MEMORANDUM

TO: Paula Knudson
Assistant Chancellor/Dean of Students

FROM: Josh Whitman
Director of Athletics

DATE: July 6, 2012

RE: Annual Report – Intercollegiate Athletics

It has been another successful year for UW-L Athletics. Our more than 500 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 country’s elite Division III intercollegiate athletics programs. Until recently, UW-L was one of only a handful of schools in the country to have finished in the Top 20 of the Directors’ Cup every year that the award has existed, including nine Top 10 finishes during a span of 15 years. In 2010-11, we ended our streak of Top 20 rankings, finishing 32nd in the Directors’ Cup standings. This year, however, we were pleased to see improvement, climbing four spots to finish 28th in the final standings. This was the fourth-highest finish among WIAC schools, behind UW-Whitewater (5th), UW-Eau Claire (15th), and UW-Oshkosh (17th).

Although this was not success on the level that we have come to expect, with more than 440 institutions competing in Division III, such a finish is still an impressive feat. It is a testament to our strong tradition and high expectations that we are disappointed with a finish in the top 6% of all D-III schools. Our coaches and student-athletes are already hard at work preparing for next year to make sure that UW-L returns to its position at or near the top of the national standings.
We did not capture any national team titles this year, an odd feeling for a program that has 60 national championships in its history, including 26 since 2001. Several teams did, however, shine brightly on the national stage:

- **2nd Place Finish, NCAA Championships – Men’s Outdoor Track & Field.** It was the second consecutive 2nd-place finish for the Eagles. UW-L has won a record 11 outdoor national championships. Coach Josh Buchholtz was named Midwest Region Outdoor Coach of the Year by the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association.
- **3rd Place Finish, NCGA Championships – Gymnastics.** The Eagles came within 0.85 points of winning their fifth consecutive national championship. Their 15 NCGA titles are the most of any school in the country.
- **4th Place Finish, NCAA Championships – Wrestling.** This was the sixth consecutive Top 4 finish for Wrestling.
- **5th Place Finish, NCAA Championships – Men’s Indoor Track & Field.** UW-L has won a record 15 indoor national championships.
- **14th Place Finish, NCAA Championships – Men’s Cross Country.** After failing to qualify for the national championships for the first time in school history during the 2010 season, the Eagles rebounded with a strong showing in 2011. UW-L has 21 Top 6 national finishes in school history, including 10 finishes in the Top 3 and three national championships.
- **15th Place Finish, NCAA Championships – Women’s Swimming & Diving.** This was the school’s 8th Top 15 finish under coach Rich Pein, who retired at the end of the season following more than 25 years leading the women’s swimming and diving program.
- **NCAA Tournament Qualifier – Baseball.** The UW-L baseball team had a season for the ages, winning a school-record 34 games and qualifying for the NCAA Tournament for only the second time in school history.

In terms of individual accomplishments, junior **Isaac Vazquez** captured the program’s only individual national championship of the year, taking the first long jump title in school history at the Outdoor Track & Field Championships with a jump of 24-11-3/4. This was the second individual national title for Vazquez, who also won the triple jump at the 2011 Outdoor Championships. UW-L student-athletes also captured numerous All-America honors.
WIAC Accomplishments

UW-L had a strong year within the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. In WIAC All-Sport Awards, UW-L finished third overall, behind UW-Whitewater and UW-Eau Claire. In men’s sports, UW-L finished second; in women’s sports, the Eagles ranked third. All three finishes were one-place improvements over the 2010-11 campaign, when the Eagles finished fourth overall, third in men’s sports, and fourth in women’s sports.

In 2011-12, UW-L finished first or second within the conference in 10 of the 19 sports that the school sponsors, including six WIAC team titles:

- **WIAC Champion – Women’s Swimming & Diving.** The Eagles won their 12th conference title in women’s swimming and their first since 2009.
- **WIAC Champion – Gymnastics.** UW-L’s gymnastics program won its 14th conference championship in the last 16 years. The program’s 21 total titles are the most of any school in the conference.
- **WIAC Champion – Men’s Indoor Track & Field.** This was UW-L’s 11th consecutive indoor championship, its 21st in 23 years, and its 37th overall.
- **WIAC Champion / WIAC Tournament Champion – Baseball.** The Eagles won their 13th conference title and their first outright title since 1978, posting a record of 21-2 in league play. UW-L also won the WIAC Baseball Tournament, only the second tournament title in the school’s history.
- **WIAC Champion – Men’s Outdoor Track & Field.** UW-L won its 22nd consecutive outdoor championship. It was the 48th title in school history.
- **WIAC Champion – Women’s Outdoor Track & Field.** The women’s program captured its league-leading 27th outdoor championship and its fifth in the last six seasons.

