Dear colleagues and students:

I'm writing today with a brief update on the budget and enrollment issues I last discussed with you in a note shared back in November. Since that time we have been attempting to cope with the impact of a slightly smaller overall student enrollment here at UWL. And now we can see that our enrollment will not increase substantially in the coming 2016-17 academic year. True, we are working hard to recruit a good-sized first-year class of 2,050 for the fall; however, this will not be enough of an enrollment increase to reverse the trend of a slight decline in students—approximately 150 in total—that is spread throughout our sophomore, junior and senior classes. Consequently, in the coming academic year we'll have less tuition to use to support our operations; in particular, we will not be able to have as many of the "Growth, Quality & Access" (GQ&A) faculty and staff positions that we fund entirely through tuition dollars. (For more information about the GQ&A program please visit http://www.uwlax.edu/Academic-Affairs/GQA/).

Earlier this year, we froze 3 GQ&A staff positions and 11 GQ&A instructional positions to account for about $1 million of our shortfall; and now we project needing to cut an additional $600,000 in instructional positions for 2016-17. This is not good news, and I apologize for the concern it will cause in our campus community.

Our CFO, Provost and Deans are working hard to reduce the impact of the budget cuts, but we know some positions will be lost. It's important to note that UWL will not be cutting any tenure-track positions, and we are committed to honoring all existing employee contracts. However, as we try to determine priorities for filling vacant positions, new and continuing contracts may be issued later than normal due to the complexity involved in trying to determine how we are offering enough of the courses our students need for the 2016-17 academic year. At this point, no decisions have been made about the positions that might need to be eliminated, but we anticipate the process will be completed by the end of March. I also regret having to tell you that in addition to losing positions, most instructors and programs will be asked to increase class sizes where there is capacity.

Adding to the challenges we're facing is the fact that the State of Wisconsin's 2017-19 biennial budget prospects do not appear encouraging for the UW System and UWL. In particular, our state's economy continues to be sluggish, and health care costs are rising dramatically. Consequently, UWL's Joint Planning and Budget Committee will need to start preparing for more state budget cuts to UWL—a situation that will play a key role in our upcoming strategic planning process. Despite all these challenges, though, our student profile at UWL remains strong, and even with planned cuts to instruction our student-to-faculty ratio will remain markedly lower than it was in the years before we implemented our Growth, Quality, and Access program.

We'll continue to work through all these issues with our Joint Planning and Budget Committee and campus shared governance groups. I'll also be holding a campus open forum in March where my leadership team colleagues and I will eager to discuss the university's budget situation and answer your questions in detail. Until then, thanks for your patience and continued dedication to UWL. I hope you'll agree when I say that we remain one of the most outstanding public comprehensive universities in the nation!

Best wishes,

Joe

Joe Gow, Chancellor
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse