Colleagues,

I thought you would be interested in reading the enclosed editorial published in this morning’s edition of The Oshkosh Northwestern that speaks very highly of our faculty and staff who, during difficult times, continue to serve the students and citizens of northeastern Wisconsin while increasing access to and enhancing the quality of higher education.

This editorial is particularly timely considering the need for state legislators to now approve Governor Doyle’s budget for the higher educational needs of Wisconsin, which was endorsed by the Joint Committee on Finance and State Senate, rather than the assembly’s proposed version. The hard work of the bipartisan Joint Committee on Finance, area legislators, the faculty and staff, as well as donors and friends of UW Oshkosh is impacted by the Assembly’s apparent disregard for the economic growth that is needed in Wisconsin.

The Assembly’s proposed budget would egregiously impact Wisconsin’s Growth Agenda, significantly affecting the ability of UW institutions to provide for the continued knowledge needs of the citizens of the state, particularly northeastern Wisconsin’s New North.

The Oshkosh Northwestern’s editorial recognizes that we have grown access to and protected the quality of higher education as much as we could through difficult times. It is incomprehensible, however, that we could continue to protect and enhance the quality of and access to educational opportunities for northeastern Wisconsin’s citizens if the Assembly’s budget is approved.

Chancellor Richard H. Wells

Posted August 7, 2007

Editorial: Amid fiscal fight, UWO focused on quality, growth

The University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh isn't weathering rough fiscal times by cutting class.

It's facing budget obstacles head on and has gritted its teeth through six years and roughly $12 million of cuts. It is noticeably expanding its campus to improve the student experience. And, for
the good of the institution and its home city and region, it is staying focused on its strategic objectives.

Proof the latter comes in the recent form of a big validation and some ongoing consumer-focused efforts.

Independent "accreditations" -- report cards organizations seek to compare themselves to peers and make sure they're staying on mission -- aren't exactly easy-reading, headline-grabbers. But the recent UWO accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools is worth a spotlight.

In January, UWO produced a 240-page submission for the HRC to consider. In March, a special delegation visited UWO and checked out the campus, examining how the more-than 11,000-student school was fulfilling its big-picture strategic plans, educational mission, growth targets and diversity goals.

One of six national university accreditors in the United States, the HLC gave UWO a gleaming stamp of approval last month, citing everything from its polished 2001 strategic plan, its efforts to improve inclusivity and diversity and its initiatives such as boosting everyday dependence on biomass energy sources – in other words, living "greener."

There are always things to work on, but, overall, UWO got winning grades.

If you want to dig deeper into the accreditation process and materials, you can find all the information at:  [www.uwosh.edu/nca_accreditation/](http://www.uwosh.edu/nca_accreditation/).

It's a big, albeit lesser-known, accomplishment for UWO and, rightly, a new "Point of Pride" for Oshkosh's resident university.

There's more.

As UWO and many other UW schools brace for another round of budget cuts, Chancellor Richard Wells is serving as chairman of a national "Task Force on Student Engagement" for the "National Voluntary System of Accountability."

Here's the layman's definition (and, it's a reassuring one): Wells is leading a group of administrators from around the country who are, voluntarily, creating a uniform, user-friendly Internet-based system giving people searching for a university an apples-to-apples comparative tool to help them find the right fit.

The project requires universities to suck it up and show their cards – their strengths and weaknesses on everything from racial diversity in the student population to student-satisfaction ratings. There will even be a uniform, college cost-estimator factoring tuition charges and financial aid.

Understandably, this bold move toward accountability and transparency hasn't won over all of academia. But give UWO and other participants credit: University leaders are answering critics who perpetuate the myth of UW elitism by finding ways to open their already gaping doors to campus wider. The VSA project takes it to a "try-this-from-the-comfort-of-your-home" level.

Way to go, UWO.

Final Thought: Kudos to the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh on its recent, grade-A report card and its ongoing efforts to make university and student performance more transparent to prospective students.