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

- **WIAC Women’s Swimmer of the Meet – Danielle Ellingson.** Ellingson won three individual conference titles in 2012, setting conference and school records in the 200 I.M., 100 breaststroke, and 200 breaststroke. She was also a member of
four conference-champion relay teams in the 400 freestyle, 800 freestyle, 200 medley, and 400 medley.

- **WIAC Wrestler of the Meet – Bebeto Yewah.** Bebeto finished the season 31-3, improving his career record to 89-8. He was a three-time conference champion and a two-time national champion.

- **WIAC Men’s Field Performer of the Meet (Indoor) – Isaac Vazquez.** Vazquez won the award for the second consecutive year after capturing conference titles in both the long jump and the triple jump. He set a conference meet record in the triple jump with a jump of 50-6-1/4.

- **WIAC Women’s Performer of the Meet (Outdoor) – Claire Elliott.** Elliott won the award after claiming the conference title in the 400-meter dash and running as a member of conference-champion relay teams in both the 4x100m and 4x400m. Elliott also finished second in the 200-meter dash.

- **WIAC Baseball Tri-Position Player of the Year – Jay Fanta.** Fanta, a senior, led the conference in batting average and on-base percentage. Fanta, who finished as UW-L’s leader in career hits, was the third player in school history to win the award.

- **WIAC Coach of the Year – Rich Pein, Women’s Swimming & Diving.** Pein, who retired following conclusion of the season, won the award for the 11th time.

- **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 four years at the helm for the Eagles; he has also won the Indoor Coach of the Year Award in three of his four seasons.

- **WIAC Coach of the Year – Chris Schwarz, Baseball.** This was the second time Schwarz won the award. He also won it in 2006.

- **WIAC Coach of the Year – Pat Healy, Women’s Outdoor Track & Field.** This was the seventh time Healy has won honors as the conference’s top coach.

In addition to the successes of our teams in national and conference competition, several of our teams and coaches enjoyed record-setting years. Our women’s tennis team tied last year’s school record for wins with 21. The soccer program, which raced to a second-place conference finish, won more games overall (10) and in the conference (5) than it had since 2007. Cross country coaching great Phil Esten was elected to the U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association Hall of Fame, and assistant
football coach **Mike Anderson** joined the Wisconsin Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

In 2012-13, the WIAC will celebrate its 100th anniversary. As part of the centennial celebration, conference officials named all-time teams in all sports that have been awarded conference championships in its 100-year history. These teams included 112 UW-L student-athletes and five coaches: **Phil Esten** (men’s cross country), **Barb Gibson** (women’s gymnastics), **Mark Guthrie** (men’s track and field), **Roger Harring** (football), and **Martha Stephens** (badminton). In addition, the WIAC will be inducting an inaugural Hall of Fame class at a banquet celebrating the centennial in August. Coaches **Esten**, **Guthrie**, and **Harring** have all been named members of this first induction class.

**Academic Accolades**

UW-L’s student-athletes are not only some of the nation’s best in their respective sports, but they are also some of the brightest in their respective fields of study. We recently learned that our student-athletes posted a combined GPA for the year of 3.186. Although down from 3.210 a year ago, such a high GPA remains a source of great pride for the program. The combined GPA of the undergraduate student body was 3.201, the first time in 11 years that UW-L’s student body has outperformed the student-athletes in the classroom. Of the just more than 500 student-athletes participating in the athletic program, 344 of them, or approximately 67%, earned a GPA of 3.0 or better. This was 32 fewer student-athletes than the previous year, a decrease of 9%.

Within the WIAC, UW-L had the Conference’s top scholar-athlete in three of our sponsored sports:

- Sean Harrington, Men’s Cross Country;
- Joel Knuesel, Men’s Swimming & Diving; and
- Garrett Scray, Baseball.

