

**Chancellor David Wilson's  
2007 UW Colleges Convocation Address  
August 30, 2007**

**Transforming the UW Colleges:  
Challenge, Change, and Opportunity**

Thank you, Dean Blankenship, for your kind introduction, and for hosting the 2007 UW Colleges Fall Convocation on this beautiful campus. I want to extend a warm welcome to faculty, staff, students, and special guests, and offer my personal thanks to the students and staff here at UW-Fond du Lac for all the work you have put into planning and making this Convocation a success.

It's wonderful to see all of you here as we kick off and celebrate the beginning of a new academic year. I sense a great deal of excitement and energy in the air because, after all, in just a few days, more than 13,000 UW Colleges' students will start or continue their academic journey with us. These students, an impressive number of them first generation college-going students, and many of whom will set foot on this and our other 12 campuses around the state for the first time, are beginning or continuing a journey that will change them forever. Our students will gain a greater appreciation for our continually changing world; they will understand what it means to think critically and deeply about the ideas of yesterday, today and tomorrow. Through the transformative power of a UW Colleges education, our students will further develop their minds, enhance their potential, and find constructive ways to contribute to the future of our state and the world. They will do all these things because they will be challenged by instructors who bring impressive credentials and preparation to our teaching mission, and an academic staff who embrace some of the most effective strategies within the UW System in guiding our students toward academic success.

I know that our instructors take teaching seriously and they do it uncommonly well. I know this because data show that our students are more likely to stay in college and graduate with a four-year degree than any other student transferring into a UW System institution.

As I have spent time on our campuses, I have visited many classrooms and learning laboratories. While visiting the UW-Marinette campus, for example, I literally walked into several classrooms unannounced and witnessed effective teaching first-hand. While strolling the halls of UW-Rock County, I passed by a history class. I have never been as excited about history as I was standing in that hallway for more than 15 minutes witnessing one of our professors teaching history with a degree of animation that would challenge the best Walt Disney

production. I have visited our new state-of-the-art science classrooms at UW-Barron County and have been duly impressed with the innovative classroom design where faculty offices are literally in the biology and chemistry labs, enabling students to use these laboratories at any time because the professor is always present. While I was there, I witnessed caring, nurturing pedagogical relationships between professors and students who are going to be our next generation scientists. I remember leaving Rice Lake thinking: "This is the way science courses should be taught."

Our instructors are known for sharing their passion for learning and knowledge in small classes that average 24 students, practically guaranteeing and requiring students' active participation and interaction in the learning process.

This year we're slightly ahead of where we were a year ago with enrollments. I want to commend you on the conscientious and hard work you are putting in to meet our enrollment targets.

All of us in this room, whether we are faculty, staff, or administrators, are proud to serve an institution whose mission includes access, excellence, quality, and affordability for students of all ages, races, income, and zip codes. Our campuses exist because we embrace an ideal about who should benefit from higher education. We share the belief that anyone who desires a college degree/education should have the opportunity to pursue it and, in so doing, not be short-changed by having anything less than utterly rigorous standards. We share an ideal that our campuses are enabling students around Wisconsin, from UW-Barron County to UW-Rock County, and from UW-Manitowoc to UW-Richland, to open doors to, become engaged with, and understand a very diverse, complex world that, quite frankly, is changing by the hour. The combination of passion, preparation, and dedication to our mission is a winning combination-- and one that we aim to preserve and build on as we move forward.

At this point, I'd like to take time to tell the stories of two of our adult students. The first student is Kim Rainer. I wish I had time to tell Kim's entire story, but here is part of it:

In January 2002, Kim was a single mom, supporting herself and her son, and living a comfortable lifestyle. The following month, her father, wheelchair-bound and a stroke survivor, began experiencing extremely severe health problems. Kim soon discovered she could not maintain her full-time-plus position as general manager for the Best Western in Appleton, while providing care for both her father in end stage renal failure, and her high school freshman son. She left her career. When her father passed away three years later, Kim was working at a bank. After many years of interacting with the medical community and seeing areas she felt needed changing, it became clear to her that she needed an education to work in the medical field she has come to believe is her destiny.

Terrified at the thought of going back to school, Kim met with an advisor at UW-Fox Valley who, Kim wrote, “was so supportive and encouraging” that she made the decision to pursue her nursing degree by completing her general studies at UW-Fox Valley and later transferring to UW-Oshkosh. Once again, she quit her full-time job, and enrolled as a freshman at FOX.

