



Delivered by Chancellor Bernie Patterson

## WELCOME

Welcome back everyone. The start of school and commencement are the most exciting times of the school year, and as I walk across campus, I can feel the excitement in the air!

I hope everyone had an opportunity to get away for some well-earned rest and relaxation. I took a vacation this summer. It was the first time in recent memory that I have been away from campus for two full weeks – it was great, especially because I got to spend time with my grandchildren. So, I'm ready to go, and I hope you are as well because we all have been through a very challenging 18 months. Despite the challenges, together we have accomplished a huge amount of important work that I am anxious to talk about today.

## INTRODUCTIONS

We have several guests with us this afternoon including:

- Business leaders from across our region
- Incentive Foundation, from Wisconsin Rapids
- Elected officials
  - Representative VanderMeer
  - Mayor Wiza
  - Offices of Congressman Kind and Senator Baldwin are also represented
- A special guest, a member of the Wisconsin Board of Regents
  - Olivia Woodmansee from UW-La Crosse
- Christina Rickert, Interim Chief Financial Officer
- Paul Hasler, Interim Chief Operations Officer
- Barbara Owens, on loan to us and part of our BVK engagement.  
She has 30 years of experience in marketing and communications and served as associate vice president of communications and marketing at the University of Toledo. Barbara also served as Chief Communications Officer at a Fortune 500 company so she brings deep experience in marketing and communications.

I have asked her to oversee the day-to-day operations in University Communications and Marketing (UCM). During this interim period Rob Manzke will handle contracts, budget and personnel issues in UCM.

- Gigi Koenig is on loan to us from UW System. Gigi is the former CBO at UW-Superior. She will add more horsepower on the finance side of the house, including forecasting and modeling.

While Barbara and Gigi are only here temporarily and part time, we will take full advantage of their expertise while we have the opportunity. Both Barbara and Gigi are reporting to me.

## SHARED GOVERNANCE

While our shared governance leaders make their way to the stage, I would just like to say that at the four universities where I have worked during my career, shared governance at UW-Stevens Point is the most visionary and the most effective. While these are good qualities for the day-to-day operations of any university, they were absolutely critical for meeting the challenges of the past 18 months. I knew we were turning the corner when Mary and Jason came to my office just a few weeks ago to suggest a series of reconciliation sessions with faculty, staff, students and administration. Our shared governance leaders will speak more about this, but I want everyone to know that I was very pleased with these sessions and how they helped put us on a solid path forward. The floor is yours.

- Mary Bowman, Chair, Common Council
- Jason D'Acchioli, Vice Chair, Common Council
- Morgan Jeidy, President, Student Government Association
- Rayvn Knipple, Vice President, Student Government Association

Thank you everyone.

Today I will focus on the future and the excellent work being done by our faculty and staff. But first I want us to look to the past for a moment and then move forward.

Last May Scott West, admissions counselor in our Admissions and Recruitment Office, gave the address at the Albertson Medallion ceremony. Scott is an Albertson winner himself. Scott's talk centered around the book, *Ten Powerful Phrases for Positive People*. I was particularly drawn to the first two:

- I'm wrong
- I'm sorry

This gave me pause as I continue to think about Point Forward and our enrollment situation.

I think everyone is aware that enrollment will be down this fall, likely a significant decline. And we are also all aware of the contributing factors:

- Demographics
- The economy
- Intense competition as the pool of prospective students continues to shrink
- Significant increase in our graduation rate

This year you can add to the list that we dropped the ball on things we routinely do. Some things just didn't get done. If you want to know who is responsible, it's me. The buck stops with me. I am responsible for everything that happens on this campus, and I take this situation very seriously.

We are doing a lot to take corrective action – starting with Admissions. It's a new day in Admissions.

- We have a complete and strong team now.
- Their spirits are high.
- Their morale is up.
- They are thinking and acting strategically.
- They are focused on Fall 2020 and they are getting after it!

I have complete confidence in our admissions team and their leadership.

And I want to ask for your help too. Your help is critical to our success. Many on our admissions team are early in their careers.

- Support them
- Encourage them
- Talk with them
- Offer to help
- Give them your perspectives

As I have said many times before, student recruitment and retention are everyone's responsibility; it doesn't matter if you are in the classroom or the mail room. Each one of us can help in some way – to help a current student who may be struggling or pitch a high school student on the wonders of UWSP.

There are influencers that have a significant impact on where high school students decide to attend college. Near the top of this list are high school teachers.

Faculty have a special opportunity to develop professional relationships with high school teachers in their discipline. For our fine arts faculty, this is in their DNA. I know the Chemistry department is all over this, as well as are several other departments.

