

Chancellor Brian Levin-Stankevich address

UW-Eau Claire Chamber of Commerce Breakfast, April 6, 2011

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2011 Chamber Breakfast here at UW-Eau Claire. I want to thank the Chamber, our annual partner in hosting this event, as well as Sodexo, which has provided not only a delicious breakfast for us this morning, but whose attentive staff every day help us make this a special place for our students. A special thanks to Christian Wise, general manager, and Terry Knudtson, catering director for Sodexo.

I also want to thank our student trio who provided you with a musical welcome this morning: Kayla Carlson on oboe, Katie Miller on clarinet and Alex Widstrand on bassoon. Please help me thank them.

You may have noticed some changes when you arrived on campus this morning. For one thing, parking is more of an adventure, something you discovered if you tried to park around to the back of this building.

For another, you probably saw quite a few trucks from a range of different businesses working in our construction area.

Last week we broke ground on our new student center—the W.R. Davies Student Center—the first of three major construction projects that will bring almost \$100 million in student, private and state investments to Eau Claire over the coming decade.

In addition to the student-funded Davies Center, the Governor has included our new Education Building in his 2011-13 budget, and this year we will also break ground on the privately funded Children's Center next to Human Sciences and Services on Water Street.

The banging and thumping as they drive the piers for the new Davies Center have already started — but I'm not complaining. This new project represents the first new building to be constructed on the lower campus in more than 30 years.

This is a picture of our campus in 1971—perhaps it looked this way when you were a student here. With all the changes under way now, however, I think it might be time to rethink how you think about UW-Eau Claire.

That's the theme for our breakfast this morning—Rethinking UW-Eau Claire. I've asked some of our faculty, students and staff to help us rethink the impact of this university on this community.

They're seated throughout the room — you can identify them by the “Ask me about UW-Eau Claire” nametags. I hope you've had a chance to talk with them over breakfast about what they are doing to make the Chippewa Valley a better place to live and work.

I'm going to call on some of them in a few minutes, but before I do, I'd like to introduce some of my colleagues with us this morning — please stand as I call your names: our provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs, Dr. Patricia Kleine; vice chancellor for student affairs, Dr. Beth Hellwig; College of Business dean, Dr. Diane Hoadley; College of Education and Human Sciences dean, Dr. Gail Scukanec; and College of Arts and Sciences dean, Dr. Marty Wood.

What would a visit to the university be without a pop quiz? Let's see what you know about us — and what may need some rethinking.

First question: How many students are enrolled at UW-Eau Claire this year?

- a) 9,989
- b) 10,343
- c) 11,409

11,409. This year our enrollment topped 11,000 — a 50-year high. For those of you who were students here in the 70s or 80s, it's a much busier place.

That's not just good for our university; it's good for Eau Claire as well. A recent study estimated that UW-Eau Claire students annually spend more than \$3.5 million at local businesses and bring about 15,000 visitors — their families and friends—to this region.

Our students come from every county in Wisconsin — besides Madison we're one of the few universities in the UW System that attracts students from all over the state and beyond — including Minnesota ... and Alaska and Wyoming ... and China and Saudi Arabia and even Mongolia (we have four students from Mongolia this year).

The classes our students take probably look a lot different from the ones you remember from your college days as well.

While students at many universities end up in large lecture classes taught by adjuncts or graduate students, at UW-Eau Claire our faculty teach — the majority of our classes are taught by faculty with terminal degrees. But how they teach is changing.

Two-thirds of our faculty use classroom computers every day, and it's not uncommon to find them using Skype, YouTube, iPads, podcasts, Kindle e-books, iTV or even cell phones. Some of our faculty use Twitter to ask questions. Students can access virtual labs from laptops off campus. These aren't gimmicks — they are helping faculty reach students in ways they want to learn.

Enrolling students is good, but graduating them is better. We're doing our part to prepare graduates who can step into and excel in the jobs that Wisconsin needs. And by the way, do not worry about a "brain drain" of UW-Eau Claire graduates — three out of four Wisconsin Blugolds stay and work right here in the state.

