



**UW Oshkosh's "Principles for Progress and Prosperity:"
A Compact to Better Educate More People
Presentation by
Chancellor Richard H. Wells
to
University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
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Members of the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents, President Kevin Reilly, and all our UW Campus colleagues, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. We are delighted to host the October 2010 Board of Regents meeting. UW Oshkosh is one of the UW System's twelve "Greater Wisconsin Universities," that is, one of those universities beyond Madison and Milwaukee, serving 110,000 UW Students.

Annual Report

By way of introducing you to UW Oshkosh, I would like to draw your attention to our *Strategic Plan Update and Annual Report* included in your packet. On pages 12 and 13, you will see a diagram depicting how we align our Governing Ideas and Resources through our Key Operational Plans and Processes, our College and Unit Plans, our University-Wide Strategic Action Initiatives, and the UW System's Advantage Wisconsin strategic framework.

Next, I would like to refer you to our Model for Enhancing Essential Student Learning Outcomes on pages 10 and 11. This model shows how our emphasis on high-impact educational practices and essential learning outcomes develops graduates who are talented, liberally educated, technically skilled, global citizens, and who are fully engaged as leaders and participants in civic, political, and social life. I show you these charts because they speak to our ability to support the new compact proposed this summer by Jay Smith and Chuck Pruitt.

Compact

I would like to focus my comments this morning on UW Oshkosh's commitment to the proposed compact. The Smith-Pruitt Compact seeks to forge the kind of relationship that Wisconsin's public university needs to establish and maintain with elected officials and the public at large. We must convince them that tax-payer funding of public higher education is a critical investment for a prosperous future, and not just a big expenditure. Known as "[Principles for Progress and Prosperity](#)," this compact calls for three things from the UW System. They are:

- first, expanded access;
- second, increased productivity; and
- third, enhanced quality.

In exchange, the compact calls for three things from the State. They are:

- first, a greater and more stable share of state tax dollars for the UW System, including the resources and flexibility needed to make faculty and staff compensation competitive;
- second, greater management flexibility in purchasing, contracting, and construction; and
- third, prudent investments in need-based financial aid to preserve access for low- and moderate-income students.

In many ways, UW Oshkosh is well positioned to uphold our end of the bargain. Regarding expanded access, for example, we are Wisconsin's third-largest and second-fastest growing university. Our enrollment growth has resulted in six consecutive record-breaking years, and our enrollment continues to grow:

- Our preliminary Fall 2010 enrollment of 13,600 sets a new historic high record;
- We have more than doubled the number of our students of color and increased the number of older adult, undergraduate students by 33 percent; and
- We remain a school-of-choice for transfer students with more than 1,500 new transfer students enrolling during the academic year.

In a time of economic uncertainty, it is a positive sign to see students investing in a progressive future for their families and the global community.

We have also expanded access to high-demand programs. For example we have added:

- New academic majors in athletic training, environmental studies, and environmental health;
- Teacher education programs in accelerated math and science in collaboration with five UW Colleges;
- 13 new graduate certificate programs;
- Collaborative master's degree in social work with UW-Green Bay;
- Accelerated bachelor's degree for non-nursing graduates;
- MBA Foundations Online Program;
- Wisconsin's first Bachelor of Applied Studies and Fire and Emergency Response Management degrees; and
- The University's first doctoral degree, the Doctor of Nursing Practice.

Furthermore, we have a long-term commitment to make a UW Oshkosh degree affordable and accessible by securing funds for scholarships and paid internships. For example:

- Our Capital Campaign so far has resulted in scholarship commitments of nearly \$5 million;
- We have also secured 125 Noyce Scholarships at \$10,000 a piece for STEM student teachers; and
- Our Center for Business Success has provided approximately \$2 million of paid internships for roughly 500 students in the past five years.

Scholarship awards and paid internships help us attract and retain our diverse student population, offset tuition costs for students in need, and encourage non-traditional students to complete their education.

With regard to increased productivity, the second component of the agreement, we have established a good track record here as well. We set new records for the number of degrees conferred in each of the past four years resulting in a 25 percent degree growth rate over the past ten years. And we plan to continue to increase productivity. We have committed to a degree-growth goal of 8,000 more degrees by 2025 as part of the UW System Degree Growth Agenda. Back in 2004, UW Oshkosh was the second school in the nation to implement a degree-completion initiative for "Stop Outs," known as the Graduation Project. Through it, we have significantly increased the number of baccalaureate- and, more recently, associate-degrees holders. In the process, we have become aware of and removed barriers for timely degree completion for all students, thus potentially decreasing the number of "Stop Outs."