If your department is not yet engaged, please get in touch with Admissions. This is crucial! We need you.

Now I would like to turn to Point Forward for a few minutes. While we need to focus on the future and on the excellent work being done on this campus by our faculty and staff, there are some things about the past that need to be said, and I want to say them.

I have now been in higher education for 42 years. The past 18 months have been the most challenging, most difficult and the most stressful I have ever experienced – I suspect this is true for many of us.

As with enrollment, I am responsible for everything that happens at this university. Nothing transpired with Point Forward that I did not approve.

Please let me digress for just a minute and say something about ideas. I often tell parents that their sons and daughters will be exposed to new ideas, even unpopular ideas. That's what a university is all about. That's what we do.

Bringing new ideas forward is not a mistake. In fact, it is expected of all of us. We must be able to have reasoned and objective conversations about ideas. We will not always agree, but that's part of the wonder of a university.

There were many mistakes made over the past 18 months, at all levels of the university, including me for sure. We had an open and frank discussion about these missteps during the reconciliation sessions Mary spoke about. I do want you to know that while we should have been able to talk about the ideas in Point Forward, we did a poor job communicating it and for that I am sorry. If you feel you want to talk more about this, please stop by my office or meet me for coffee.

What I learned in our reconciliation sessions was that we are all on one team – that all of us, regardless of whether we are administration or faculty or students, want what's best for the university. Now it is time to face forward. Now is the time to focus on the future. So, what are we doing to address these issues?

## ACTION ITEM 1

Working with shared governance and academic leadership, we must develop a meaningful and actionable program review process; a process that is data driven, with both quantitative and qualitative data. A process that is understandable and viewed as fair. This work has already started, and it will be important that we finish this by the end of this semester. We still have some very difficult decisions to make.

## ACTION ITEM 2

Reenergize our strategic planning process. Todd Huspeni is our lead on this, serving as our strategic planning officer. Earlier this month more than 20 faculty, staff, students and administrators participated in a two-day strategic planning retreat facilitated by two colleagues from the Society for College and University Planning that resulted in a heightened understanding of what an effective planning process looks like.

To build on the significant momentum that came out of this retreat, we must work closely with the Integrated Planning Advisory Council or IPAC, shared governance and university leadership, to review our planning process to assure that it is open, consultative, collaborative, representative and will result in plans that have expectations and metrics to evaluate our progress and success.

I will look forward to IPAC providing a progress report and a timeline to the university community by the end of this semester. We will commit to sharing the outcome of IPAC's work with all of the campus.

### ACTION ITEM 3

Review and modify as appropriate our Vision (not Mission) statement. We identified this need at the planning retreat. Each vice chancellor is initiating a conversation within their respective division and communicating their recommendations to IPAC by mid-semester. This will give IPAC the opportunity to fold this feedback into our reenergized planning process.

### ACTION ITEM 4

We are merging University Communications and Marketing, Admissions and Financial Aid. Over recent years these units have worked together more collaboratively, but going forward they will be united as one department. We are combining the associate provost for enrollment management position and the executive director for university communications and marketing position and will begin a search immediately for a Chief Marketing Officer. This merger will be effective with the appointment of our new CMO.

### ACTION ITEM 5

Last spring we completed our work on the reorganization of our academic units, and I reported the results to the campus. The provost will be submitting our proposal to UW System in time for consideration by the Board of Regents at their December meeting.

### ACTION ITEM 6

We are committed to having an Inclusive environment. It is imperative that everyone on campus feels welcome regardless of their identity and background. While I believe we have made progress in this area, there is more work to be done. Working together – the Division of Student Affairs, the Diversity Council, the Faculty and Staff Gender and Sexuality Center, the SGA Inclusivity Committee and the Center for Inclusive Teaching and Learning are taking the lead in articulating our progress, assessing our current environment and bringing forward a campuswide plan to move us forward. I have asked Vice Chancellor Thompson to provide a progress report to the campus by mid-spring semester.

### ACTION ITEM 7

Initiate a public branding campaign. This summer, with the support of UW System, we engaged with BVK, a marketing firm in Milwaukee that specializes in higher education. BVK's initial discovery phase provided an opportunity for them to get to know us, understand who we are, what we do and most importantly, what we value. Phase two began the creative process that many around campus participated in this summer. What you saw then were concepts – not ad copy, not billboard or print copy, but concepts. Based on the approved concepts, with feedback from campus, the marketing materials are now in production. The first phase will be aimed at the digital world where our prospective students live.

