Bonjour and welcome to the seventh annual Blugold Breakfast.

I am Gilles Bousquet, the interim chancellor, and it is my distinct pleasure to continue this wonderful UW-Eau Claire tradition of coming together to begin the academic year as a campus community.

For those of you whom I have not yet met, let me briefly introduce myself. This month marks the 30th year I have lived and worked in Wisconsin! As you can hear from my accent, I was not born on the banks of the Chippewa River. I was born in Algeria, grew up and was educated in France, and started teaching at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on a day like this one, in August 1982, as an exchange lecturer. I planned to be in Wisconsin for one year — and I have stayed 30!

In the meantime I had met a wonderful American woman, we got married, and raised a family in this great state.

Indeed, allow me to introduce one of my favorite teachers and mentors, who has provided me with a loving and patient introduction to Wisconsin and America, Deborah Johnson-Bousquet.

Debby, will you please stand? Debby and I want to thank all of you who have already made us feel so welcome and so at home here in Eau Claire. This year provides us with the opportunity to get to know this beautiful part of Wisconsin — we have rented a home here in the Third Ward and Debby has taken a leave of absence from her job teaching high school French in Sauk Prairie in rural Wisconsin to get to know you all better and spend time on this very special campus.

With my roots in the classroom, and my tenure home in a language/culture and humanities department, my entire career has been devoted to building bridges and collaborations across departments, schools and colleges, between the campus and business and non-profit partners, and between the University and the rest of the world.

I am particularly proud of the work that my colleagues and I have done — it is always a team effort — to build productive collaborations between a foundational liberal arts
education and the professional schools, from the health sciences to business and education, and to advance the blueprint of a truly global campus.

This is one of the exciting dimensions of being here in Eau Claire: You, too, attach a great deal of importance to internationalization and to global learning. You have made these foundational goals in your strategic plan.

So you can imagine my interest when the president of the UW System, Kevin Reilly, approached me to come to Eau Claire for this interim period. Your well-deserved reputation as one of the system’s truly internationally minded campuses — and you are good at it — has given my transition to this campus an additional interest. As we say in French, it added a little "piment" (spice) to it.

As I got to know the campus better, international education became very quickly just one among a growing and impressive list of attributes of excellence that makes your reputation. I heard you praised in Hong Kong, in Aix-en-Provence, France, and in Latin America, but also, much closer to home, in my meetings with our community partners.

I am energized and humbled by the dedication I have seen with my own eyes during the past several weeks.

And before going any further, I’d like to recognize the enormous contribution that my predecessor, former Chancellor Brian Levin-Stankevich made to this university. Indeed, this very breakfast was his idea and I want to honor the achievements of his tenure.

This gathering is also a celebration of the many friends the campus has, and the support that they offer us, year round. First, this morning’s hot breakfast would not be possible without the generous support of our UW-Eau Claire Foundation, the divisions of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs and our colleagues at Sodexo. Let’s thank them for continuing this tradition with a big round of applause.

This morning, as a fellow newcomer, I want to welcome with you our almost 90 new faculty and staff to their first Blugold Breakfast. I had the pleasure of meeting yesterday with some of the 56 new teaching staff joining us.

What a thrilling moment as you are joining UW Eau Claire. We are proud to welcome you and thank you for choosing this campus. I know you will find, as I have, that this is a generous and highly dedicated community that puts our students first.

If you joined the UW-Eau Claire community at any time during 2012, please stand so we can officially welcome you to our campus.
I’d like to introduce two university leaders who joined us this summer. Will you stand when I call your name?

Dr. David Baker, a professor emeritus of music, serves our university as our interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

And Dr. Durwin Long, the new director of Continuing Education, comes to us from North Hennepin Community College in Minneapolis. Welcome to both of you.

I’d also like to welcome any students who got up early to be here with us. I am looking forward to working with Cory Fish, student body president, and all student leaders this coming academic year.

We’re pleased to have with us several legislators and other good friends of the university. As I read your name, please stand — and let’s hold our applause until everyone has been introduced:

- Kerry Kincaid, Eau Claire City Council president
- Brian Amundson, interim manager of the city of Eau Claire
- Jack Blackburn, mayor of the city of Altoona
- Tom McCarty, Eau Claire County administrator
- Robin Leary, County Board member for District 23 and assistant to the UW-Eau Claire Foundation
- Carol Craig, president of the Eau Claire school board
- Marjorie Bunce, representing U.S. Senator Herb Kohl
- Mark Aumann, representing U.S. Representative Ron Kind of the Third District
- Terry Moulton, state senator for the 23rd Senate District
- Kathy Bernier, state representative for the 68th Assembly District
- And representing the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Foundation, vice chair Barry Moullet.

