

## Blugold Commitment details

The following e-mail message was sent Aug. 27, 2009, to all UW-Eau Claire employees.

Dear UW-Eau Claire Faculty and Staff,

I want to echo my speech at the Blugold Breakfast Tuesday by welcoming all faculty and staff to the start of our new academic year.

At the Breakfast I announced a major initiative that my administration will be leading this fall: the Blugold Commitment. Afterwards, I held discussions with some student leaders and key administrators; I'd like now to provide more details about the proposal.

The Blugold Commitment is our effort to make sure the high-quality education that distinguishes our University is not only preserved but made affordable and available to all students. The continuing and long-term erosion of state support for higher education — evidenced most recently in the \$8 million reduction we face in the coming biennium — demands that we look to alternate funding sources if we are to preserve the quality of our University. The Blugold Commitment addresses this challenge through a combination of allocating our existing dollars more efficiently and increasing differential tuition.

Efficiently allocating our resources was one purpose of our Program to Evaluate and Enhance Quality (PEEQ) last year. We will begin to implement many of the recommendations from that process this fall in close consultation with deans, departments, units and shared governance.

Over the next two months we will also engage students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends in defining how we intend to make excellence affordable. Our goal is to take the Blugold Commitment proposal to the Board of Regents in October for approval by the end of the year. The broad outlines of the proposal are as follows:

An increased differential tuition, phased in over four years, will be invested in assuring the highest quality UW-Eau Claire degree. Our campus conversations this fall will help us determine the exact level of investment. I have proposed a “real to ideal” range of \$1,000 to \$2,500 to begin these discussions. The increased tuition will enable us to:

- **Expand high-impact learning for *all* students.** High-impact experiences include student-faculty collaborative research, global and intercultural immersion, internships, small freshman classes, service-learning and capstone classes — the valuable experiences that ensure student success and define UW-Eau Claire excellence.
- **Make the UW-Eau Claire degree more *affordable*** by helping students graduate in four years or less and increasing financial aid to hold harmless families at or below the current Wisconsin median income level of \$72,000. Even with a significant increase in tuition, the cost of a *four-year* UW-Eau Claire degree would still be less expensive than the current five- or six-year degree too many

of our students receive. Increasing financial aid will assure that low- and middle-income families can still afford a quality education.

- **Partner with students to assure results** through expanded student-directed differential tuition and annual outcome reports. Our current differential tuition is built on more than a decade of student participation.

In particular, the Blugold Commitment will enable us to invest in:

- **New faculty and staff** — to free up time for the high-impact, time-intensive practices that benefit students, reduce our student-faculty ratio and assure timely graduation.
- **More money for student-directed differential tuition** — that can go directly to supporting the experiences students value.
- **Expanded financial aid** — to hold harmless students from low- and middle-income families at or below the current Wisconsin median income of \$72,000.

In the coming weeks you'll have the opportunity to learn more about the Blugold Commitment, share your ideas and help us determine the scope of our proposal to the Board.

In the meantime, I look forward with you to welcoming back to campus our 10,700 students and beginning what will be a challenging but rewarding year.

Chancellor Brian Levin-Stankevich, Ph.D.