

UW-Milwaukee: Changing with Our Students and Our Times

Fall Plenary Address; delivered Sept. 18, 2008
Chancellor Carlos E. Santiago

Good afternoon. I'm pleased to be here with you today as we begin our work together in this new academic year.

This fall marks the start of my fifth year as UWM's Chancellor. The past four years have passed quickly for me – not, I like to think, just because I'm getting older, but because UWM has presented a lot of challenges to keep me busy.

I think that's true for all of us.

We've all been working at a demanding pace in recent years, both to *keep up* with the rate of change in the world at large – in the economy, in society, in science and technology – as well as to *lead* positive change for our students, with our regional partners, and in our professional disciplines.

As we know from the current political campaigns of both major parties, “*change*” is the mantra of this season. This is serious business as the electorate tries to understand the specifics of the changes being proposed and also, listening to the many “talking heads,” tries not to *miss the tornado for the “spin.”*

But beyond these changes and challenges at the national level, I'd like to talk with you today about some of the major changes I've observed in UWM's student body – changes in our student profile and in our students' university experience that reflect, as I suggested earlier, the economic, social, and technological changes in the greater society and the changes that UWM has initiated.

In past plenary speeches, I've emphasized UWM's historical, and continuing, mission to provide student access and opportunity, high quality instruction, and cutting-edge research. And I've especially emphasized our need to dramatically grow funded research as a catalyst for economic growth in the Milwaukee area and the State of Wisconsin.

The changing profile of UWM students

Concurrent with UWM's maturation as a major research institution, *our students' university experience and the profile of our student body also are noticeably changing.*

I recently looked at the annual Beloit College “Mindset List” which contains fun facts about the changes in today's 18 year olds, who – incidentally – make up about 96 percent of our freshman class.

For our students born in 1990:

- Gas stations have never fixed flats, but most serve cappuccino;
- IBM has never made typewriters;
- W-W-W has never stood for World Wide Wrestling; and
- Jay Leno has always hosted “The Tonight Show.”

Looking at several more serious measures of our student body this fall, I can identify the following significant changes over the past five years:

- Overall enrollment is beginning to stabilize, while our graduate student enrollment continues to grow;
- Instruction online and at sites other than the East Side campus is rapidly increasing;
- Research and instruction are being increasingly integrated;
- The proportion of our students living in residence halls and wishing to live in residence halls is growing;
- Our students are becoming more diverse, ethnically, culturally, and geographically;
- Our success rate, as measured by student retention and graduation, is increasing.

First, let’s look at our current enrollment numbers.

We are anticipating a final fall 2008 enrollment of 29,100 students, which is down slightly from our all-time high of 29,358 set in fall 2007.

Since fall 2003-2004, we have enrolled an additional 3,250 students, a 12.6 percent increase, in just five years.

Now, during these years, anyone who has walked on Hartford Avenue between class changes, or crossed the Spaight’s Plaza at midday, or (may heaven help you) tried to drive on Maryland Avenue, between Hartford and Kenwood on any weekday can attest – without knowing these numbers – that this is a LOT of students in a compressed space.

But this rate of increase, at least for undergraduates, is leveling off.

While our graduate enrollments have continued to increase each year and are expected to number about 5,000 this fall, our new freshmen this fall number about 4,000, down nearly 12 percent from the 2007-2008 high of about 4,500 freshmen.

By comparison, the new freshman class of 2003-2004 was about 3,800. And population demographics show that we can expect fewer traditional college-age students in the coming years.

If I may interject a personal note at this point, I’d like to say that the Santiago family is doing its part to counteract this declining demographic trend.

In January 2006 I introduced you to our grandson, John Carlos.

Well, he is now two years old and we welcomed his brother Nicholas in August of this year. As you can see, both are sporting UWM garb.

Research, pedagogy integration is rising

While our traditional new freshman classes will be smaller in the next several years, we anticipate serving more students by increasing online instruction.

This is very desirable for at least three reasons.

- First, online instruction enables us to reach students who because of work, family responsibilities, or location have very limited opportunity to engage in classroom instruction;
- Second, online enrollments do not add to an already overcrowded East Side campus; and
- Third, we are rapidly developing innovative online pedagogy that enjoys a high degree of student and teacher satisfaction and academic success.

A few numbers to illustrate the rapid growth on online teaching:

In fall 2003-2004, about 350 UWM students were enrolled exclusively in online courses.

This fall, more than 1,000 students will take courses exclusively online.

In 2003-04, the College of Letters and Science (L&S) generated 1,308 student credits in online courses.

This fall, L&S is generating 9,159 credits online – more than 5 percent of total L&S credits and a sevenfold increase in just five years.

In this same five-year period, a number of schools and colleges have developed majors and degree programs online – for example:

- The doctorate in the College of Nursing;
- A master's degree in the School of Information Studies; and
- A bachelor's degree with a major in the Department of Communication in L&S.

