MEMORANDUM

TO: Paula Knudson
   Vice Chancellor/Dean of Students
FROM: Josh Whitman
       Director of Athletics
DATE: June 9, 2014
RE: Annual Report – Intercollegiate Athletics

It has been another successful year for UW-L Athletics. Our more than 550 student-athletes, competing in 19 intercollegiate sports, continue to prove that they are among the nation’s best and brightest. They are leaders in the classroom, role models in the local community, and winners in their respective sports. They have wholeheartedly embraced our mission: to be champions, in sport, in school, and in life.

Success on the National Stage

The Learfield Sports Directors’ Cup measures an athletic program’s overall success by assigning points based on a school’s finish in 18 select sports. By this measure, UW-L has established itself as one of the nation’s best. In 2013-14, UW-L finished 13th in the country, which was a three-spot improvement over our 16th place finish a year ago. This was the second-highest finish among WIAC schools, behind only UW-Whitewater. In the last four years, our finish has improved steadily: 32nd in 2010-11, 28th in 2011-12, 16th in 2012-13, and now 13th in 2013-14. UW-L is one of only nine institutions to place in the Top 35 of the Directors’ Cup all 19 years that the award has existed.

During 2013-14, six UW-L teams – men’s cross country, gymnastics, men’s and women’s indoor track and field, and men’s and women’s outdoor track and field – finished in the Top 4 in the country, including a national title in men’s indoor track and field. The national championship increased UW-L’s total number of team national championships to 63, the most of any school in our conference and among the most of any school in the nation.

- National Champion – Men’s Indoor Track & Field. Following competition hosted by Nebraska Wesleyan University on the Lincoln campus of the University of Nebraska, the Eagles won their 17th indoor national championship,
the most of any school in the country. UW-L’s team has brought home the national indoor title in 10 of the last 14 years. Coach Josh Buchholtz was named Midwest Region and National Indoor Coach of the Year by the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association (USTFCCCA).

- **2nd Place Finish, NCAA Championships – Men’s Outdoor Track & Field.** The Eagles placed second at the NCAA Division III Outdoor Track & Field Championships, held at Ohio Wesleyan University. Coach Josh Buchholtz was named Midwest Region Outdoor Coach of the Year by the USTFCCCA.

- **2nd Place Finish, NCAA Championships – Women’s Indoor Track & Field.** UW-L finished second for the fifth time in school history. The Eagles had 65.0 team points, two points behind the national champion.

- **3rd Place Finish, NCAA Championships – Men’s Cross Country.** Coach Derek Stanley, in his second year at the helm for the Eagles, led the program to a third-place finish. It was the 11th Top 3 finish in school history, a mark that includes three national championships.

- **4th Place Finish, NCAA Championships – Women’s Outdoor Track & Field.** The Eagles posted the 15th Top 5 finish in school history. Head coach Pat Healy was named Midwest Region Outdoor Coach of the Year by the USTFCCA. He has led his teams to Top 5 finishes at 15 of the last 32 indoor and outdoor national competitions. Assistant coach Katie Wagner was named the Outdoor Assistant Coach of the Year and Midwest Region Outdoor Assistant Coach of the Year by the USTFCCCA.

- **4th Place Finish, NCGA Championships – Gymnastics.** The Eagles placed fourth at the national championships. UW-L has won four of the last seven National Collegiate Gymnastics Association (NCGA) titles, and the program’s 15 total championships remain the most of any school in the country.

- **19th Place Finish, NCAA Championships – Women’s Cross Country.** The Eagles’ 19th place finish was the program’s 28th Top 25 finish in school history.

- **21st Place Finish, NCAA Championships – Wrestling.** UW-L finished 21st at the national meet. It was the first time during the eight-year tenure of head coach Dave Malecek that the Eagles finished out of the Top 4. The program has 19 Top 10 finishes in school history.
• **39th Place Finish, NCAA Championships – Women’s & Men’s Swimming & Diving.** Second-year coach Charlie King took members of the men’s and women’s teams to the national meet, where both teams finished 39th.