Next question for our quiz: How many graduates, ready for the workforce, did we provide Wisconsin last year alone?

- a) 859
- b) 1,332
- c) 2,197

If you picked a or b, you're not even close. UW-Eau Claire graduates the third highest number of undergraduate students in the UW System, behind only Madison and Milwaukee.

2,197. When I say our graduates are ready for your workplace, here's what I mean:

We're a national leader in the number of our students who study around the world because we know those learning experiences make better employees and more engaged citizens. This year we'll send 422 students abroad to 26 different countries. These students, many of whom can speak a second language, have learned to thrive when thrown into new cultures and understand global issues, can compete with the best for jobs in companies large and small, here and around the country.

If you think study abroad means lounging on a beach in Mexico, talk with Amy Young and her student Ian Allen — will you stand? They just returned from researching the political effects of microfinance on economic development in rural Nicaragua.

Or talk with Professor Jan Larson and student Scott Morfitt, who traveled to Moldova — a former Soviet republic and the poorest country in Europe. Jan and Scott, please stand.

They spent their January break training local students to run a public radio station in that information-starved country.

Our graduates bring real-world learning with them. More than 1,100 students did practicum work across 130 schools in this region last year.

Half of our students have one or more internships before they graduate. Did you know that every year students from our College of Business provide research and consulting services — everything from developing business plans to designing LEAN system improvements, to creating fundraising plans to researching marketing opportunities for area businesses and organizations?

We have several faculty and their students from the College of Business who can talk with you about the real-world impact they are having through internships with area businesses. Will you stand? Professors Tim Vaughan, Scott Lester and Kristy Lauver and their students Brittany Rezin, Evan Hillan, Jason Vahlenkamp and Danielle Wadsworth.

Are you looking to expand your sales force? Our Center for Sales and Sales Management provides our students with hands-on professional sales experience, including the annual Great Northwoods Sales Warm-up, a 2½-day competition that attracts participants from across the Midwest.

Ask Bob Erffmeyer, who directs the center, about the champions UW-Eau Claire has produced — and sent on to Fortune 500 companies as well as companies around the Chippewa Valley. Bob and his student Emily Helmer are here — please stand.

If your idea of history is memorizing dates, think again. Students and faculty in our history department are up to their elbows in public history — researching our community for the Wisconsin Humanities Council and the Chippewa Valley Museum. Talk to Professor John Mann and student Joe Tierney if you'd like to hear about their oral history project for Eau Claire Energy Cooperative's 75th anniversary. We're also pleased to have with us Mary Kay Brevig, manager of communications and public relations at Eau Claire Energy Cooperative. Please stand.

If there is such a thing as “public science,” Professor Paul Thomas does it. Paul, where are you? You may know him from the “Ask a Scientist” program at the Acoustic Café. He's currently working with the Eau Claire City Council to construct a planet walk downtown. If you don't know

what that means, talk with Paul or his student, Janis Roadt. As this year's winner of the UW System Regents Teaching Excellence Award, Paul would love to fill you in.

But let's get back to our quiz: How many hours of service do our students provide this community?

- a) 470,000
- b) 230,000
- c) 10,700

If you picked 470,000 hours, you're right. At minimum wage, that translates into a \$3.4 million economic boost — not to mention the priceless contributions our students make through their caring and service to Chippewa Valley health care, arts, education and not-for-profit organizations.

And speaking of economic boosts, Eau Claire is about to get one this weekend, when almost a quarter million dollars of revenue is generated by the Eau Claire Jazz Festival. If you've ever taken in one of the performances — or had a child or grandchild participate in a master class — tell Professor Baca you appreciate what he and our music department do for Eau Claire. Bob, will you please stand? He's joined by Patty Horecki, executive director of the Jazz Festival.

I could go on for hours describing the incredible work of our faculty and the quality of our graduates, but I'd rather you heard about this from the people who are making a difference in this community every day: our faculty, students and staff.