Perhaps most significantly, our faculty and teaching staff are developing innovative and highly successful online pedagogy.

- Professor Diane Reddy has developed the “U-Pace” program, completely online, to teach Psychology 101. U-Pace guides students through program sections at an individualized pace. Compared to Psychology 101 students in conventional classrooms, U-Pace students have been more successful completing coursework and consistently have scored higher on the cumulative course examination. Most noteworthy is that these outcomes are the same for students regardless of the success, or lack of success, in previous academic work. One hundred and fifty students are taking the U-Pace course this fall.
- Other courses, like the Math Pilot Program for freshmen who are not ready for college mathematics, employ a blended computer and classroom-laboratory pedagogy. The Math Pilot courses, developed by Professor Eric Key, have a high

success rate with up to 98 percent of students earning a grade of C or better and up to 98 percent earning an A or A-.

Instruction elsewhere is increasing

In addition to this rapid development of online instruction that engages students away from our compressed East Side campus, the University is moving ahead with plans to increase the number of campus sites. Our campus Master Plan is moving forward and the consultants are back on campus this week. In the meantime, we will continue to pursue opportunities for additional growth like

- Innovation Park;
- the Academic Health Center; and
- the Harbor Campus.

Our students' instructional experience is changing not only through the rapid increase in online and hybrid computer instruction, but also through the more systematic integration of research into our instruction.

As a doctoral institution with an explicit research mission, UWM has always provided paid and volunteer experiences for students to participate in faculty research.

With the new State allocation of two million dollars in base budget for this purpose, UWM is integrating research more broadly into the undergraduate learning experience.

Coordinated by the UWM Office of Undergraduate Research, funds have been used this year for salary support to more than 200 students working on research with faculty and staff members.

This effort will continue to evolve through close consultation with our faculty and staff. Integration of instruction and research is crucial to UWM's maturation as a research institution, and we have requested additional base budget funds for this purpose for our 2009-2011 budget. Already, that budget proposal has been endorsed by the UW Board of Regents and is pending review and action by the State. The success of the current and forthcoming funding processes will be measured by our ability to garner extramural support for research.

Desire for campus living is growing

A fourth change in the experience of our students is that UWM has many more students living in residence. With the addition of the RiverView residence hall, 2,455 new freshman students (about 61 percent of new freshmen) are living on campus this fall.

This is an increase of nearly 450 students from fall 2006, when only about 50 percent of new freshmen lived in residence halls. As more students find campus housing, fewer students are residing in the nearby community, thereby reducing friction between the university and our neighbors.

Occupancy is at 100 percent in our residence halls, and demand for on-campus housing exceeds our current capacity by several thousand potential students. I'm sure those of you who were here in the late 1970s remember well that at that time our residence halls consisted of Purin Hall and three towers of Sandburg. And that the student demand for even that limited residence capacity was so low that the University had to fill the entire West Tower and much of the North Tower with administrative offices!

We have come a long way from that time, but our goal remains to have capacity to offer on-campus housing to all incoming freshmen. We currently are considering three sites on Milwaukee's east side, in proximity to Kenilworth and RiverView, for another new residence hall.

Students who live in university housing have a higher retention rate (between 12 percent and 15 percent higher in recent years at UWM).

And a critical core of students on campus enhances the overall student experience, including social and cultural programming and vibrant athletic programs. We have a nationally successful Division I Athletic Program, and the residence halls provide many of our most ardent supporters.

Having noted the important role of intercollegiate athletics in the student experience, I'd like to take a minute here to thank Bud Haidet, who announced earlier this week that he will retire as our Athletic Director in 2008-2009 after 45 years of service to intercollegiate athletics, including 20 years at UWM. Bud has led UWM's development into a nationally recognized Division I intercollegiate athletic program. I fully expect the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) will recertify our athletic program later this fall in our 10-year NCAA review.

Bud, would you please stand and let us say thank you.

Diversity is increasing broadly

Another characteristic of UWM's student body that is changing as the University matures is its ethnic, cultural and geographic diversity. One of the goals of our Access to Success program is to increase the proportion of underrepresented students of color by one percentage point each year.

I am pleased to note that among this fall's new freshmen, more than 16 percent are underrepresented students of color compared to 14 percent in 2007-08.

Our diversity grew this year, both in real numbers and as a percentage of the freshman class, even as the size of the class declined.

This increase in diversity is significant because a companion goal of Access to Success is to increase our first year retention rate by one percentage point each year. Using our new holistic/comprehensive admission review process, we are admitting only those students who we believe are prepared for and able to benefit from our academic, advising and

support programs. We will not be a revolving door for any category of students; *students at UW-Milwaukee are admitted as individuals based on their chance to succeed here. Opportunity and success, not numbers, are our mission.*

Our student body also is becoming more diverse culturally and geographically. A larger proportion of our students are coming from outside the immediate Milwaukee metro area: 37 percent of UWM students are from areas of Wisconsin outside Milwaukee County and the adjacent counties, and nearly 7 percent are from other states or are international students.