• **Regional Appearance, NCAA Championships – Baseball.** The Eagles earned their second appearance in the NCAA Division III Midwest Regional in the last three seasons under head coach Chris Schwarz.

Individually, UW-L student-athletes captured six national titles during 2013-14, bringing the school’s total to 200 individual national championships in its history. UW-L student-athletes also earned 72 All-America honors during 2013-14.

Men’s and women’s track and field athletes accounted for all six national titles. In men’s track & field, Dominique Neloms captured the indoor long jump title while Grant Havard won the discus throw at the outdoor championships. In women’s track & field, Bria Halama took the national indoor title in the triple jump. UW-L captured the women’s indoor and outdoor 4x400-meter relay crowns as well as the outdoor 4x100-meter relay. Bailey Alston was named the Women’s Indoor Field National Athlete of the Year by the USTFCCCA.

**WIAC Accomplishments**

UW-L had a successful year within the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. In WIAC All-Sports Awards, UW-L captured the men’s award for the second straight year and 18th time in school history. The Eagles were second in the WIAC Women’s All-Sports and WIAC Combined All-Sports Awards in 2013-14.

During the year, UW-L finished first or second in the conference in 12 of the 19 sports that the school sponsors, including eight WIAC team titles. This increased to 20 the number of conference titles that UW-L has won in the last three years. This year’s conference champions:

• **WIAC Champion – Men’s Cross Country.** The men captured their second straight WIAC championship and their league-best 32nd overall.

• **WIAC Champion – Women’s Cross Country.** The women took their first league title since 2006 and seventh in school history.

• **WIAC Champion – Women’s Swimming & Diving.** The Eagles won their third consecutive conference title and 14th conference title in program history.
- **WIAC Champion – Gymnastics.** UW-L won its 22nd title in school history and 17th in the last 21 seasons.
- **WIAC Champion – Men’s Indoor Track & Field.** This was UW-L’s 13th consecutive indoor championship, its 23rd in 25 years, and its 39th overall.
- **WIAC Champion – Women’s Indoor Track & Field.** UW-L won the women’s indoor title for the 22nd time in school history. It was their sixth title in eight seasons.
- **WIAC Champion – Men’s Outdoor Track & Field.** UW-L won its 24th consecutive outdoor championship. It was the 50th title in school history. The 50 conference titles are the most in the history of the WIAC, regardless of sport.
- **WIAC Champion – Women’s Outdoor Track & Field.** The women’s program captured its league-leading 29th outdoor championship and its seventh in the last eight seasons.

As always, UW-L had numerous individual WIAC champions and selections to the All-Conference teams in their respective sports. Other notable individual accomplishments for both student-athletes and staff:

- **WIAC Women’s Cross Country Athlete of the Year – Laura Mead.** Mead, UW-L’s top runner in all seven meets in 2013, became the first runner in school history to earn the award. She won the individual title at the 2013 WIAC Championships.
- **WIAC Women’s Swimmer of the Meet – Brooke Reynolds.** Reynolds won the 100 and 200 backstroke and 100 butterfly at the conference championships. She was also a member of the winning 200 medley relay.
- **WIAC Men’s Diver of the Meet – Justin Bublitz.** Bublitz captured the one-meter and three-meter diving competitions at the league championships. He is the fourth diver in school history to win both titles in the same season. It marks the second straight season Bublitz has earned the honor.
- **WIAC Women’s Track Performer of the Meet (Indoor) – Jaime Ludwigson.** Ludwigson captured the 60-meter dash and 60-meter hurdles at the WIAC Championships and placed second in the 200-meter dash.
- **WIAC Men’s Field Performer of the Meet (Outdoor) – Dominique Neloms.** Neloms won the long jump and high jump at the league championships. He also placed second in the triple jump.
• **WIAC Co-Position Player of the Year – Taylor Kohlwey.** Kohlwey became the third player in school history to earn the WIAC Co-Position Player of the Year Award.

• **WIAC Coach of the Year – Derek Stanley, Women’s and Men’s Cross Country.** Stanley, in his second year at UW-L, was named the WIAC Women’s and Men’s Cross Country Coach of the Year after leading both teams to league titles.