For a complete list of the athletic and academic awards won by UW-L’s teams, student-athletes, and coaches, see Attachment 1 – Honors and Awards.
Budget

The operating budget is projected to grow from $2.0 million in Fiscal Year 2012 to $2.4 million in Fiscal Year 2013. Funds come from three primary sources. Nearly $1 million in State of Wisconsin funds pays salaries and benefits for the vast majority of the Athletics staff. More than $730,000 derives from segregated student fees, which will increase next year to $78.88 per student, up from $73.24 this past year. It should be noted, however, that these incremental dollars are being used to fund increased costs imposed on our program by campus. None of these dollars is being used to fund program growth or expansion. Our remaining funds come from self-generated revenue, which includes gate receipts, entry fees, corporate sponsorships, and private donations. For our program to achieve its goals, we must grow this third revenue source aggressively and strategically. It is through self-generated revenue that we will be able to expand our program and build a model of sustainable excellence.

Staffing

We have a tremendous 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. The coach/student-athlete relationship is the building block of competitive athletics – the foundational piece upon which everything good about college athletics stands. Through those relationships, the UW-L coaches help our student-athletes recognize 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 had three retirements in the head coaching ranks this year. Sheila Perkins retired after 18 seasons as the head volleyball coach. Rich Pein retired following his 30th season in charge of our men’s and women’s swimming and diving program. And Don Fritsch retired as the head coach of the men’s cross country team, a position he held for the last 14 years. Perkins, Pein, and Fritsch take over 60 years of collective head coaching experience with them, leaving large shoes to fill on the head coaching staff.
Lily Hallock was hired in February as the new head volleyball coach. Hallock comes to UW-L after serving as an assistant coach at both Smith College (Mass.) and the University of California-Santa Cruz. Charlie King began in April as the new head coach of the women’s and men’s swimming and diving program. King spent the prior four years as an assistant coach at the University of Utah, before which he was the head coach at Millikin University (Ill.) and Augsburg College (Minn.). In June, we named Derek Stanley the new head coach of UW-L’s women’s and men’s cross country programs. In that capacity, he succeeds not only Fritsch, but also Pat Healy, who completes a 21-year tenure as the head women’s cross country coach. (Healy remains the head coach of UW-L’s highly successful women’s track and field program.) Stanley has ten years of head coaching experience at the Division III level, including, most recently, seven years as the head coach of the women’s and men’s track and field and cross country programs at Marietta College (Ohio).

All of our head coaches have split appointments with the University. An ongoing challenge is that their coaching percentages do not align with their actual time commitments; for them to be competitive in their respective sports, they must work as full-time coaches, yet they are required to shoulder additional responsibilities as well. With the support of campus administration, we worked aggressively this year to begin addressing FTE deficiencies on our head coaching staff, with a new target benchmark for our head coaches of 0.65 coaching FTE. Improvements included the following:

- Increasing the FTE of the head soccer coaching position from 0.25 to 0.50.
- Increasing the FTE of the head volleyball coaching position from 0.50 to 0.65.
- Increasing the combined FTE of the head women’s and men’s cross country coaching positions from 0.25 to 0.50.
- Increasing the FTE of the head women’s and men’s swimming and diving coaching position from 0.50 to 0.65.
- Increasing the FTE of the head men’s track and field coaching position from 0.40 to 0.65.
- Increasing the FTE of the head women’s track and field coaching position from 0.40 to 0.65.
Assistant Coaching

Assistant coaching FTE is another notable challenge. We lack people. We have a limited number of budgeted assistant coaching positions. Instead, the vast majority of our assistant coaches are either not paid at all or are paid by the respective head coaches as funds became available, either through fundraising or budget surplus. For us to achieve our goals, we must develop a sustainable financial model that allows us to attract and retain a qualified assistant coaching staff.

That said, in the past two years, we have made progress. We have nearly doubled the FTE that we have available for assistant coaches, including the following additions in 2011-12:

- Adding 0.25 in assistant coaching FTE, to be shared between the women’s and men’s track and field programs. **Derek Stanley**, in addition to the serving as the head coach of the UW-L cross country program, will also fill this role as an assistant coach for both track and field teams.
- Creating 0.20 FTE for an assistant wrestling coach, which we have matched with an equipment manager position (0.80 FTE). This position is currently vacant, with a hire anticipated by the end of July.

