TO: News Editors and Directors  
FROM: Jacob Wrasse, Student Body President  
DATE: Dec. 17, 2015  
SUBJECT: Response to community opposition toward UWEC’s bid on Syverson Home

This Monday the Blugold Real Estate Foundation voted to end its bid to acquire the Syverson Lutheran Home to provide future housing for UW-Eau Claire students after considerable neighborhood opposition. Though I understand and respect this decision by Blugold Real Estate, the dialogue surrounding this event has caused me to reflect deeply on the value of UW-Eau Claire students to the community and the innumerable benefits that future partnerships may bring.

Despite ample evidence to the contrary, a miscategorization of college students that more reflects outdated, inaccurate stereotypes than it does actual facts. Even though this is a problem at numerous institutions of higher learning across the country, I find it particularly troublesome that these perceptions may still pervade a city of approximately 65,000 people where the university's 10,500 students make up roughly 1-in-6 of the population. There is no such thing as 'keeping the university on its campus' or 'keeping students out of our neighborhoods.' We're already there, and you've met us.

Hundreds of UW-Eau Claire students work at small businesses across the city to allow for quality customer service and the success of local entrepreneurs, and hundreds more are patrons of those establishments. Hundreds more complete internships from business like Xcel Energy to JAMF Software, and our student teachers and aspiring nurses can be found in all area schools and hospitals and nursing homes. Our athletic team's student athletes draw thousands of spectators to Carson Park, Zorn Arena, and Hobbs Ice Center. UW-Eau Claire's nearly 7,000 off-campus students, including myself, pay rent to dozens of area landlords who, in turn, pay property taxes and support neighborhoods from the Third Ward and Historic Randall Park to Putnam Heights and both sides of the Eau Claire River. These same students complete hundreds of thousands of community service hours each year, and many of them fall in love with Eau Claire and choose to stay here after graduation.

UW-Eau Claire alumni have won Grammy's, built major corporations and businesses, and founded publications that define our community. You see them reporting the news, writing in print publications, and starting their own non-profits. They've worked in the State Capitol and on the Board of Regents. Our graduates have appeared on Broadway and national television. They've worked for the U.S. Departments of State and Justice.

When someone says they don't want students to be a part of their community in any city in the country, they're talking about these people. In our city, this would be failing to recognize that the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire's student body has been the history of this region, they're the lifeblood of its current growth, and they're the hope for its future. It is my sincere hope that with each passing day more and more people will begin to recognize this.

We're here, and we're not going anywhere.

Contact Jake Wrasse, UW-Eau Claire Student Body President, with questions at 715-836-4048 or wrassejw@uwec.edu.