Students steal 'show' during Chancellor Wells' Regents presentation

by News Bureau - Friday, August 22, 2014

"Chancellor, we've got this."

It took four University of Wisconsin Oshkosh students to remind him, but, ultimately, they got through.

Each helped "steal the show" from retiring Chancellor Richard Wells as he "attempted" to present a 14-year overview of UW Oshkosh's physical and academic transformations for the UW System Board of Regents meeting in the campus's Alumni Welcome and Conference Center (AWCC) on Aug. 21 and Aug. 22.

"With Chancellor Wells' help and leadership, we have really achieved some incredible things at UW Oshkosh," said Oshkosh Student Association president, political science major and Student Titan Employment Program intern Jordan Schettle, interrupting Wells during the front-end of his Board of Regents presentation -- a campus update traditionally reserved for UW System chancellors. "The list is tremendous. Educational initiatives we have all helped launch have strengthened our reputation in so many ways."

• CLICK TO SEE THE BOARD OF REGENTS MAIN MEETING WEBCASTS.

Schettle, alumnus and entrepreneur Jordan Johnson (beneficiary of UW Oshkosh's public-private partnership that created the Alta Resources Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation), University Studies Program peer mentor and accounting and finance major Joe Infusino-Braun and business and environmental studies major Stephanie Peffer each took a turn to "interrupt" Wells. The emerged from the Regents' Thursday, full-house gallery at the new AWCC and helped introduce video montages capturing the many stories of strides during the last 14 years at the state's third-largest institution of higher education.

VIDEO: Highlights of a Chancellorship -- UW Oshkosh's presentation to the UW System Board of Regents

Johnson, inventor of the "ProShot" hand-bands (elasticized bands that help develop a basketball player's proper shooting technique) helped introduce the Board of Regents to UW Oshkosh's many partnerships -- partnerships enriching learning and business opportunities for students.
"Our UW Oshkosh Foundation, where I also work, has also demonstrated incredible partnership by working hand-in-hand with the city of Oshkosh and investors to resurrect downtown Oshkosh’s Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel and Convention Center, where many of you are staying,” Johnson told Regents after asking Wells to "take a seat" and give up the main presentation microphone. "And the UW Oshkosh Foundation has partnered with biogas and sustainability companies and Wisconsin’s largest dairy farm to turn waste to energy. It supplies the grid with renewable energy. It helps a community address an environmental challenge. It gives our environmental studies and future environmental engineering students a nationally distinctive, one-of-a-kind educational experience."

Infusino-Braun, who, as a "peer mentor" last fall helped guide freshmen students through the very first steps into the University Studies Program (USP) -- UW Oshkosh's revolutionary transformation of general education -- praised the quality of the program and also stressed the ways the campus community embraces inclusive excellence in all it does.

"It’s strengthening our writing, speaking and what Chancellor Wells fondly calls 'those higher-order cognitive skills,'… or 'soft skills,'" Infusino-Braun said. "And the USP is helping keep students on a successful path toward a degree by using small groups and peer mentors like me. It’s one more way among hundreds at UW Oshkosh that we are improving quality. Another is ensuring that, in everything we do here, we keep inclusive excellence part of our mission. For me, inclusive excellence is all about embracing difference, sharing our unique talents, perspectives and values. It’s also about making sure everyone -- students, faculty and staff -- have an equal opportunity to share and succeed."

Peffer, the fourth and final "interrupter," thanked Wells and the University for her eight-week, summer internship abroad with UW Oshkosh partner and sustainability and efficiency giant Viessmann Group -- a German company that has been deeply involved in the institution's development of three "biodigesters" and endowed the lead professor for a new, collaborative environmental engineering technology program, ready to launch this fall.

The biodigesters are both biogas production facilities and high-impact learning-laboratories benefiting UW Oshkosh students.

Beyond the bricks, mortar and technology, Peffer stressed the campus's "green" reputation in its everyday work. She applauded the commitments of Viessmann, other partners and the campus itself to supporting the faculty and staff at UW Oshkosh -- the daily stewards of sustainability.

"With Chancellor Wells’ support and guidance over these last 14 years, we’ve really become a sustainable institution like no other," she said. "Sustainability is involved in everything we do. It is part of our University Studies Program. It’s how we build buildings. It’s part of how we budget and plan. This campus is now home to two -- count ‘em TWO – LEED Gold certified sustainable buildings: Sage Hall and Horizon Village. All of our buildings are being built to that standard.

The campus has been ranked as high as 14th nationally on Sierra Magazine’s and the Sierra Club’s “Coolest Schools” list – a measure of how green we are. We are a Tree Campus USA. We have helped donate and recycle tons of materials during move-out days. And, yes, the stuff we scrape off our dining trays in Blackhawk Commons becomes the fuel that powers our campus biodigester. And this is just in, hot off the presses: We have just completed the update to our new, comprehensive Campus Sustainability
Plan. It’s full of a host of new goals that will keep us committed to sustainable life and learning well after Chancellor’s retirement. But, with all that said, we know being sustainable really means investing the hard work and talent of our university faculty, staff and students on a day-to-day basis..."

Wells -- "robbed" of his planned PowerPoint presentation -- ended the update to the Regents with his own video, a reminder of the three, critical priorities he urged UW System leaders and stakeholders to continue addressing after his retirement.

On Friday, Aug. 22, the Board of Regents presented Wells and his wife Christie Charbonneau Wells with a resolution and proclamation of appreciation for their 14 years of academic, cultural and broader community investment of creativity, care and leadership at UW Oshkosh and within the New North region.

The resolution acknowledges Chancellor Wells’ nurturing of “nearly annual, record growth in both student enrollment and degrees awarded at UW-Oshkosh while carrying out a remarkable expansion and modernization of Wisconsin’s third-largest university -- including transforming general education with the launch of the new University Studies Program – all of which strengthened the university’s reputation and educational and economic impact in the local community, the New North region, and the state of Wisconsin.”

The UW System also noted Wells’ help developing UW Oshkosh’s national reputation for sustainability, its commitment to local, regional and state catalytic collaborations and his dedication to the “campus shared governance, helping establish UW Oshkosh’s ‘Classified Staff Advisory Council’ – now the University Staff Council – to participate in governance at a level similar with the University’s Faculty Senate and Senate for Academic Staff.”

Learn more:

- [UW System Board of Regents Aug. 21, 22 meeting summaries](#)