

EXTENSION *in Action*

SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EXTENSION | WINTER 2004/ANNUAL REPORT

2 *Conversation with
Interim Chancellor
Marv Van Kekerix
and Walter Sava*

3 *Revitalizing Lac du
Flambeau*

4 *Preparing for college
success*

6 *Building stronger
families and
communities*

8 *Addressing racism*



WAYNE BRABENDER

UW-Extension educates Wisconsin's diverse populations

University of Wisconsin-Extension and its UW campus partners help minority students like Glenda Vasquez, Areli Zavala and Yomira Zavala learn the ropes about succeeding in college. (See pp. 4-5.)

**UW
Extension**
Learning for life

The changing face of Wisconsin, and the university's role

A conversation with **Walter Sava**, executive director, Latino Arts Inc., Milwaukee, and **Marv Van Kekerix**, interim chancellor, University of Wisconsin-Extension



Marv Van Kekerix
interim Chancellor
UW-Extension

Van Kekerix: When most people talk about cultural diversity in higher education, they focus on enrollment and admissions.

University of Wisconsin-Extension

takes a very broad view of the issue, addressing sensitive topics in constructive ways.

Sava: Racism and discrimination are tough issues, but at least we're willing to talk. In my experience, this conversation doesn't take place everywhere. Americans are willing to confront important topics and deal with them.

Van Kekerix: As that conversation takes shape, what role should the university play?

Sava: In my opinion, universities have not been as aggressive in this area as they could have been. Everyone should have a voice, but educated people ought to lead the effort. The university – where people freely “agree to disagree” – can help bring about positive change.

Van Kekerix: That's a niche that we can fill. Our faculty and staff are accustomed to helping people address complex, often controversial issues. We bring an objective, research-based perspective that helps people identify the problem, apply knowledge and find workable solutions. In this case, everyone knows about

Wisconsin's changing demographics, but people need help understanding all the implications.

Sava: There are 100,000 Latinos in the greater Milwaukee area alone, a number that has doubled in 10 years. That has implications for the arts, jobs, housing, education and every other area. Within the university, we now have Latinos in top positions, including two on the UW Board of Regents and one as chancellor of UW-Milwaukee. That's progress.

Van Kekerix: Still, there's work to be done. If we're going to provide all Wisconsin people with access to university resources, we must understand the persistent barriers faced by people of color.

Sava: Pre-college programs that target minority children are vital. People wonder why students of color drop out of college. They fail to understand what it's like to be one of a



Walter Sava
Executive Director
Latino Arts Inc.

handful of Latino or black students on a campus, without the structure or preparation to help them feel like they belong. Pre-college programs help young people and their parents become

accustomed to the idea of going to college, so that minority youth are more likely to feel like they belong there and enter college with a better shot at succeeding.



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Through the University of Wisconsin-Extension, all Wisconsin people can access university resources and engage in lifelong learning, wherever they live and work.

An EEO/Affirmative Action employer, University of Wisconsin-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements.

Partners revitalize a northern tribal community

In the 1950s, the streets of **Lac du Flambeau** were crowded with visitors who had come to learn about the culture of the **Ojibwe people** and to enjoy the lakes and forests of **Vilas County** in northern Wisconsin.

Lac du Flambeau had a vital downtown in the 1950s and '60s, but it deteriorated as the storeowners' children moved away or gave up the businesses. The Ojibwe, of the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, are working with UW-Extension to revitalize the town's center, which has found new life with the success of the Lake of the Torches Casino and Hotel. Major improvements over the past five years include road projects and new sidewalks.

Jobs and restoration

Brian Gauthier, community resource development educator for Lac du Flambeau Tribal UW-Extension, says

the economy has received substantial revenue from the tribally owned casino, which opened in 1989 at the center of the Ojibwe reservation.

"The casino provides many jobs for tribal and non-tribal community members," Gauthier says. "Right now, we want to focus on restoring the downtown area by improving aesthetics, adding infrastructure such as water pipes and communication lines, and building a retail incubator or strip mall."

Partners in community development

Gauthier is working with the tribe's Planning and Development office and Northwoods NiiJii Enterprise Community Inc. to capitalize on the tourism industry and provide a strategic plan for community development. The partners are helping to build a strong economy on the reservation to take advantage of growing interest in the casino and the area's year-round recreation.

A nonprofit organization working to combat poverty through social and economic development, NiiJii provides project support in funding, training and grant writing, and leverages seed funding, giving three Wisconsin tribes access to millions



GREG JOHNSON

Lac du Flambeau UW-Extension Community Resource Development Educator Brian Gauthier consults with Lac du Flambeau Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Stephanie Tralango on tactics to build tourism in the community.

of federal dollars for community development.

"Working with the Ojibwe tribe is about building relationships and empowering people," explains Patricia Stanton, NiiJii executive director.

Emerson Coy, director of the Lac du Flambeau Planning and Development office, adds, "This partnership is successful because of the time spent listening and creating trust in one another, recognizing the commitment we have in common, and bringing our different goals into harmony." —*Amber Rose Fonzen with Jo Futrell*

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

- Through 70 ongoing projects, the partners have assisted 217 businesses and helped create and/or retain hundreds of jobs since 2001.
- Every \$1 the partners invest in a project results in a return to the community of \$72 in grants.