Over the course of the year, we also hired new faces into existing positions, including a new men’s basketball coach (**Rick Karius**, who divides his time with the Admissions Office) and a new assistant coach for our men’s and women’s swimming and diving teams (**Alex Kultgen**). We currently have a vacancy on our women’s basketball staff. We are working to identify another campus partner to create a full-time campus employment opportunity before we actively recruit applicants for that position.

Sports Performance

One of the year’s most exciting developments occurred in the area of strength and conditioning. With the help of campus administration, we restructured the existing strength training situation to better service the student body and to provide enhanced training opportunities to UW-L’s student-athletes. Through this new model, we created two strength and conditioning positions as part of our Athletics staff, which we filled with **Kevin Schultz**, a UW-L alumnus who returned to campus after serving three years as the head strength coach at Carnegie Mellon University, and **Phil Whitesitt**, who
expanded his existing role as assistant head coach of our men’s track and field team. The student-athletes, in their written program evaluations and senior exit interviews, spoke in glowing terms about the addition of the Sports Performance program. It will be a significant competitive advantage as our program moves forward.

**Athletic Training**

Athletic training is an area of growing concern. Athletics has always enjoyed a strong partnership with UW-L’s nationally renowned academic program in athletic training. 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, depending on the time of year, and, according to the most recent data, more than 45,000 treatments per year.
- During peak times, 14 of the 19 varsity sports receive daily athletic training 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.

The Athletic Training staff is currently comprised of 10 Certified Athletic Trainers (“ATCs”), with their appointments allocated between Athletics and the Department of Exercise and Sport Science as follows:
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<th>Position</th>
<th>Athletics FTE</th>
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<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
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The third assistant athletic trainer position, which we created by adding 0.36 new FTE to an existing research intern position, will be new for the 2012-13 year. We have hired Christy Schultz, a returning Athletic Training Fellow, to fill this position.

Even with the addition of 0.36 FTE, however, Athletics remains responsible for only 30% of the 4.60 total FTE providing direct care to UW-L’s student-athletes. These 10 ATC supervise a staff of approximately 40 students. Supervision guidelines require direct auditory or visual contact between an ATC and a student, meaning that a student, for example, cannot be covering a practice in a gymnasium while his or her supervisor is in the Athletic Training Room. These restrictions require greater staff numbers to allow for appropriate supervision of the students. Such limited staffing falls far below levels recommended by both the National Athletic Trainers’ Association and the NCAA. Depending on the services provided, NATA recommends between 7.6 and 10.2 FTE for an intercollegiate athletics program of UW-L’s size and scope, more than 4.0 FTE above current levels.

Such a deficiency endangers the health and well-being of the University’s student-athletes and damages the educational experience of the athletic training students. During their traditional seasons, most of the 19 sports receive tremendous medical coverage from the athletic training staff for home competitions and practices. Staffing shortfalls, however, eliminate or significantly limit the availability of other important services, including coverage at away contests, during nontraditional seasons, in post-
season rehabilitation, and during off hours. These limitations place the health of UW-L’s student-athletes at risk – risks that are becoming more pronounced due to recent changes by the accrediting body for the academic program in athletic training and impending changes to the structure of the academic program itself.

Until the spring of 2011, student athletic trainers traveled with every team, and the students understood the level of care that their educations allowed them to provide. In other programs around the country, however, problems arose because students would travel unsupervised with teams and perform unlicensed services (which, in many states including Wisconsin, violates state law).

Faced with growing concerns related to unlicensed practice, the accrediting body for UW-L’s academic program in athletic training, the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education, decreed in March 2011 that to remain accredited, academic programs could no longer allow athletic training students to travel with intercollegiate athletic teams unless supervised by a certified athletic trainer. The policy became effective immediately.

Providing athletic training coverage to UW-L’s intercollegiate athletic teams while traveling is critical to maintaining the standards of excellence that the University has established in both its athletic training and intercollegiate athletics programs. Although host institutions generally provide athletic training services to visiting teams, the level of service provided by host institutions is not comparable to what would be provided by UW-L’s own training staff. In many circumstances, UW-L’s student-athletes are among dozens, if not hundreds, of student-athletes at a given event, leaving them competing for time with an athletic trainer whose primary concern is the student-athletes from his or her own school. In addition, but no less importantly, UW-L’s athletic trainers are familiar with the physical condition of the University’s student-athletes, allowing them to provide better care. (A trainer’s ability to accurately diagnose a concussion, for example, is greatly improved by that person’s familiarity with the athlete when he or she is not concussed.)

