

Chancellor James C. Schmidt
Centennial Hall Dedication
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Feb. 5, 2014

Good morning.

It is my honor to be the first chancellor in more than 30 years to dedicate a new, fully state funded academic building on the UW-Eau Claire campus. It is fitting that we dedicate this building on February 5, as this is an important date in the history of the founding of our institution.

On February 5, 1910, the Board of Regents chose a site in the Third Ward of Eau Claire on “land lying between the wooded bluffs of Putnam Park and an abrupt bend in the Chippewa River” as the location of the new Eau Claire Normal School.

The Eau Claire Normal School, now UW-Eau Claire, would never have been realized if not for a long — we’re talking more than 20 years — and concerted effort by this community. Today, we celebrate another important milestone with the dedication of Centennial Hall — and with that would like to recognize some of our many community supporters and colleagues. Please wave as I say your name — and let’s hold our applause until all are recognized.

- Eau Claire City Council President Kerry Kincaid, Vice President Dave Duax and City Manager Russ Van Gompel
- From the University of Wisconsin System Office of Capital Planning and Budget, Kate Sullivan and Jeff Kosloske
- State Division of Facilities Development Project Manager Russ Van Gilder
- Mark Aumann, representing Congressman Ron Kind
- James Dimock from the UW-Eau Claire Alumni Association board of directors
- Janice Lemminger, board member of the Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation
- Bob Mc Coy, president and CEO of the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce.

Please join me in a round of applause.

We also have with us today alumni representing classes from seven different decades. Please wave when I call your name — and again let's hold our applause until all are recognized:

- Joan Cook, Class of 1949
- Bob Schneider, Class of 1951
- Lois Schultz, Class of 1953
- Steve Kurth, Class of 1961
- David Hoofe, Class of 1964
- Cleo Powers, Class of 1967
- David Backstrom, Class of 1973
- Paula Stuetgen, Class of 1976
- Vicki Hoehn, Class of 1980
- Sam Stagliano, Class of 1981
- Lois Schultz, Class of 1982
- Nancy Schuster, Class of 1991
- Andy Schlafer, Class of 1992
- Joe Carlson, Class of 2007
- Gretchen Bachmeier, Class of 2013.

Please join me in recognizing our alumni.

Earlier, I noted why this date is important to UW-Eau Claire. I'd like to reference another occasion — some six years later, when what is now Schofield Hall was dedicated. One of the speakers was the governor of Wisconsin, Emanuel Philipp. Here is what he said then:

“We have met here today to dedicate this beautiful building. It has been built by the fathers and mothers and other interested taxpayers in order that you, the sons and daughters of the commonwealth, might have better educational service. It not only benefits you, and yours, but will go on benefitting as long as the walls of this massive building last.”

Those words, I believe, ring as true today as they did nearly a century ago. The governor was speaking to the common good that higher education provides to our community and our state — and he also spoke about the shared sacrifice necessary to achieve that common good.

We exist to serve the sons and daughters of Wisconsin and to provide graduates with the education and skills necessary to succeed in a Wisconsin and world that those who had the foresight to found this great institution could only imagine.

The program at which Governor Philipp spoke in 1916 was arranged by the most eminent business and professional leaders of the community under the banner of the Civic and Commerce Association, which asserted that in a few years the amount of money brought to the city because of the normal school would reach an astounding figure and that the new institution “would be a better asset to the city than a manufacturing plant.”

How prophetic.

Today, we dedicate this wonderful new building that will serve to educate our citizenry as we approach our second century of service to this great state.

As we do so, let us also rededicate ourselves to the principles of those who helped found this institution — that what we teach here, what students learn here “not only benefits you, and yours, but will go on benefitting as long as the walls of this massive building last.”

Thank you.