students before they set foot on campus, by engaging the UW Colleges, the technical colleges and community colleges in nearby states.

This vision of a premier University is why pedaling uphill is worth all the effort.

I know you believe as passionately as I do in the public purpose of this institution and in our vision to be a premier university.

But with all the challenges we've encountered and continue to face, how can we progress toward our goal? That's where our University values come in. They're listed there on your handout — I'd like to use our four values to help outline the gold arrow priorities that lie ahead for us this year.

The first value — stewardship and sustainability — is especially relevant during yet another year of significant budget difficulties.

While the 5.5 percent increase to student tuition will alleviate some of the cut, we are still looking at a \$2.3 million reduction this year alone.

The deans and directors have submitted proposals to the vice chancellors that will enable us to meet this budget reduction during the first year of the biennium. Cuts will not be made across the board, nor will Blugold Commitment funds be used to backfill for base reductions. Our budget reductions will be strategic, in all divisions, to preserve our mission and vision, and to free up funding to re-invest in our priorities.

While the upcoming budget reductions will require changes and sacrifice, they will not undermine the fundamental fiscal health of this University.

Nevertheless, our fiscal sustainability over the next decade will require all of us to be much more mindful of our tuition revenue that derives from student enrollment, retention and timely graduation.

As I mentioned earlier, with tuition now the primary source of our income, everything we are able to do or want to do, will be affected by the tuition revenue and efficiencies we are able to generate. This does not mean that we need to radically grow the size of our freshman class and become a university of 12,000 or 15,000 students. That *would* be one way to generate more revenue, but it would compromise our vision and reduce the ability of our incoming students to succeed.

As our Centennial Plan outlines, and as I have stated since my very first breakfast speech in 2006, we will instead increase our tuition revenue by increasing our student retention and timely graduation and by serving a more diverse array of students.

By enabling more students to stay and complete their degree — and more than one in four to do so within four years — we will be able to maintain our current size, increase the number of students we serve and, as a result, increase the revenue that supports our core work. Most importantly, we will help our students achieve their goals at less cost to them and with less debt upon graduation.

What does that mean for the coming year?

If you flip over the centennial plan summary you'll find our 2012 gold arrows — our University priorities for the coming year. The first arrow, to “advance student success,” challenges us to improve our ability to retain and graduate students by working on GE reform and our graduation requirements.

Many of you are actively involved in identifying the barriers to timely graduation, revising requirements for the major or streamlining course offerings. This is vital, department-level work that must continue.

It is not easy, but improving our academic productivity does pay dividends.

When we enrich, not expand, our curricular requirements, streamline required course sequences without sacrificing rigor, and use our summer and Winterim sessions to improve course availability, we shift and better manage demands on faculty teaching time.

In turn, the additional tuition revenue from improved retention can be reinvested in more instructional positions. All this means more time for faculty-student interaction, mentoring and collaborative research — some of the hallmarks of UW-Eau Claire excellence.

Amid all the state-level drama of last spring, many felt that much was lost. But we also made some important gains.

The retention of an intact UW System was accompanied by new operational flexibilities that the legislature felt should be granted to all the campuses. This was something that I and my colleagues worked hard to achieve. We had the strong support of many business leaders in our own community, including many longtime friends of the University who helped make it possible for us to gain some of the flexibilities we have long sought.

Among others I want to thank Bob McCoy and the Eau Claire Chamber board for advocating for our Education Building and for their public support of the Wisconsin Idea Partnership.

Currently, we do not receive state allocations to appropriately reward faculty and staff. Compared with our peer institutions, we're at or near the bottom of the pack in level of compensation. I am committed to doing all I can to change that, in light of the new UW System funding flexibilities. Assistant Chancellor Dave Gessner and I are actively exploring a suitable mechanism to achieve more competitive compensation.

But here's what you need to know. The only way to free up funds for more competitive compensation, since they don't come from state appropriations, without shrinking our workforce or cutting quality, is to maintain a steady and growing tuition revenue fund.

Here's how we do that: We must diversify our enrollment portrait, retain more students to graduation, and create programs that meet demand and that can sustain a higher tuition-to-cost ratio. Growing our tuition revenue is the key to more competitive compensation and our financial health, now and in the future.

The second value that must guide our efforts in becoming a premier learning community is EDI — our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusivity. We are making strides in improving the diversity of our campus. The percent of freshmen who are students of color is at 9 percent, an increase of almost 40 percent over the past five years.

This isn't a result of just the hard work of one or two offices, but of everyone.

Last year I mentioned the success that the Honors Program has had in attracting a broadly diverse student body. That program has also been nationally cited as an example of "high-impact leadership" in the service of equity.

This year the social work department is in the process of drafting holistic admissions requirements to enrich the diversity of students in that major. Every department can be more intentional and creative in supporting this critical value.

But if you look back at our first gold arrow you'll find another way in which we can support EDI: by serving our transfer students more effectively and by assuring that our transfer students, many of whom are low-income, first-generation learners, have equitable opportunities for access into programs, academic success and integration into the life of this campus.

