

Campus Community –

I am pleased to join Chancellor Bernie Patterson in announcing that I plan to restructure the University of Wisconsin System to help improve access to higher education. Today, we announce to the public a proposal to merge UW Colleges with their nearest four-year institution.

For UW-Stevens Point, this will mean UW-Marathon County and UW-Marshfield/Wood County will be integrated with your institution effective July 1, 2018. Essentially, there will be no change this fall or spring, and we will be looking forward to see how to best leverage UW-Stevens Point to expand access to higher education by offering more general education and upper-level courses, as well as identify and reduce barriers to transferring credits within the UW System.

As part of the plan, I will also propose the realignment of UW-Extension operations. UW-Extension Cooperative Extension and UW-Extension Conference Centers would be moved to the state's land grant institution, UW-Madison, as is consistent with the practice in other states. Other aspects of UW-Extension will be integrated with UW System Administration in order to maintain their statewide role. This proposal will go before the Board of Regents in November to get approval to proceed with implementation planning.

This decision comes at a time when UW campuses are managing enrollment and financial challenges. Demographic trends indicate that current enrollment challenges are not likely to significantly improve in coming years. By 2040, nearly 95 percent of total population growth in Wisconsin will be age 65 and older, while those of working age 18-64 will increase a mere 0.4 percent. Our labor force growth will be flat, while the demand for an educated labor force is growing exponentially. We must get more students through the educational pipeline to help meet Wisconsin's needs.

We must be bold and reform where we can so our institutions can continue to meet the needs of the state and our students. This plan will improve access to higher education with a continued focus on affordability for students and families, as well as access to extension programs for local communities. By integrating our campuses—leveraging resources and shared talent across the campuses—we can greatly improve access and enhance offerings to the communities we serve, while realizing efficiencies and potential cost savings.

We know that change can create uncertainty. The details of the plan are still being developed, and I am confident Chancellor Patterson and other leaders will work closely with faculty, staff, and students to help make this a smooth transition. Our success will be measured in our ability to listen and respond to the needs of individual regions so we can provide opportunity for all.

We will continue to share more information as it becomes available. If you have a particular question, please visit <http://go.uwsa.edu/restructurefeedback> so we can help provide more answers to you in the future.

Thank you,
President Raymond Cross

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