Despite the clear benefits of having uninterrupted care from UW-L’s athletic training staff, our program currently lacks the FTE to send a supervisory ATC on most trips –
more than 150 trips in a typical year – with an athletic training student. During the 2011-12 academic year, an ATC and an athletic training student accompanied six sports when traveling: football, gymnastics, soccer, men’s and women’s outdoor track and field, and wrestling. These sports were selected based on injury data and participation numbers. This leaves two-thirds of UW-L’s varsity sport programs and approximately half of its student-athletes traveling without benefit of University athletic training coverage.

Further complicating the athletic training situation is the major overhaul that the academic program is scheduled to undergo over the next several years. The undergraduate program will be discontinued, replaced with a graduate-level curriculum. Because graduate students will not be asked to supervise other graduate students, this transition will result in the loss of four graduate assistant positions, meaning that we will have four fewer certified athletic trainers serving UW-L’s student-athletes. Thus, as shown in the chart below, a staffing situation that is already below recommended levels promises to worsen in the near future.

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This is a health and well-being issue and, thus, deserves prompt attention. Creating 0.36 new FTE in the area of athletic training was a step in the right direction. We will also continue to evaluate whether existing resources can be deployed more effectively to achieve more comprehensive coverage for our programs. With such a drastic
reduction in personnel looming, however, any such measures will provide only short-term relief. We must continue to work with ESS leadership and campus administration to develop proactive, sustainable solutions.

Administrative Support

In terms of administration, we have made significant improvements in the last 18 months. This year was the first on-staff for our newly created Event Coordinator position, which we share 50/50 with Campus Recreation. Erin Thacker has done tremendous work in her first year on the job, with responsibilities that include staging all UW-L home athletic events and coordinating team travel. Another exciting change was the creation of another new administrative position, titled the External Relations Coordinator, to handle the department’s marketing efforts and to assist with corporate sponsorships and donor development. Kate Burke has been hired for this position and will begin with us this summer. In addition, we have added part-time support in the areas of facilities and sports information, and we continue to make extensive use of student labor, providing students with exceptional experience in college athletics in exchange for their time and skill.

Facilities

Facilities present an ongoing concern. Key considerations as we head into 2012-13:

- The pressbox area of the softball field was closed this year due to structural concerns, and both dugouts have significant structural damage as well. In its current state, the facility borders on unsafe. We are working with campus facility planners to develop a solution, with hopes of completing an initial construction phase in time for the 2013 season.
- Plans are underway to design and build a new practice facility for the gymnastics program before the 2013-14 academic year. The facility, to be situated on north campus near the baseball and softball fields, will be centrally funded and will provide a state-of-the-art home for UW-L Gymnastics.
- Four new scoreboards are scheduled for installation on campus before and during 2012-13. Venues receiving new boards are the stadium, the softball field, the soccer field, and the swimming pool. The total price tag of the project is anticipated to be approximately $750,000, with funding made possible through
the generosity of campus partners and private donors. The project’s centerpiece will be a video scoreboard in the stadium. The board, which will feature full video capabilities, will be the largest in Division III at the time of its construction.

- The outdoor tennis courts are in a state of disrepair and, at a minimum, must soon be resurfaced. Due to structural deficiencies, it would be preferable to rebuild the courts from scratch. This will require a significant expenditure. We have begun discussions with community tennis organizations about possible collaboration.

- With the impending closure of Wittich Hall and the therapeutic pool that it houses, discussions must continue about relocation of those programs using the Wittich pool. There are significant concerns about attempting to put all campus pool users into the pool in Mitchell Hall, currently used primarily by the Eagles swimming and diving program. The problems center largely on water temperature. Wittich’s pool is maintained at a much higher temperature than is Mitchell’s, which is dictated by NCAA regulations to be no higher than 81 degrees. Preliminary tests have indicated that the Mitchell pool’s water temperature cannot be changed as rapidly as would be necessary to host all users in a single facility. Discussions to find a solution to this problem are ongoing.

- We have a financial commitment from the L-Club to help us develop a recruiting lounge in Mitchell Hall. We hope to incorporate plans for that project into a larger renovation of the Mitchell Hall entryway, with work ideally to be done in the summer of 2013.

