

2019 UW-La Crosse Academic Staff Excellence Award

Louise Janke leads campus effort to navigate students through fiscal challenges

Financial finesse

Empathy and compassion aren't two words most college students think of when dealing with their finances. But they do at UW-La Crosse, thanks to UWL Financial Aid Director Louise Janke.

The long-time financial aid counselor and director has helped to make the UWL experience much more than loans and federal work study. UWL students have options of financial literacy and

emergency funds, along with easy access to scholarships and a clothing closet.

"The focus is trying to help the student," says Janke. "We're able to do this by partnering with staff and faculty in other campus departments."

Janke got hooked on helping students as a student herself on campus in the early '80s. The elementary education major worked in the Alice Hager Curriculum Library steering fellow education majors to access curriculum materials.

Two years out of college and discovering teaching wasn't a life-long career for her, Janke returned for graduate studies in college student personnel. Her final semester included an internship with the Financial Aid Office at the former College of St. Theresa in Winona. The director resigned for another job and Janke was asked to take over.

She did for the next year before returning to UWL to become a financial aid counselor.

After eight years, Janke resigned in 1995 to become director of Financial Aid at Mayo Medical School in Rochester,

Minnesota. After commuting from Trempealeau to Rochester became tiresome, the young mother stayed home with her two children before returning as a campus counselor in 2001. Four years later, she became director. Since, Janke has introduced an array of helpful financial programs.

Janke realized the university wasn't clearly communicating about financial issues when staff asked students withdrawing

from the university if they had a loan. The majority of them didn't know.

That triggered her to initiate "It Make\$ Cents," a creative, innovative financial literacy program that has garnered three state awards. She also initiated the Scholarship Resource Center, Maroon

Tycoons, and partnered with others to initiate an apprentice program, and a clothing closet. She is currently with the Student Life Office to develop an emergency resource webpage for students to navigate through financial hardships.

Janke is quick to point out the efforts have flourished under a collaborative, team effort. "We're really very grateful for our campus partners and for the support we have received from our administrators to get these initiatives off the ground."

From the thanks

Janke hears from graduates to the university's standing of having the fewest loan repayment defaults in the state, the efforts are working. "It's very rewarding to see these efforts pay off," she says.

—Brad Quarberg, University Communications



The Louise Janke file

- **Currently director of UWL Financial Aid. Previously a UWL financial aid counselor; director of Financial Aid at Mayo Medical School, Rochester, and College of St. Theresa, Winona.**
- **Abbreviated campus work: organized first UWL Student Employee of the Year Program; created and piloted the It Make\$ Cents financial literacy program; established the Scholarship Resource Center; initiated the Maroon Tycoon Award Ceremony; partnered to develop an "Emergency Resource" webpage; co-founder of the "Clothing Closet."**
- **Community involvement: Trempealeau Catfish Days; Friends of Trempealeau Library; School District Foundation Board and Cash for Class Scholarships, Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau Schools; Trempealeau Community Youth Sports Board; Zion Lutheran Church.**
- **Two degrees from UWL: bachelor's in elementary education, 1984; master's in college student personnel, 1987.**