

UW-Eau Claire Foundation: Receives \$10 million gift

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(Eau Claire, WI) — The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Foundation has received a \$10 million gift, the largest investment in an endowed fund in the university's history. This lead gift is helping launch the public phase of the Foundation's Sustaining Human Innovation capital campaign.

An anonymous donor on the Foundation's board of directors announced their initial campaign gift to the Foundation at its recent annual meeting and as the board finalized plans for the \$125 million capital campaign. The gift will create an endowed fund where the university will be able to focus the annual income to establish areas of distinction in health and human wellbeing.

"We are thrilled to begin the public phase of this campaign with this transformational gift," Kimera Way, president of the UW-Eau Claire Foundation, said. "The support we continue to receive from our donors, our alumni and our partners has positioned UW-Eau Claire to achieve national distinction. We want to lead in undergraduate research, health and human wellbeing and equity, diversity and inclusion. We have a bold vision for the future, and this gift and this campaign will help us achieve our strategic goals."

The Sustaining Human Innovation Campaign outlines investments in people, programs and facilities, all of which align with UW-Eau Claire's strategic plan. The quiet phase of the campaign began in 2017, and more than \$70 million has been raised to date, thanks to the \$10 million gift announced today. The focus of the campaign is to direct support to sustainable, renewable investments that will ensure UW-Eau Claire can continue to offer students a transformative education for

years to come. The campaign will run through June 2026.

“Sustaining excellence is only possible through remarkable philanthropic efforts, and gifts of this magnitude set a course for success into the future,” Chancellor James Schmidt said. “The phenomenal research and learning taking place on campus every day is possible thanks to the support of our alumni and our community partners. I can’t say enough about the commitments our alumni, donors and friends have made to this campaign, which will sustain our mission to offer students a life-changing educational experience.”

The launch of the public campaign comes after years of record-breaking philanthropy at UW-Eau Claire. That philanthropy is evident in the new \$5.5 million Flesch Family Welcome Center on campus, a project that was paid for completely through private funds. Next spring, work will begin on the Sonnentag Event Center, a project made possible by a generous gift of land and cash from John and Carolyn Sonnentag.

In addition, nearly \$10 million in new endowed scholarship funds has been received thanks to the early success in the quiet phase of the Sustaining Human Innovation Campaign. One of the campaign goals is to expand the Foundation’s ability to serve specific populations, including students from historically excluded populations, first-generation college students, students with financial need and students pursuing degrees in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). In collaboration with Mayo Clinic Health System, the Foundation is securing funding for biomedical innovators and those with a specific emphasis in the area of health and human wellbeing. The campaign is focused on securing investments that will generate consistent annual funding for renewable scholarships, research opportunities, internships and other high-impact experiences for students.

“As an institution of higher learning, we have an obligation to prepare students for lives of purpose and to serve the world,” Way said. “That has been UW-Eau Claire’s mission for more than 100 years. Yet the threats we face are clear: reductions in state funding, frozen tuition and increased competition for a declining pool of college-age students. The task of defining and sustaining UW-Eau Claire’s future is formidable. But within every challenge lies opportunity. We have a passion to

elevate student success through scholarship support and innovative instruction. We have the tools to develop national signature programs and the strategy to pair them with our ongoing commitment to exemplary education.

“The financial investments of alumni and friends in the Sustaining Human Innovation Campaign today are the most vital resources we need to sustain UW-Eau Claire’s future.”

Schmidt said the history of support and the commitment to excellence that has long been a part of life for all Blugolds, students, faculty, staff and alumni has created a virtuous circle of success.

“Philanthropy is the margin of excellence at UW-Eau Claire,” Schmidt said. “The culture of philanthropy at UW-Eau Claire sets us apart from most regional comprehensive universities across the country.”

Schmidt added that past leadership established a culture of excellence that is thriving today.

“It is because of that early foundation of excellence that our Blugold alumni often point to their experience at UWEC as setting the stage for their success. We are so grateful that they are willing to pay it forward to ensure that future generations of Blugolds also will experience that kind of transformational educational opportunity.”