Please join me in welcoming all of them.

We in western Wisconsin are honored to be represented by two Eau Claire residents on the UW System Board of Regents. Regent John Behling, the most recent appointee, is an attorney with Weld, Riley, Prenn & Ricci. Regent Ed Manydeeds is a local attorney with Richie, Guetting & Manydeeds. Regent Manydeeds is with us this morning and I’d like to invite him to bring greetings on behalf of the Board of Regents.
Thank you for the leadership, encouragement and support you have provided to UW-Eau Claire.

It is now my pleasure to invite UW-Eau Claire Foundation Board Vice Chair Barry Moullet to the stage to bring greetings and, perhaps something else from the UW-Eau Claire Foundation.

I’m really enjoying the part of my new job where I get to receive large checks for the university! And what a wonderful opportunity the new endowed math and science chair will be to our ability to enhance the quality of our already distinctive academic programs.

The Foundation’s important contribution would not be possible without the gifts of many of you who support our University through your financial donations as well as your time and dedication. You have helped make the past year the second-best fundraising year in our history, paving the way for the start of the upcoming Centennial Campaign. Watch for more updates on that campaign next month.

I want to especially commend the Foundation staff members who have achieved so much during a very challenging economic climate.

I also want to recognize Kim Way for her fearless dedication to UW-Eau Claire — fearless because I have yet to hear an aspiration that Kim has turned down. She, her exceptional staff and her board are prepared to move mountains for our campus community. We are very fortunate to have them as partners.

It is a highlight of this opening meeting each year to recognize those individuals who exemplify our University’s commitment to excellence. Would the following people please come forward for the presentation of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Excellence Awards:

- Joey Bohl
- Jill Prushiek
- Kent Syverson
- Anne Hlas and
- Jean Pratt

Vice Chancellor Beth Hellwig and Associate Vice Chancellor of Undergraduate Studies Bob Knight, would you also please come forward.
Excellence is not just a motto at UW-Eau Claire, but, as I’ve discovered this past month, it is the defining attribute of what it means to be a Blugold, the benchmark that faculty, staff and students are proud to uphold. Today we honor those faculty and staff who inspire all of us through their example. I was able to spend time with each of them and learn about their teaching, scholarship, service and many contributions to the University and the community. It is inspiring and humbling to work with you.

Each Excellence Award recipient will receive the University Medallion and a check from the UW-Eau Claire Foundation in the amount of $1,500.

The Markquart family endowment funds the Excellence in Classified and Academic Staff Awards and the Excellence in Teaching Awards. The Markquart family has 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.

[Vice Chancellor Hellwig and Vice Chancellor Knight to podium for Excellence Awards presentation.]

Congratulations to all of you. It is now my pleasure to introduce University Senate Chair Susan Harrison.

[Susan Harrison to podium for remarks.]

Thank you, Susan. Susan was among the first people from UW-Eau Claire to contact me when my appointment was announced, and she has been invaluable in helping me get to know her colleagues and the university. Thank you for making me feel so welcome, and I look forward to working with you and the entire University Senate this year.

Like many of our new faculty and staff, I can measure my time at this campus in days, not months or years. Thirty-seven days, to be precise.

From this relatively short and busy period I want to share with you some first impressions that stand out for me:

- First and foremost, how open and welcoming you and your colleagues, our students and the community have all been.
- Second, what a sense of momentum I have felt everywhere I have gone and with all the individuals I visited.
- And finally, I have found that UW Eau Claire is a very special place, in its physical layout, and in the passionate way I have heard all of you, and your alumni, and our Eau Claire friends talk about this university.
From a welcome barbecue at The Priory to joining Student Body President Cory Fish at the soft opening of the new Davies Center, I’ve learned to appreciate what is known as Wisconsin’s most beautiful campus — and understand how much this place is growing, changing and will continue to change.

I’ve attended a golf outing with our athletic boosters and enjoyed the welcome of colleagues in the foreign languages department, conversations in Brewer, Schneider and Hibbard halls and a visit to the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. I celebrated our acquisition of one of the world’s great jazz music collections with donors and musicians, and met with business leaders to discuss the role the university can play as an economic driver in the region. All have impressed on me the quality of this institution and the dedication of faculty, staff, alumni, emeriti faculty and friends.

