

# UW-Stevens Point: Unveils plan for new kind of regional university

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As it approaches its 125th year, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point plans to continue to evolve in a way university officials say could become a national model – by making programs more career-focused while weaving a liberal arts education throughout the curriculum.

A plan for a new kind of regional university was unveiled to UW-Stevens Point students and faculty and staff members earlier today.

“We’re creating new possibilities for students of all ages,” Chancellor Bernie Patterson said. “This new kind of regional university for the 21st century will produce graduates who are among the best prepared professionals in Wisconsin, giving them not only a very competitive advantage in their careers, but also in life. These priorities reflect the ongoing spirit of the Wisconsin Idea.”

Patterson and Provost Greg Summers said the new vision for UW-Stevens Point is being driven by the expectations of students and parents and a desire to meet the needs of Northcentral Wisconsin.

“Our students are laser-focused on the cost of higher education and the return they’re going to get on their investment. They’re looking for careers with multiple pathways and the skills they know they need to succeed in those careers,” Summers said. “That includes a strong foundation in the liberal arts. We’re going to build that same career-focused majors into everything we do at UW-Stevens Point, from how we advise to the way we teach and how students learn.”

As part of the proposal, UW-Stevens Point’s academic departments would be

reconfigured within several new interdisciplinary schools that house degree programs. They would focus on professional outcomes, each aligned with the talent needs of the region's communities and businesses. Schools would include existing groups of programs in areas such as natural resources, health and wellness, business, education and the performing arts, as well as new configurations such as design, human services and information science.

UW-Stevens Point would also create two new entities within its University College – the Institute for the Wisconsin Idea and the Center for Critical Thinking. The institute, staffed by faculty from several liberal arts disciplines, will create a stronger, more focused and enriching liberal arts core curriculum to complement the university's career-focused majors. The curriculum will place special emphasis on critical thinking.

Through the Center for Critical Thinking, training will extend to local high schools, employers, nonprofits and other community partners. Both units are intended to place the liberal arts at the heart of the university's curriculum in ways that are integrated with professional education.

The proposal calls for the elimination of six majors, less than half of the number of proposed program cuts announced earlier this year.

The university was able to save programs because of faculty retirements and resignations resulting from deficits and decreasing enrollment, said Summers, and because of the willingness of current faculty members to envision how their programs would fit into the new curricular alignment.

Majors slated for elimination are French, German, Geoscience, Geography, History and two (BFA) concentrations within Art. UW-Stevens Point will continue offering Art (BA), Graphic Design (BFA) and History for teaching certification, all areas with higher enrollment. UW-Stevens Point also plans new programs in Geographic Information Science at both the bachelor's and master's levels.

All students currently enrolled in these major eventually discontinued will be able to complete their degrees. Courses in each of these disciplines will continue to be taught at UW-Stevens Point as part of the general education program, as required classes in other majors, and through new interdisciplinary majors.

This proposal will be reviewed by various committees within the UW-Stevens Point

Common Council. The chancellor will then review recommendations from shared governance and submit his final recommendation to the UW System Board of Regents. A final plan must be in place by spring 2019 to coincide with the submission of the next fiscal year's budget. The first stages of the reorganization would be implemented by July 2020.

Find more information as well as background on how UW-Stevens Point's plan was created with input from students and faculty and staff members at [www.uwsp.edu/pointforward](http://www.uwsp.edu/pointforward).