

Chancellor testifies before Joint Finance Committee

by Chancellor Richard H. Wells - Tuesday, March 17, 2009

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/1781/chancellor-wells-testifies-before-joint-finance-committee/>

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Chancellor Richard H. Wells presented testimony today to the Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee titled, "The Great Economic Recovery Value of the UW System Regional Comprehensive Universities and the UW Colleges." Chancellor Wells joined UW Board of Regents President Mark Bradley, UW System President Kevin Reilly, UW-Milwaukee Chancellor Carlos Santiago and Student Regent Colleene Thomas.

The testimony Chancellor Wells presented follows:

I want to first thank Co-chairs Miller and Pocan and members of the Joint Committee on Finance for this opportunity to highlight the critical economic importance of the state's eleven regional comprehensive universities as well as the UW Colleges.

When you think of the UW colleges and regional comprehensive universities, such as UW Oshkosh, in terms of their economic development role, you need to think of their impact at three levels:

- The universities' and colleges' impact on workforce development,
- The universities' and colleges' impact on business enterprises, and
- The universities' and colleges' impact on the region and its communities.

The challenge is to make sure the University and its resources are aligned with all three. Collaboration is the major way we ensure there is alignment with business enterprises in the New North region. UW Oshkosh aligns itself with regional workforce needs through its collaboration with its sister institutions in the [Northeastern Wisconsin Educational Resource Alliance](#) (NEW ERA). Founded in 2001, NEW ERA is a consortium of the executive leaders of northeast Wisconsin's 13 public universities and colleges, which serve 1.2 million Wisconsin residents. This collaboration has facilitated large increases in degree program articulations, business entrepreneurship centers, graduation projects, and alternative licensure/certification programs for much-needed nurses and teachers.

The NEW ERA institutions also collaborate through [New North, Inc.](#), a consortium of private and public sector business leaders and economic development professionals throughout the 18 counties of northeastern Wisconsin who work together for the purpose of sustaining and growing the regional economy. UW Oshkosh aligns its resources through collaborations with NEW ERA and New North, Inc., to maximize its economic development impact.

My testimony provides examples of how we are aligning our resources with current and future workforce development, business and regional needs in a collaborative manner. Each example will fall into one of the three areas. The [Economic Development Collaboration Highlights](#) handout provides many additional examples.

Workforce Development Examples

The number one way UW Oshkosh and UW System universities impact the economy and enhance the state's competitive edge is by increasing the number of college-educated workers. In the past eight years, our enrollment has increased from 11,700 to 12,700, and we have increased the number of degrees conferred by UW Oshkosh by 23 percent (from 1,685 to 2,073). Our certificate, professional, undergraduate and graduate programs contribute directly to workforce development by educating more and better-prepared graduates to fill existing and future jobs.

For example, the Bachelor of Applied Studies (BAS) is a collaborative initiative of NEW ERA offered by UW Oshkosh and UW-Green Bay that provides a major in Leadership and Organizational Studies for technical college associate-degree holders. The program offers the technical college graduates work-related competencies, such as understanding organizational theory, global literacy, leadership and supervision, project planning, budget management and conflict resolution, to move into workforce leadership positions.

The Alternative Careers in Teaching (act!) program is a collaborative teacher licensure program between UW Oshkosh and five UW Colleges that addresses the shortage of certified Science, Technology, Engineering and Math teachers (STEM) in Wisconsin. The program prepares qualified professionals with at least five years of experience working in one of the STEM fields to teach mathematics or science at the secondary level. Due to a \$600,000 Noyce Teacher Scholarship grant, the program will provide 50 \$10,000 stipends to students who might not otherwise be able to make the transition from working professional to certified STEM teacher. For example, Kristine Jackson grew up on a four-generation family dairy farm just south of Waupaca where she developed a strong work ethic. She has practical experience as an assistant supervisor of a water testing laboratory and supervisor of a pulping, bleaching and papermaking laboratory. She currently manages the business office of the handcrafted-log-home and carpentry business that she and her husband own, but she wants an opportunity to continue using her chemistry degree by becoming a science teacher.

