

Leader-Telegram

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More than a hockey goal

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While I am amused by the appellation of "hockey chancellor" in Wednesday's Leader-Telegram, my hockey "career" never amounted to much, and anyone who has seen me play knows that my relation to hockey is in the truest sense of the word "amateur." Yes, I like hockey. I also like football and volleyball, Russian history, student performances, watching teachers teach and students learn, and all the great events one gets to support when privileged to lead a university like ours here in [Eau Claire](#).

The renovation of [Hobbs Ice Center](#), however, is not about hockey. It really is about community collaboration, across the public and private sectors, to achieve something better than any of us could achieve alone. This project is just one of many that [UW-Eau Claire](#) and the community have been and will continue to be involved in together.

This project represents the hard work of many individuals and organizations. Brought together by the expectations set by the [Eau Claire City Council](#), the primary users of Hobbs Ice Center worked for many months to identify their common interests, develop a relationship of respect and trust, and bring their respective organizations and members to a set of common agreements.

The participants in the [Ice Sports Consortium](#) ([Eau Claire Youth Hockey Association](#), Eau Claire Figure Skating Club, North and Memorial high schools, UW-Eau Claire, and the city of Eau Claire) have taken on a role of stewardship for a significant community facility that hosts more than 250,000 users and visitors each year. Together, these participants have set out to raise about one-third (\$2 million) of the cost of this renovation - a significant commitment for all. The university is proud to provide its expertise and support to this joint community effort.

As a university with a beautiful campus that is also located inside of and throughout the Eau Claire community, it is our special role to pursue opportunities to enhance university and the community facilities and our quality of life. Whether that role is fulfilled by our research talents (as in nanoscience, marketing or river resource management), with the contributions to the arts by university faculty and students, or through the many facilities we already share with the community ([Bollinger Fields](#), Hobbs, [Carson Park](#)), the university has stood and should continue to stand ready to provide expertise and leadership in support of common goals.

In recent months, in addition to discussions about Hobbs Ice Center, the university has actively worked with community groups on initiatives to enhance performing arts venues in Eau Claire and identify a common interest in a community arena-convention facility. These and other collaborative efforts that involve multiple public entities, as well as private sector enterprises, involve not only athletic venues but potential academic sites as well.

The economic reality is that the university cannot count on the state for an adequate level of support for facilities we desperately need, just as community organizations cannot generate sufficient funding for each to have its own facility. It only makes sense that we pool our talents and resources to identify how we, as a community, can collectively reach a point where shared facilities serve multiple users' needs and enrich Eau Claire.

Providing leadership in and support for our community is a key element in our currently emerging university strategic plan. This has been a strong message from members of the community and from our students, faculty and staff. Hobbs is on the front page now because the timing of this project required all of the users to come together to meet an immediate, pressing need. Other community projects will unfold on different timetables.

The important element in all of this is community collaboration. Those citizens involved in the Hobbs project deserve our appreciation for their leadership and their commitment. If we keep our eyes on the real prize - working together for the advancement of all of us - this community will continue on a path to greater success.

[Levin-Stankevich](#) is chancellor of UW-Eau Claire.