• **WIAC Coach of the Year – Charlie King, Women’s Swimming & Diving.** King, in his second year leading UW-L’s women’s and men’s swimming and diving programs, earned the WIAC Women’s Coach of the Year Award for the second straight season.

• **WIAC Coach of the Year – Josh Buchholtz, Men’s Indoor Track & Field / Men’s Outdoor Track & Field.** Josh has now won the Outdoor Track & Field Coach of the Year Award each of his six years at the helm for the Eagles; he has also won the Indoor Coach of the Year Award in five of his six seasons.

• **WIAC Coach of the Year – Pat Healy, Women’s Indoor Track & Field / Women’s Outdoor Track & Field.** This was the 11th time Healy has won honors as the conference’s top indoor coach and the ninth time he has been named top outdoor coach.

In addition to the successes of our teams and student-athletes in national and conference competition, several of our teams and coaches celebrated personal landmarks as well. Head baseball coach Chris Schwarz and head softball coach Chris Helixon each earned their 200th career victory at UW-L while head men’s basketball coach Ken Koelbl earned his 150th career win. Meanwhile, UW-L’s men’s running programs captured the 2013-14 Al Carius Division III Men’s Program of the Year Award, presented by the USTFCCCA. It marks the second straight season that UW-L earned the honor. On the women’s side, the Eagles placed third in the 2013-14 Deb Vercauteren Division III Women’s Program of the Year Award, also as recognized by the USTFCCCA.

**Academic Accolades**

UW-L’s student-athletes are not only among the nation’s best in their respective sports, but they are also some of the brightest in their respective fields of study. Prior to this year, 11 times in the last 12 years the Eagle student-athletes posted a combined
grade-point average that was higher than the combined GPA of UW-L’s general student body. We do not yet have the final academic numbers for this year, but we hope this is a record that continues. Of the student-athletes participating in the athletic program, approximately 65% of them earned semester GPAs of 3.0 or better in the spring of 2014.

Within the WIAC, UW-L student-athletes were recognized as the conference’s top scholar-athlete in three of our sponsored sports: Josh Dedering in Men’s Cross Country, Rachel Schroeder in Women’s Cross Country, and Jacob Peterson in Men’s Indoor Track & Field.

To facilitate improved relationships with the faculty and instructional staff on campus, Kim Blum contacted 29 academic departments throughout the year requesting meetings and has now made presentations at 10 departmental staff meetings. The meetings have been very well received and have opened the lines of communication.

Community Involvement

2013-14 was an active year for UW-L Athletics in the area of community service. Many sports acted on their own initiative to pursue community activities, including such things as reading at local schools and participating in events to benefit Special Olympics or breast cancer awareness. The athletic program as a whole, meanwhile, continued to place an emphasis on instilling in our student-athletes an obligation of service. As we examine potential community opportunities, we look for situations that will be not only meaningful to the group with which we are partnering but that will also be educational for our student-athletes. Ideally, we want to provide our student-athletes with service opportunities that expose them to new and different environments, populations, or cultures. Deputy Director of Athletics Kim Blum spearheaded many of these efforts.

The good work in our community being done by Kim, our coaches and staff, and our student-athletes was recently recognized by the National Association of Division III Athletic Administrators (NADIIIAA) and Jostens, who bestowed on us the Community Service Award of Merit at the NCAA Convention in San Diego.

Listed below are several notable community involvement efforts undertaken throughout the year:
• In what has become an annual tradition, our program once again hosted a number of events to honor our nation’s soldiers in recognition of Veterans Day. Our final home football game included several ceremonial features, including the presentation of colors, the playing of Taps, and recognition of a fallen soldier. Thanks to the generosity of Logistics Health, Inc., we provided free admission to the game to all local servicemen and women. The following Monday, our athletic program, along with the UW-L Foundation and Freedom Honor Flight, hosted the third annual Veterans Day Breakfast. Approximately 200 of our student-athletes were on-hand to serve breakfast and mingle with more than 400 veterans who attended the meal.

• We hosted our annual Kids Nite Out event at Mitchell Hall, when parents from the community can take advantage of cheap child care from UW-L’s student-athletes to get an evening of free time. This year’s event, held in December in case the parents wanted to use the time to do some holiday shopping, was attended by approximately 125 children from the community. While in Mitchell, they played with more than 200 UW-L student-athletes and pursued a variety of activities, including inflatable games, parachutes, scooters, dodge ball, basketball, volleyball, and arts and crafts.

• In January, UW-L Athletics partnered with HuHot Mongolian Grill to host its second annual Coaches vs. Cancer celebrity cooking event. More than 20 members of UW-L’s coaching and administrative staff, along with Stryker, the school mascot, took turns at the grill. The event, which was attended by approximately 200 people, raised nearly $1,000, all of which was donated to the Relay for Life.

• A large contingent of UW-L student-athletes and staff took the Polar Plunge to benefit Special Olympics. The UW-L group, featuring 25 participants, raised more than $2,000, the most of any school in the WIAC.

• In the spring, UW-L’s Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) organized and held the second annual Senior Prom, a social event/dance for elderly citizens in the community. Attendance was hampered by poor weather, but
approximately 30 hardy seniors attended the event, many of whom were shuttled to Mitchell Hall by a motor coach that transported people to and from local retirement communities. Student-athletes, in their finest evening attire, attended in large numbers and were gracious hosts to our guests, who enjoyed snacks, games, and dancing.

- Throughout the year, UW-L Athletics partnered with Riverfront, Inc., to provide ongoing interaction between its clients and UW-L student-athletes. Each week of the school year, one of UW-L’s athletic teams was responsible for assigning five to eight student-athletes to staff a standing service obligation at Riverfront. The partnership, which ended its second year, has been a tremendous success. We look forward to growing the relationship even more.

**Staffing**

We have a wonderful staff, including coaches and support personnel. The group is dedicated to the Division III philosophy and believes wholeheartedly in the value of what we do. UW-L coaches help our student-athletes embrace athletic competition as an extension of their educations: the lessons learned through athletics, although taught outside the four walls of the classroom, are no less relevant or enduring than those that our student-athletes learn through their coursework.

**Head Coaching**

We saw one change to our head coaching staff during the year. Sara Burton, a veteran of 20 seasons as the head coach of our women’s soccer program, stepped away from her coaching responsibilities to assume the position of Student-Athlete Success Coordinator, discussed in detail below. Sara’s successor as the leader of our women’s soccer program is Jason Murphy. Jason comes to UW-L after four years in the same role at Marian University in Fond du Lac, where he also served as the athletic director.

**Athletic Training**

Athletics has always enjoyed a strong partnership with UW-L’s nationally renowned academic program in athletic training, housed in the Department of Exercise & Sport Science (ESS). UW-L’s athletic training students, under the supervision of the academic program’s instructional staff, have provided first-class medical care to UW-L’s student-
athletes and, in return, have received dynamic clinical experiences that have prepared them to be successful professionals. The work performed by the athletic trainers – staff and students alike – is impressive:

- The Athletic Training Room is open daily from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. From early August until mid-May, the Athletic Training Room is open almost every day, including weekends and many holidays.
- Athletic training staff and students administer between 250 and 350 treatments per day and more than 45,000 treatments per year.
- During peak times, 14 of the 19 varsity sports receive daily services.
- Over the course of 9 ½ months, athletic training staff and students will provide coverage at more than 125 home athletic contests and more than 1,750 practices.
- Each year, UW-L athletic training students spend, on average, a collective total of nearly 20,000 hours serving the university’s student-athlete population.

Faced with such daunting numbers, we have discussed the need to expand FTE in athletic training to provide a higher level of care for UW-L’s student-athletes. We were far from meeting national standards, and gaps remained in the coverage that we were able to offer. Also of concern was the lack of financial responsibility that Athletics shouldered for the care of its own student-athletes; instead, ESS had long funded the vast majority of the FTE in the area of athletic training services.

