



CHANCELLOR'S RESPONSE TO PEEQ A REPORT TO THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE COMMUNITY

December 14, 2009

UW-Eau Claire Faculty, Staff and Students,

At the Blugold Breakfast on August 25, 2009, I charged each division head to explore the many and varied recommendations of the PEEQ Evaluation Team with the deans, departments and units involved. They were to report their findings and actions (both taken and planned) to me by the end of this current semester.

The action recommendations that are outlined in the pages that follow are based on the findings and proposals forwarded by my division heads, framed within the context of a rapidly changing environment that has produced significant budget reductions and a growing imperative to serve our students in the most effective and efficient ways possible.

They outline a roadmap that I and my executive team intend to follow, in conjunction with shared governance and with the support of the cabinet, deans, directors and chairs. Our goal is to use PEEQ to inform the decisions we must make to ensure that our University continues its progress toward our shared vision to become the premier undergraduate learning community in the Upper Midwest.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brian Levin-Stankevich".

Chancellor Brian Levin-Stankevich



University of Wisconsin
Eau Claire

PEEQ AND OUR CORE WORK

A Changed Context

We begin with a brief note on context, for it has changed over the past two years since the strategic plan called for the PEEQ process. We made considerable budget reductions for this current 2010 fiscal year. These constitute, in addition to the foregone general pay plan adjustment of 2%, more than \$1.6 million in salaries reduced by furlough. Another \$771,000 was given to a budget lapse and \$2.9 million in reductions in general purpose state funding. Auxiliary accounts were reduced by more than \$2.1 million—money that had been targeted for facility improvements, equipment and on-going maintenance needs in many of our residential and common buildings. These were just the biggest items, and many of them repeat again next year. Our task now is to decide which of those campus-based decisions should be permanent and which were expedient but unsustainable. There is no doubt that we will need to fill some of the positions either eliminated or currently held vacant and that we will need to rebuild some budget categories that were used to meet this budget reduction. I hope that this report will provide some provocation to make those decisions.

It would be comforting if this current biennium were simply a “dip” in the funding level for public higher education. While it is an exaggerated change, the trend line over the past 15 years reflects a steady decrease in the percentage of the state budget allocated to the UW system. In presenting the budget last year, Governor Doyle spoke of the “new normal.” Even with gradual general economic recovery, state tax revenues will lag behind other sector growth. So we must think of the current budget level as our new normal and the most realistic way to proceed for the next few years.

If the current funding level is a new normal, then expenditures must match revenue availability. For too long a variety of functions across the University continued as they had been, even though funding for them had disappeared. Excess tuition revenue and a healthy reserve built from carry-forward funds covered the structural deficits this created. Our first order of business is to live within our means. I have seen no informed assessment of state or federal funding in recent times that projects increased public funding for higher education. Moreover, any prospect for additional funding will come with very specific performance expectations that will require outcomes well beyond those any universities currently achieve. Any possible new funding will be an investment, targeted to outcomes and unavailable to use as “back-fill” for prior budget reductions.

The possibility of additional funds over and above what is now the current base budget should be viewed as a way to permanently enhance what we do and how we work. This is true of new tuition increase funds for 2010. And it is particularly true of any funds that might result from regent approval of a Blugold Commitment differential tuition increase.

The Blugold Commitment is not intended to simply replace all that has been lost and return the university to some *status quo ante*. The Blugold Commitment is intended to help create the university this community has defined for 2016, not to recreate the university we were in 2001.

How We Distribute our Resources

There is tremendous incentive in this current environment to attend carefully to how we distribute our resources and to account for what we have accomplished with that spending.

Our own national IPEDS data comparisons offer us a macroscopic perspective on how we spend our resources at UW-Eau Claire. The data reflect overall institutional revenue and broad categories of expenditures. Based on fall 2008 data, we spend only a slightly higher percentage of our budget than our peers on instructional categories, yet we

spend significantly fewer actual dollars than our peers on instruction per student FTE. (In fairness, our peer institutions generated nearly \$2,000 more per student FTE through higher tuition, higher state allocations, and larger grant and contract revenue, so even the same percentage of spending by category would result in our spending fewer dollars per category of expenditure.)

