

Chairs' Corner – March 2009
UW Bothell and UW Tacoma campuses

TO: UW Foundation, Deans, University Advancement Staff
FROM: Daniel J. Evans, Chair, UW Foundation
Lyn Grinstein, Vice Chair, UW Foundation
Orin C. Smith, Immediate Past Chair, UW Foundation

Dear Friends,

It will soon be the fourth anniversary of the legislative mandate that turned UW Bothell and UW Tacoma into four-year universities. When the two campuses opened in 1990, you will recall, they were limited (at the undergraduate level) to two-year upper-division programs serving transfer students from community colleges. That remains the primary mission for both. But in spring 2005 the state directed UWB and UWT to begin admitting freshmen by fall 2006. Now that the two campuses are teaching their third freshman class, we thought you might be interested in a progress report.

In brief: the transition at both campuses has gone extremely well, especially given the lightning speed at which the faculties and administrations had to create whole new lower-division curricula, student services, admissions systems, etc.

It helped that both campuses welcomed their new status. But each took its own path. “We were moving so fast,” says Tacoma Chancellor Pat Spakes, who arrived just as the legislation was signed, “that there wasn’t really time to do much conferring with Bothell.” And of course the two campuses, while sharing an interdisciplinary approach to education, are strikingly distinctive in many ways. UWB’s modernistic campus, set in a natural landscape that has helped shape its programs, is “co-located” with Cascadia Community College and serves mainly the suburban areas north and east of Seattle. UWT is an urban campus, housed in handsomely renovated industrial buildings and tied closely to Tacoma itself and the regeneration of its downtown.

At neither campus does freshman year look much like the Seattle experience, even though both programs fulfill UW general-education requirements. For starters, there are no large lecture courses. At Bothell, the year is organized around the “Discovery Core,” a yearlong series of imaginative interdisciplinary seminars. All freshmen share this core program, choosing one or two electives each quarter to fill out their schedules and explore possible majors. “The Discovery Core is a very intensive program,” says Chancellor Kenyon Chan, “and we’re very proud of it. It’s received national attention, and it has changed the character of UWB.”

Tacoma freshmen study in a “cohort” of the same 50 students throughout the year. “We are very committed to the model of learning communities,” says Chancellor Spakes, citing nationally validated “best practices.” All the cohorts move through four or five core courses, each course team taught, each focused on a broad area of knowledge (such

as science) but with an interdisciplinary “global theme” that continues through the year. As at Bothell, electives fill out the schedule.

With almost three years of experience under their belts, faculty, staff, and students at both Bothell and Tacoma are now engaged in an extensive review of the first-year programs, to see how they can be made even better.

For both campuses, student word-of-mouth is clearly very positive. There are now about 475 freshmen and sophomores at UWT (out of some 3000 total students). Freshman applications have increased every year, and next fall’s class may reach 250. At UWB, the numbers “have exceeded all our expectations,” says Chancellor Chan. There are 250 freshmen this year (out of 2300 total students) and the number is likely to reach 325 next year. “More students are now naming UWB as their first choice, and we’re getting applications from younger siblings of the first pioneering class. We’re even beginning to get out-of-state and international applications—students who want an intensive, small-university environment.”

Meanwhile, other initiatives on both campuses are addressing state needs within local contexts. A couple of examples among many:

In April, on Earth Day, the City of Tacoma will break ground on its new Center for Urban Waters building on the Thea Foss Waterway. The building originated in Tacoma’s need for a new water-treatment plant, but with UWT participation it has evolved into a major marine research center, dedicated to cleaning up and sustaining the waters of South Puget Sound. When the building opens next year, it will house city facilities, the headquarters of the Puget Sound Partnership, and UWT laboratories and teaching space.

Thanks to its recently endowed Port of Tacoma Chair—funded by the Port, the City of Tacoma, the shipping-terminal operator SSA Marine, and the UW’s Matching Gift Initiative—UWT has hired an outstanding scientist to take full advantage of the new facilities. Dr. Joel Baker, a leading researcher on water pollution in marine environments, arrived a year ago. He is already playing a key role not only in UWT environmental research and education but also in the Puget Sound Partnership (as chair of its science panel). The synergies envisioned for the Urban Waters facility—among UWT, public agencies, and citizens—are full of promise.

UWB, with its finger on the pulse of another public need, last year won a federal grant to fund a training program for nursing faculty. “This state desperately needs more nurses,” says Chancellor Chan, “and therefore it desperately needs more educators of nurses.” UWB nursing chair Mary Baroni, with much-appreciated assistance from Representative Jay Inslee, developed the successful proposal. The project brings together a regional consortium of community- and technical- college nursing programs. Bothell faculty will work with this consortium to expand the UWB Master of Nursing program, in order to train more nursing faculty to teach at the partner colleges—whose nursing alumni practice throughout the state.

For both Bothell and Tacoma, as each continues to develop new programs, the current economic climate means a difficult balancing act. “We are cutting budgets severely,” says Kenyon Chan. “But we also have new degrees—such as a BS in Electrical Engineering—up for approval by the HEC Board. Our enrollment is growing dramatically, and we have to be prepared for the students who will come. We have to invest in the future.”

Dan, Lyn, and Orin

Looking Back

- **Contributions July 1, 2008 through February 28, 2009 total \$210,441,178.**
- The February Report of Contributions is attached and contains fundraising details.

Looking Ahead

- **Friday, April 24, 2009.** Foundation Board Meeting, 8:30 a.m. coffee; 9:00-11:00 a.m. meeting. Location: The Floyd and Delores Jones Playhouse, 4045 University Way NE, Seattle.
- **Friday, September 11, 2009.** Foundation Board Meeting, 8:00 a.m. coffee; 8:30-11:30 a.m. meeting