

Making a difference:
Overcoming the challenges before us



Spring 2012 Plenary Address
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Chancellor Michael R. Lovell
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Good afternoon and welcome back from our annual winter break. As I think about all that goes on here between semesters – UWinterIM, preparations for the second semester, research, registration, and other ongoing administrative tasks – maybe “winter break” isn’t the best term.

It’s more like a brief pause: just enough to catch your breath.

It is a very welcome pause, nevertheless, and I hope that all of you were able, as I was, to spend more time with family and friends, and to enjoy this unpredictable Wisconsin winter.

As we gather again today, I would like to talk with you about three issues:

1. An update on the state budget and its effects on our campus;
2. The status of several initiatives I identified in the September Plenary that have become major campus activities for this academic year; and
3. A few highlights of the many untold stories about the people on our campus and the remarkable impact they are making on the Milwaukee community and beyond.

2011-13 biennial budget

The budget context for our major initiatives and success stories is a difficult one: We are coping with additional state budget reductions and the lack of a compensation plan for the 2011-13 biennium.

This is a very difficult time for everyone on our campus. I have spent a large amount of my time and energy over the past year engaged with budget developments in Madison, fighting to keep our current resources and to position UWM for future success.

Unfortunately, the other UW System chancellors and I were not able to reduce the biennial budget reduction. We also were not successful in getting approval for a self-pay compensation plan, or in getting sufficient budgetary flexibility to significantly offset the budget reductions.

As reported this week in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, the reduction in the UW System budget was among the greatest in the entire nation.

This certainly is not a ranking that we aspire to.

On the afternoon of my inauguration last October, the state informed the UW System campuses that, in addition to the \$250 million in funding cuts to the current biennial budget, the UWS would need to return an additional \$66 million.

This certainly was not a welcomed inauguration present to the campus.

This lapse to System represents 38 percent of the additional cuts allocated to all state agencies – the worst percentage in state history. UWM’s share of this budget lapse is \$8.9 million.

My highest priorities to meet this additional budget reduction are to avoid staff layoffs or reductions in section offerings. To date, we have managed to do this.

Although we cannot control what happens at the state government level, we certainly will continue to have a prominent voice. On February 8, I will testify before the governor’s task force that is reviewing the structure of the UW System, as mandated in the current state budget. Also, as we enter into this very active political year, UWM will partner with Wispolitics.com and our radio station, WUWM, to bring candidates for public office to campus to have a dialogue with the campus community.

I challenge the UWM community to be at the crossroads of public discussion for the 2012 elections, listening carefully and respectfully but also asking the hard questions about Wisconsin’s future.

In addition to actively involving ourselves in the public discussion of issues this year, we will continue to effectively control the resources that we do have to advance important activities. We are taking some serious hits, but we are resourceful, and the campus continues to move forward.

A strong testimony to our success and maturity as a research university is that UWM has been included among the top 500 universities in the 2011 Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities. The Shanghai ranking signifies that UWM is one of the world’s best international research universities, and it is a tribute to our great faculty, staff, and students.

Capital Projects

In spite of our budgetary challenges, our campus continues to change faster than at any time in its history. All of our major capital projects continue to move forward, and we are continuing to embark on new initiatives that will increase our international reputation.

At the old Pabst Brewery site, we will be receiving the keys for the new building for our Joseph J. Zilber School of Public Health in June of this year. With the arrival of Founding Dean Magda Peck in March, we’re anticipating a great year for the school.

The transformational Kenwood Interdisciplinary Research Complex is projected to start construction in December of this year, with anticipated occupancy in February 2015.

We broke ground at Innovation Park last summer and will begin construction this June on the “Accelerator Building,” funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

The new addition to the School of Freshwater Sciences' Great Lakes WATER Institute building will start this June; the project is expected to be completed in December 2013.

In the Northwest Quadrant, we have begun to relocate academic units during campus improvement projects. Hundreds of occupants of Bolton Hall are currently being housed in the Northwest Quad. The UWM Children's Center will be moving from the Kunkel Center to the Northwest Quad in summer 2013.

Plans for the Northwest Quad in the 2013-15 capital budget include:

- Relocating the Norris Health Center to provide better health services for our students;
- Creating a Central Kitchen for Restaurant Operations; and
- Developing School of Education Teaching-Learning Labs.

Administrative reorganization and changed budget model

On November 22, 2011, I sent an email to the campus announcing administrative reorganizations that would better align units, be more efficient, and better serve the campus community. These reorganizations are proceeding and will be fully implemented by July 1, 2012.

I would especially like to thank the vice chancellors and the staff whose divisional affiliations and reporting lines are changing for their very positive contributions to this effort. In some units, like University Information Technology Services, these changes have been very complex, and the faculty and staff involved have been exceptionally helpful in shaping and planning the changes. Thank you again.

In the Fall Plenary, I said that the campus would be changing its budget model to place less emphasis on encouraging overall enrollment growth and more emphasis on funding our new facilities and areas of research and academic program growth. That process has begun and, when fully implemented, will better position our campus for the future.

CERNET

As many of you know, I went to the People's Republic of China last month to take part in a signing ceremony with the organization CERNET for a project that will transform our campus. The project will dramatically increase the internationalization of our campus by bringing up to 1,000 high-performing students to UWM.

To put things in perspective, China has 260 million college-age students and 10 million high-performing high-school students who take an exam to get into the top 20 Chinese universities. Since only 2 to 3 million of these students get into the top schools, there is a pool of 7 to 8 million potential students to bring to international universities like UWM.

These students will significantly enhance our campus community. I have often stated that I would like to require all UWM students to have an international experience to better

prepare them for an increasingly global society. I realize that it is not feasible for all of our students to study abroad. But through the CERNET project and other international student programs, all UWM students will be exposed to international perspectives in their classes and campus life. During a recent trip I took to Babson College, where 28 percent of the undergraduate student body is international, a senior who was giving us a tour said that he loved that there were so many international students on his campus because he would get three or four perspectives in class discussions that he otherwise would not have experienced.

The CERNET agreement also is transformational because it represents a new revenue stream during a time of fiscal austerity. When we reach steady-state in the project, UWM could be getting an additional \$20 million in tuition revenue that can be used for many needs – more course sections and student aid, new faculty and staff positions, and salary increases for campus employees.

Finally, the CERNET agreement further demonstrates that UWM is recognized as an international university. CERNET is an affiliate of the Chinese Ministry of Education that focuses on increasing educational attainment for Chinese students. CERNET will be setting up only four programs in the U.S. Three years ago, it established an East Coast program in Massachusetts. We should all be proud that CERNET chose Milwaukee and UWM for its Midwest location.

Best place to learn and work initiative

In the Plenary last January, I stated that “the institutions that will prosper as we transition through this period of austerity are those that have the best internal cohesion.” Building on that idea, we have developed an initiative that was emphasized in our new vision statement and announced in the Plenary this past September – the goal of making UWM the best place to learn and work. In a recent meeting with campus leadership, I stated my most fundamental belief about this university: The faculty, staff, and students of this campus are our greatest competitive asset.

Every decision that we make going forward should support, enhance, and protect this asset. That is the core premise of the best place to learn and work initiative.

The people of our campus deserve a workplace characterized by open communication, personal respect, freedom from intimidation and fear, clear career paths and expectations, a diverse population, and well-informed and supportive leaders.

This is what I mean by establishing a positive “campus climate” in which everyone can flourish.

I charged Professor Mark Mone of the Lubar School of Business, and Vice Chancellor Joan Prince to take the lead in organizing and advancing this initiative. Three retreats involving deans, governance groups, department chairs, and the secretary of the

university were held in August 2011 with the goal of identifying and prioritizing a series of campus climate actions.

The highest-priority activities for 2011-12 are in the areas of leadership, careers, workplace climate, and rewards. In brief, the focus this year will be to institute the following:

- Leadership development and training, especially for staff supervisors;
- Better communication and clarity about career paths and promotion;
- Campus code of conduct and respect;
- Family-friendly workplace practices; and
- University-wide awards for promoting diversity and inclusion.

On February 8, the Best Place to Work Coordinating and Action teams will hold a kickoff meeting to review progress to date and initiate action plans. I fully expect that as our campus climate initiatives move into action this semester, many of you will participate in one or more of these activities. My senior staff and I will be strongly engaged in the process and continuously measure progress to continue to build a stronger UWM community.

Another upcoming event focusing on campus climate, and specifically diversity, will be Inclusive Excellence Day 2012. This day of strategic planning will be facilitated by Professor Ceasar McDowell from MIT, who leads the civic-dialogue organization Engage the Power. If you're interested in participating, check the website at <http://mydevelopment.uwm.edu/longview.cfm?eventid=44986>.

As another small step to building campus community and promoting healthier lifestyles on campus, I have accepted an informal challenge from the president of Concordia University Wisconsin, Patrick Ferry. I agreed that UWM would participate in a friendly competition in the October 2012 Lakefront Marathon, which passes through both the UWM and Concordia campuses.

The competition, which will be called the Claws vs. Paws Challenge, is open to all UWM faculty, staff, and students. We will even have special training programs and awards for first-time marathoners.

I would like to especially thank Helaine Hickson for volunteering to serve as the UWM team coordinator. I think the concept of "fun" must be a component of any discussion of campus climate, and I think our upcoming defeat of Concordia University's runners next fall will be fun.