Our third value, one I would like to particularly emphasize, has set us apart throughout our history. It is our innovation and commitment to continuous improvement. We pioneered differential tuition and undergraduate collaborative research. We lead the UW System in our study-abroad and service-learning programs.

But I'd like to challenge you to think differently, no matter what your discipline, department or unit. Can you revise your major to reduce time to degree while also enhancing learning outcomes? Can you collaborate with other units to trim the time it takes to hire, purchase, renovate or process? Can we say no to those activities that don't get us closer to being a premier university?

I fear that sometimes we hide behind our seal of excellence, unwilling to jeopardize the status quo on the presumption that excellence will be automatically lost.

Sometimes excellence requires us to be the best at doing less, not more under duress. We assume that everything that has been a part of our campus and our work lives must be preserved while we hesitantly try to add even more. It is time to stop this unfortunate thinking, born of a culture of scarcity, and be the adventurous innovators we have proven we can be.

We have an opportunity to do this next week. Susan Harrison just invited you and the University Senate to spend an afternoon looking at how it can improve its efficiency while also preserving the principles of shared governance and transparency.

Our current Senate and department committee structures demand literally thousands of hours of your time and my time each year. If we can reduce this expenditure of time by even 10 percent, that will translate into more time for advising students, scholarship, maintaining currency in your disciplines and innovating in your curriculum or programming.

We can also be more innovative in how we create and fund new programs.

Two years ago we launched Blugold Beginnings, a program that serves our recruitment, retention, community service and EDI goals. The preliminary outcomes have been impressive, with more than 1,300 fifth graders spending a day on campus this spring, 145 UW-Eau Claire students serving as mentors and 25 learning community scholars helping to run the program.

Under Jodi Thesing-Ritter's leadership, this program has leveraged institutional support to attract major external funding from UW System, Americorps and the Great Lakes

Higher Education Guaranty Corporation. This is a model for how we can think — and fund — outside the box.

Two years ago, I announced a target of doubling our international student enrollment of 150 students. (Enrollment had not recovered from 9/11 and the exit of international students.) We invested in recruiting by earmarking a portion of the additional tuition generated by international student enrollment to sustain the recruitment effort while also adding to our overall tuition revenue. I am pleased to note that under Karl Markgraf's direction, we are well ahead of that target and expect to enroll 271 international students this fall.

This past year we also developed our bachelor of professional studies degree, set to begin this academic year. An interdisciplinary program aimed at returning adult students who want to translate their associate's degree into a UW-Eau Claire bachelor's degree, it will be online and eventually self-supporting.

I mention this program because it is, like Blugold Beginnings and international recruitment, another model for how we can fund innovation. The provost provided seed dollars for faculty to develop the program, and we partnered with UW Extension to underwrite the launch until it becomes self-sustaining.

We know this model works and so we will continue to find ways to invest seed dollars in ideas and programs — especially academic programs — that recruit and retain students and, importantly, can become self-supporting.

The fourth and final value that must support our priorities is that of leadership.

As a University, we have come this far because we have not been afraid to blaze a trail. And we have kept our vision of academic excellence at the forefront.

The integrity of the baccalaureate is so important to me because it is the mainstay of what we do at UW-Eau Claire. We will always keep our focus on providing the most exceptional liberal education and professional preparation for our students. But we cannot continue to do so with a curriculum that exceeds our resources to teach it, that strains course availability, eats up huge resources and wears down faculty energy.

We cannot protect the quality of our degree if we ignore the realities of student mobility and rising demands for timely graduation.

So I am looking to each one of you for leadership this coming year. I am asking each of you to be University citizens: good stewards in your disciplines and units, and creative in

helping to make student enrollment and retention — especially for transfer and non-traditional students — your priority. But even more importantly, I am asking you to look beyond your classroom or office walls to the bigger picture — to how you serve this great University.

Our ride toward our vision has and will continue to be uphill. Unfortunately, that uphill climb has been made more difficult because we haven't had many gears to reduce the strain. But this year, the Wisconsin Idea Partnership has effectively given us some additional gears for our ride. And I'll keep pushing for more so we can travel any terrain with greater efficiency.

But regardless of how many gears — or how much flexibility from regulations that we win — it will be up to us to actually use them. We'll need to learn how to operate at new speed and how to shift for different terrain — to overcome fears of slipping our chain or even falling.

At the end of our accreditation visit in 2009, I pulled aside one of the evaluators who was from one of our aspirational peer institutions. I asked him for his honest assessment of whether we could achieve our vision.

His response was a conditional “yes.” He said that with some innovation on resources and some flexibility as a campus, we definitely had the people and the ability to become the premier undergraduate learning community in the Upper Midwest.

We have lost some resources and we'll have to shed some old habits, but we have continuing new resources in the Blugold Commitment and new flexibility to gain more control over our own fate. If we can remain focused on our mission, if we can learn to shift, and if we resist the temptation to backslide in tough times, I *know* we will achieve beyond our own expectations. And, I know you bring the creativity, critical insight, empathy and intellectual courage we need to reach our destination.

I'm looking forward to the year ahead!

Welcome to the fall semester at UW-Eau Claire!