Kim shared that she had never been the type of student who learned easily. With the help of one of her professors, student services, and a professional evaluation, she learned she has difficulty translating visual media such as text and pictures into usable information. She finally understood why learning had always been so difficult. As a result, she was given access to tutors, extra time for test taking, and amazing help from all of her UW-Fox Valley professors. The UW Fox faculty and staff’s willingness to help, coupled with her determination to succeed, allowed her to complete 61 credits with a cumulative GPA of 3.83.

Two months ago, Kim was diagnosed with ovarian cancer and had two major surgeries. This month, she began 18 chemotherapy sessions, which will last until the end of November. Knowing she would be unable to complete 16 credits this semester while undergoing chemotherapy, she returned to Student Services. Her advisor helped identify her options. Kim shared with us:

“We discussed everything from my schedule, to my financial aid package, to my credit requirements, to my health, to being placed on prayer chains. I have received hugs, prayers, cards, phone calls and encouragement. Although everything is not quite finalized, the help and support I have received and continue to receive have touched me in ways I can’t begin to express. The first day I walked through the doors of UW Fox Valley I felt welcomed, cared about and supported. Today when I walk through the doors of UW Fox Valley, I feel like I am coming home. I don’t know if I could face this semester without you. Thank you UW Fox Valley, from the bottom of my heart.”

Let me now introduce Kim Rainer. Kim, would you please come up here and let us recognize your achievement? Thank you.

---

The second student is Terry Lins.

Terry, also a returning adult student, received his associate’s degree and was recognized at UW-Richland’s spring 2007 graduation ceremonies. His UW-Richland success story is not the first in his family. His wife and two daughters began their educations at UW-Richland, and now have successful careers.

Terry started his college education at the Richland Center campus back in 1970, when it was known as Wisconsin State University Platteville-Richland Branch Campus. Classmate Jackie would later become his wife.

The circumstances of Terry's return to college were not ideal. Terry had a leg amputation as a result of diabetic complications. Prior to that time, he'd been a maintenance worker with the Richland Schools. Health problems led to an early retirement.

The silver lining to that cloud was that it provided the opportunity for him to pick up his education at UW-Richland and build on what he began more than 30 years earlier.

He now plans to continue his studies at UW-Platteville this fall, pursuing a major in psychology. He's exploring the possibility of a second career as a counselor.

We'd like to extend our congratulations to you, Terry, and offer a token of our appreciation for your being here with us today and your achievement. Would you like to say a few words about what UW-Richland has meant to you?

\_\_\_\_\_(Terry speaks)\_\_\_\_\_

I'll briefly address some challenges today, but mainly I want to share with you the many new and exciting opportunities the UW Colleges is exploring and creating to further carry out our mission and deliver on our maximum access vision. Many of these explorations are underway and being steered by faculty and staff in the audience. I see a lot of bright potential on the horizon for the UW Colleges, and I hope when you're leaving here today, you will share my excitement and sense of optimism for the future of the UW Colleges.

I stand before you this morning on the cusp of what I will call challenge, change, and opportunities.

As I talk about our challenges, I am reminded of something I heard about tidal waves. I heard it this way: When a tidal wave hits land, there are basically three responses. First are the people who say, "I've seen this before," and they do nothing and are drowned. Second are those who say, "I'm getting out of here," and they hide and their homes are destroyed. Third are those who say, "This is a tidal wave. I better learn to surf." What I am talking about this morning is how we are learning to surf in response to the challenges ahead.

The biggest challenge we now face is state funding—and I must admit here that it's high tide at the State Capitol and surfing is extraordinarily difficult. Just think that today is August 30<sup>th</sup> and we still do not have a state budget, making our state the only state in the nation to have this dubious distinction. We have to open our doors next week, not knowing what the funding picture looks like. This has presented us with a daunting challenge. Do we not hire the critical instructors we need to teach the sections of English, mathematics, or chemistry on our campuses? Do we not approve staffing requests from our campuses to initiate

searches for tenure-track faculty for next year? What do we cut out of our budget that is already the most efficient in the UW System?

In light of the uncertainty, I have had to make some tough decisions. One thing is certain: we do not want to limit access to our campuses, for so doing would seriously erode our mission. Therefore, I have instituted a temporary moratorium on all administrative hiring within both the UW Colleges and UW-Extension. At the same time, I have given approval to hire the critical instructional academic staff to teach some of our courses, and have approved the recruitment of a minimum of 20 tenure-track faculty positions during the coming year.

Let me take this opportunity to applaud the leadership of our campus deans, Extension deans and directors, and the efforts of many of you in the audience, for helping us send a clear message to our legislators of the harmful effects that the proposed Assembly version of the budget would have on our institution. For those of you who have not called your legislators or written a letter—now is the time. Silence in this case is not golden. We need to make sure that our voices are heard as the Conference Committee debates the UW System budget, and failure to do so might mean some very unpleasant outcomes for our students.