Business Enterprise Development Examples

UW Oshkosh also aligns its resources with business enterprise needs through collaborations. For example, in September the Center for Community Partnerships at UW Oshkosh and a "Fortune 500" company, Yahoo!, opened a Global CareCenter in Oshkosh that enables 35 UW Oshkosh students to earn \$10,000 a year by providing superior IT support service to 15,000 Yahoo! employees around the world. The collaboration provides the Yahoo! Global CareCenter with excellent part-time student workers while also enhancing the students' overall educational experience. Our Center for Community Partnership also serves the business needs of such clients as Oshkosh Corp., Mercury Marine, Plexus and Kimberly-Clark. Next year the Center alone will provide \$700,000 of paid work for students.

The Wisconsin Family Business Forum is an example of our alignment with small business enterprise needs. With 43 members and 10 sponsors, the Wisconsin Family Business Forum assists approximately 400 entrepreneurs who face issues unique to running a family business.

Regional Economic Development Examples

In addition to the way our collaboration with NEW ERA and New North, Inc., enables us to better align our resources with economic development needs in the region, we serve the health needs of uninsured individuals through the Living Healthy Community Clinic – Winnebago County. UW Oshkosh’s College of Nursing provides primary healthcare services to the uninsured of Winnebago County in partnership with many health care organizations. The UW Oshkosh clinic, in operation for 13 years, served 773 uninsured patients in 2008. The value of patient services for that year is worth more than \$1 million.

The nationally distinctive Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program at UW Oshkosh, which receives no state funding, has prepared 300 BSN nurses through the Accelerated Bachelor to BSN program. This Accelerated Online Nursing program now confers 30 percent of the roughly 220 BSN degrees awarded each year at UW Oshkosh.

The University has a tremendous impact on the economy of the state and the region because our programs are aligned with regional needs. We are able to better align our programs with regional needs because we collaborate with NEW ERA and New North, Inc.

The University as a Regional Economic, Educational and Cultural Anchor

The University is the economic, educational and cultural anchor of the region. With its successful process for making sound financial decisions, UW Oshkosh will meet the challenges posed by the current economic crisis. We are committed to maintaining the current number of seats in courses for our students, producing better-prepared graduates, avoiding layoffs with the help of the Governor and the Legislature and creating more than 4,000 construction-related jobs through the completion of \$100 million of capital improvements over the next three years.

Consequently, the University’s 2009 economic impact will continue to increase well beyond the \$500 million and over the 9,000 jobs directly and indirectly created in years past by the State’s third-largest university. UW Oshkosh’s unparalleled 2009 educational, cultural and economic value for its hometown and the NEW North region has never been of more vital importance during its 138 year history.

Nonetheless, UW Oshkosh, its ten sister regional comprehensive universities and the UW Colleges cannot maximize their outstanding economic recovery value given the current level of proposed budget cuts.

The System’s UW Colleges and the 11 regional comprehensive universities, serving a total enrollment of more than 100,000 students, are being asked to cut up to \$85 million during the 2009-11 biennium. For example, UW LaCrosse is facing an \$11 million cut while UW Eau Claire and UW Oshkosh must each deal with a \$8.7 and \$7.7 million budget reduction. Please remember the UW System and its universities have the lowest administrative costs in the nation and, according to the National Center of Higher Education Management Systems, the UW System and its universities rank among the nations “five most productive state systems of higher education relative to their resources.”

The level of cuts noted above deeply threatens the ability of these vital comprehensive regional universities and colleges to maximize their enormous economic recovery value for their respective Wisconsin regions. Please do what you can to help reduce such large budget cuts.

On March 18, Chancellor Wells will present similar testimony to the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities titled, “The Economic Impact of the UW System on the State of Wisconsin: UW Oshkosh’s Economic Development Collaborations as a Member of “The New North.” He will be joined by UW System President Kevin Reilly, UW-Madison Chancellor Biddy Martin, UW-Milwaukee Chancellor Carlos Santiago, UW-Colleges and UW-Extension Chancellor David Wilson, Mark Guard, a graduate of UW-Platteville and UW-Fox Valley’s collaborative program in mechanical engineering, and Tom Still of the Wisconsin Technology Council.

Links

- [Budget survey results shared at forum](#)
- [Budget survey executive summary and data](#)
- [Chancellor's Communications](#)