

From: **Chancellor's Office** <chancellor@uwgb.edu>
To:
Subject: Update on UW-Green Bay Marinette Campus
Date: 19.01.2024 20:00:19 (+01:00)



Dear UW-Green Bay Faculty and Staff,

On November 14, 2023, I visited the Marinette campus to discuss with faculty and staff changes that we intended to make for that location. We discussed a path forward for the Marinette location and that we would immediately begin negotiating with Marinette County on how we would achieve our goals. Our discussion centered on acknowledging the enrollment challenges we are having in Marinette, but that we had a plan to reframe what success means to us in Marinette.

We learned yesterday that someone released the internal meeting notes to the Marinette County Board and the media. Our conversations with the County are still occurring, but our internal conversation has become public prior to us completing negotiations. We will not comment on the ongoing discussions. However, today I am sending you the draft communication we were working on that reflects the internal conversations we had back in November so that we are transparent internally and externally on our intentions.

In collaboration with Marinette County, we are working to make a paradigm shift to redefine how we will measure success, provide value to our constituents, and invest in UW-Green Bay's location in Marinette.

Since the merger of the former UW Colleges, we have thought differently about how to embrace our locations in Manitowoc, Marinette, and Sheboygan. We were leaders in openly stating that we would not compete with the technical colleges in our region for associate degree offerings and instead highlight select 4-year degrees on each campus that could best serve each distinct community. We declared that all students at any location we serve are in fact all UW-Green Bay students and therefore, we equalized pay for all our faculty and staff that serve each location and created one governance and administrative structure for us all to exist under. We added the Rising Phoenix program which now educates 367 students primarily in rural areas who can earn an associate degree with us while still in high school. We have experimented and tried to find the right collection of offerings at each location that honors the investment and trust that each county has placed in us to be locally relevant.

These actions have placed our locations in Manitowoc and Sheboygan on positive trajectories of increasing enrollments and stable futures. Our location in Marinette has not experienced the same trajectory. Despite initial enrollment gains, we recognize that persisting on the current path will inevitably lead to closure. Instead of waiting for a closure, we have chosen to proactively rethink our approach to maintain a meaningful presence in Marinette.

Beginning in the fall of 2024, we will suspend in-person classes at the Marinette location. But this is just a small part of the story. It is important to note that only 14 of our classes this fall at Marinette were taught purely in person. The rest were online or streamed across multiple locations. In the fall, we will keep classrooms with streaming capabilities active for courses that are taught at Marinette or coming to Marinette from other UW-Green Bay locations. These changes will also deepen our connection to the Northeast Wisconsin Technical College campus that is down the road from our location. We have articulated programs with NWTC that connect to UW-Green Bay degrees and will seek to expand the pipeline of students in Marinette who start at NWTC and finish with us at any location. Rather than compete with them, we should complement the outstanding work NWTC is doing and provide streamlined educational options for people to choose from.

We will increase our investment in Marinette based on three pillars. First, we know that the people in Marinette value the Herb Williams Theatre. We do, too, and therefore will invest further to make it the flagship theatre northwest of Green Bay. Just like UW-Green Bay has revitalized the Weidner Center on the Green Bay Campus, we will do the same for the Williams Theatre in Marinette and provide programming including art exhibits, events, lectures, performances, and education that engages people of all ages. We already see this working based on attendance at recent events. Second, the location will serve as an access point for students and community members for educational resources. We will expand camps, non-credit educational offerings that are responsive to the requests of the community, and learning opportunities through our Lifelong Learning Institute. These additions will help increase the number of people benefitting from a UW-Green Bay education and advance the quality of life and economy for all people that live in the region, not just primarily those of traditional college age. Third, we plan to invite third party access to facilities that can enhance the capital investment Marinette County has made at the location. We are working to sign a new agreement with Marinette County that will ensure that we can make great use of the infrastructure at the campus.

We acknowledge this will be a painful transition for those in Marinette that have endured countless campus management changes, but we must embrace a new model rather than trying to cling to the past. It is our job to be responsible stewards of our resources. Rather than try to perpetuate a broken economic model, we will reallocate our resources to the benefit of the most people possible in the area. Having a UW-Green Bay location in Marinette is central to our mission as a regional comprehensive university with a 16-county footprint that spans the coastline from Sheboygan to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. We are not leaving. Yes, it will look different, but it will not close. We want our campus in Marinette to be an educational asset for generations to come. This change directly addresses the tremendous upheaval that is happening right now in higher education as referenced in [this article](#) from the Chronicle of Higher Education. It is why it is not a good strategy to do the same thing and hope for a different result. Instead, we are creating the opportunity for a brighter future for our location by listening and learning from our experience thus far in Marinette and redefining a path forward to focus on a likely path to success. We are proud to make this shift in collaboration with Marinette County to best meet the needs of the community as a higher education partner.

Best,

Mike

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