Regarding the third component of the compact, enhanced quality, UW Oshkosh is taking steps to provide the learning every student needs in the 21st century. In 2008, we adopted a set of student learning outcomes based upon the Essential Learning Outcomes of the American Association of Colleges and Universities. We have developed definitions and performance indicators for each outcome so that students will have a better understanding of what is expected of them. Regardless of a student's background or choice of major, each one of our graduates should achieve the liberal education outcomes. You will hear more about our initiatives to enhance quality from our Provost and Vice Chancellor Lane Earns and his colleagues at the Education Committee meeting this afternoon.

We are also extremely proud of the high quality of teaching on our campus. UW Oshkosh has won the most Regents' Teaching Excellence Awards. Six faculty members and three academic departments have received this prestigious award.

At UW Oshkosh, we are working creatively and innovatively to improve quality through strategic financial planning. For example, we have integrated employment-based learning outcomes into our on-campus Student Titan Employment Program (STEP). Initiated in 2009 and continued by popular demand again this year, the STEP program is improving the quality of on campus employment while helping to make education more affordable for 200 students through a reallocation of \$500,000 annually. To qualify for STEP funding, supervisors must develop performance appraisals that include expectations for on-the-job learning outcomes and they must give their student workers face-to-face, pre- and post-position, performance evaluations on the relevant student learning outcomes.

Furthermore, STEP implements a best practice for Inclusive Excellence by requiring that all STEP job descriptions be posted on a central web site before hiring begins to give qualified first-generation, transfer, and minority students an equal opportunity to apply for the positions. Next year, we will apply what we are learning to the other 1,500 on-campus jobs providing \$5 million in employment opportunities for our students.

You will hear more about our strategic financial planning initiatives from our Vice Chancellor of Administration, Tom Sonnleitner, and his colleagues at the joint meeting of the Business, Finance and Audit Committee and the Capital Planning and Budget Committee this afternoon.

Advocacy Strategy

I believe we can make a compelling case for the Smith-Pruitt compact by building on the advocacy strategy that worked so well for us in 2007-09. If you ask me, what made our case for the 2007-09 Growth Agenda so compelling was this: it was **not** about us. Rather, it was about our mission—about meeting the needs of the people, the communities, and the students we serve. We convinced third-party advocates and the state that we are an excellent investment by showing them how we are highly aligned with the needs of this region and how we leverage our resources through many partnerships and collaborations. We must continue to prove that and to build on the good faith, respect and mutual understanding that the 2007-09 Growth Agenda advocacy strategy generated.

I realize this type of strategy differs from the “hard-ball” type of strategy that uses threats, bluffs, and other negative tactics. Some would say that, if we are not using “hard-ball” tactics, we are “giving away the farm.” But my Grandmother Corbo, who ran an Italian-American restaurant in upstate New York, would say, “Only use enough vinegar to remind them what sugar tastes like.”

It is clear we need a very compelling strategy for 2011-13. And, we have to do things in a fundamentally different way if we want to see a greater share of state tax dollars invested in the mission of our public higher educational institutions. To meet the needs of the people, the communities, and the students we serve over the next 6 years, I believe we must provide not only better educational quality, but better educational quality at lower per-capita degree cost.

Controlling costs

To control degree costs and increase quality, when the State’s budget is in the red, is a big “ask.” Can we deliver on this? It won’t be easy, but I believe we can. It is being done on other campuses. In a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article titled “[The Elephant in the Room: Curricular Glut](#),” Michael Bugeja describes how his school of journalism at Iowa State streamlined curricula so that they have a ratio of 16 majors for every active course. His faculty enhanced quality while lowering the per-capita cost of a degree by providing students with more rigorous curricula focused on mission and degree progress. How did they do this?

- by simplifying degree requirements,
- by continuously assessing degree progress to determine pedagogical effectiveness,
- by eliminating sequences, options, emphases and tracks,
- by scheduling more efficiently, and
- by identifying and deleting outdated courses.

Another article, titled “[Can Learning Be Improved When Budgets Are in the Red?](#),” also from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, reports that the Teagle Foundation has identified “some relatively inexpensive steps that can improve students’ cognitive and personal capacities.” Their research shows that colleges can improve the quality of student learning and engagement, at a time when budgets are stretched, by starting to ask themselves some fundamental questions. For example:

- Are we asking our students to reach robust, long-lasting learning goals?
- Do all students and faculty members understand what those expectations are and why they are important?
- Do the requirements of departments and courses reflect those educational goals?

Here at UW Oshkosh, we have explored those questions. As a result, I can say that we are asking our students to reach broad, learning outcomes that will enable them to think for themselves and to work with others to solve problems in innovative ways. I also have great confidence that our students and faculty members understand what those expectations are and why they are important because they voted to adopt the UW Oshkosh Student Learning Outcomes in May 2008, after members of our Liberal Education Reform Team visited every department and governance group on campus at least twice to discuss their expectations for student learning.

We are currently investigating the third question: do the requirements of departments and courses reflect those educational goals? Last year, the LERT team mapped where those outcomes are taught in over 1,000 courses. They also surveyed faculty opinion on the level of achievement that should be expected of UW Oshkosh students at both graduation and upon completion of the general education program. We are very earnest in our efforts to improve the quality of the educational experience at UW Oshkosh. We are also doing things to reduce the per-capita cost of a degree.