This is a very special place, but we are not an island, and UW-Eau Claire, like all of higher education, is experiencing unprecedented change. Like you, I have served the students and citizens of Wisconsin during years of furloughs, budget cuts and wage freezes. I have seen the debilitating effects such cuts have had on our ability to attract and keep talented faculty and staff and to reward those who exemplify the excellence that is the cornerstone of our university.

The year ahead is the second year of our 2011-13 biennial budget, one that continues the base reductions of the past year and provides for no pay plan. There is, however, light ahead, as you may have heard in recent reports from Madison. The governor has indicated that continuing lapses for the upcoming 2013-15 biennial budget will not be required for UW System. This exemption is good news for us and for our students. While it does not bring new revenues in the coming biennium, we can move forward knowing that a portion of these reductions is behind us.

At the same time, the tireless pursuit of excellence and an expanded role for universities as economic engines and social and cultural beacons cannot be decoupled from strong merit compensation for the extraordinary talent present on our campus.

In my experience, organizations that thrive here and around the world have found ways to attract and retain the talent that sets them apart and keeps them ahead of the competition. We must find these means, soon, here in Wisconsin, and here in Eau Claire.

As the budget discussions unfold in the coming months, my chancellor colleagues and I have pledged to strongly and continuously advocate for a fair biennial budget that includes a state-supported pay plan for faculty and staff in 2013. Like you, I am very
concerned about the increasing cost of attendance faced by our students. We are working diligently to contain cost increases while also sustaining quality educational and support services.

Those are immediate concerns that must have our attention. But we must also look ahead.

Four years from UW Eau Claire’s centennial in 2016 and midway through your strategic plan, this coming year is an ideal time for us to take stock together of UW-Eau Claire’s strengths and opportunities and keep moving forward.

At your tables are this year’s Gold Arrow priorities. You’ll notice this year there is only one Gold Arrow. While in the past there have been three or even five of them, this year the Cabinet and the University Planning Committee have put forward only one: to continue our progress through review, refinement of our vision and improved communication.

You just have to take a look around this campus to see this continued progress materialized.

As I’ve discovered since I stepped on campus, "excellence is always under construction." This summer Garfield Avenue was dug up and filled in again — just in time for our breakfast. The Children's Center moved out to The Priory and the Education Building went up, thanks to the efforts of Dean Gail Scukanek and her committee. The old Davies has come down — and what a great job University Centers staff did to transition to their new space.

But this is only the beginning. As our facilities master plan outlines, we have a new residence hall on the hilltop and the redevelopment of Garfield Avenue next in line.

And then there is the new Davies building. I hope all of you have had the chance to take a tour and explore. The consensus so far is one word: "WOW!" Thank you to our students for making possible a new campus center that reflects the best of the Blugold spirit of excellence. It truly exemplifies our core values of sustainability, innovation, leadership and inclusiveness.

Thanks also to the building committee, under the expert leadership of Vice Chancellor Beth Hellwig, who invite all of you to join us on Homecoming weekend for the official ribbon cutting.

Let me take a moment to acknowledge all of you who have worked so hard to keep our campus functioning despite the construction challenges. Special thanks to the Admissions and Orientation staff who completely restructured orientation this summer without missing a
step, to the News Bureau and Publications for the creative signs that put a positive spin on construction barriers, and to our Facilities Planning and Facilities Management staff who have been in the thick of change — but are working hard to keep the lights on, air conditioning working and buildings clean. Despite the piles of dirt and yards of new fencing, this remains a beautiful campus. Let’s give them all a round of applause.

But evidence of change is not just limited to our physical spaces. I know that many of you have been working hard and creatively to “transform learning” as the Centennial Plan outlines. The chairs of Arts and Sciences, for example, met throughout the summer to look at challenges we need to address to better serve our students and produced innovative options for meeting those challenges. I encourage you and your faculty colleagues to continue those productive discussions with Provost Kleine, Dean Baker and their respective teams.

Many of you in Student Affairs have been involved in a variety of leadership development programs as well as helping to establish several new living-learning communities, including the new Outdoor Adventure community developed in partnership with the department of English. I applaud your work.

From continued work on liberal education reform to new personnel systems that will strengthen our campus community, UW-Eau Claire most definitely is a “campus on the move.”

Your vision to be the premier learning community has never been more relevant, especially during a period in higher education that is seeing momentous demands from within and without.

Our students and their families are asking for increased value from their tuition investments — a demand we cannot ignore as student tuition becomes one of our primary sources of revenue. New experiments in learning, such as Harvard and MIT’s massive open online courses, are changing how learning is delivered.