My interest in helping transform UWM into the best place to work is motivated each day as I continue to see the remarkable things faculty, staff, and students do across campus, in Milwaukee, and around the world. For me, seeing our activities firsthand has been one of the most enjoyable and inspirational parts of my job. Learning these fascinating and uplifting stories – real-life characters engaged in real-life narratives – has reinforced my

belief that I am extremely fortunate to be at this university at this time in its history. I couldn't be prouder to represent the people of this campus.

Our campus has big stories that get extensive media coverage:

- The Milwaukee Initiative building projects;
- Our growth of research funding and gifts;
- Partnerships and consortiums with area businesses and institutions;
- Faculty and staff compensation;
- State budget cuts; and
- Student tuition issues.

These stories are important and will continue to garner most of the media headlines.

But I've found these big stories are just a small part of our campus. We have stories to tell about individuals and programs that are even more compelling because they are making such a big impact on the lives of others.

These are our untold stories.

They do not just show UWM's economic impact. They highlight how our campus improves every aspect of human life – from fine arts and humanities, to health and human services, to education and the environment, and to the quality of life of people across the entire cultural and economic spectrum. Here are just two stories that illustrate UWM's impact on the Milwaukee community.

Hope House

During my Inauguration Week last October, I had an “aha” moment while volunteering at Hope House. Hope House is a dynamic community center on Milwaukee's South Side that is making a great difference in the lives of low-income families and the homeless.

Through the UWM Center for Volunteerism and Student Leadership, I spent a good part of the day stocking shelves at the Hope House food pantry, touring facilities, and learning about its community outreach programs. I was utterly amazed that every volunteer or staff member whom I met at Hope House had a direct connection to UWM – either as a student, employee, or alumnus of our university.

I was extremely impressed by the impact that the people of our campus were making in the lives of those less fortunate than themselves. It made me realize that there are so many people at UWM who selflessly give of themselves for the greater good. It is a story that is seldom told in the press, but defines who we are as a campus community.

Silver Spring Community Nursing Center

Later last fall, I had a second and equally profound experience while attending a celebration of an EPA grant awarded to the Westlawn Partnership for a Healthier

Environment. At the event, which was held at UWM's Silver Spring Community Nursing Center, my eyes were opened to how UWM's College of Nursing had truly transformed a Milwaukee community.

I learned from city and community leaders at the event that the Silver Spring Nursing Center has been a trusted presence in the Westlawn community for the past 25 years. The center has transformed the neighborhood's environment and given hundreds of underserved residents access to health care, and to educational and training opportunities.

Most important, the Silver Spring Nursing Center has given the Westlawn community pride in their neighborhood and hope for their future.

On the way back from the event, Interim Provost Johannes Britz and I talked about how we had never been prouder of the role UWM is playing to improve Milwaukee.

These stories bring to mind again a truth that I've stated publicly on several occasions:

UWM can't solve all of Milwaukee problems, but we are an important part to all of the solutions.

“Spotlight on Excellence”

This year, in addition to involving you in the “big” stories that develop, I plan to capture many of the “untold” stories that many of us do not hear about. These stories will highlight our great people and programs through new informational videos that we call the chancellor's monthly “Spotlight on Excellence.” The videos will tell stories from every corner of our campus. They will be linked to the chancellor's website and be used in other venues to promote and market our campus.

I invite all of you to suggest an individual or group to feature in a “Spotlight on Excellence” video. Think about an individual or group doing some remarkable activity, and let me know about them by going to my website, chancellor.uwm.edu, and clicking on the “Submit Feedback” link.

The first chancellor's “Spotlight on Excellence” video features UWM Associate Professor Anne Basting. Basting, who was our commencement speaker this past December, has made her career by melding diverse disciplines in unexpected ways. The video showcases TimeSlips, the seemingly magical program Basting created that brings those with Alzheimer's disease and dementia into the world of improvisation, “replacing the pressure to remember with the freedom to imagine.” She has garnered national attention, appearing on the “Today” show.

You can view the video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgSCRxQ_AIQ. My thanks to Mary Rinzel from our Communications and Media Relations Department for beautifully capturing Anne's story.

Several reasons motivated me to initiate the chancellor's "Spotlight on Excellence" series:

- We must take pride in our institution and its mission. Pride is believing in the value of one's work and being motivated, regardless of tangible rewards. Even in hard times like these, we are working in the service of a great purpose: informing and enriching the lives of thousands of people. I said earlier that the people who work and study here are UWM's greatest asset. Their stories put flesh on our mission and vision statements, giving a human face to our words.
- The people we serve will continue to be UWM's strongest advocates. UWM alumni have most generously volunteered to lead our capital campaigns, have donated substantial gifts, and have promoted public-private partnerships.
- The stories are our foundation to advocate for resources and support to fully realize our mission. They are powerful tools to convince others to provide our campus the financial support, including competitive compensation, that we need.

Again, if you have any suggestions for a "Spotlight on Excellence," please go to my website and click on the "Submit Feedback" link.

I thank you all for joining me today and for making a difference at UWM.