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UW-Extension pre-college programs target minority youth

Continuing education programs on 26 University of Wisconsin campuses, offered in partnership with UW-Extension, help minority students transition successfully from high school to college.

The programs are designed to help students of color and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds graduate from high school with the skills necessary to be successful at a UW institution.

Recent figures from the National Center for Education Statistics indicate that more than 60% of all high school graduates nationwide will go on to college directly after graduating from high school. What the numbers don't tell, however, is that a smaller percentage of students of color enroll in college right after high school than their Caucasian classmates. Likewise, there is a gap between students from high- and low-income families in their immediate enrollment rates.

Stepping Stones

Patricia Pearson looks back at her high school experience and thinks about how close she came to being “left behind” in the classroom.

“I was overlooked by many teachers when I raised my hand to answer questions, rarely invited by community leaders to participate in community projects, and never informed about pre-college programs until my last year of high school, which was almost too late,” she says. “I was not from an affluent family, but from an economically disadvantaged background.”



S.C. JOHNSON

Patricia Pearson

Pearson, now a senior information systems analyst on the e-commerce technical team at S.C. Johnson & Son Inc. in Racine, was lucky enough to stumble across UW-Parkside's continuing education pre-college program Stepping Stones. The Stepping Stones program provides workshops, mentoring, financial aid assistance, ACT preparation and tutoring.

“During my senior year [in high school], UW-Parkside's pre-college staff played a major role in encouraging me to attend college, guided me through the college selection and admission process, and assisted me in securing an S.C. Johnson & Son Inc. scholarship and other sources of financial aid,” Pearson explains.

Pearson graduated from UW-Parkside in 2002 with a double major in management information systems and Spanish.

STEPPING STONES IMPACTS

Of the 213 students who completed the Stepping Stones program from 2000 to 2004:

- 100% of the seniors graduated from high school and applied to institutions of higher learning.
- 92% enrolled in a postsecondary institution. Of these, 90% attend a Wisconsin school, the majority of which are UW System campuses.

For more information:

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EXPLORE IMPACTS

According to an evaluation completed by participants at the end of the 2002 EXPLORE program:

- 89% felt the program was a good experience.
- 82% said the program increased their interest in learning about college or careers.

Additionally:

- 83% of parents of EXPLORE participants observed that their children showed an increased interest in careers and college after participating in the program.

For more information: Wayne Sorenson, (715) 346-4069 or wsorenso@uwp.edu



WAYNE BRABENDER

Alphonso Chavez, Ashley Oviedo, EXPLORE counselor Lauren Jung and Sylvia Oviedo work together on an education activity at the Aurora Center in Berlin.

EXPLORE

Traveling around the United States from spring through fall makes it difficult for children of migrant families to keep up with schoolwork. It also limits their exposure to career opportunities and participation in school-enrichment experiences. Because of this disjointed academic schedule, students need summer tutoring to help decrease the negative impacts of frequent travel.

Since 2000, the UW-Stevens Point Extension has offered the EXPLORE program for children of migrant workers in central Wisconsin. EXPLORE provides enrichment activities, academic tutoring and career exploration opportunities that help students in grades 3 through 10 achieve academic suc-

cess now, while also learning about college and career opportunities for the future. Students keep up with schoolwork through EXPLORE's on-site tutoring sessions and computer-based English tutorials.

ACT preparation

Southeast Asian students tend to re-

ceive low scores on the English and reading portions of the ACT college-entrance exam. Earlier this year, the UW-Marathon County Office of Continuing Education held two weekend sessions of ACT preparation studies for 39 students, 38 of whom were Southeast Asian. —Amy Pikalek

ACT PREPARATION IMPACTS

According to comparisons between pre-and post-test scores and participant evaluations:

- Significant improvements were made in the reading and English sections for those students who scored the lowest (49% correct or less) on the pre-tests.
- On the English test, students who received scores of 33% or less correct improved by an average of 7 points on the post-test.
- On the reading section, the lowest-scoring students improved by an average of 4.4 points on the post-test.

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Wisconsin Public Television is a force for community action



JEFF MILLER

Professor Dhavan Shah found that participants in a Wisconsin Public Television community screening and discussion were more apt to talk about race and become involved in community action.

A 1996 tragedy in Texas reverberated nationwide.

A black man was dragged to his death behind a pickup truck, and members of a group of white supremacists were convicted of the crime.

WPT provides a forum

Reflections on this act continue today, even in Wisconsin, hundreds of miles from Texas. This is due to an initial film screening and community discussion, and subsequent similar forums, convened by Wisconsin Public Television (WPT) and its partners.

On Jan. 21, 2003, nearly 300 people turned out to watch “Two Towns of Jasper,” produced by one white and one black filmmaker. The film depicted two very different interpretations of the dragging death and racism.

