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## UW Colleges chancellor is 'excited' about largest enrollment

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MANITOWOC — On one hand, a downturn in the economy has meant difficulties for the University of Wisconsin Colleges, the 13 two-year campuses that are part of the UW System.

On the other hand, economic recessions typically lead to increased enrollment, according to David Wilson, chancellor of the UW Colleges and UW-Extension.

"We are truly excited this year to have the largest enrollment in the history of the UW Colleges," Wilson said during a visit to UW-Manitowoc on Thursday.

The campuses are serving 13,807 students, he said.

UW-Manitowoc has about 520 students this semester, or the equivalent of about 420 full-time students, according to Daniel Campana, dean of the campus. That's about the same as last year, he said.

While the recession has caused an increase in enrollment throughout the UW System, the increase is even larger among the two-year campuses, Wilson said. When there is an economic downturn, people look to retooling their skills, and many turn to the UW Colleges, which Wilson said provide academic quality and affordability.

"They can come here for two years and save an enormous amount of money," he said.

It helps that the Board of Regents has frozen tuition at the UW Colleges for the last three years, Wilson said.

He touts a higher graduation rate among students who transfer from one of the two-year campuses to a four-year school.

Among students who start out at a four-year campus, about 58 percent graduate, he said.

For those who transfer from a two-year school, the graduation rate is about 70 percent. He believes that's a function of nurturing student-professor relationships at the UW-Colleges in which the professors understand the needs of the students and connect with those needs without lowering academic standards.

Despite increased enrollment statewide, the poor economy hasn't been all positive for the UW-Colleges. The UW System, as a whole, had to cut its budget by \$155 million, Wilson said, and the UW Colleges budget needed to be reduced by several hundred thousand dollars.

One result is the colleges will recruit only 10 new faculty positions for the 2010-11 school year. A decision will be made regarding whether to approve an additional 15 to 20 positions based on the state of the economy in two or three months, Wilson said.

One of the 10 positions approved for 2010-11 is an assistant professor in computer science, which will be shared with UW-Sheboygan, Campana said.

A 2 percent pay increase that was set to go into effect in June throughout the UW System was rescinded, Wilson said.

He said while he understands families are suffering in the current economy, he was disappointed the increase didn't go into effect. The impact is felt especially by UW Colleges employees, who, Wilson said, are among the lowest paid in the UW System.

All state employees, including those working for the UW Colleges, are required to take eight unpaid furlough days this school year and again in 2010-11.

"Our faculty are so committed to teaching, and so passionate about it," he said, that despite the furloughs, "I'm finding that they are finding ways to make sure that if a student is in need that that need is served."

Wilson said he makes two official visits to each of the two-year campuses every year. He comes for special events, such as graduations and theatrical performances as well, bringing his average number of visits to about four per campus annually. He meets with students, faculty, staff and sometimes community leaders. Wilson said he also has visited each of the 72 UW-Extension offices in the last three and a half years.