

## Northeast Wisconsin's universities and technical colleges collaborate on new Bachelor's of Applied Studies degree programs for working adults

Cheryl Hentz

### Meeting of the minds

There's no question in anybody's mind that Northeast Wisconsin is setting the standard for how to cooperate regionally.

RICHARD WELLS  
UW-OSHKOSH CHANCELLOR

A University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh program approved in April by the UW Board of Regents will make a bachelor's degree more accessible to a number of technical college graduates and provide the workplace leadership talents that Northeast Wisconsin employers say they need.

The Bachelor's of Applied Studies degree program is being launched jointly by UW-Oshkosh, Fox Valley Technical College, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College and UW-Fox Valley. A similar program at UW-Green Bay is expected to be passed by the Regents in May.

"This is really the first opportunity that people in Northeast Wisconsin are going to have to take their associate degree from a Wisconsin technical college, regardless of what it's in, and have it transferred in to the adult degree program at the university to give them 60 credits toward their bachelor's degree," explains Eric P. Craver, program manager in the Office of Adult Degree Programs at UW-Green Bay.

To sustain and grow a vibrant economy, Wisconsin needs more college-educated people, according to UW System President Kevin Reilly.

"In Wisconsin, we only have

about 25 percent of the population college-educated," says Reilly. Neighboring states such as Minnesota enjoy a 4 percent lead in college-educated adults and, not surprisingly, have roughly a \$4,000 advantage in per capita income compared to Wisconsin.

Meanwhile, a UW System/Wisconsin Technical College System committee reports that while Wisconsin ranks among the top 10 states in the proportion of residents with associate degrees — some 62,000 Northeast Wisconsin residents hold such degrees — it is in the bottom quarter of states in terms of those with bachelor's degrees.

"That has economic ramifications," says Marsha Rossiter, Ph.D., and assistant vice chancellor for the Division of Lifelong Learning and Community Engagement at UWO. "We know that income is directly related to educational level. And we know that our economy needs to attract and retain a highly qualified, flexible, knowledgeable workforce.

"We serve working adults in this region through our existing programs," Rossiter adds. "We're in close touch with many employers, both in the public and private sec-

tor, and we were certainly aware that there are many people who have associate degrees who are interested in earning a baccalaureate degree and moving into leadership or supervisory capacities in their organizations.”

The program will expand opportunities for career advancement and give employees the knowledge and skills that Northeast Wisconsin firms have said they will need in the future. It also will help reduce a huge shortage of bachelor degree-educated residents in Wisconsin.

The innovative Bachelor of Applied Studies degree focuses on leadership and organizational studies. It’s a unique collaboration between UWO, UW-Green Bay, Wisconsin technical colleges and two-year UW colleges and is aimed at working adults with associate degrees from technical colleges.

The program is aimed at people with associate degrees in applied science who want to move into jobs such as program managers, project

coordinators and team leaders in the public and private sector. It will focus on leadership, communication and project planning.

The program was originally conceived by Northeastern Wisconsin Educational Resource Alliance (NEW ERA), a consortium of area public universities and colleges whose goal is to provide quality, seamless programs to better meet area educational needs. It complements the efforts of New North, which is a collaborative effort with chambers of commerce, economic development groups and corporations working to advance job growth in the 18-county region of Northeast Wisconsin.

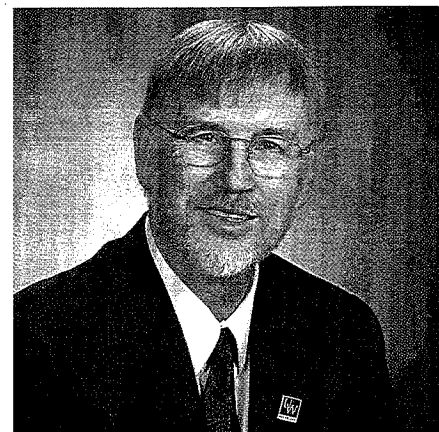
“Individuals and employers in the region need additional options for baccalaureate completion, and this will be an excellent new option,” Susan May, Fox Valley Technical College executive vice president and chief academic officer says in a press release. “Combining the in-depth technical skills gained through an associate degree at a

technical college with accelerated delivery focused on leadership and organizational studies, UW-Oshkosh will yield a very powerful degree.”

The program demonstrates how post-secondary academic institutions are working together to maximize their unique curriculums, by offering a significantly longer and broader range of degree paths for their student bodies, says Jerry Murphy, executive director of New North.

“Obviously, this applied baccalaureate degree has more connectivity to the business community and the foundation business background of New North,” he says. “These degrees are a combination of technical degrees and the broader range thinking skills that go with a baccalaureate degree. So it fits very, very comfortably into the manufacturing concentration or the type of business and industry that is pretty much the backbone or the foundation of New North’s economy.”

Jim Perry, NEW ERA incoming >>



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JIM PERRY, UW-FOX VALLEY  
DEAN/NEW ERA INCOMING CHAIR

chair and UW-Fox Valley's campus executive officer/dean, agrees, saying the program will provide workers a path to educational and career advancement.

"This is an outstanding example of how the area's educational institutions can work together to better meet the needs of the people and employers of the region," he says.

UWO Chancellor Richard Wells agrees that this is a wonderful opportunity for the UW system in Northeast Wisconsin and New North to showcase the tremendous collaboration going on in the region.

"There's no question in anybody's mind that Northeast Wisconsin is setting the standard for how to cooperate regionally," he says. **Mp**