We are pleased to report that we made positive strides this year to address these concerns. A year ago, we reported a plan to revamp the organizational structure of our athletic training unit, a plan that we have spent much of 2013-14 implementing:

- **Scott Doberstein**, who had served as our head athletic trainer for more than a decade, accepted an expanded role with ESS that will allow him to step away from clinical practice with our student-athletes and teach full time. He is excited about the change.

- Scott’s appointment was 0.25 Athletics / 0.75 ESS. In preparing to recruit his replacement, we were able to restructure the position. The new Director of Athletic Training Services (DATS) will have an appointment of 1.0 FTE in Athletics and serve on an 11-month contract. In the spring, we successfully hired **Joel Luedke** into the DATS position. He comes to La Crosse after serving as an
assistant athletic trainer the last several years at Oklahoma State University. Prior to accepting his position at OSU, Joel served as an Athletic Training Fellow here at UW-L. He will begin his new responsibilities with us on July 1.

- More than a year ago, another member of our athletic training staff accepted a tenure-track faculty position with ESS. For the 2013-14 academic year, we filled her vacancy on an interim basis. This spring, however, we underwent a successful recruitment for a new staff athletic trainer, with a 0.50/0.50 appointment between Athletics and ESS. This was a significant improvement, as the position was previously structured with an appointment of only 0.25 FTE in Athletics. Our new athletic trainer, Sheldon Wagner, joins the staff after spending more than a decade as the head athletic trainer for the athletic program at Viterbo University. Sheldon’s experience will prove a valuable asset to our athletic training unit.

The following chart summarizes the organizational staffing changes in athletic training that will be in place beginning with the 2014-15 academic year:

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As the chart indicates, the FTE provided for care of UW-L’s student-athletes has increased by 14% as we head into the new year. Important to our athletic program’s relationship with ESS, Athletics increased its athletic training FTE by nearly 50% and is responsible for the entirety of the unit’s growth. Athletics is now funding nearly 40% of the athletic training FTE that is providing direct care for UW-L’s student-athletes.

**Administrative Support**

We have reshaped much of our organizational structure over the last several years. In August, prior to the beginning of the year, we were pleased to recognize the efforts of four staff members with much-deserved titling changes. Long-time Associate Athletic Director **Kim Blum** was named Deputy Director of Athletics and assumed an expanded role that includes direct supervision of seven of our 14 head coaches and all of our internal support functions. **David Johnson** was re-titled Assistant Athletic Director for Media Relations. **Erin Thacker** was made Assistant Athletic Director for Operations. And **Kate Burke** became the Assistant Athletic Director for External Relations.

In terms of organizational alignment, we are preparing for what we hope is the last major adjustment to our structure and division of responsibilities. The intent is to take full advantage of individual strengths and develop efficiencies within our operations. Changes that have been made recently or will be made prior to the start of the upcoming year:

- Perhaps the most influential additions to our staff this year were also the most inconspicuous. As reported last year, **Brian Gordon** and **Suzanne Anglehart**, faculty members in ESS and Microbiology, respectively, joined our team as new Faculty Athletics Representatives (FARs). They have invested themselves fully in our work and meet regularly with Kim to review compliance and eligibility matters. They routinely attend our athletic events and have been invaluable in their counsel and assistance.

- Assistant Athletic Director **Erin Thacker**, who has served on a shared appointment with Campus Recreation for the past three years, will transition to a full-time appointment with the athletic program. She will continue with her responsibilities related to event management and travel coordination, but she
will also become director of our outdoor athletic facilities. Erin will move from a 10-month to a 12-month appointment.

- With Erin’s arrival, she will assume facilities responsibilities previously held by head baseball coach Chris Schwarz. Chris will take over direction of our athletic camps and clinics program.
- Bill Hehli, our women’s and men’s tennis coach, has also served as the director of our camps and clinics. With Chris Schwarz assuming those responsibilities, Bill will join our Sports Information unit, where he will serve as an assistant to long-time staff member, Assistant Athletic Director Dave Johnson.