The agency is working feverishly to create some early digital ads that will launch in September to attract future students. While those are in production, they will be creating the rest of the campaign. In early September BVK will be on campus working with our photographer and members of the UCM team to shoot video and conduct a number of photo shoots for the ads.

Once the whole campaign is ready, we will share it with all of you. You aren't likely to actually see the campaign unless you have a high schooler at home, so we will bring it to life on campus in other ways.

While the UCM team will have the lead on managing the logistics of the campaign, it will be critical for the university to own the UWSP identity and integrate the branding into our own activities. Each of us represents the university in all of our interactions.

## ACTION ITEM 8

Re-engineer our enrollment management function. Also, this summer, with the support of UW System, we engaged with RNL, a national firm specializing in enrollment management. Their work included a current market and marketability analysis of existing programs, new programs, graduate programs and adult/online programs. We anticipate this academic program demand analysis very soon and expect it will influence decision-making in the future.

Our work with RNL also includes an assessment of how we award financial aid and scholarships with the goal of leveraging these resources to increase enrollment and retention. We have already gained valuable insights from them and have been adjusting the way we award scholarships as a result.

RNL is also evaluating and helping rebuild our communication plan to better connect with prospective students, including direct communications by faculty, deans and staff. The leadership in Admissions and Financial Aid are working hard implementing the RNL recommendations by the end of this semester.

Other developments related to student recruitment include:

- A new, detailed 25-page strategic recruitment plan.
- We are developing an adult student recruitment plan.
- Building on the work of the Task Group last year, we continue to identify structural barriers for adult students.
- And we just completed a multiday training session for our recruiters, including two days with our deans. This gave our staff knowledge and perspective we have not worked to convey in the past. The deans thought this was excellent, as did the staff.

We have our work cut out for us, but we are up to the task!

The faculty and staff of this university work incredibly hard and it shows. Your successes this past year are many. For example:

- HLC has reaffirmed our ten-year accreditation!
- 21 criteria
- HLC is only requiring a monitoring report for one of the 21 criteria. Sixty percent of schools that go through this process are required to submit one or more monitoring reports. This is an outstanding outcome.

Todd Huspeni was the lead on this two-year effort. Todd and everyone who worked with Todd on this, please stand. Well done!

We know we change lives, but we tend to think of this in terms of our students. You may not realize the enormous impact we have on this entire region. We are changing lives of people we will never meet.

Our overall economic impact on the Wisconsin economy is \$671 million! On the Stevens Point campus, it is **\$584 million**, an increase of \$164 million in just four years.

- Wausau campus: **\$51 million**
- Marshfield campus: **\$36 million**

Every state dollar invested at UW-Stevens Point generates \$18 in economic activity.

We create over 6,000 jobs.

Couple all of this with the fact that 92% of our graduates are still living and working in Wisconsin three years after graduation, you begin to see just how important this university is to our state. What you do every day makes all this possible.

Speaking of all that you do, our retention rate is up from 72.9% to 74.2%! Clearly our new efforts in this area are working. Faculty and staff from across campus have been involved. Not only have we invested in a new software platform that allows us to communicate individually with prospective students, we also have a tool that helps us identify students at risk earlier in the process so we can help them with whatever their issues are – this should help retention and completion.

Our goal must be to improve our completion rate and in so doing, increase retention to 82%. This goal will not be reached in one year, but it needs our full attention. This is very important work. Just like student recruitment, student retention and completion are everyone's responsibility.

Good work everyone.

You continue to innovate, to create, to find new and better ways to serve our students. Consider for a minute our:

- New School of Design and School of Performing Arts.
- The expanded role of Cornerstone Press and the excellent hands-on experiences for our students.
- Our partnership with Marshfield Clinic Health System in workforce development for the health care industry.
- Our partnership with Incourage Foundation in Wisconsin Rapids. When their CEO, Kelly Ryan, spoke on campus, there was standing room only as I watched the excitement build among our faculty and staff about the evolving possibilities for community development and outreach in Wood County. Similar opportunities may develop in Wausau with the Clark Island initiative.
- Our Data Analytics program and our longtime partnership with Sentry. We are helping meet workforce needs in the insurance industry and across all sectors of our economy.
- Our highly successful internship program with Skyward. Excellent experience for our students.
- Our new MBA that will be offered this fall on all three campuses.
- Our significant success in sustainability, including our three STARS Gold rating from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, the first UW university to achieve 100% renewable electricity, and just last year, our National Recycling Coalition: Outstanding Higher Education award. Only one institution nationally is selected for this award each year.
- More than 165 colleagues have worked tirelessly to bring about the very successful reorganization of the university with our campuses in Marshfield and Wausau. I am very proud of the outstanding work they have done.
- And let's not forget – our students succeed in the classroom and beyond. What I like about Division III athletics is the grounding principal of the “student athlete.” The cumulative GPA for our women's teams was 3.24 and the men's teams exceeded 3.0. Men's Hockey achieved a 3.22 GPA, the highest among any of our men's sports, and they still found time to bring home our sixth national hockey championship as the first undefeated team in NCAA D3 hockey history!
- Then, Now and Forever: We Are Point Capital Campaign