Just three years ago, with initial investment from the NanoSTEM Initiative, professors Doug Dunham and Marcus Mc Ellistrem created the Materials Science Center at UW-Eau Claire. The center does cutting-edge research with nanotechnology — the manipulation of matter on an atomic scale — that's really small stuff. What sets this center apart are the partnerships with area industries — Marcus, tell us what you and Doug are doing for the Chippewa Valley economy.

[Marcus Mc Ellistrem's comments]

Thanks, Marcus.

This university is not only helping to build economic muscle in Eau Claire, but we're working to keep the community healthy as well. You know about our nursing program, but did

you know we also have satellite classes in Marshfield? Our 400 nursing students did clinical work at more than 100 regional medical facilities last year.

Those of you who have recruited employees from outside the area know that one of our biggest attractions is the beauty of our river and the recreational opportunities this region provides. Our faculty and students use the river and area parks, including Putnam Park, as outdoor classrooms. Recently, students and faculty combined to help make our river a classroom for the entire community. Dr. Garry Running is one of four faculty members who helped lead the Pedal and Paddle initiative. Also with him today is student Kate Ebnet.

[Garry Running and Kate Ebnet's comments]

Thank you, Garry and Kate.

My colleagues have shared with you just a few of the ways in which UW-Eau Claire is making a big difference in the Chippewa Valley — but our reach extends even farther. In today's global marketplace, strengthening our economy here requires building networks of commerce that span the globe. Small and medium businesses need to be just as savvy as the Fortune 500s — but how do you begin a relationship with a fellow entrepreneur in India or China?

That's where the NWITA comes in – the Northern Wisconsin International Trade Association. I'll let Dr. Julia Pennington from the department of management and marketing tell you more.

[Dr. Pennington's comments]

Thanks, Julia.

This morning I've asked you to re-think your image of UW-Eau Claire. We're a growing, changing university that impacts the economy, culture, health and reach of this region.

I know that you all take as much pride as we do in what we are able to accomplish here, not only in the lives of our students who come to this community for their degrees, but also in the research and faculty service that have earned us a reputation as one of the foremost universities in the Midwest.

There is a “but” in this presentation, however.

No, it is not the “but we need more money to do this” argument. Although, if we’re honest, state support has traded places with student tuition as the primary source for funding public higher education in Wisconsin.

Our students know the value of a UW-Eau Claire degree. Last year they agreed to increase their own tuition by \$1,200 per year because they know those dollars will be invested in the experiences that will make them more competitive — and provide you with future employees who have the skills and abilities you need for your businesses and organizations to succeed.

This year, we are looking at one of the largest reductions in state funding in decades. The Governor’s biennial budget, if passed in its current form, will result in cuts of approximately \$5 million annually to UW-Eau Claire — 8 percent of our total state-provided revenue. That’s 5 million fewer dollars coming to this region ... on top of the more than \$6 million in reduced spending capacity of our employees as a result of transfers of salary to benefit payments.

I do not want to argue the merits of the Governor’s budget repair bill this morning. I will note, however, that our faculty and staff have made and are making sacrifices, as many of you have also had to do during this economic downturn. We have contributed through pay freezes and furloughs that represented additional pay cuts of more than 3 percent over each of the past two years.

UW-Eau Claire employees are your neighbors, your customers, and your fellow tax-paying citizens. We want to be partners in helping Wisconsin get back on its feet as long as that burden is distributed equitably. I fully understand that there are so many demands on state resources that additional public funding for higher education is unlikely.

So, the “but” is about what we need to become the efficient partner that you need this university to be. It’s about what we need to be able to help ourselves. As you’ve seen today, we have demonstrated for decades our ability to be innovative and creative in how we teach and serve this community. We have proven our willingness to tighten our belts, cut entire programs and focus on what we do best.

As you’ve heard this morning, even in the face of continuing reductions in state support, we are expanding the boundaries of what we can do to benefit this community, primarily through additional student-paid tuition.

BUT, and it's a big BUT, the rules and processes of state and System layers of management have tied our hands, blocked efficiencies and held us up in the race to excellence. So with the likelihood of even less public funding in the future, we need the ability to use the resources we do have and can generate more effectively.

When Bob introduced me this morning, he mentioned my title as Chancellor of UW-Eau Claire. Yes, I'm chancellor of a highly ranked university.

But I'm also the CEO of a \$160 million enterprise — the fourth largest employer in this region. My enterprise depends on the public sector for about 24 percent of its total revenue. What percent of your business derives from the public sector in one way or another?

I lead an organization with a 99 percent customer satisfaction rate — as a recent alumni survey revealed. In fact, our current customers just voted for a self-imposed price increase — in short, we're looking at a marketplace that values our product highly.

Some of you would envy those numbers. Yet, while I may be CEO, I'm unable to make decisions that would leave us even more competitive and efficient.

For example, I can't set the price on my product to compete in the marketplace — tuition is set by the Regents. In fact, some legislators want to go even further and cap tuition across the state. Like you, I'm not a fan of government-mandated price controls.

Thanks to state caps on numbers of employees, I can't hire the people I need, pay people what the marketplace demands or provide incentives for stellar performance, even when we have the customer-driven revenue to do so. I'd love to find more cost-effective health plans but they are determined from Madison.

Like you, when faced with tough times, I look to see where we can find efficiencies. But many purchasing decisions are driven by statewide contracts designed for other agencies radically different from a university. We have largely moved to VOIP telephones. Yet we still must pay for mandated and unused telephone trunk lines into our residence halls because that's what the state contract dictates.

The \$100 million in construction now under way on our campus is a welcome investment, but facilities decisions — even those like our student center, which do not involve state or taxpayer dollars — must be administered by a cumbersome system of representation from the

UW System and state agencies. UW-Eau Claire has minority standing on those committees, which means that while our students are paying 100 percent of the costs of the new center, they do not have the determining voice in the design or building decisions.

We estimate that we could save \$2 million on the Student Center if we had more flexibility to manage construction without the most burdensome state oversight. That construction, by the way, with many local contractors and subs, is a prime example of a public institution creating private jobs without the use of any tax-supported state funding.

Over the past five years we've reduced our energy usage by 16.3 percent. Yet UW-Eau Claire saw none of those savings. We have little incentive to reduce energy use or become more efficient other than our own commitment to being green.

I've read and heard a lot of calls for public enterprises like the university to be run more like a business. Yet we do not have the tools available to any business to do so.

Don't get me wrong. The university is not a business — its mission is to educate and prepare citizens, not make widgets or return shareholder investment — but we do have a lot more room to use competitive business practices in administering our enterprise. As CEO of this institution, I want to cut the red tape that keeps us tangled up and inefficient — and I need your help to do so.

You may have heard a thing or two on the news recently about Governor Walker's proposal to give UW-Madison the autonomy and authority to deal with the constraints I've just described.

I applaud the Governor's recognition of the need for change in how higher education in Wisconsin is able to operate.

But I join with most of my fellow chancellors in the UW System in supporting a revision to the proposed legislation that would extend the same flexibilities now proposed for Madison to all UW universities. This is known as the Wisconsin Idea Partnership.

Without the savings and efficiencies we could realize with these flexibilities, the \$250 million cut to Wisconsin higher education and the \$5 million annual cut to UW-Eau Claire will seriously affect our ability to maintain our quality, serve our students and be the community partner you want us to be.

I've invited Regent Edmund Manydeeds of Eau Claire to join me this morning to give you a brief overview of why this request for flexibility is so critical.

[Regent Manydeeds' comments]

Thank you, Regent Manydeeds.

This morning I asked you to rethink your image of UW-Eau Claire. As our faculty and students shared, we are committed to helping to lead our state into the future.

But if we are to continue to do that, especially during tough economic times, we need to rethink how we transition from a state-supported institution to a tuition-dependent institution.

So I am asking the Chamber and each of you to let our representatives know that you support the Wisconsin Idea Partnership.

As Regent Manydeeds said, all of us here at UW-Eau Claire are here because we love working with students. I came to Eau Claire because of its strong national reputation for excellence. We all want to continue that tradition of achievement. We can help ourselves in these challenging times, but we need the tools to do so.

Thank you.