Chancellor Wells statement on Gov. Walker's tuition-freeze proposal

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http://www.uwosh.edu/today/32967/chancellor-wells-statement-on-gov-walkers-budget-freeze-proposal/

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Chancellor Richard Wells issued the following statement regarding Gov. Walker's tuition-freeze proposal:

"As you may have heard, Gov. Scott Walker today called for an additional two-year tuition freeze in the UW System's next biennial budget. The Governor's proposal, if approved, would follow a tuition freeze within the current 2013-2015 biennial budget, the first two-year tuition freeze in UW System history.

I echo UW System President Ray Cross's and Board of Regent President Michael Falbo's comments in reaction to the Governor's proposal. UW Oshkosh is committed to continuing to work with UW System administration, our Board of Regents, the legislature and the Governor to keep the cost of college affordable for our state's thousands of current and future students. This responsibility also requires these important partners to continue working together to fortify and enhance state funding for our institutions and their top priorities. These include efforts to close achievement gaps, enhance the quality of the education our students receive, provide more competitive compensation for our many faculty and staff members and deliver funding for targeted economic development initiatives.

The Governor's new tuition-freeze proposal coincides with news reports and fresh updates about our UW System and UW institution fund balances, shared with the Board of Regents this week. It is critical that, at both the Board of Regents and campus levels, we also continue the hard work necessary to keep our many stakeholders informed of the ways we are acting as responsible and strategic stewards in the oversight and management of these funds.

Our fund balances are the result of entrepreneurial and efficient practices on our campuses. They result from sound fiscal planning and meticulous budget management. As recently confirmed by the state's Legislative Audit Bureau, nearly 100 percent of these balances at UW Oshkosh are related to a plans, programs or purposes essential to our mission.

The January audit of fund balances and reserves around the UW System confirmed less than one half of one percent of UW Oshkosh's 2012 fund balances and reserves were "undocumented," while the remainder of our institution's $27.2 million fund balance total was either 1.) "planned" for 2.) "designated," for and 3.) "obligated" to for specific academic programs and campus initiatives or was 4.) in an emergency reserve fund.

I look forward to continued dialogue and cooperation with the Board of Regents, colleagues at our sister institutions, state legislators and the Governor as the next state budget advances through planning, deliberations and, eventually, approval."