

Admissions & Recruitment Annual Report 2023-2024

Mission

The Admissions Office is dedicated to recruiting, admitting, and enrolling a diverse and academically talented student body. By providing information and support throughout the application and enrollment process, the Admissions Office strives to promote student success.

Vision & Values

The Admissions Team creates energetic and engaging experiences that exceed expectations to recruit, admit, and enroll students. Additionally, the Admissions Team takes good care of people – prospective students, families, colleagues, and each other – to create a successful environment to reach enrollment targets.

2023-2024 Goals

A major focus for 2023-2024 was evaluating admissions policies and practices following the June 2023 U.S. Supreme Court ruling prohibiting the use of race in admissions, reviewing and updating the Admissions Office Equity Plan, and building support for transfer student recruitment and enrollment. In addition, international student recruitment efforts expanded, and new transfer articulation agreements were developed. Finally, meeting new student enrollment targets set by the university remains a critical yearly goal.

The Admissions Office evaluated and modified admissions policies and practices to comply with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling prohibiting the use of race in admissions. To complete this task, work of the Universities of Wisconsin UNC/Harvard Campus Contact Workgroup was incorporated and guidance from the Universities of Wisconsin General Counsel and U.S. Department of Education was reviewed. Changes were successfully made to the Universities of Wisconsin application for admission, including UW-La Crosse's essay prompt, the UW-La Crosse catalog, and the application review process. Additional reviews and necessary changes were completed for any scholarships or programs that utilized race as a selection factor.

The goal to review and update the Admissions Office Equity Plan is in the final stages. The original equity plan was created when the Equity Liaison initiative was initially launched. It was important to review that plan, update it accordingly, and identify ways to implement that plan in all aspects of recruiting, admitting, and enrolling new students. The Admissions Office will aim to regularly reference the Equity Plan throughout this next year to integrate an equity lens in programming, initiatives, and operations.

Transfer students comprise an important part of the UWL student body. Providing clear information and assistance as students move through the application and enrollment process continued to be a priority. The Admissions Office met with several campus partners (Academic Advising Center, Residence Life, and Academic Services Directors) to better understand the transfer student experience and identify opportunities for improvement that will promote student success and a sense of belonging. To further enhance the transfer student experience, evaluations occurred to improve events such as TREK: Transfer Resources & Engagement Kickoff and Western Technical College visits (hosted by UWL staff on the Western Technical College campus). The goal is to provide exemplary support for transfer students throughout the process of becoming a UWL student.

The Admissions Office gave secondary attention to two areas in 2023-2024 expanding international recruitment efforts and growing the number of transfer articulation agreements. International recruitment travels included Heather Pearson (Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka); Karolyn Bald (Vietnam); Marcus Mahlum (India); and Miranda Panzer (Luxembourg). Five new articulation agreements were signed with Western Technical College and new transfer pathways were established with Waukesha County Technical College, Mid-State Technical College, and Northcentral Technical College.

The summer/fall 2023 new freshman target was set at 2,200 students. On the tenth day of the fall semester, the official freshman cohort was reported at 2,294. This was one of the largest freshman cohorts in the history of UWL. The transfer target for summer/fall 2023 was set at 350 students. The official transfer class was reported at 358 students, surpassing the target. The efforts of numerous partners across campus combined with the steadfast dedication and work of the Admissions staff, resulted in both freshman and transfer enrollment targets being exceeded.

Summer/Fall 2023 Freshman Funnel

Applications	7328
Admits	5364 (657 cancelled)
Deposits	2669 (321 cancelled)
Enrolled	2294 (94 over goal of 2200)

Summer/Fall 2023 Transfer Funnel

Applications	823
Admits	547 (85 cancelled)
Enrolled	358 (8 over goal of 350)

As of June 15, 2024, the applications, admits, and deposits for the summer/fall 2024 freshman cohort are strong. It is predicted that the summer/fall 2024 freshman cohort will easily exceed the enrollment target of 2,225 students.

Summer/Fall 2024 Freshman Funnel (as of 06/15/2024)

Applications	7110
Admits	5393 (504 cancelled)
Deposits	2639 (263 cancelled)

As of June 15, 2024, the transfer applications and admits for the summer/fall 2024 cohort are comparable to this point in time last year. It is predicted that due to the strong summer/fall 2024 freshman cohort, the transfer enrollment target for summer/fall 2024 may be reduced.

Summer Fall 2024 Transfer Funnel (as of 6/15/2024)

Applications	708
Admits	452 (49 cancelled)

2023-2024 Points of Pride & Accomplishments

Campus Visits

Interest in campus visit options remained strong and several partners across campus assisted to provide energetic and engaging experiences that exceeded expectations.

Campus Close-Up (five):	888 students + families
Senior Visit Day (two):	222 students + families
Scholar Day:	67 students + families

Admissions Information Sessions, Walking Tours of Campus, Senior Snapshots, and Individual Appointments were also offered. During the 2023-2024 year, Vanguard provided 1,324 campus tours. Total campus visitors again exceeded 17,000 for the year!

Multicultural Student Visits

Thanks to the financial support from the Academic Initiatives Differential Allocation Committee, the Admissions Office coordinated 23 special multicultural group visits this past year that involved 567 students. This included Latinx Visit Day on April 20 – a visit program offered in Spanish as an introduction to UWL for Latinx students and their families.

UWL Ho-Chunk Educational Promise Program

First announced in January 2024, the UW-La Crosse Ho-Chunk Educational Promise Program was piloted in the Spring 2024 semester to guarantee scholarships and grants to meet the full in-state tuition for Wisconsin residents who are enrolled members of the Ho-Chunk Nation and pursuing their first undergraduate degree.

UWL & Western Technical College

The Transfer Admissions Team expanded relationships to increase UWL's presence on the Western Technical College campus in their Learning Commons. Trevor Sprague, Associate Director of Transfer Admissions; Alex Wagner-Romero, Transfer Admissions Counselor; Beck

Hawkins, Academic Advisor from the Academic Advising Center; Cooper Shea, Graduate Assistant from the College of Science & Health; and Nate Wolfe, Veteran Services; represented UWL at Western's campus on a weekly basis to meeting with more than 30 prospective and admitted students.

Recruitment Travel

Domestic student recruitment included high school visits and in-person college fairs. During the 2023-2024 year, the Admissions Team visited over 400 high schools and represented UWL at more than 190 college fairs.

Non-Resident Recruitment & Taste of La Crosse in Chicago

Non-resident recruitment efforts in the past year will result in a first-year freshman class including new students from 18 different states: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, and Texas. The annual Taste of La Crosse in Chicago event for admitted students from Northern Illinois and the Chicagoland area allowed students to connect with one another, learn about next steps for enrollment, and hear about the experiences of current UWL students.

International Recruitment in Malaysia

Heather Pearson coordinated UWL's hosting of a "fly-in" for five counselors from American Degree Transfer Program colleges in Malaysia from July 20-22, 2023. The counselors met with members of campus leadership, department chairs, and current Malaysian students. UWL's largest number of international students comes from these colleges and the visit provided an opportunity for the counselors to experience UWL and better assist future students. Additionally, Heather Pearson was an invited guest for the 10th anniversary celebration of the American Degree Transfer Program at Methodist College in Kuala Lumpur in March.

2023-2024 Challenges

The competition for students continues to present challenges to UWL's recruitment efforts, especially as most campuses work to stabilize student enrollment due to the declining number of high school graduates. Appropriate housing and class availability is critical. Without available beds on campus and classes to build schedules, enrollment will continue to be impacted. Due to limited space in the residence halls, no new transfer students for spring 2024 were able to live on campus. On-campus housing options were also limited for fall 2024 transfer students. Fortunately, the on-going residence hall renovation projects will provide much-needed updated living options for students.