- There must be a renovation and/or expansion plan for Mitchell Hall. Existing spaces are either too small or in need of repair. Needs for the renovated facility would include additional gymnasium space, increased wrestling space, a larger indoor fieldhouse/track facility, a renovated pool area, improved locker rooms and athletic training space, improved weight training opportunities, expanded administrative and coaches offices, and enhanced entryway/corridor presence.

**Additional Points of Note**

As the year began, our staff confronted two unanticipated administrative challenges. The first challenge was an audit performed by UW System; the second challenge came in the form of an NCAA investigation into our school’s financial aid practices (for full information on the NCAA investigation, visit www.uwlathletics.com/ncaacase). In
May, we also completed the NCAA-mandated Institutional Self-Study, a comprehensive internal review that all Division III athletic programs must undergo every five years. Together, these three situations provided us with an opportunity to examine carefully our practices related to different areas of our business, and both demonstrated to us areas in need of improvement. We have embraced the lessons learned and look forward to using them to build a stronger, more efficient program in the future.

A highlight of the year was unquestionably the new partnership that our athletic program forged with the La Crosse Loggers. The Loggers, which this summer celebrate their 10th anniversary in La Crosse, committed to providing private funding necessary to sustain the UW-L baseball program into the future. The Loggers’ gift, of between $40,000 and $45,000 annually, will allow the baseball team to regain secure financial footing after State dollars used to support the program were cut from the University’s budget in 2009. In exchange for the Loggers’ support, UW-L Athletics committed to helping the Loggers raise funds to make facility improvements to Copeland Park, the Loggers’ home field, with hopes that UW-L Baseball could begin to play at Copeland as well. With cooperation from the City of La Crosse, the Loggers will enter into a long-term lease to remain Copeland’s primary tenants, the facility improvements will be made without delay, and our baseball program could begin playing its home games at Copeland as early as 2013.

In March, UW-L was proud to host, for the second consecutive year, the NCAA Division III Wrestling Championships, held at the La Crosse Center. More than 150 of the country’s best college wrestlers, representing more than 50 institutions, assembled in La Crosse to compete for individual and team accolades. Reviews of the event from participants and spectators have been extremely positive. Attendance for the two-day event was again near an all-time high, and the La Crosse Center facility, in the downtown setting, provided an ideal location. The success of the Championships is a credit to Associate Athletic Director Kim Blum and her staff, who, in conjunction with many organizations and groups from the local community, did an incredible job planning, staging, and managing the event. We look forward to bidding for the Wrestling Championships again in the future.
In 2012-13, our staff will draw on the experience of staging the national wrestling tournament the last two years to host the Division III Outdoor Track & Field Championships – the largest championships staged by the NCAA at the D-III level. This event, to be held over three days in May 2013, will bring nearly 800 competitors and thousands of fans to the La Crosse area.

In June, UW-L was once again host to the WIAA State Track & Field Championships, an event that we have held on our campus since the early 1990s. Men’s track and field coach Josh Buchholtz and women’s basketball coach Lois Heeren, in their roles as, respectively, On-Site Coordinator and Assistant On-Site Coordinator of the State Meet, performed admirably managing the challenging logistics of such a large undertaking. With perfect weather and our beautiful facility, record crowds were on-hand to witness the two-day meet. We have received extremely positive feedback from those in attendance, as well as our partners at the WIAA, about the quality of the event.

**Conclusion**

It was an important year in UW-L Athletics. Athletically, our sport programs took a step forward from a year ago, and academically, our student-athletes continued to set a high standard. Are we the best? No. But we are on our way. And as they often say in the corridors of Mitchell Hall, the journey itself is the reward.

We are developing an expectation of excellence. The bar is high here at UW-L. We will not settle for mediocrity, nor will we tolerate complacency. High expectations pervade our program. Those who embrace those expectations will become part of something truly special – a place where student-athletes and staff alike achieve their dreams.

To do so, we are assembling the most talented team of people in Division III athletics. Our program will rise as high as our staff takes us. As we seek strategic growth and add new faces to our team, all of us must work together to confront the innumerable challenges that stand before us. If we work together – but only if we work together – we can overcome any obstacle and solve any problem. But we have to believe in one another, rely on each other, and work with, not against, each other. Our philosophy says it all. WE. US. OURS. If we do that, together, we can all be CHAMPIONS.