These same reports indicate that we spend about two-thirds as much as our peers on “institutional support” that includes university-level administration and the various business, facilities, safety, planning, personnel, public relations and development functions. The report indicates that we spend a far greater proportion of our annual budget on generically defined “student services” than the peers selected for us by the National Center for Educational Statistics. (Student services in this regard cut across functions that are here distributed between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, such as student data systems, athletics, financial aid administration, admissions, records/registration, health services, counseling, career services, social and cultural programming, and child care. It was evident that the PEEQ evaluators often treated these areas as a whole, regardless of separate reporting relationships.) We also assign a far greater proportion of our budget (and more dollars per FTE) to academic support functions than our peers. These include libraries, academic computing and technology, academic administration, and academic advising.

The very obvious questions raised by this data are many. Does this pattern of spending coincide with the characteristics and mission of this university? Is this how we should be spending our resources? If not, how can we begin to adjust our spending to match our purposes?

Our Core Work

At the heart of the Centennial Plan is transformed learning. Our vision is to become the “premier undergraduate learning community in the Upper Midwest.” The PEEQ evaluator recommendations began with a challenge to value teaching and learning above all else.

What will that mean? We continue to build our learning community on a rigorous immersion in a discipline and integration of a disciplinary understanding with the perspectives of a liberal education. Our learning environment is intended to reflect a global preparation of our graduates encompassing both international and cross-cultural experience. Teaching and learning excellence must be the premier standard against which we measure all else that we attempt or desire to do.

We at Eau Claire have developed some unique approaches to student learning, and we have excelled in them. Our Centennial Plan calls for an intensification of those innovations to a level of performance that truly transforms those who experience Eau Claire. We develop the whole person through our predominantly residential university environment, and we develop that whole person in the context of the student’s educational effort. Where there are experiential opportunities for learning and where there are possibilities for the personal development of students, these should be closely integrated with our academic programs. They should not exist in isolation. The philosophy we adopted in determining the need for a division of student affairs was one that emphasizes “extensive and on-going collaboration” between instructional and non-instructional areas.

A fundamental question posed to all departments and units in PEEQ was related to their centrality to the mission of the university. The core work of this university is the facilitation of student learning through teaching, advising, scholarship and service. If we proceed from this premise, subsequent criteria for decision-making about everything we do will be more consistent.

Intrinsic Organizational Value

There is no comforting way to express what has become a harsh reality. The days are long gone when we could say that “without a department or office of X,Y or Z, we are not really a university.” Our definition of UW-Eau Claire, a definition that has evolved over generations, does assume the presence of core academic areas—but it doesn’t mandate whether they be majors or minors, departments or programs. The days in which intrinsic value derived from the organizational status (size of budget, number of offices, salary of the “director,” etc.) are past. The PEEQ evaluation report identified a number of disciplines that might seek some combination with others. Many of those discussions have or had already begun. Those are ultimately questions that need to be resolved by those best able to identify legitimate academic purposes for such combinations.

Not all of the various services that support students are required by law or even by accreditation. Where they are required, there is no mandate that we provide the services ourselves as opposed to making sure the services are available. There is no requirement that we provide all the support services uniquely to our university as opposed to in full or partial collaboration with other campuses. In fact, common data systems, private student housing, language instruction and consortium management arrangements are commonly intruding on the presumption of unique campus-based ownership of services and even instruction.

Yet there remains a very strong pull in the direction of organizational structure. Nearly every major initiative that I have seen on campuses over the past couple of decades has gravitated toward some form of institutionalization of structure. What *does* create intrinsic organizational value is the ability of a department or unit to demonstrate that it makes a difference in accomplishing our core work. This demonstration, in turn, relies on assessment of outcomes. A critical conclusion of the PEEQ analysis, one reflected in our self-study and in the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), findings is the need to deepen our understanding and use of assessment in decision-making. The PEEQ reports put the relative assessment sophistication of campus units into sharp relief. The results underscore that we all need to attend to assessment more purposefully. Assessment, as it has come to be defined by accrediting organizations, state and system offices and the public does not come naturally to most in higher education. So the progress that has been made in many academic departments and non-instructional units is admirable.

While we need to continuously question and assess the functions and operations necessary to fulfill our core work, we need to place the intrinsic value in the function, not in its status in the organization structure. Each of us needs to define our value in terms of the core work of this university. To do this, we must have measureable outcomes that demonstrate not only that we are essential to the university but that we are essential as currently organized and operating within the university.

RESPONSES TO PEEQ RECOMMENDATIONS

It is within this context of budget restraint and need for accountability, and with a commitment to our core work, that I propose our institutional responses to our PEEQ review. In my view, our distribution of resources does not currently match our aspirations. An institution that aspires to be a premier learning community noted for high-impact learning practices cannot assign fewer resources to instruction than its peers. The Blugold Commitment would help us to invest in ways that could restore a balance in our resource distribution. But we need to live with the “new normal” first, and that requires that we focus on outcomes in place of inputs and change the way we work accordingly.

In the pages that follow, I will address some of the specific areas around which the PEEQ evaluation team submitted recommendations. I group these into eight categories, by the nature of the challenge they address and the purpose they serve rather than their scope or organizational locus. I include here those intervening actions that have been taken, work in progress, and proposals that have come forward to address the concerns raised in the PEEQ reporting and evaluation process.

The action recommendations that follow outline the course I and my leadership team will begin to chart in the coming months. This will be done in continuing consultation with deans, chairs and directors who have already been involved in reviewing relevant PEEQ evaluation team recommendations. Many actions will also require consultation with and be accomplished in conjunction with shared governance. My cabinet includes representatives of the faculty, academic staff, classified staff and students, and it will be informed of and be a part of deliberations about actions resulting from PEEQ.

Our Curricular Signature

The Academic Plan, as presented to the University Senate and to the Board of Regents this fall, focuses on curricular renovation, particularly toward the culmination of years of work on general education and accompanying graduation requirements. Provost Kleine has worked closely with our deans and has met individually with academic departments to discuss their PEEQ reports and those areas cited by the departments and/or the evaluators as needing attention.

While the PEEQ recommendations provided a range of suggestions on which programs should grow, such decisions cannot be accomplished through one PEEQ review alone, and will require continuing analysis.

We will begin our efforts by firmly establishing a curricular signature for UW-Eau Claire that reaffirms our leadership in liberal education, rigor in and across the disciplines, and excellence in high-impact practices. This will involve the following:

INSTRUCTIONAL INVESTMENTS

- Invest in approximately 25 new instructional positions to enable a more sustainable and integrated undergraduate curriculum (by utilizing new tuition funding, Blugold Commitment dollars, and reallocations);
- Build on the clear strengths and regional visibility of academic programs (beginning with natural sciences, music and performing arts);
- Develop emphases that have evolved within and across disciplines (beginning with actuarial science, and environmental studies);

- Increase capacity for high-demand disciplines based on future opportunities for graduates (for example in health care administration, health and social informatics, applied behavioral science, materials science, communication sciences and disorders, and nursing);
- Reinforce the importance of and our capacity for all students to acquire foreign language competencies.

PROGRAMMATIC RESTRAINT

- Replace discipline-specific foundation courses with a smaller array of broadly-applicable core course (e.g. statistics, research methods);
- Establish a university-wide requirement that all programmatic and unit changes include cost, opportunity, and enrollment impact analyses;
- Require that all new program proposals include a sustainable funding plan that includes reallocations;
- Develop a mechanism for the review of low-enrollment programs with a set of performance criteria and outcome indicators that would trigger review and action;
- Continuously review credits required by programs, student credits at graduation and time to degree, and work with programs that exceed reasonable norms and targets;
- Review the sustainability of Environmental and Public Health as a major;
- Establish a university-wide curriculum committee to oversee all curricular revisions to seek out, reduce, and prevent duplication among colleges, departments, and programs;
- Eliminate small-enrollment graduate programs that do not directly enhance undergraduate learning and/or contribute resources to support undergraduate programs and faculty;
- Eliminate unsustainable graduation requirements (e.g. wellness requirement) and reallocate saved resources.

HIGH-TECH, HIGH-TOUCH LEARNING

- Increase the number of courses using delivery modes including online, hybrid and/or handheld technology to enhance teaching and learning;
- Develop and implement online degree completion programs targeted at adults who have partially completed college programs (beginning with Bachelor of Liberal Studies and professionally-related degree options).

STRUCTURAL REALIGNMENT

- Effect a cost-neutral reassignment of duties in the Office of Academic Affairs to better support quality undergraduate and graduate education, high-impact learning practices and closer collaboration among CETL, ORSP and LTS;
- Continuously review and realign reporting relationships of student service offices under Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.

It should be noted that a number of specific recommendations from the PEEQ evaluation team have been reviewed and will not be adopted. Among them were the elimination of the foreign language requirement, a reduction in the number of foreign languages offered, the elimination of currently held discipline-based accreditations, and the creation of an Equity Studies department.

Enrollment Management

The Academic Master Plan must be informed by ongoing strategic enrollment management that addresses recruitment, retention and graduation. Focused efforts will be led by the current Executive Director of Enrollment Services, and these have begun through the enrollment management team. Support for recruitment, as noted by the evaluation team, will become even more critical as the demographic of our primary market continues to drop, and this drop will continue as a trough for some time to come. Competition for traditional-aged, residential students will become much more intense, and we will need to match that intensity with the quality of our academic programs and learning environment and with aggressive recruitment efforts that match those institutions with which we favorably compare.

To maintain our funding levels, we will need to maintain our enrollment. Our academic plan will address graduate education. We are also committed to sustaining our undergraduate enrollment (traditional) at current levels or even at lower levels assuming that we can retain students more effectively and graduate students more efficiently. This would permit us to maintain our selectivity or even improve on it, which in turn keeps our need for remedial services low and permits the restructuring of at-risk student support as discussed below under Student Success.

This all depends, however, on supplementing traditional student enrollment. Alternatives may be non-traditional learners, on-line students, transfer or graduate students. Without these students we will likely see fewer applicants for the same number of spaces, requiring the enrollment of students with more varied academic preparation and the consequent costs.

There was discussion in the PEEQ evaluator report of non-traditional student enrollment that I take as shorthand for serving a predominantly local (or at least place-bound) working or transitioning adult population. This poses questions of mission centrality for us. We have not attracted or served a significant non-traditional student population to date. It would be facile to simply declare that we must do a better job, although there are some areas where we easily can. To truly serve adult, off-peak hour learners we would need to rethink our current services and allocations of time.

RESPONSES:

- Utilize continuing education and outreach to expand educational offerings to non-traditional students (local and distant) both independently ourselves and in collaboration with partners. Rethink the structure and relationship of continuing education functions and financing models relative to credit and degree programs and to our own colleges and departments;
- Partner with institutions (regionally or with UW-Colleges) that are better equipped to serve non-traditional students to serve our region;
- Align transfer enrollment (credit recognition) practices with UW System best practices;
- Develop “pathway” agreements with select UW Colleges;
- Invest in international student recruitment. This will be a declining investment over a three-year period to support greater outreach and presence in the most productive international markets for Eau Claire. It is to become self-sufficient as additional international students enroll and as the tuition revenue they generate offsets and surpasses these costs of recruitment. A specific target—doubling international student enrollment—has been set, and the Center for International Education is accountable for achieving that target;
- Hire a recruiter in Admissions to specialize in recruiting students of color;

- Implement an enrollment management plan that fulfills our Growth Agenda commitments and that lays out a path to diversify our enrollment mix in order to sustain revenue, quality and selectivity;
- Develop graduate degree and certificate programs that are based on market demand and academic strengths of the university.

Student Success

The PEEQ evaluators gave considerable attention to student support services. At UW-Eau Claire, such services are spread across our divisions. Student success is at the heart of our University's mission. In support of this mission, the Provost will create a new Student Success Network within Academic Affairs and in collaboration with Student Affairs. This network will leverage existing resources to restructure and consolidate the units and functions that are key contributors to purposeful, effective student learning from pre-college to timely graduation.

Congruent with the premises stated earlier, those functions that support student academic success should be most closely aligned with the academic homes of students and should support a team approach to student success that includes professional expertise, and student and faculty member collaboration. While such services have over time come to occupy specific locations that are distinct from academic spaces normally inhabited by faculty and students, because of technological improvements, that no longer needs to be the case.

