MOTION: That the Division of University Outreach at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee be renamed the School of Continuing Education

RATIONALE: School of Continuing Education more accurately and clearly describes our growing array of educational programs, our diverse teaching, research and service mission, while aligning us unambiguously with UWM’s primary mission, our peers around the United States and the perceptions of our students, grant funders and colleagues.

Why ‘Continuing Education’? The majority of our current students are adults seeking continuing education which focuses on the changing demands of their professions in human services, engineering, business, management, information technology, transportation, criminal justice and governmental affairs, as distinct from our previous predominance in the arts and personal enrichment areas. Our role has changed over the last 5 years to include:

- a growing array of credit programs delivered in partnership with UWM schools and colleges, either face-to-face or increasingly, on-line;
- a significant amount of extra-mural funding for research and instruction secured by our tenured and tenure track faculty and academic staff.

Our unit serves over 43,000 students a year. Recently, independent research of randomly selected students and others was conducted to help us understand our various constituents and increase the effectiveness of our marketing to grow our operations and impact. It revealed that:

- Our students see us as the first choice for quality continuing education, particularly in southeast Wisconsin, and also as an accessible entrée to UW Milwaukee;
- ‘Outreach’ is now an overused but ambiguous term. Program evaluations over the last three years and nearly 300 randomly selected current and past students, staff and UWM administrators most often associated ‘outreach’ with service delivery programs from hospitals, social agencies and groups such as the scouts, schooner project, museums, etc. The relationship of outreach to university-level continuing education was typically not grasped nor understood. The relationship of University Outreach to UWM was also not clear;
- The term ‘outreach’ was seen by many as synonymous with ‘extension’ and served to perpetuate the confusion with co-operative extension, an arm of UW Extension still primarily known for its agricultural support mission. That small part of our work which is still supported by UWEX funds is conducted through its continuing education arm, but, at present, this distinction is usually lost on students and partners because we don’t have ‘education’ in our name;
- The recent research also revealed that 79% of our students rated their educational experience with us as either ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’. A total of 92% rated it as ‘good’, ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’;
- A striking 68% of the students surveyed had no other past or current connection to UWM. However, as a result of their experience of our programs, their identification with the whole of UWM was strong and extremely positive;
- ‘Continuing Education’ was the term identified by 77% of our students and 72% of our staff and UWM peers as ‘a good’ or ‘the best’ single term to describe our broad mission. Students in the arts, humanities, sciences, human service agencies, professions, information technology industries and community reported feeling the term ‘Continuing Education’ was the most accurate, explanatory and inclusive - as distinct from ‘outreach’, ‘continuing studies’ or ‘professional development and training’;
- In the last five years many of our peer institutions in the US have changed their names in a similar way to better reflect and promote their programs, and align themselves to their university missions. To date over 170 fellow members (almost all of whom only offer credit programming in partnership with other campus schools and colleges) of our national professional body, the University Continuing Education
Association, now have names that include ‘school’ or ‘college’ and ‘continuing education’ or very similar, ‘continuing studies’, and/or ‘professional studies’;

- Other research shows that many of our students progress from noncredit or credit certificates developed by us and offered in partnership with other UWM schools and colleges to become regular degree-seeking students on campus. This pathway to increased student numbers (and tuition) for campus schools will only increase if our name is more clearly identified with higher education and UWM;

- As UWM moves into a capital campaign, there are obvious attendant alumni and development benefits of our more than 300,000 students of the last decade staying positively connected and involved with our university.

**Why ‘School of Continuing Education’?**

- Our unit has tenured and tenure-track faculty who, in addition to having an income generation requirement, all face the same merit, promotion and tenure standards and divisional committees as faculty in other UWM schools and colleges.

- Our multi-disciplinary faculty, while small in number, are among the most productive at UWM in terms of numbers of current peer-reviewed publications, curriculum development, extra-mural funding (e.g. NSF, Federal Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, Education, Small Business Administration, Justice, DPL, and foundations such as MacArthur, De Witt Wallace, Ford, Helen Bader, etc.), teaching evaluations, enduring community partnerships and service to their professions and beyond. Their work mirrors and extends that of their colleagues in other UWM schools and colleges on campus by providing the structure for transdisciplinary education.

- Our faculty teach in undergraduate and graduate programs on campus, and partner with campus faculty in Nursing, Education, Letters and Science, Engineering and Applied Science, Business, Social Welfare and Health Sciences. Together they do joint research, secure grant funding, develop curriculum for credit and noncredit programs; such as applied gerontology, trauma and corporate counseling, youth work, public administration, non-profit management, science education, therapy, internet technologies, project management, urban education and international studies. The term ‘school’ much more accurately describes this work and enhances the standing of our joint faculty activities with funding and publishing bodies.

- Credit and noncredit students report that employers are more inclined to reimburse tuition for programs provided by a recognizable school in a well-known higher education institution. They have expressed a preference for us to adopt a name that more closely reflects our higher education programs and UWM home.

- Our unit has a leadership role in the strategic development of e-learning at UWM. We initiated UWM’s foundation membership in the increasingly prominent Global University Alliance and through it we already offer two successful noncredit programs that will also soon be offered for credit through other schools at UWM. Four more e-learning certificate programs are under development. Identification as a School of UWM more accurately reflects this activity, benefits the whole university nationally and internationally and is very valuable to the success of our marketing;

- As the Milwaukee Idea is implemented across southeast Wisconsin and more broadly, reinforcing the presence of a UWM School of Continuing Education that is located downtown, in an area that is being rejuvenated and is attracting many more residents and visitors, can only benefit the whole of UWM. UWM’s faculty and staff and its reputation as an engaged, student-centered, urban research university will be the beneficiaries.

Approved by faculty and academic staff

Senator Christine Dunning
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