I have saved the “oh, wow” one for last. Six years ago, at the State of the University Address, I also talked about work we needed to accomplish and handed out several challenges. One of those challenges went to Vice Chancellor Chris Richards. It was quite simple – start a capital campaign. In our then 120-year history, our university had never conducted a capital campaign. On July 1 of this year, Chris walked into my office to say he had completed his assignment. And, he quickly added, with enormous help.

Please do not take to social media with what I am about to share with you. This is a sneak preview of Homecoming on October 19 where we will celebrate the close of the campaign, honor our distinguished alumni and celebrate the 125th anniversary of the founding of the university.

But I can say now that the campaign was a huge success. We experienced three record-setting years in total giving to the university during the campaign. On our Day of Giving in May, we received 240 gifts totaling \$140,000, all for student scholarships.

The two largest gifts in UW-Stevens Point's history were received during the campaign. One was for \$4 million from Sentry Insurance to endow two faculty chairs in data analytics. We will be announcing the second gift in the near future when the details are worked out. In our 120-year history prior to the campaign we had received four gifts in excess of one million dollars. At the close of the campaign, we had more than tripled that number, adding almost a dozen gifts over a million dollars. The Foundation's endowment has more than doubled! Our best friends, supporters, alumni, faculty, staff, students and the business community have made a resounding statement with their checkbooks that they love and support this university.

Then, Now and Forever: We Are Point Campaign concluded June 30, 2019.

- Campaign initial working goal: **\$18 million**
- Public phase goal increased to: **\$30 million**
- Raised: **\$41 million** (unofficial total)

"The focus of any capital campaign should not be on the numbers, but rather on what the generosity of our best friends and supporters make possible for the university and our students." Chris Richards

I have heard Chris say this more times than I can count. Now many of these possibilities are a reality thanks to the generosity of our friends and supporters.

- We increased scholarships by 20%.
- 91 new scholarship accounts were established.
- We increased program funds by 30%.
- 60 new program funds, including five endowed chairs and professorships were added.
- And we added 10,000 new donors to our rolls.

This is what success looks like. Will all the members of our Advancement team and the deans please stand.

Let me tell you about one very generous gift – the Berard Gateway Scholarship.

Bob and Mary Berard's very generous gift will fund scholarships for 20 first generation freshman and sophomores each year! And until the endowment is fully generating the necessary funds, they are also funding the scholarships through additional gifts.

Bob and Mary have also made a gift to establish a new gateway to the university as you approach on Stanley Street. With the new science building as a backdrop, this will make a stunning first impression as prospective students and their parents arrive on campus.

And less than 200 yards to the north, we are currently raising funds to purchase the Newman Center, to serve as a new welcome center for Admissions. Bob and Mary, we cannot thank you enough. Our gratitude runs deep.

Consider this for a moment, "Philanthropy will mean the difference between the maintenance of a great university and the evolution of an extraordinary one."

Thanks to Bob, Mary, Sentry and our other great supporters, big or small. We are becoming that type of university. You are making a difference.

## CONCLUSION

Let me conclude, with one more thought.

When BVK came to visit their first couple of times, when they were exploring who we were, they spent time visiting around campus interviewing faculty, staff, students, administrators. When they finished that process, they came to share with me what they heard – not who said what but what they heard. We heard people talking about student success. We heard people talking about commitment. We heard people talking about scholarship and teaching, research and hands-on learning, and heard about commitment to student success.

They said, "Bernie, we hear all those things on just about every campus we visit. But we heard something on your campus we never heard before. It's simply this: That our faculty and our staff do whatever it is they have to do to help students succeed, regardless of the obstacles, regardless of the challenges, regardless of the road blocks, they don't give up. They persevere. We think of this in one word, persistence. Something we have not heard or felt on any other campus."

And they were so right, they were so right. I knew then they understood who we are, what we do and what we value.

Today, leave here with a renewed commitment to student success. Leave here with a renewed pride in this university and what you do. Leave here this afternoon knowing in your heart you are making a difference.

Thank you all for being here this afternoon, but mostly thank you for what you do every day. Let's go do what we do best. Thank you!