RESPONSES:

- Implement university-wide, service-oriented student support structures that emphasize convenience, eliminate duplication and that integrate more closely with the academic mission of the university:
 - Reconceptualize the services provided by the offices of Advising and Career Services as primarily delivered within and in close collaboration with colleges, departments and programs, where possible. Develop pilot programs to demonstrate and test options;
 - Reconceptualize student academic support functions—Writing Center, Academic Skills Center, Mathematics Lab—to provide services where students are and when they need them;
 - Locate high-impact learning practices such as internships and service learning within colleges and departments and hold these units accountable for integrating these practices into their curricula;
 - As part of creating a support system, cross-train professional staff to work effectively within such a system.
- Maximize student on-campus employment opportunities, particularly where related to their academic and career aspirations;
- Transform “undeclared major” to “exploratory student” program that will engage students in both exploration and decision-making about their futures through a progressive, purposeful process involving academic and experiential learning;
- Continue Student Affairs-led expansion of living-learning centers in the residence halls (potentially funded through additional fees), co-curricular support programs (including athletics), EDI activities and leadership development, in partnership with faculty as well as academic staff members.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusiveness

One of the overarching findings of the PEEQ process was the university-wide opportunity to enhance our efforts in equity, diversity and inclusiveness (EDI). Every department and unit has room to grow in this regard so it is imperative that we continue our commitment to weave EDI into the fabric of our learning environment.

The PEEQ evaluators asked for greater clarity of roles and collaboration among those offices with significant EDI-related responsibilities, but not for a new administrative structure. We will work to clarify roles where necessary while increasing awareness of which campus entities have responsibilities in EDI-related areas such as student and employee recruitment and retention, curricular initiatives, professional development, mentoring, and community building. However, we must remember that EDI cannot be compartmentalized—it must be a component of everyone’s work.

In addition to continuing our efforts on the Equity Scorecard, Compass, Dismantling Racism, the Campus Climate Survey, and actions based on what we learn from those projects, the following respond to some of the recommendations in the PEEQ evaluation report.

RESPONSES:

- Make EDI a cross-cutting theme in all personnel actions, expectations and rewards:
 - Integrate EDI in the processes and metrics of departmental personnel committees;
 - Incorporate EDI into review processes of individual employees.
- Incorporate meaningful EDI reporting as well as accountability for EDI outcomes in the annual report process.

Student Affairs

As a newly-formed division of the university, Student Affairs continues to evolve in function and structure and in collaboration with Academic Affairs and other constituencies.

RESPONSES:

- In spring 2010, charge a campus-community task force to complete a comprehensive comparative analysis of how best to integrate, structure, fund and deliver student health services and counseling services;
- Establish a campus-community task force to assess our array of intercollegiate sports to assure that our athletics program is aligned with our mission, funding and student recruitment and retention efforts;
- Explore models for providing supplemental, full-time employment opportunities for coaches that do not rely on shared appointments with Kinesiology;
- Restructure the current Office of Student Affairs to create a Dean of Students position reporting directly to the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs in as revenue-neutral a manner as possible. The creation of the new Division of Student Affairs requires a staffing structure to support its mission. In the creation of that division, the desire to eliminate additional administrative positions overlooked the workload involved in serving our students;
- Determine the costs and benefits of maintaining duplicate facilities maintenance staffing structures.

Assessment

As noted above, every major recent examination of the university (PEEQ, Self-Study, HLC report) has focused on assessment, and our current environment promises only greater scrutiny. The following respond to recommendations from the PEEQ report.

RESPONSES:

- Institutional Research:
 - Invest in an additional academic staff position to permit the development of data needed for assessment and for the analysis of that data in addition to the ongoing work of responding to mandated reports and ad hoc requests;
 - Align reporting relationships so that Institutional Research supports all divisional needs across the university.
- Annual report process
 - Academic Affairs has already begun to work with the Academic Policies Committee to identify permanent improvements to the annual review process and the relationship of those annual reviews to the septennial review process. This work will result in annual reviews that incorporate assessment and benchmarking for academic and non-instructional units.
- Establish a relevant peer cohort that includes current peers and aspirational peers to create effective benchmark and measurement targets. Benchmarking was noted as a deficiency by the PEEQ evaluators, but one cause of this deficiency is the lack of a consistent peer cohort. We have one cohort selected by default in the IPEDS report, another used by UW System Administration for salary comparisons, another selected in the Delaware Cost Study.