Requests from businesses and our communities for graduates able to navigate a global economy challenge us to look closely at the scale and scope of our operations, our makeup as a community of students and scholars, and our vision of what constitutes a premier, regional university in an interconnected and interdependent world.

The power of this interconnected world was brought home to me in a conversation I had this past spring, halfway around the globe in Hong Kong, with a UW-Eau Claire alumnus, Dr. Albert Wong, an entrepreneur and leader in traditional Chinese medicine. When
I asked him about his years at UW-Eau Claire, I had not finished my question when he said, “Great — it was a great experience!”

A graduate of our chemistry department, he went on to receive a pharmacy Ph.D. at UW-Madison and then to a distinguished career in Hong Kong and mainland China, bringing new pharmaceuticals produced according to traditional methods.

His description of his UW-Eau Claire education — “great” — was to become the leitmotif of my conversations with alumni who have sought me out to tell me about this university and the impact that you have had on their lives — with unqualified passion!

That is why I am excited to be here: Through your alumni I have learned about the difference you have made and continue to make for those who study and live here. As a first-generation college graduate myself, I am especially proud to be the chancellor of a campus where four out of 10 students are the first in their families to attend college.

Coming to this university with new eyes, I see an institution that is in many ways already a premier one.

Today, the question I ask of you is how can we use the coming year to build on your accomplishments as a premier learning community. How can we use this year to write an even more extraordinary future for this institution?

Let me be clear: I have no secret agenda in the drawer of my desk. My agenda is to serve you, our students, our alumni, our friends and partners, here in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and beyond. To listen to your aspirations and facilitate their realization, and to also listen to your frustrations, when needed, to help improve where I can, and together, to build on the greatness of this institution.

As your interim chancellor, I will do all I can to prepare and smooth the way for the next leader. Consider me your recruiting “agent” for the best person in the United States and the world. We should not settle for less when it comes to the leader who will help take this university into its next century.

At the same time, I will work with you to keep the momentum that you have created, and wherever appropriate, accelerate the transformation you aspire to, support specific moves forward with my experience, knowledge of higher education, and the relationships, close and far, that I can put at your service.

This year, through an expanded commitment to global learning; a number of strategic collaborations across campus, locally and globally; and an accelerated and agreed-upon
transformation of learning and of our infrastructure, I believe we can together chart a course for UW Eau-Claire that is both harmonious and bold.

My confidence in the future of this institution lies in my conviction that universities are uniquely capable of changing the world and that UW-Eau Claire exemplifies what makes the 21st-century university such a force for good.

Universities are a nexus of smart people, great ideas, and strong relationships — we are talent and knowledge rich at a time when as a region, as a nation, we need both as never before. Here, at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, we connect faculty, staff, students, alumni, friends and many communities together, from the campus to the city, the region and the world — communities in learning and action that change lives and change the world.

For example, just one week after I arrived, chemistry Professor David Lewis was awarded the 2012 Wisconsin Medical Entrepreneurship Foundation Innovation Scholar Award for research that he and his students have done to develop new and safer derivatives of warfarin, an anti-coagulant drug. Dr. Lewis and his students collaborate with researchers at the Marshfield Clinic in an innovative partnership that exemplifies the power of this university to make a difference in Wisconsin — and throughout the medical world.

As Dr. Lewis’s work exemplifies, we have opportunities to apply our knowledge, innovate and expand our academic and professional offerings by deepening and expanding our relationships with our communities.

The Confluence Project is another one of these “windows to the future.” What an opportunity this is for UW-Eau Claire to redefine how a university like ours can bring our people and ideas together with our community partners to literally reshape our city’s core, grow our economy and enrich the cultural life of our entire region.

The Confluence is a true collaboration involving the university, local developers, the city and county, arts institutions and citizens to create a community arts center and student residence that could NOT be developed independently by any one of the partners. In short, making the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

You can see an artist's rendering of The Confluence on the screens behind me. This is just a sketch of what could be. Our music, art, theater arts and residence life departments are actively involved in helping to define the new facility and bring our ideas of a vibrant center to life.

As your chancellor, however, you should know that the first question I asked myself as I learned about The Confluence was, How does this project advance the core academic
mission of this University? How will it contribute to our teaching, learning and scholarship? In addition to many other things it can do for our campus, I am convinced that The Confluence (and The Priory as well) could open up and expand a number of key academic options and increase our leadership in high-impact practices.

