

# UWSP health program receives accreditation

BY NICK PAULSON • JOURNAL STAFF • SEPTEMBER 30, 2008

---

The health promotion and wellness program at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point has become the first such program to receive accreditation.

Last week, the health promotion and wellness program was granted accreditation by the National Wellness Institute. The program has been around for decades and has offered a health promotion and wellness major for eight years.

The institute, founded by faculty at UWSP in the 1970s, became the first organization to offer accreditation in health promotion about a year ago.

"I think it is recognition to show that your program has met some standard of excellence," said Thomas Wetter, program coordinator at UWSP.

While it is a stamp of approval for the health promotion and wellness department, the biggest benefits will go to the students.

Employers will know students graduating from an accredited program have fulfilled requirements set by an outside source. Graduates also will be eligible to become certified wellness practitioners, a new professional organization rolled out along with accreditation that has benefits of its own.

"It will continue to connect the dots of wellness professionals so that networks can continue to thrive," said Derek Bell, who manages the National Wellness Institute. "Professionals can share what they find is going on in the field."

The recognition was a long time coming.

Because of the close relationship between the university and the institute, faculty in the school of Health Promotion and Human Development were involved in the research used to develop the credentials for accreditation.

UWSP was then able to prepare its materials as the process was developing, so when the institute got the go-ahead to offer accreditation, the university was first to apply.

"I wouldn't say the first day, but we submitted our application as quickly as we could after they announced it," said Marty Loy, head of the school of Health Promotion and Human Development.

The reviewer who critiqued UWSP, while working for the institute, was an independent individual that staff didn't know beforehand.

The accreditation became effective immediately. There is also a chance, because UWSP's application was based on last year's data, that the class of 2008 may qualify for this certification.

## FACTORS FOR ACCREDITATION

A few reasons listed by the National Wellness Institute why the UWSP health promotion and wellness program received accreditation.

- Program designed to be heavily experimental, which is seen as sound and enriching.
- Cross-disciplinary cooperation among faculty.
- Attention within the curriculum on the whole person, not just exercise.
- Strong support from college and department administration.