

## **Bernie Patterson: \$1.8 million grant aimed at enhancing student success**

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We are committed to helping students succeed at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. We just learned of a grant that will help meet a key goal, to help more students graduate.

As traditional funding sources have eroded over the years, we have turned to other sources to meet student needs. We were delighted to learn our application for a Title III grant from the U.S. Department of Education was awarded. The \$1.8 million, five-year grant will fund the program Strengthening Academic Success: More Graduates for Wisconsin.

Title III is part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The grant is part of a Strengthening Institutions Program, which helps higher education programs expand their capacity to serve low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen an institution's academic quality, institutional management and fiscal stability.

A need for strong, well-coordinated, seamless academic support services was identified during our strategic planning process. The Title III project will include enhanced tutoring, intensive academic advising and targeted career counseling. In addition, a new "conditional admit" retention program will be launched. These services will be packaged for at-risk students and available to all UWSP students.

Risk factors that are obstacles to success for some students include being low income, first generation attending college, testing into remedial math, having ACT scores below 20, not having declared a major or being on academic probation.

Three-fourths of UWSP students receive some form of financial aid, and 34 percent are eligible for Pell grants. Among incoming students, 47 percent are the first generation in college, many with little if any support to successfully adapt to the rigors of college.

We currently retain about 82 percent of students from their first to second year. This retention rate exceeds state and national averages. But we want to do even better. The stretch goal I have set is to improve this to 87 percent.

With enhanced academic advising and instruction through the grant, we aim to increase retention of first-to-second-year students by 0.5 percentage point for each of the five years of the grant. Another goal is to improve our four-year graduation rate by 3 percentage points by year five of the program.

The grant will also fund 32 peer supplemental instruction leaders and peer advising mentors in the Tutoring Learning Center — student jobs, helping other students.

This grant will help us to strengthen and improve instructional effectiveness and efficiencies in retaining and graduating well-prepared, workforce-ready students. It is one of several ways our faculty and staff are helping students succeed, and to graduate in four years.

These new opportunities are available to our students only because a small team of extremely dedicated staff members were determined to make a difference — and they have, to a tune of \$1.8 million.

**Bernie Patterson is chancellor for the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.**

[http://www.stevenspointjournal.com/article/20130930/SPJ04/309300044/Bernie-Patterson-1-8-million-grant-aimed-enhancing-student-success?nclick\\_check=1](http://www.stevenspointjournal.com/article/20130930/SPJ04/309300044/Bernie-Patterson-1-8-million-grant-aimed-enhancing-student-success?nclick_check=1)