Now a bit about change. As the evolutionist Charles Darwin discovered, “those who survive have one thing in common—they are the ones most responsive to change.”

We are facing a great deal of change within our institutions.

- Change brought about by the integration of the UW Colleges and UW-Extension

- Change brought about as a result of shifting demographics in our state

- Change brought by a projected decrease in the number of traditional-age students in our state

- Change brought by seemingly blurring the missions between the UW Colleges and the Wisconsin Technical College System

- And change resulting from UW System’s challenge to all of our institutions to increase the number of bachelor’s degrees in Wisconsin, so that it becomes one of the top knowledge-based states in the nation, resulting in a knowledge economy that would benefit from the intellectual capital we produce.

This is truly an exciting time for us! We are seeing change create fertile ground for new ideas and new forms of collaboration and programming. Our task is to be responsive to change.

Speaking of change, I would be remiss if I did not express my appreciation to those who have dedicated much time and effort to our institutions and who have moved on to other chapters in their lives since we met at last fall's Convocation at UW Fox-Valley. We will not forget their work and dedication, and we will benefit from their leadership for years to come. But as the world continues to move, I want you to move with me and the world.

We have taken a critical look at what we do well and how we are poised to respond to challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Now, let me take a moment to talk with you about where we are headed.

Let me start with our shared vision. In February of this year, after several months of holding internal and external listening sessions around the state, and after combing through the recommendations of the Commission on Enhancing the Mission of the UW Colleges, I unveiled what I saw as our vision going forward. That vision is maximum access. We are the premier access institutions within the UW System. I outlined several things in February that I felt we needed to do within the UW Colleges and UW-Extension to enable us to enhance those premier access institutions. This is part of what I said:

- Across the UW Colleges and UW-Extension, we will remove every barrier that exists to bring a college education within reach to tens of thousands of potential students, including adults, who have told us they desire to attain college degrees
- We will need to embrace a more accelerated academic degree program and look at offering accelerated courses
- We will explore mobile campuses – taking instruction to parts of the state that right now are not being served well
- We will continue to explore how to take greater advantage of Wisconsin's largest daily classroom—Wisconsin Public Radio and Wisconsin Public Television. Each day, more than 150,000 Wisconsin citizens listen to Wisconsin Public Radio or watch Wisconsin Public Television. We will support the effort on the part of those networks to explore cutting-edge technology like data-casting to deliver educational courses to the public at large.
- Within the UW Colleges, our faculty will always be on the forefront of instructional innovation.
- We will seek more collaborations with the technical colleges to take our liberal arts courses and the associate's degree in liberal arts to their campuses, and deliver programming to meet the needs of students across the state

- We will pursue with utmost zeal the Adult Student Initiative, which aims to use our vast statewide networks to bring thousands of adults in this state into our classrooms and online, giving them the best start for the life they want.
- We will explore ways to bring more baccalaureate degrees, especially in engineering, to areas of the state where we have campuses
- We will explore some restricted baccalaureate degree authority on the part of the UW Colleges, if a comprehensive university cannot meet the local need where our campuses are located
- The UW Colleges must remain affordable

Well, what are we doing to position our institutions to achieve this vision? What are we doing to improve our surfing skills?

-I have appointed **a task force to explore a UW Colleges Center in northern Wisconsin**. That group is expected to outline an implementation strategy relative to location. The group is researching unmet needs in northern Wisconsin and exploring possibilities for offering the Colleges' Associate of Arts and Science degree in Florence, Forest and Vilas Counties. If a need exists, it is our desire to start offering programs in this part of the state by fall 2008. The plan is to offer our program in local high schools and/or community centers. We are not seeking to build any free-standing UW Colleges campuses, but to offer our courses in high schools or community centers, as well as on-line in order to meet those unmet needs.

**-Another task force is currently looking at how our campuses can offer more bachelor's degrees onsite.** Efforts are now under way to explore the feasibility of the UW Colleges' delivering restricted baccalaureate degrees using our own faculty. These degrees, if offered, would be targeted toward adult, place-bound students who are currently not being served at the B.S. degree level by our comprehensive institutions. The content of these degrees would be driven by employer demands in the state. I will also ask our campus deans to survey our service area more thoroughly to ascertain the need for graduate degrees, and to begin a more aggressive effort to bring those degrees to our campuses as well, in collaboration with our doctoral and comprehensive institutions. Our campuses have an enormous potential to be vibrant regional university centers offering a variety of degrees to meet regional needs. Our intent in all of this is to put forth a model that is an efficient use of scarce resources, is non-duplicative in nature, and expands access.

