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UW System committee supports Blugold Commitment

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EAU CLAIRE — A UW System Board of Regents committee unanimously voted today to support the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire's Blugold Commitment, an initiative that will allow the university to maintain and enhance the high-impact learning experiences students say they value.

The regents' Business, Finance, and Audit Committee recommended that the full Board of Regents approve the proposal, which will be funded through an increase in differential tuition paid by UW-Eau Claire students. The committee included with its recommendation a requirement that by May UW-Eau Claire provide regents with a more detailed plan for how Blugold Commitment funds will be allocated.

"Students have been actively involved in developing and modifying the Blugold Commitment, an initiative that will allow us to preserve and enhance the distinctive UW-Eau Claire experience in the face of state funding constraints," Chancellor Brian Levin-Stankevich said. "We know high-impact programs lead to student retention and student success. But those experiences require more faculty and more resources. The Blugold Commitment will allow all of our students to have these experiences. I'm pleased with the committee's actions and look forward to talking with the full Board of Regents tomorrow."

The full Board of Regents will consider the proposal during a 9 a.m. Feb. 5 meeting.

Committee members approved the proposal following a lengthy discussion, which included presentations by several UW-Eau Claire students who supported the proposal as well as comments from students who opposed the Blugold Commitment.

Two UW-Eau Claire alumni also spoke in support of the proposal, noting the lifelong value of having a degree from an institution like UW-Eau Claire, which enjoys a reputation for excellence.

"The reputation of the institution where you earn your undergraduate degree has great importance throughout your lifetime," said JoAnne Brandes, a UW-Eau Claire alumna and

former member of the Board of Regents. "I don't want to see high-impact programs go away at UW-Eau Claire; I want to see them enhanced."

The students supporting the program noted the importance of providing opportunities for more students to participate in high-impact practices, such as global and multicultural immersion experiences, collaborative undergraduate research and internships.

With the Blugold Commitment, differential tuition — a separate tuition above the tuition set annually by the Board of Regents — would total \$1,200 per year, phased in over four years. To assure that UW-Eau Claire continues to maintain access for low- and middle-income families, up to 40 percent of the tuition increase will be used to provide grants for students with need.

The Blugold Commitment asks students to invest in more of the high-impact educational practices that prepare them to succeed when they graduate, Levin-Stankevich said. It also asks faculty and staff to commit to providing an integrated curriculum and more experiential learning, and it asks alumni and friends to commit to raising more scholarship funds, he said.

The additional monies raised through the increased differential tuition rates would enable the university to hire up to 50 more faculty and staff, Levin-Stankevich said. The investment would do a number of things, including expanding global and intercultural immersion experiences, collaborative research and internships. It also would enrich students' academic experiences through enhanced advising and more integrated graduation requirements, he said, adding that it also will give faculty more time for mentoring.

Levin-Stankevich announced the Blugold Commitment in August 2009. In the months since, he and other campus leaders have worked closely with elected students and sought input from all students, parents, faculty, staff, alumni and other friends of the university. A survey about the Blugold Commitment was completed during the fall semester by 3,672 students, the highest response ever for any UW-Eau Claire student survey, referendum or election.

The UW-Eau Claire Student Senate voted in December 2009 to support the Blugold Commitment.

Details about the Blugold Commitment can be found on the [Blugold Commitment Web site](#).