

**From:** Chancellor Bernie Patterson  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 29, 2016 3:56 PM  
**To:** Faculty/Staff List <dl-facstafflist@uwsp.edu>  
**Subject:** Retention initiative launched

Dear faculty and staff members,

As we enter the final stretch of our academic year, here is a recap of some recent activity.

In late February, I met with about 40 campus leaders – deans, directors, department heads – to share enrollment and retention concerns. (See [presentation](#) slides.) Our student enrollment has declined by 422 students in the past three years. That represents a revenue loss of \$2.2 million. Our retention rate has eroded nearly five percentage points in the past five years, to 76 percent for full-time students returning their second year.

The largest majority of students are not leaving because they struggle academically. Of those who did not return after their first year, 70 percent were academically eligible to continue their education at UW-Stevens Point. We have the power to change this, and change we must.

We have launched an initiative to improve retention. I've appointed Provost Greg Summers as university retention officer. He will lead a small management team, identifying goals, strategies and actions to enhance student services and improve retention. The team includes Jim Barrett, associate vice chancellor for enrollment management; Susan Crotteau, associate director of University Centers; Kathy Davis, dean of University College; and Troy Seppelt, dean of students. Working with the vice chancellors and deans, the team has the authority to make management and operational improvements. Any policy changes will be considered by our shared governance bodies.

You've heard me say that retention and recruitment is everyone's job. That's truer now than ever. Please share suggestions on improving retention with this team.

Also as true as ever is my confidence we will succeed in overcoming these challenges. A few examples:

- Recent graduate Paul Clark, who completed a bachelor's and two masters' degrees at UW-Stevens Point, wrote in a letter (attached) he was "astounded by the quality" and personal attention he received from faculty, most recently in History. There are similar examples of extra effort, engagement and dedication across our campus.
- Another alumnus, Roxanne Baumann, recently shared that her grandmother cleaned houses and saved money so Roxanne could be the first in their family to attend college. Driving by Old Main while traveling between Appleton and St. Paul, her grandmother thought this looked like a good place to go. "She was right," wrote Roxanne, now director of global engagement for Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership.
- During the Soul Food Dinner Feb. 28, I had the pleasure of hearing Mary Shepard speak. The longtime owner of Club Ebony in Indianola, Miss., she set the stage for the B.B. King Museum

and Delta Interpretive Center. One of her messages to our students was: "Respect your teachers. They're here to help you learn." She was right, too.

- Sentry Insurance announced March 8 its largest gift ever, \$4 million to UW-Stevens Point to endow two new faculty positions and create a data analytics major. Sentry invested in us because they've seen the dedication of our faculty and staff, and the quality of our graduates.
- Financial aid packets were sent to prospective students in February – a month earlier than they were four years ago. Awarding aid earlier than other UWs is a competitive advantage as students choose their college. Financial aid is a complex and highly regulated system, so we were especially pleased to learn recently a state audit of our data last year found no concerns. Another job well done serving our students.

Yes, we have challenges to overcome, but we have great things happening here that empower us to overcome these challenges. Just look around your department and campus, and you'll see examples of faculty and staff giving their best to help our students succeed. I hope you are as proud of those efforts as I am. Thank you for your role to ensure our students thrive at UW-Stevens Point, and complete their degrees here. This is truly a special place.

Sincerely,

Bernie