Our graduate students and undergraduate transfers also are making our student body more geographically and culturally diverse. Graduate international students increased by 8.7 percent this fall over 2007-2008; our 1,400 new transfer students this fall come to UWM from nearly 250 different colleges and universities in the United States and abroad.

Let me emphasize here UWM's continuing commitment to students in the City of Milwaukee, to doing our part to grow that pipeline to higher education for Milwaukee K-12 students.

- UWM has 12 charter schools in the city.
- We partner with Milwaukee Area technical College (MATC) with funding support from the National Science Foundation to offer the Milwaukee Math Partnership to prepare Milwaukee students for college-level mathematics.
- We have a leading role in the Teachers for a New Era program.
- We offer pre-college programs to more than 8,000 K-12 Milwaukee-area students each year.

UWM is working collaboratively with City of Milwaukee schools, teachers and students to help prepare city students for university-level work and university life.

That effort will continue to be central to UWM's mission.

Student success rate is increasing

Another characteristic of student change at UWM is that our students increasingly are remaining in school and graduating. The Access to Success program has a goal of increasing first-year retention and six-year graduation by one percentage point per year. Looking at the 2005 and the 2006 freshman classes, we are succeeding in our freshman retention goal.

- For our 2005 freshman class, about 69 percent returned to UWM the following year.
- For our 2006 freshman class, 71 percent returned in 2007.
- The retention rate is even greater for freshmen who participated in Access to Success activities; nearly 75 percent returned.

Our graduation rate for new freshmen who earn degrees from UWM within six years has trended upward over the past 10 years:

- The six-year graduation rate of the 1991-92 freshman class was about 35 percent.

- For the 2001-02 freshman class, it was nearly 42 percent.

As UWM matures as a research-focused, destination university, I expect this graduation rate to continue to increase, as more high-achieving undergraduate students complete their baccalaureate degrees here at UWM.

Supporting students financially will be crucial

A final, crucial note about the recruitment, retention and graduation of UWM students: The need for increased financial support is great.

We know well that the cost of higher education has increased much more rapidly than people's income or the inflation rate in recent years, and that student debt load has skyrocketed. Our ability to recruit, retain, and graduate students will depend heavily on our ability to provide scholarships, awards, assistantships, internships, and competitive graduate stipends to deserving students.

We are making progress in this effort:

- The Campaign for UWM raised \$29 million for scholarships;
- The Chancellor's Graduate Awards totaled nearly \$2 million last year;
- The Chancellor's Diversity and Leadership scholarships and the Academic Achievement Leadership Award totaled \$315,000 this year, including a number of "full-ride" scholarships to high-achieving students;
- And there are many, many school, college and department scholarships.

Goals for the future are compatible

The changes in the UWM student experience and the profile of our student body that I've outlined are integral to, and fully compatible with, our goal to greatly expand our research base.

Recruiting and educating "life literate" students:

- historically and culturally aware;
- conversant with new technology and communication media;
- possessed of keen analytic skills; and
- imbued with a life-long spirit of inquiry and curiosity –

is an essential part of our mission to create a world-class research university.

To succeed in this mission, we urgently need to

- recruit many new faculty and staff members;
- acquire land for expansion;
- renovate existing facilities and build new ones;
- add graduate programs;
- strengthen our infrastructure; and
- grow our research funding base.

But, as I've suggested today, an equally important component of this mission is the urgent need to recruit, financially support, intellectually challenge, and graduate our students.

This year, 2008-09, will be a pivotal one in determining how much we will succeed in our ambitious long-term goals. We are completing our planning for growth, and we must continue to deliver results.

You, our faculty and staff, have done an outstanding job of building the groundwork for our future growth.

Together, we must seize this moment if UWM is to become a truly transformative force in Milwaukee and the State of Wisconsin.

Richard Longworth in his recent book, "Caught in the Middle: The Midwest Confronts Globalization," identifies Milwaukee as one of the Midwest cities "on the bubble." Will we develop into a "global city" like Chicago or will we continue in an extended economic decline?

Together, we must seize this moment if Milwaukee is to realize its potential to become a vibrant "global city."

Our students' role in this future

In closing, I'd like to say something directly to our students.

In this speech, I've talked about you, our students, in rather impersonal, largely numeric terms. I do understand, however, that you are not statistical entities, are not pieces of an abstract "student body" to which change just happens.

You are individual people and citizens. Change is not something created by and given to you by the faculty and staff of this institution.

We can help you imagine the future.

We can work with you as partners to develop your skills, your sense of community responsibility, and your habits of mind.

But, make no mistake, *change in the future is that which you will create and embody. You will be that change. That future is your gift and your responsibility.*

Thank you.