- Tuition. As many of you know, shortly after February, I advanced a proposal to UW System administration to restructure tuition at the UW Colleges. President Reilly has also empanelled a group to look at the UW System tuition structure system-wide. But despite the fact that the group is still deliberating its recommendations, the UW System Board of Regents, on August 7, 2007, approved President Reilly's recommendation to **freeze the UW Colleges tuition at 2006-2007 rates, enabling more working class families to access an affordable UW education.** I want you to join me in applauding this action on the part of the board because it sends a strong signal about where the board and System Administration stand on the importance of access to higher education.

-Another action we are taking to enhance our institutions is to **explore more revenue streams.** On September 10th, senior administrators in both institutions will meet with a fundraising consultant to consider conducting a feasibility study to drive our fund development efforts. Results of this study are expected to be available within six to eight months, and I will use them to set our fundraising goals for the UW Colleges and UW-Extension.

-We are also looking into **building residential facilities.** As most of you know, two of our campuses currently have residential facilities: UW-Marathon County and UW-Richland. Five more campuses are in varying phases of discussing this possibility. Recognizing the need to move more strategically in this area, I have asked the vice chancellor for Administrative Services for the UW Colleges and UW-Extension to head a small task force to examine the pros and cons of our erecting more residential halls on UW Colleges' campuses. One very important question I am asking this task force to explore is whether our campuses, with more residential facilities, could serve a greater role in relieving the pressure on UW-Madison at the freshman and sophomore levels. Our preliminary analysis is leading us to conclude that the majority of students not accepted at Madison leave the state for undergraduate degrees. They do not go to the other comprehensive campuses. If this is the case, what role can the Colleges play in absorbing these students for the first two years and then transferring them on to Madison at the junior year? This is not happening in record numbers now because many of these students want a residential experience during the first two years.

That report will be due late this fall. One thing is certain--if we pursue adding more housing to our campuses, we will go in the direction of private investments. No state dollars will be pursued in such a venture.

-I am currently **investigating opening UW Colleges centers in both of Wisconsin's largest cities-- Milwaukee and Madison.** These centers would offer freshman and sophomore courses, primarily targeting students of color and adult students. We will exhaustively survey these markets to ascertain the student groups not currently being served well by existing UW institutions.

Discussions are currently under way with both UW-Milwaukee and UW-Madison, and the Milwaukee Public Schools, to gain their support for this possibility.

-In addition, I have had discussions with UW-Madison Chancellor John Wiley, UW-Madison Dean of Liberal Arts Gary Sandefur, and UW Colleges Interim Provost Greg Lampe to explore a **baccalaureate degree partnership in liberal arts** with UW-Madison on all UW Colleges campuses. These discussions are ongoing, but I think there can be great potential for such a partnership.

-We also want to **bring more engineering degrees to our campuses**. You perhaps read in last week's newspaper about the Gehl Corporation's decision to remain in Washington County, keeping 300 jobs in the county. At the heart of that decision was the role played by UW-Washington County, and Dean David Nixon, to collaborate with UW-Platteville to bring a four-year engineering degree to the UW-Washington County campus. I am very excited with the great partnership we are forming with UW-Platteville to bring four-year engineering degrees to a number of our campuses. In mid-September, UW- Marathon County will make a similar collaboration announcement with UW Platteville, and next spring, an engineering program between UW-Marinette and UW-Platteville is scheduled to begin. This means five UW Colleges campuses will offer undergraduate degrees in engineering. Going forward, we will continue to pursue these types of partnerships with not only Platteville, but with UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee as well.

-We are looking at the various obstacles that stand in the way of getting more students onto our campuses. One of those obstacles is the long time it takes busy adults to complete a course and actually get a degree. I am pleased to report that this is the first semester we will be piloting what we call accelerated courses, offering these courses in six-, five-, and 10-week formats. Thus far, early enrollment figures indicate that some of these courses will be a big hit. For example, at UW Fox, three courses are being offered with a total enrollment of 41 students.

These are some of the exciting opportunities we are addressing as we transform our institutions to become the premier access institutions in the UW System.

Finally, I want to thank all of you for your commitment and hard work this past year. Continue to stay positive and open-minded as we embark on a future filled with opportunities and promise. As we prepare for the future, we need to look at challenges as opportunities. And we must always strive for transparency, openness, and accountability. If we want true quality and depth in our inter-institutional work, it is essential that solid links between people and institutions are nurtured. I think we are off to a great start and I look forward to working closely with all of you this year to move many of these opportunities forward. I wish you all the very best as you begin this new academic year!