Facilities

Facilities present an ongoing concern, but we have made significant progress in recent years, with additional projects in the near future that will mark notable improvements. There is an ambitious slate of facility projects scheduled for summer of 2014. If we are able to accomplish these projects on schedule, it will position us well heading into the new year. Highlights from 2013-14 and key considerations for 2014-15:

- Spring 2014 marked the completion of a two-year process that resulted in the UW-L baseball team changing home venues, from its North Campus facility to Copeland Park, a City of La Crosse-owned facility that is also home to the La Crosse Loggers of the Northwoods Baseball League. UW-L was instrumental in raising nearly $600,000 in private funding that was used for several upgrades to Copeland Park, including installation of a new artificial turf infield surface, construction of new dugouts, and the installation of a large video board. In exchange, the Loggers will make an annual donation of between $40,000 and $45,000 to the UW-L Foundation. The proceeds of their gift will be used to sustain the future of the UW-L baseball program, which had university funding terminated in 2009. The artificial infield proved critical in its first year of use; it saved six or more games from postponement or cancellation. We are now proud to play our home games in one of the finest baseball facilities in the region.

- For many years, we have hosted one of the premier cross country meets in the Midwest, the Drews/Neubauer Invitational, at a golf course near West Salem, a
short drive from campus. Unfortunately, the course was recently closed, necessitating the search for a new venue. For a variety of reasons, all of the local possibilities proved not workable. We are currently finalizing an agreement with a course in Ettrick.

- We have developed an ambitious slate of facilities projects to be completed over the next several months:
  - With the Athletics staff continuing to grow, work is underway in the basement of Mitchell Hall to create several new office spaces. Sports Information and Marketing will be relocating to the lower hallway, along with members of our coaching staff. We will be making corresponding office adjustments in other areas, particularly in the Athletic Training Room.
  - A handful of strategically placed doors are to be installed in designated locker rooms in Mitchell Hall’s basement, along with secure locking mechanisms on roughly a dozen existing locker room doors. The result will be the creation of several year-round locker rooms to be inhabited by UW-L’s teams. These rooms will be entirely secure and only accessible to those team members. This will make Mitchell Hall’s basement a much safer and more secure area.
  - Two locker rooms – those designated for the women’s and men’s basketball teams – will be fully renovated, including new lockers, carpet, paint, lighting, and technology. These rooms will be used as models for future renovations to additional locker rooms.
  - The two largest spaces in Mitchell Hall – the gymnasium and the fieldhouse – are to receive fresh coats of paint this summer. Both of those facilities, along with the swimming pool, are to gain new sound systems this summer as well.
  - New one- and three-meter diving boards and supporting structures are to be installed in the Mitchell Hall pool facility.
  - We recently received approval to install a video board system in the Mitchell Hall gymnasium. We are working aggressively with vendors and campus facility planners in an attempt to have the boards installed for the fall season.
There is a plan to expand the Sports Performance Center (SPC) into what is currently a large storage area near the southeast corner of the fieldhouse. It will be necessary to identify new storage solutions for displaced materials and develop a plan to minimize the disruption to student-athlete training in the SPC during the expansion, which is scheduled to last no more than a few weeks. This expanded space will be used to house new high performance treadmills.

As storage in Mitchell Hall becomes increasingly scarce, effective utilization of available spaces becomes all the more important. In the coming weeks, we will be installing a heavy duty shelving/storage system in the center of Mitchell Hall’s three racquetball courts. This system will help tremendously with storing and organizing the growing supply of materials that our program uses.

The softball pressbox and concessions building is to be completed this summer, along with concrete work and landscaping along the pathway leading to the facility from the parking lot. The facility is also supposed to be equipped with a new sound system and Internet connectivity.

The future of the long-talked about gymnastics practice facility remains uncertain. Original plans called for the facility to be fully functional more than a year ago, but repeated delays have significantly altered the timeline. One reason for the delays has been ongoing discussion about the best site for the facility. Latest information is that the facility will be available for use by our gymnastics team in the fall of 2016. We need to determine whether this proposal remains the most preferred option to address the needs of our gymnastics program.