There are at least two sides of the coin called “controlling the price of a college degree.” One side is external subsidy of the cost through State, Federal, and private funding. I believe we can build external stakeholder trust and confidence in the Smith-Pruitt Compact if internal stakeholders drive down per-capita degree costs and improve educational quality. If we do our part, then external stakeholders should increase their price subsidies and investments so as to maintain affordability for our students.

The other side of the coin is internal cost controls. These include reducing time to degree, curricular glut, requirement maze, and bureaucracy, and by providing more cost-efficient services. I believe that we can build internal stakeholder trust and confidence in the Smith-Pruitt Compact if external stakeholders increase their price subsidies and investments in public higher education. If they do their part, then Internal stakeholders should drive down the per-capita degree costs and improve educational quality so as to maintain affordability for our students. The beauty of the compact is that both sides of the coin reflect the same goal: Everybody wants more value and less debt. A successful compact will optimize our ability to control costs and enhance quality.

The quality/cost relationship can be enhanced in multiple ways. Improved quality often **does** require new funds. For instance, our Beach Monitoring project is funded by increased investment in the form of more than \$3 million of local, state and federal grants. The Beach Monitoring project advances scientific knowledge, engages over 100 student researchers in high-impact learning, addresses community health concerns, and helps protect our tourism economy. Another fine example is the Yahoo! Global Support Desk, which will provide paid internships this year of \$364,000 for about 30 students. Each student will receive approximately \$10,000 while being engaged in part-time, employment-based, and high-impact learning.

Another tried-and-true way to improve quality is to reallocate existing funds. The Student Titan Employment Program, which I described earlier, exemplifies improvement of quality through reallocation. Another fine example is the AirBoat Rescue project. It is a cross-discipline, multi-platform, student-faculty project that produced a documentary film, a magazine and a CD. It was funded by a combination of private and reallocated university resources. You will hear more about these exciting initiatives in a couple of minutes. We have prepared a short video, and we have invited the key players in the AirBoat Rescue, Beach Monitoring project, and the Yahoo! Global Support Desk to speak to you in person, and to answer any questions you may have.

In conclusion, I want to stress the existence of a third way, in addition to new funding and reallocation of existing funds, to enhance the quality/cost relationship. I maintain that it can also be done through better use of time and controlling costs. We haven’t truly challenged ourselves to continue to improve quality while reducing degree cost, and over the next several years, that will be our number-one priority so as to maintain and enhance the trust and confidence of external stakeholders.

I realize that, like Robert Frost 90 years ago, I may be pursuing the road “less traveled by.” But I take encouragement from Frost’s wisdom. He concludes his famous poem with these lines: “I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference.” Besides providing expanded access, increased productivity and enhanced quality as the Smith-Pruitt compact calls for, I believe that we also need to work on lowering the per-capita cost of a college degree . . . and that THAT will make all the difference.

Admittedly, we cannot continue to do more with less indefinitely. There are some “enabling conditions” that must be met if we are to motivate our internal stakeholders to improve quality while reducing degree cost. Our most important enabling condition is securing fair, competitive compensation for the retention, recruitment, and development of our talented faculty and staff. We are dependent on the fine work of our outstanding faculty and staff, and we must see to it that they receive competitive compensation.

On opening day, I provided examples and called upon everyone on the UW Oshkosh campus to identify ways to control degree costs and increase quality. It is clear, for example, that

- The administration and staff will have to continue
 - to reduce bureaucracy, and
 - to provide more cost-efficient support services for faculty, staff and students.
- The students will need to aim high and take more responsibility for seeking out and following the advice of faculty and staff so that they can obtain a better education in a more timely way.
- The faculty and instructional staff will need to continue their efforts to reduce the time to degree by providing:
 - more accurate assessment of, and credit for, prior learning,

- more high-impact educational experiences relevant to learning outcomes, and
- more options in course scheduling.
- Faculty and instructional staff will also need to streamline curricula and requirements to get rid of bloat.

In each case, controlling these cost drivers could lead to improved quality depending on how they are done.

Next, on our agenda this morning, is a short video. We prepared it to highlight some of our high-impact, educational practices that illustrate the quality teaching and learning being done at UW Oshkosh.

- Show Video

Now, Professor Greg Kleinheinz will begin our panel presentations. Information on all of our panelists is included in your packet.

- Beach project
- Yahoo!
- AirBoat Rescue project

In sum, as we commence this very critical University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents meeting to help better serve the people of Wisconsin during these extraordinarily challenging times, please take inspiration from the words of Norm Lee, "There are no heroes. There are just circumstances." I have come to know many, many UW System students, faculty, and staff. So I can say with great confidence, God help those circumstances!