

NEWS RELEASE

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UW-Stout seeing positive signs of enrollment growth

One year after pandemic, first-year student retention and other indicators are strong

Story Link

Photos attached

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Menomonie, Wis. — University of Wisconsin-Stout is seeing a number of positive enrollment trends, one year after returning to normal on-campus operations following the pandemic.

With the 2022-23 academic year underway, indicators of an improving enrollment outlook include:

- Record levels of interest for fall 2023
- Increased retention rate among first-to-second-year students
- Record number of art and design students
- Record number of student athletes
- A strong increase in international students.

Although enrollment overall is down slightly this year based on early estimates, the positive signs point to a full, post-pandemic rebound soon.

The retention rate for students beginning their second year at UW-Stout is 71%. That's up 3% and back to the pre-pandemic level. The rate matches the four-year average from 2016 to 2019, said Laura King, vice chancellor for Enrollment and Strategic Initiatives.

"UW-Stout is seeing positive indications that enrollment is ~~improving, beginning to turn around. Although we had hoped for a quicker rebound this fall, w~~improving. We know that enrollment trends in higher education are similar to what we are experiencing locally and regionally. ~~W~~Over the past year, we have invested time and energy to make the student experience more personalized and focused on the success of all learners," King said.

“At UW-Stout, we believe that our unique approach to higher education is a difference-maker for our graduates and employers. We focus on learning by doing, connecting students with leaders in their field, and building leading-edge programs through our engagement with industry partners. We are Stout Proud as a community and want others to experience the personal difference UW-Stout can make in their lives,” she said.

UW-Stout has more than 1,200 students in the [School of Art and Design](#), the most in school history. In terms of students, it’s the largest art and design program of any college or university in the Upper Midwest.

The School of Art and Design offers eight undergraduate programs and a Master of Fine Arts in design.

The [Pre-Bachelor of Fine Arts](#), which began in 2021, is helping attract more students. They can explore their options, create a portfolio and discover if a BFA is right for them.

“The Pre-BFA has demonstrated the positive impact that community building and a shared first-year experience can have toward enrollment growth and campus retention,” said Dave Beck, director of the school.

“A School of Art and Design like ours is a natural fit for a polytechnic university that emphasizes hands-on experiences and career preparation,” Beck added.

Overall, UW-Stout has an employment rate of 98.4% within one year for graduates, the best employment rate in the UW System.

In [Athletics](#), the university has more than 700 student athletes for the first time in university history. A new women’s lacrosse team, which begins play in the spring, and the esports team are helping attract more students. UW-Stout has 19 teams.

The esports team, which is coed, is the first and still the only such team in the UW System.

“Our current roster management strategies continue to have a positive effect on overall campus enrollment,” said Duey Naatz, athletic director.

Among international students, UW-Stout saw a 14% increase this year, also returning to a near pre-pandemic level. The university currently has 189 international students and strong interest for spring semester and fall semester 2023.

This number is expected to continue to grow because of new programs and initiatives, said Scott Pierson, director of the [Office of International Education](#).

The university also has more than 200 study abroad options, including a new offering this year for incoming first-year students, [JUMPSTART: Scotland](#).

Two recent grant announcements also could boost new student enrollment by supporting underrepresented students. The [McNair Scholars Program](#) was renewed by the U.S. Department of Education. [Fostering Success](#), which supports students who were part of the foster care system, received new funding from the state.

Fostering Success was the first such program in the UW System and has served as a model for other System programs.

A new [Wisconsin Tuition Promise](#) program through the UW System will provide additional support to students beginning in 2023.

Despite impacts from the pandemic, UW-Stout moved up in [five key categories](#) in the [2022-23 Best Colleges](#) lists by U.S. News & World Report magazine, including its Engineering ranking, which has improved 40 positions in the past two years.

UW-Stout is [Wisconsin's Polytechnic University](#), with a focus on applied learning, collaboration with business and industry, and career outcomes. Learn more via the [FOCUS2030](#) strategic plan.

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