Imagine students and faculty creating new music, mounting productions with community partners, managing an art gallery or working with regional recording artists. Can we create new incubators for arts and arts-related business ventures that could benefit the entire region?

What really excites me about The Confluence Project is the opportunity it presents for us to think differently as a university. Not only is this project becoming a model for how to partner on large-scale capital projects, but it can also prompt us to enlarge the scope of our curricular offerings, and our cultural and social relationships as well.

The recent acquisition by the Foundation of The Priory — formally St Bede’s Monastery — also presents new opportunities for academic programming and community relations. How can partnerships with regional or international businesses, non-profit organizations, or other institutions of higher learning truly set us apart from our peers? Can we partner, for example, with regional Native American nations to develop The Priory as a home for cross-cultural learning? By asking these questions of you, I hope to help UW-Eau Claire expand its reputation as an academic and a community change leader.

But The Confluence is not the only future we are creating here. As I look at all you are doing, I see another momentous opportunity within our reach.

I referred earlier to my experience in building interdisciplinary linkages and global connections. How can my experience and relationships as leader of UW-Madison’s global initiatives help you not only sustain but also expand your current efforts in globalization?

For example, UW-Eau Claire already has a statewide reputation for providing almost a quarter of your students with international and multicultural immersion experiences. You are a national leader in semesterlong study abroad. And you have enriched that opportunity with faculty-led research and service opportunities around the world, supported in part by the International Fellows program.

UW-Eau Claire honors students, for example, traveled to Guangzhou, China, with nurse educators Dr. Lee-Ellen Kirkhorn and Catherine Berry to study risk factors for adolescent diabetes. This kind of high-impact experience is increasingly becoming the
hallmark of a UW-Eau Claire education. How can we multiply and accelerate global learning so it is found in every corner of this great institution?

Our graduates must have the skills and experience to be able to live and work in a multicultural and multilingual world, whether they are employed in Shanghai, Ryad, Rio, or Eau Claire, whether they go on to graduate school, seek a career with a multinational company, become an educator here in the Chippewa Valley or raise a family in their Wisconsin hometown.

This kind of purposeful learning requires multiple opportunities for global learning, anchored in the curriculum and amplified in a broad range of experiences.

What if we could find ways for all our students and many more faculty to study or collaborate on research and curriculum building around the globe? What if we connected not only our students but also our region’s businesses, non-profit and government organizations to opportunities abroad for new and expanded collaboration, competitiveness and deeper mutual understanding?

This year, let’s make sure we have a thorough discussion about what a leader our university can be in global education and how it will support and energize our shared aspirations.

As I step back and reflect on my days so far in Eau Claire, what strikes me is how willing you have been to sit down with me, or when passing in the hallways, to tell me about your work, your ideas, the students you have mentored and their success.

As we look to the year ahead, one that will be fraught with complexity, full of challenge and accelerated change, the unfettered exchange of ideas and opinions is essential to build a shared, bold, imaginative future fueled by your aspirations and guided by our combined experience.

I would like to propose for us to continue and expand these kinds of conversations, in informal ways and more formally, through our shared governance groups, as well as through regular, open Q&A sessions for the entire campus community. Let’s give it a try very soon. To be specific, I would like to invite you to the first of these campus Q&A sessions next month.

Since new projects are on many people’s minds, why not meet in the Haas Fine Arts Center and devote part of our conversation to The Priory and The Confluence projects, as well as to aspects of our facilities plan. We will be sure to open up the discussion to any other question you would like the chancellor and the Schofield team to entertain.
These discussions, as well as those in our scheduled meetings and the many conversations as we see each other across campus, I find essential to keep open channels of communication, to bring greater transparency to the way we operate, to continue to build trust and mutual understanding, as well as to provide multiple opportunities for a true cross-fertilization of ideas that will take us to the next chapter in the history of this distinguished institution.

I would like to end my remarks this morning as I began them — with thanks. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of this great campus community and of the future you are creating. It is an honor and a privilege.

UW-Eau Claire is already a premier institution, one with the talent and ideas to indeed transform the years ahead. I know that we can be a powerful force for good with our students, a resourceful neighbor in our communities and increasingly around the world, and a talent generator both locally and globally. Let us continue to nurture together the exceptional teaching, learning, human and intellectual community we share, and together weave the fabric of the extraordinary future UW Eau Claire is poised to create for itself, with and for its partners and the region, throughout Wisconsin, this nation and the world.

Thank you. And have a great start to the semester.