

Record-high enrollment demonstrates University's alignment to needs of students, the region

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/2490/record-high-enrollment-demonstrates-universitys-alignment-to-needs-of-region/>

Spring enrollment at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is at historically high levels following record fall enrollment of 13,198. With more than 11,600 students enrolled in classes, the enrollment figures represent a 17.4 percent increase over the last decade.

Spring semesters typically have smaller enrollments than fall due to the fall commencement, wherein nearly 1,000 students graduated — a record for mid-year commencement. Meanwhile, applications for Fall 2010 are up 3 percent over Fall 2009.

The high enrollment numbers demonstrate how the University has aligned its curriculum to respond to the educational, economic, healthcare and leadership needs in the New North region while also working to ensure that higher education is affordable and accessible.

“These numbers demonstrate how the University has become more aligned with the needs and demands of the region,” Chancellor Richard H. Wells said. “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 and be active citizens and community leaders.”

Added Provost Lane Earns, “The faculty has worked hard to create innovative academic programs and develop new majors and degree options in high-demand areas. The University has collaborated with our community partners to allow individuals to make the most of their talents and meet the needs of the region. In northeastern Wisconsin, bachelor’s degree attainment is 18.8 percent, compared with 25 and 27 percent in the state and nation, respectively.”

One example of such alignment is the Bachelor of Applied Studies (BAS), which provides a major in Leadership and Organizational Studies for technical college associate-degree holders.

“A bachelor’s degree was something I always wanted to achieve, especially since I switched gears in my career,” said John Lesky, a junior in the BAS program. “Many of the people I worked with had undergraduate and graduate degrees, so I felt out in the cold, so to speak. I had in my mind that I wanted to go back to school. I just didn’t know for what. The leadership studies program is a great fit for me.”

Another example of the University aligning its curriculum with the needs of the region is the recent addition of the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree within the College of Nursing. The program, which begins this fall, will help address the nursing shortage in the region. The nursing program also has developed an accelerated program that allows bachelor’s degree holders to achieve a BSN degree online. To date, the University has graduated 300 additional nurses beyond those who graduate from the traditional BSN program.

“I needed a program that would allow me to work around my family and not make it too complicated,” said Heidi Wagner, a 2009 graduate of the accelerated online bachelor’s to BSN program. “The program was a huge help for me when I got on the job.”

The University also has added an environmental health major, which was approved by the Board of Regents last week. The organization representing environmental health professionals in the state as well as the State of Wisconsin Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Health approached UW Oshkosh about adding the major after they identified a lack of undergraduate environmental health education as a threat to their workforce. The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development projects the number of jobs for environmental scientists to increase by 9 to 25 percent in the next decade in the eastern half of the state. Currently, UW-Eau Claire is the only other institution to offer the environmental health degree.

In addition to aligning its curriculum more closely with the region’s demands, the University has taken measures to make higher education more affordable.

For example, 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.

Thanks to two federal Noyce Teacher Scholarship grants awarded to UW Oshkosh, the program provides 125 \$10,000 stipends to students who might not otherwise be able to make the transition from working professional to certified STEM teacher.

“I wanted to pursue a career in teaching science. With my bachelor’s degree in nuclear medicine technology, the ACT program was a perfect fit for me,” said Jessica LeMoine, who is currently enrolled in the program. “The ACT program allows me to pick up the teaching certificate in a short period of time and to work on most of the classes while staying home with my children.”

Meanwhile, the UW Oshkosh Foundation is giving top priority to raising money for scholarships through its pride.purpose.promise campaign. Additionally, the University has established a \$500,000 program that provides funding for high-impact internships for approximately 150 students, bringing the total number of students employed by UW Oshkosh to 1,500.

“The University is committed to providing a high-quality education that is affordable, accessible and aligned with the needs of the region,” Wells said. “We expect to see continued growth as we continue to work on curriculum development as well as opportunities for financial aid and scholarships.”