The outdoor tennis courts are in a state of disrepair. The surface is heavily cracked and the painted surface is peeling. The poor playing surface has caused some reported injuries, to both our players and the public. We have tried to address the worst areas with short-term fixes. Cosmetically, fences are heavily leaning and paint is discolored. Due to the structural deficiencies, it would be preferable to rebuild the courts, subsurface and all, rather than simply resurfacing. There has been much discussion with the university’s leadership about the future of the campus’ northeast corner. As the plans for that space are
developed, tennis should be a featured facility in the conversation. Even if it is, the area needs substantial attention in the interim period.

- With the recent closure of the therapeutic pool in Wittich Hall, discussions must continue about relocation of those programs using the Wittich pool. Significant concerns remain about attempting to put all campus pool users into the pool in Mitchell Hall, currently used primarily by the Eagles swimming and diving program. This could prove very detrimental to the competitiveness of our swimming and diving programs.

- The swimming facility itself is in need of a major facelift. We have made surface level improvements over the last several years, including the installation of a new timing system and scoreboard, the installation of new starting blocks, and, soon, the installation of new diving boards and structures. But there is significant work left to be done. The pool walls need resurfacing and painting. The lights need to be replaced and modernized. The ventilation system needs to be addressed. There is the possibility of expanding adjacent storage, which would provide space for materials currently kept on the deck, freeing needed deck space for users.

- There has been preliminary discussion related to construction of a new fieldhouse facility. Such a space, along with the resulting accommodations that would become possible in Mitchell Hall, could be a game changer for our athletic program.

**Diversity, Inclusivity & Equity**

We have committed significant resources this year to creating a more inclusive culture among our student-athletes and staff members. Highlights:

- During our fall meeting with all 600+ student-athletes, we discussed at length the responsible use of social media. To emphasize our point, we displayed social media posts by UW-L student-athletes where they used inappropriate, hurtful language and slurs. This provided an opening for a broader conversation about diversity and appreciation of difference.
• For the second year, we hosted Eagles 101, a seven-session seminar aimed at assisting freshmen student-athletes with their transition to college. The class, mandatory for all freshmen student-athletes during the fall semester, focuses on a number of topics, including the value of diversity and lessons to create a more inclusive, tolerant culture.

• As discussed above, we have now created a position within our athletic program that is specifically responsible for, among other things, leading and directing our diversity efforts. In her new role, officially titled the Student-Athlete Success Coordinator, Sara Burton focuses on the academic and personal success of our student-athletes, with an emphasis on wellness, diversity, inclusivity, and service. Sara is tasked with promoting a more inclusive environment within UW-L Athletics. It is, from what we can tell, a position not seen elsewhere in Division III athletics, and it symbolizes the emphasis that our program places in this important area. Sara’s strong grasp of these subjects has already proven valuable in navigating several challenging situations and serving as a resource for our student-athletes.

• We immediately tested the need for our Student-Athlete Success Coordinator (SASC). During the spring semester, we worked through a challenging situation involving use of the n-word within one of our sport programs. Sara played a critical role. She facilitated consultation with the Office of Multicultural Student Services and coordinated several meetings with team leadership and team members. The situation became the impetus for a series of educational opportunities planned for the fall semester.

• A focus of the year has been conducting a thorough analysis of the athletic program’s compliance with Title IX. In January, Deputy Director of Athletics Kim Blum and I attended a workshop hosted by Valerie Bonnette, a former investigator for the Office of Civil Rights and a pioneer in the area of Title IX’s applicability to college athletics. Following the workshop, Kim and I completed an analysis of our program, which we then presented to the campus leadership team, including yourself, Chancellor Gow, and Vice Chancellor Hetzel. As a campus, I would encourage us to re-engage in the conversation that stemmed from that meeting. There is important work that needs to be done in this area,
and the athletic program is prepared to assist as directed by the university’s leadership.