International student enrollment for fall 2024 will see a slight increase over fall 2023. Continued recruitment activities in Malaysia and a new focus on Vietnam are showing promise both in the number of applications from those countries and the visa acceptance rates. Admitted students in certain other countries still struggle to schedule visa interview dates prior to the start of classes,

and there remains a high number of visa refusals. Concerns expressed by international students include the cost of tuition, availability of scholarships, access to food that meets their religious or cultural needs (such as Halal), and opportunities for employment after graduation. Some of these factors are within UWL's control, while others are influenced by outside forces (economic, political, etc.). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, UWL had two full-time positions focused on international student recruitment and admission, a recruitment budget twice the size of the current budget, and a larger allocation of non-resident tuition remission dollars for international scholarships. More universities (UWs and others) are increasing their recruitment efforts and investing in new initiatives such as hiring in-country recruiters. As international recruitment evolves and becomes more competitive, UWL will need to assess its goals for internationalization and determine how assertive it wants to be in attracting students.

Recruitment involves a significant volume of UWL print publications distributed at college fairs, high school visits, and on-campus visits. The price of paper and the cost to print publications remains high. Additionally, the cost of postage is increasing again. These necessary costs will need to be accounted for in future budgets.

Cost for recruitment travel will remain a challenge for the foreseeable future. The increase in expenses for gas and hotels will impact each recruitment trip. Recruitment travel is essential for building an applicant pool which in turn allows us to meet enrollment targets.

The Admissions Office ran several searches in 2023-2024 to fill vacant positions. Retaining staff is a concern, especially given the loss of office and institutional knowledge with each departure. The significant turnover in Human Resources required Admissions to absorb a larger share of duties in the recruitment and hiring process. Considerable effort was devoted, and flexibility needed, to run efficient and effective searches. While the positions have been filled with strong candidates this year, Admissions is hopeful new leadership in Human Resources will aid future searches. Additionally, a great amount of time is dedicated to training staff to be successful in their roles. This must be executed strategically to promote the success of new staff, confidence in their duties, and create a sense of belonging and purpose.

Staff Update

As in past years, the Admissions Team said goodbye to staff and welcomed new members in 2023-2024. Wes Quintana, Multicultural Freshman Admissions Counselor, left the Admissions Office in June 2023 for a position at the UW HELP (Higher Education Location Program) Office. His Multicultural Freshman Admissions Counselor position was filled by Franky Zavala in July.

In June 2023, Jonelle Streed left her 40% Freshman Admissions Counselor position to relocate to North Carolina with her family. Following a restructuring, that position was increased from a 40% position to a 100% position with an increased focus on recruiting first generation and Pell-eligible students. Holly Korfmacher was hired in this position and started in July.

Tanisha Petherbridge, Multicultural Freshman Admissions Counselor, took a position at Viterbo University in July 2023. That Multicultural Freshman Admissions Counselor position was filled by Julia Lewis in July.

Scott Johns, Associate Director of Transfer Admissions, left in July 2023 after 13 years at UWL for a position with CollegeSource, a technology company that supports higher education institutions. Following a successful search, Trevor Sprague was welcomed in August as the new Associate Director of Transfer Admissions.

Kim Berg, Transfer Application Review Specialist, moved to the UWL Records & Registration Office in August 2023 for the Credit for Prior Learning, Transfer, and Grade Coordinator position. Katie Kennedy was hired in the Transfer Application Review Specialist role and started in October.

August 2023 also marked the move of Angel Allen, Multicultural Freshman Admissions Counselor, to a full-time UWL Assistant Women's Basketball Coach position. This 50% Multicultural Admissions Counselor/50% Assistant Women's Basketball Coach role was filled by Deja Williams in May.

Katie Kennedy, Transfer Application Review Specialist was recruited away from UWL to work at the American Psychological Association and left her position in March 2024. A search for that position resulted in Mikaela Robarge filling the Transfer Application Review Specialist role in June.

In May 2024, Tommy Knoche resigned from the Administrative Assistant II position to work as the UWL's College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities Dean's Executive Assistant. Emily Moua started in the Admissions Office Administrative Assistant II position at the Front Desk in June.

Finally, Taiyani Davis, Regional Multicultural Freshman Admissions Counselor based in Milwaukee, left her position in May 2024. Admissions is working with campus leadership to identify the appropriate next steps for that position.