Faculty and Staff Support

The PEEQ evaluation report noted correctly that our greatest strength is our faculty and academic staff and that there has been a continuous erosion of capacity and time to maintain excellence. There are a number of aspects that lie beyond the capacity of the campus relative to compensation. Workload issues, however, can very much derive from policies, from what we must or want to do, and from support available to faculty and academic staff. Many of the responses to the PEEQ report have the potential to reduce duplication and thereby reduce obligations. Others can provide more targeted support for teaching and learning by consolidating requirements and clarifying roles for major courses and service courses.

RESPONSES:

- Charge CETL, ORSP and LTS to identify and implement best practices for improving undergraduate teaching, learning and research. These areas also need to work collaboratively in locating and securing external financial support to sustain their functions as well as enhancing the teaching and learning enterprise;
- Identify sustainable opportunities for professional development and for growing our talent into the leadership of the future;
- Identify sustainable ways to support faculty and academic staff participation in international learning experiences to better serve and educate students about global perspectives;
- Develop an on-campus summer professional development “conference” for classified staff;
- Re-examine workload and identify workload obstacles to create a more sustainable working environment. Promote the Blugold Commitment as a way to address workload obstacles to engagement with innovative and high-impact practices.

Institutional Effectiveness

The PEEQ evaluation report dwelled on our culture of “hyper-compliance” with regulations and our propensity to create layers of rules on top of those set by state and system authorities. As a consequence, we spend considerable time and effort satisfying each other’s requirements. An alternative is recommended below. There were also a significant number of recommendations regarding specific units, often raised to the evaluators by those units themselves. Those will be addressed through supervisory interactions.

RESPONSES:

- Develop a process for faculty, academic staff and students to identify those rules and practices that serve as obstacles to efficiency and “good work.” Utilize process improvement tools to identify the “offending” policies and processes, determine their necessity, identify their purpose, and explore and implement improvements that provide for less bureaucratic intrusion and fewer delays;
- Review specific market-based pricing recommendations from the PEEQ evaluators. Although some might generate modest revenue streams, many constitute an expansion of “charge-backs” that generate dissatisfaction. Others, such as fees for certain additional or personalized services might be both allowable and advisable;
- Move common systems costs to a university-level expenditure as opposed to allocating this budget to departments and then charging back or having to make up deficits due to System-wide increases in campus obligations;
- Explore variations of “cost-recovery” pricing for graduate programs such as those used by UW-Stout;
- Hire a director for business services/university budget officer. University investment in this position will assure depth and continuity in the management of our financial health;
- Develop shared service functions with nearby UW campuses. The chancellor will bring together his counterparts and their executive teams in February, 2010, to explore collaborations.

CONCLUSION

The context in which we first committed to undertaking what became the PEEQ process has itself changed considerably. We have experienced a massive economic downturn that has had a negative effect on this state's revenues on top of an already considerable structural deficit. That has resulted in the exodus of roughly \$12M in this biennium from the UW-Eau Claire budget. We have prepared for and experienced our HLC site visit. Their initial commendations and recommendations both caution us and urge us to act. We have initiated an effort to match our revenue generation to those of our primary competitors through tuition differential, the outcome of which is still in the balance.

In this altered context, re-reading the Centennial Plan requires a different lens than we started with. I have reflected in this report what I see as priorities that respond to the status quo that PEEQ was intended to measure. I will urge their adoption by the campus community in the coming months. I will urge the budget reallocations that must flow from them for adoption in the 2011 and 2012 budgets, depending on opportunity.

The implementation timeline for these recommendations is important, for we cannot delay in becoming a more student-focused, effective institution. It is my intention to establish firm budgets and timelines for these initiatives, in consultation with my division heads, and to report regularly on our progress. We will use the all-faculty and staff meeting in January, 2010, to lay out our priorities and implementation timetables and we will continue to work with vice chancellors, deans, chairs and directors to support the initiatives outlined in this report.

We have the opportunity, through the recommendations presented here, to position our university for the future. I look forward to working with faculty and staff to better serve knowledge, our students and our state.