**Resource Development**

During 2013-14, we completely revamped the process utilized for our annual fundraising campaign. We updated our distribution lists and solicited several thousand new names of potential supporters from our student-athletes and staff members. Rather than communicating by traditional mail, we started the campaign with a series of four individualized e-mails, each of which featured an element of our mission statement and, in many cases, was sent “from” a familiar face within our program. With the assistance of the UW-L Foundation, we constructed an easy-to-use online giving portal. We also developed a text-to-give platform. Following the e-mail portion of the campaign, we then sent an individualized mailing. Developing the process and activating the strategy was incredibly time-consuming and challenging. Assistant Athletic Director Kate Burke spearheaded our efforts. Kate collaborated with several web vendors to create the entire platform from scratch. The results were positive in the first year, and we look forward to seeing even more productivity from the campaign in future years.

The L-Club, the fundraising arm of our athletic program, continued its string of hosting successful events throughout the year, including the Roundball Rumble on the River, the Eagle Eye Open, and the New Year’s Eve Fireworks. Kate Burke, in her role with the L-Club, has shouldered much of the responsibility for planning and staging these events and deserves tremendous credit for the progress they have made.

Also of note, last August, we were pleased to host our annual Diamond Eagles Dinner, where we recognized three new members who joined our $10,000 annual gift club.

**Additional Points of Note**

Kim Blum, in her fourth year leading our compliance operation and eligibility process, continues to refine our system, with excellent results. We were pleased this year not to report a single secondary violation. Our two-year period of NCAA probation also ended on May 31 of this year, bringing to a close a difficult chapter in our program’s history. Even that experience, however, has taught us many lessons, and we continue to develop and tighten our operations in this critical area.
For the first time during my tenure, we had a year in 2013-14 without the additional responsibility of hosting an NCAA championship event. In 2011 and again in 2012, we hosted the NCAA Division III Wrestling Championships at the La Crosse Center. In 2013, we brought the NCAA Division III Outdoor Track & Field Championships, the largest Division III championship event, to Veterans Memorial Field Sports Complex. Rather than hosting such a time- and resource-intensive event, this year we focused our efforts on our internal operations, an investment that proved beneficial. The break will be short-lived, however. In the spring of 2015, we will host the national championships of the National Collegiate Gymnastics Association (NCGA) in Mitchell Hall. We also learned this year that we have been awarded bids to once again host the wrestling championships (2017) and track & field championships (2018). It is a testament to the tremendous efforts of our staff that the NCAA is willing to return to our community, and the athletic program looks forward to once again shining a national spotlight on UW-L and the La Crosse region.

Just this weekend, UW-L once again played host to the WIAA State Track & Field Championships, an event that celebrated its 25th anniversary on our campus. Men’s track and field coach Josh Buchholtz and women’s basketball coach Lois Heeren, in their roles as On-Site Coordinator and Assistant On-Site Coordinator of the State Meet, respectively, performed admirably managing the challenging logistics of such a large undertaking. We have been talking in earnest with the WIAA’s leadership about the details of a long-term (e.g., 10- to 15-year) agreement to remain the host of the meet. It will be important that we remain protective of, and attentive to, that relationship and conclude the negotiation as soon as possible.

Last week, I announced that I will be leaving the university to accept the same position at Washington University in St. Louis. How the university manages the transition in leadership will be critical. The program has great momentum. New revenue streams have been strong, due in large part to strengthened relationships with donors and local businesses. If those relationships are not tended during the transition, they could be damaged or lost. We have a talented, dedicated staff. They have a solid grasp of our program, the reasons for its success, and the causes of our momentum. They can be trusted to provide valuable guidance and input as you select new leadership.
Conclusion

This year we reaped the rewards of the seeds we have sown over these past several years, while continuing to sow new seeds for the future. Our teams improved in every facet: athletically, academically, and socially. Have we attained our goal of being the best? No. In truth, if we have the right people involved with our program, we never will. Because the standard against which we measure ourselves is one that we ourselves set, not a bar set by someone else, and our people will always push that bar higher. But make no mistake: we are on our way. And as they often say in the corridors of Mitchell Hall, the journey is the reward.