Catalyst for change

The screening, held in Madison, demonstrated the power of public

Community partnership builds strong Hmong families

Hmong families struggle to preserve their cultural identity as their children are often torn between traditional life and mainstream youth culture. Hmong youth are the first generation to use alcohol, tobacco or other drugs. Through the Hmong Family Strengthening Project in Eau Claire, families are reducing the risks their kids face through enhanced communication, support and discipline.

Multiple community partners

The project is led by the Partnership for Strong Hmong Families, which includes state and county University of Wisconsin-Extension Family Living educators; representatives from Eau Claire schools, youth and

family organizations; the police department; and respected Hmong community members. Initiated under UW-Extension leadership, 16 facilitators were trained and a family-strengthening curriculum was adapted to reflect Hmong beliefs and traditions. Three series of classes were held, reaching 30 families with middle school-aged children. Classes included youth, parent, and family sessions; free childcare; and dinner.

Improved family relationships

As a result of the classes, parents reported family conflict decreased significantly, while their parental expressions of affection and love increased. Youth said parents monitored them more, gave them more

praise and rewards, and that family conflict decreased. Youth reported their parents now have stricter attitudes about drug use, and family rules are clearer and more likely to be enforced. Parents requested more classes, prompting a booster session in 2003.

Expanded support

The partnership has expanded to take on a range of issues affecting Hmong families. The program is a model of how to provide positive family experiences for other immigrant groups that face the special challenges of parenting between two cultures. —Mary Huser and Jo Futrell

PARTICIPANTS MORE LIKELY TO:

People who attended the “Two Towns of Jasper” screening were:

- 16% more likely than the sample average to see racism as a problem in the community
- 25% more likely to talk about race
- 48% more likely to participate in community action
- 81% more likely to become involved in the community

The event also led to additional screenings and discussions, a 2003-04 series and another in 2004-05. To date, 10 events have taken place with more than 1,000 people participating.



JIM GILL

Wisconsin Public Television provided forums for community discussion and increased understanding of racism.

television as a convener for social discourse. The National Center for Outreach, a national clearinghouse for community outreach, sponsored

research on the event and found that there is an impact when a broadcast is used as a catalyst for attitudinal and behavioral change. Dhavan

Shah, professor of mass communications at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, conducted the research.

—Moirra Harrington

Spanish-language training leads to better service for clients and patients

Research by the U.S. Census Bureau indicates by the year 2010 Hispanics will be the largest minority group in the United States. Anticipating the demands created by these changing demographics, many of the continuing education offices on University of Wisconsin campuses have developed workplace Spanish-language programs for English-speaking supervisors, police, and health-care and social-service workers, individuals who are increasingly interacting with Spanish-speaking individuals on a daily basis.

UW campuses provide training

Currently, at least seven of the UW Colleges (UW-Baraboo, UW-Fond du Lac, UW-Fox Valley, UW-Manito-

woc, UW-Marathon County, UW-Rock County and UW-Waukesha) offer Spanish-language programs. For example, the UW-Manitowoc Office of Continuing Education developed a course for health-care

professionals. The program focuses on basic Spanish instruction and communication skills, issues and terminology pertinent to the health-care system, as well as Hispanic cultures. —Amy Pikalek

LANGUAGE SKILLS IMPROVE CARE

According to a post-course survey, almost all of the UW-Manitowoc participants reported immediately using their new Spanish-language skills, enabling them to improve the care they gave their Spanish-speaking patients. Health-care workers say the course has enabled them to:

- Ask their patients simple questions in Spanish, putting the patients more at ease
- Discuss medical histories with patients in Spanish
- Help their patients follow clinic appointments, lab tests and report symptoms more accurately
- Know the names of foods in Spanish, which helps with diagnosis and dietary recommendations

Addressing racism through dialogue, action and change

Improving race relations is a challenge for many communities in Wisconsin.



JIM GILL

Rochelle Moore, participant and facilitator, Kenosha Diversity Circles

Diversity Circles, offered by University of Wisconsin-Extension and its partners, help create a new awareness of the issue of racism, develop sensitivity to others' experiences, and promote understanding of how racism affects everyone.

Kenosha/Racine

Since 2001, Diversity Circles at UW-Parkside have reached more than 1,500 Kenosha and Racine citizens

and 2,500 high school youth in 80 discussion groups. The Study Circles program is a collaboration by UW-Parkside, Kenosha Coalition for Dismantling Racism, and Sustainable Racine Preparing for Diversity Committee.

According to follow-up surveys, as a result of the Study Circles program, participants:

- could discuss racial issues openly and frankly with people of other races (98%)
- increased their understanding of attitudes/beliefs about racism and race relations (96%)
- increased their understanding of others' attitudes and beliefs about racism and race relations (95%)

- increased their ability to communicate more effectively (89%)
- changed their relationships with people of other races (87%)

Fond du Lac

Since September 2003, more than 80 people in Fond du Lac County have participated in the Diversity Circles training offered through continuing education and Cooperative Extension offices. As a result of these efforts:

- People are working with businesses to make local businesses more welcoming to people of color.
- High school-aged facilitators will begin offering Diversity Circles in high schools.
- The city of Fond du Lac is reaching out to contractors who employ more people of color. —Amy Pikalek and Pamela Seelman



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