

Accreditation great for students, employers

Bernie Patterson, For USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin

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We received some terrific news this month. After years of effort and two decades of planning, the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point earned accreditation for its School of Business and Economics from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB).

This is good for our students and for employers throughout northcentral Wisconsin. AACSB accreditation is the hallmark of excellence in business education. It affirms our commitment to establishing and maintaining top quality business education for our students, which in turns provides top quality employees and leaders to meet workforce needs in central Wisconsin and throughout the state.

The accreditation process required a rigorous internal review, AACSB mentor and peer review, all of which made our solid program even better. Marty Loy, dean of our College of Professional Studies, which houses the business program, described it as an exercise in self-improvement. Led by School of Business and Economics head Gary Mullins, we developed a plan to meet standards of excellence in strategic management and innovation; learning and teaching; and academic and professional engagement.

As part of the assessment process, we established a business advisory council, consisting of 17 executives in central Wisconsin. They represent insurance, financial, manufacturing, technology, health care, agriculture, construction and other industries in the region. These business leaders have helped keep our programs relevant to the region by informing our curriculum, guiding program priorities and providing mentorship and career guidance for students. Ongoing networking and other events connect our students and potential employers.

In many ways, as businesses continue to engage with our School of Business and Economics, they help shape their future employees.

Much attention at the state and national level has focused on workforce development needs as Baby Boomers retire and high schools graduate fewer students. UW-Stevens Point is well positioned to help meet those needs.

We actually contribute to a “brain gain” locally. One survey of students enrolled in School of Business and Economics showed 30 percent came from Marathon, Portage and Wood counties and 60 percent of them stayed in the three county area after they graduated. More than 1,100 students currently major in accounting, business administration and economics.

Accreditation is also validation to our many business partners and friends for their unwavering support of the School of Business and Economics and our students.

One example of long-time support is John Seramur, former chief executive officer and president of First Financial Corp. (now Associated Bank). John did not attend UW-Stevens Point, but he hired many of our graduates. Nearly 40 years ago, he established a scholarship for students majoring in economics, business administration and managerial accounting at UW-Stevens Point. The John C. Seramur Economics and Business Scholarship fund, which now exceeds \$1 million, has recognized the scholastic achievement and potential of more than 200 students.

Scholarships provide needed support to our students and ultimately provide an additional return on investment to businesses and the community.

Our graduates will complete degrees from a program ranked among the top 20 percent in the nation and top 5 percent in the world. One of our business majors, whose sister attends Northwestern, noted they are both attending institutions accredited by the same organization. Indeed.

To those considering where to attend college, accreditation is one more reason to choose UW-Stevens Point. Prospective students can be confident they will learn the skills and abilities needed to succeed in a global economy.

Prospective employers can be confident we are preparing future employees with rigorous curriculum, outstanding faculty and a variety of on-the-job experiences.

We are grateful for the support of our business partners, alumni, faculty, staff and students who helped achieve this milestone.

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

<http://www.stevenspointjournal.com/story/life/2017/02/24/chancellor-accreditation-great-students-employers/98329690/>