2024-2025 Initiatives & Goals

The annual goal of the Admissions Office to meet the new student enrollment targets established by the university will continue.

Meanwhile, the Admissions Office will focus on three primary areas in 2024-2025

- Evaluate Parent & Family Engagement Initiatives
 - Parents and family members play a role in supporting their students from recruitment through graduation. The Admissions Office will evaluate how parents

and families are currently engaged in the recruitment, admission, and enrollment of students. Additionally, Admissions will seek to understand how early parent and family engagement may encourage continued engagement throughout college, resulting in increased student utilization of UWL programs and resources designed to foster success.

- Review Operations Training Manuals to Facilitate Cross Training of Staff
 - The Admissions Office will continue to welcome new staff. Reviewing and updating manuals will promote continuity of operations while serving as a training resource promoting success of new staff, confidence in their duties, and creating a sense of belonging and purpose.
- Build Relationships and Discover Opportunities to Engage Campus Partners in the Recruitment and Enrollment of New Students
 - New students comprise an important part of the UWL student body. The touch points with these students from recruitment to application to registration to enrollment should engage various campus partners. Information must be shared, and individuals designated to assist applicants and students when needed. The Admissions Office will meet with campus partners to better understand the current student experience and identify opportunities to share information about resources that will promote student success and a sense of belonging.

Additionally, the Admissions Office will give secondary attention to two areas in 2024-2025

- Identify the Impact of Direct Admit Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Guarantee on UWL's Recruitment Efforts
 - Universities of Wisconsin will launch the Direct Admit Wisconsin program at ten of the 13 campuses next year. Additionally, the Wisconsin Guarantee created by state legislation will begin in the fall. The impact of these initiatives on UWL's recruitment efforts is not fully known. As a result, it will be important that attention is given to better understand the impacts of these programs so future recruitment strategies may be adjusted accordingly.
- Grow Membership of the Parent Advisory Board and Expand Engagement
 - The membership of the Parent Advisory Board will change as dedicated and involved members have children graduating from UWL. The New Student & Family Programs Coordinator will cultivate interest and incorporate new members into the advisory board. The goal is to expand engagement with members in a meaningful way that allows the work of the advisory board to continue and grow.

Student Highlight

“As a Vanguard, I forged life-long friendships, gained cherished mentors in the Admissions Staff, and discovered my favorite way to give back to a community that I’m proud to call home.”
– Morgan Priem, Eau Claire, WI.

Honors & Presentations

Sam Pierce, Associate Director of Admissions, received the Rising Stars Under 40 award from the 7 Rivers Alliance for his work and contributions as an outstanding young professional making a difference in the La Crosse community.

Sam Pierce, Associate Director of Admissions, presented at the 2023 Wisconsin Association of Collegiate Registrars & Admissions Officers (WACRAO) conference. His session was titled “Diving into High School Visits.” Sam also served as the Universities of Wisconsin representative on the Wisconsin Education Fair (WEF) Executive Board.

Trevor Sprague, Associate Director of Admissions, presented at the 2024 CollegeSource Annual Conference. Trevor’s presentation was titled “Unleash the Party with Promotion and Usage Best Practices.”

Corey Sjoquist, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Admissions & Recruitment, presented at the 2023 Wisconsin Association of Collegiate Registrars & Admissions Officers (WACRAO) conference. The presentation was titled, “The Application Process.” He also served on a panel for UWL’s 2024 Social Justice Week. The title of the panel presentation was, “Fact or Fiction: Implications of Recent State-Level DEI Decisions.”

Heather Pearson, International Articulations & Admissions Counselor, served as the Chair of the External Relations Committee for the Wisconsin Association of Collegiate Registrars & Admissions Officers (WACRAO).

In conclusion, the UWL Admissions Office remains a leader within the Universities of Wisconsin and across the state of Wisconsin. Our success is because of the dedicated Admissions Team along with the strong partnerships and relationships at UWL, in the high schools, and at other colleges and universities. We take good care of people. We create energetic and engaging experiences that exceed expectations. We plan to continue all those things in 2024-2025!