

Chancellor's message regarding campus response to economic downturn

The following e-mail message was sent Nov. 12, 2008, to all UW-Eau Claire employees.

Colleagues,

The global financial crisis and apparent economic recession are beginning to have far-reaching effects both nationally and here in Wisconsin. It is clear that we are facing challenging times that could adversely impact UW-Eau Claire and our students. While it is not certain what that impact might be, next week (Nov. 20) the state will receive new tax revenue estimates that will provide a clearer picture of Wisconsin's short-term and longer-term fiscal situation. Given all of the recent developments, including rising unemployment and sagging automobile and retail sales, the news is not expected to be good.

I am sharing this information with you so we as a campus community can begin preparing for how we will respond to the current economic downturn.

It is incumbent upon all of us to carefully monitor how our students and their families are being affected by these unsettling times. Parents may be caught up in layoffs, plant closures, or other financial setbacks that can increase stress and result in students performing poorly or even having to consider whether they are able to continue their education. If you know of students in this situation, please refer them to the many support services available on campus, including Financial Aid and Counseling. We also must be supportive of our colleagues whose families may be facing job losses or similar difficulties.

As an institution, we have already laid much of the necessary groundwork for sound fiscal decision making. The new strategic plan and budget process, as well as the PEEQ process, will help us critically and fairly evaluate all of our departments and units to determine program and spending priorities. An across-the-board approach to any potential budget cuts would result only in across-the-board reduction in quality. We must be strategic in our approach – otherwise we risk transforming excellence into mediocrity. None of us wants that.

There is no way yet to know whether additional reductions will come immediately, i.e., in the remainder of this fiscal year or in the 2009-11 state budget, but given the economic realities, we would be remiss not to begin considering our options. In the coming weeks, I expect we will have much more information to help guide our thinking and I will share that information as it becomes available.

Brian Levin-Stankevich, Ph.D.
Chancellor