Dear colleagues and students:

I hope things are going well as we move into the final weeks of the spring semester. I know we all have much to do to finish out the academic year, and I don't want to add to your list of things to think about. But over the past few days I've received many questions about the budget reduction plan our Joint Planning and Budget (JP&B) Committee recently approved, and I want to be sure everyone has as much information as possible.

I'm attaching both the full budget plan and an overview of the amount each of our University's divisions will contribute to our overall reduction in state support. Although space does not permit me to explain these documents in detail, I encourage you to examine them closely to get a sense of all the options our JP&B Committee considered as well as the way the cuts have been apportioned across our campus.

Also, I'd like to address the following four questions that I have been asked repeatedly over the past few days:

**Q:** "You said there would be no layoffs or outsourcing, but now we are hearing that people are losing their jobs."

**A:** Unfortunately, in addition to eliminating approximately 40 vacant positions, we have been forced to phase out the positions of a small number of UW-L staff. These colleagues will have one or two years in which to find new positions at UW-L or in other organizations. Although these position eliminations are not "layoffs" in the traditional sense—because they won't happen immediately—they still are challenging for the people involved, and we will do everything we can to assist them in finding new employment over the coming years. The decisions to phase out these positions were made very carefully by the administrators closest to them. They determined that the functions associated with the positions will not be essential as we enter an era where the state will not provide the funding required to support all the things we were able to do in past years.

**Q:** "Why are we not cutting any faculty positions? This makes those of us who do not teach feel undervalued."

**A:** Very early on in this process the vice chancellors and I made a decision not to reduce course availability for our students so that they can continue to complete their degree programs without having to pay for additional time spent at UW-L. This means we will not be cutting any teaching positions, and we will fill all classroom vacancies as best we can. I regret if this has led some colleagues to conclude that their contributions are not as highly valued as those of our teachers. That was not our intention at all. But in hindsight I can see that it would have been better to have more discussion about such an important decision. Although I remain convinced that enabling our students to complete their degree programs on time should be our top priority, it was a mistake not to allow more people to have their voices heard on this question. I apologize for this oversight and deeply regret if it has made anyone feel under appreciated. As you can see from the summary of divisional reductions, Academic Affairs is experiencing the largest dollar decrease of the divisions. Nonetheless, there is no denying we are protecting class availability, and I wish I could say the same about all the other aspects of our university, because, as we all know, there are so many things that make UW-L such an outstanding campus.
Q: "When the budget cutting decisions were made did the people making them understand the full impacts of the reductions?"

A: This is a difficult question to answer because these decisions have different degrees of uncertainty associated with them. When it comes to eliminating vacant positions or phasing out currently filled positions, I think the administrators who made these decisions conducted a thorough and careful assessment of the impacts. However, the potential impacts of other decisions like slightly increasing our enrollment or the rates charged to auxiliary units for shared services were much more difficult to gauge. In particular, it is almost impossible to understand in advance the full impact of our 7% across-the-board reduction in supply and expense budgets; and we may end up needing to make adjustments as it is implemented. But our JP&B Committee thoroughly discussed each option and I think we've made the wisest possible decisions given the information available to us.

Q: "You said this process would be transparent, but it doesn't feel that way."

A: We've tried to share information openly though out this process. But when it came to determining particular position phase-outs and vacancy eliminations it was not possible to discuss such sensitive personnel matters with a group as large and diverse as our JP&B Committee. Consequently, we asked each vice chancellor to create a plan for her or his own particular division. It was very challenging for our vice chancellors to complete phase one of our position eliminations, and when we realized an additional phase was necessary it wasn't possible to find enough vacancies to produce the needed savings. That is why we were forced to phase out a few currently filled positions. As you can appreciate, the colleagues in these positions had to be notified in a private manner. So, yes, we were not able to be completely transparent. But I hope you'll agree that all other aspects of our budget deliberations were conducted openly, and anyone who wanted to attend JP&B Committee meetings was able to watch the discussions.

I know there are many more questions to be answered, and my administrative team colleagues and I look forward to discussing them fully in a series of upcoming open forums. For now, though, I hope I have addressed the major issues that are on the minds of the members of our campus community. These are challenging times and I am grateful for your patience and continued dedication to UW-L.

Sincerely,

Joe

Joe Gow, Chancellor
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse