

Strong enrollment, landmark gen-ed program's launch mark start of UWO 2013-14 year

by News Bureau - Friday, August 30, 2013

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/29051/strong-enrollment-landmark-gen-ed-programs-launch-mark-start-of-uwo-2013-14-year/>

Strong, stable enrollment.

And the launch of one of the nation's most highly-anticipated, landmark innovations in general education.

Just two elements in what is shaping up to be another tremendous year of strides and breakthroughs at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.

UW Oshkosh is just days away from the kickoff of the 2013-14 academic year. Classes begin Wednesday, Sept. 4. The University's latest enrollment projections suggest a strong, stable student population this fall despite the long-projected downward trend in the number of state high school graduates and potential college-bound students.

Current projections show UW Oshkosh enrollment will be close to its fall 2012 mark of 13,513 students. New, first-year and transfer student projections for fall 2013 are also at or near 2012 totals.

The university may realize a slight decrease when enrollment numbers are final in a few months, but Chancellor Richard Wells said the campus community is collectively proud of faculty and staff efforts continuing to keep a high-quality and highly-popular education accessible, affordable and centered on all students' success. It is keeping enrollment stable despite challenging demographic and economic forces.

Wells will address the campus community at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 3 during UW Oshkosh's Opening Day ceremonies. Faculty and staff will be honored with the University's teaching and service awards ([VIDEO: 2012 Opening Day ceremony](#)).

"Students and their families making an investment in a college education respect and respond to quality," Wells said. "The fact that we continue to stand tall and maintain a relatively steady enrollment despite the demographic trends is evidence that each and every UW Oshkosh faculty and staff member is playing an important role here. They are providing our students the best opportunity possible to succeed – an engaging, connected educational experience that will ensure our graduates enjoy rewarding careers, stay active in and give back to their communities and enjoy a high quality of life well beyond their graduations," Wells said.

There is no better example of the campus' concentration on providing high-quality education than in the launch of the new [University Studies Program \(USP\)](#).

The program is, quite literally, new school. The USP is UW Oshkosh's landmark redesign of general education for all students.

Several years in development, the USP does away with the disconnection and drudgery students have experienced while tackling and crossing off a list of required "gen-ed" classes that feel unrelated to their future studies and career pursuits. Instead, in the USP, students set out on three "Quests," or phases of their general education experience over their first two years at the University. Each is centered on "signature questions" and engaging, connected courses that challenge students to explore sustainability, intercultural knowledge and civic engagement.

In their first two years at UW Oshkosh, each and every student will benefit from smaller learning communities (often classes of 25 students), peer and alumni mentor connections and an unparalleled opportunity to – in the second semester of their sophomore year -- break out of the classroom and participate in high-impact, campus and community service-learning projects. They'll also use "e-portfolios" to document evidence of their learning – a kind of living resume that faculty members are confident will help students launch into rewarding careers or further studies.

"It is incredibly rewarding to see the fruition of many years of our faculty's hard work and collaboration in designing the USP reach our classrooms and the community," UW Oshkosh Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Lane Earns said.

"We have been guided by research and best practices on essential learning outcomes," Earns said. "We have worked closely with national associations such as the [Association of American Colleges and Universities](#) (AAC&U) and listened to leaders in the workforce as we developed the USP. The result is a truly transformed general education program that is earning national attention because it attempts to increase dramatically the opportunity for our freshman and sophomore students to succeed in college and thrive as they continue their educational journeys through life."

First-year students will get another introduction to the USP from faculty members teaching courses in "Quest 1" on Sunday, Sept. 1 at 5:30 p.m. in Kolf Sports Center. The new program officially begins with the start of fall semester classes on Wednesday, Sept. 4.

The USP's launch is just one of several benchmark accomplishments set for the academic year ahead at UW Oshkosh. Others include:

- Completion and start-up of the [UW Oshkosh Foundation and College of Letters and Science's third biodigester partnership, based at Rosendale Dairy](#) – the state's largest dairy farm. The \$7 million facility will serve as both a renewable energy plant and a living, learning laboratory for renewable energy research, preparing generations of environmental and renewable energy scientists for the workforce while helping responsible, sustainable farming prosper for generations. The biodigester is scheduled to begin producing energy by the end of December and is designed to generate 1.4 megawatts of electricity by using Rosendale Dairy's livestock waste to capture and combust methane. Beyond giving students a one-of-a-kind, collaborative educational and research instrument, the biodigester will play a tremendous role in cutting UW Oshkosh's original 2025 target date for carbon neutrality on the campus. Energy sold back to the grid will help negate the campus's carbon footprint.

- The anticipated early-2014 completion of the [Alumni Welcome and Conference Center](#), UW Oshkosh's new "front-door" situated on the Fox River just off of Wisconsin Street and Pearl Avenue. The \$12 million facility will serve as another sustainable and state-of-the-art community, alumni and student crossroads and event hub for the campus and Oshkosh area. Fueled by fundraising through the UW Oshkosh Foundation, the Alumni Welcome and Conference Center will serve as a new home for the University's tens of thousands of alumni, their events, meetings, banquets and other gatherings. The facility, also available to the public for galas, weddings and corporate functions and meetings, is poised to enhance UW Oshkosh's reputation as a first-rate host for academic and community conferencing.

"We are proud of our strong and steady enrollment trends, and we are equally proud of the increases we are seeing in our incoming students' academic standing and preparedness," Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Petra Roter said. "It is one more positive indicator of the commitment to learning, community service and leadership UW Oshkosh students are ready to make in the academic year ahead."

Learn more:

- [The journey: More than 1,300 graduate from UW Oshkosh](#) (spring 2013 Commencement)
- [Morning ceremony class speaker to class of 2013: "Continue to beat the odds"](#)
- [Morning faculty commencement speaker: "Be agents of civility"](#)
- [Afternoon ceremony class speaker to class of 2013: "Stay humble. Stay hungry."](#)
- [Afternoon faculty commencement speaker: "I believe in you"](#)