Greetings from UW-River Falls!

As we begin the fall semester at UW-River Falls, we find ourselves sharing in the sense of purpose and excitement that our new and returning students bring to campus. This fall, in particular, there is more than ever to celebrate. We have increased the size of our incoming freshman class by 13% and have almost 1,700 new Falcons (freshmen and transfer students) joining us. Not only are we attracting more students, thanks in part to our new academic programs like agricultural engineering, data science, neuroscience and the recently reinstated food science and technology major, we are also improving the academic profile of admitted students, who boast the highest average ACT scores recorded in 15 years.

As you read on, you will learn not only about the inspiring success of our first ever comprehensive fundraising campaign, but also about how we are expanding the opportunities that our students have to grow and learn. Be it through entrepreneurial business development programs, participation in cutting-edge research with faculty mentors, or study abroad experiences like our new partnership program in Mexico “Experience Puebla,” the success of our students demonstrates that the UWRF commitment to excellence is making a difference.

At a time when some question the value of investing in public higher education, or the worth of a college degree, it is important to reflect on just how much a college degree impacts not only the individual but society as a whole. We know from research that more education results in better prospects of employment and higher lifetime earnings, but also increased civic participation and community engagement. While there are serious discussions at the state and federal level regarding how to address the cost of higher education, we must not lose sight of the value of what is truly an investment in personal and public good. For more opinion, data and resources on this topic, please visit my new blog at https://www.uwrf.edu/News/ChancellorsBlog/, where the first submission is on the value of a college degree.

Meanwhile, I invite you to read the information in this issue of Falcon Quarterly. As the leaves turn golden and the air crisp, on behalf of the university’s outstanding faculty, staff and students, I thank you for your support of UW-River Falls.

Dean Van Galen, Chancellor
Mexican families. guided field trips, and they can choose to either live on campus or with carefully vetted providing a rich, holistic learning experience. Participants will be able to engage in undergraduate programs in Puebla, Mexico. The program allows formal academic Autónoma del Estado de Puebla (UPAEP), a private university that offers 42 UWRF has finalized details visited, earning three credit hours toward the university's global perspectives River Falls and support to secure funding to pay for their trip. To date, 12 students have exchanged agreements with Polish university. Cooperation between UWRF and a major Polish university, Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego (AWF), is creating new opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges for health and human performance students. The exchange agreement allows AWF students and faculty to study at UW-River Falls and support to secure funding to pay for their trip. To date, 12 students have visited, earning three credit hours toward the university’s global perspectives requirement.

Cross cultural agreement signed with Polish university. Cooperation between UWRF and a major Polish university, Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego (AWF), is creating new opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges for health and human performance students. The exchange agreement allows AWF students and faculty to study at UW-River Falls and support to secure funding to pay for their trip. To date, 12 students have visited, earning three credit hours toward the university’s global perspectives requirement.

Exchange program launched with Mexican university. UWRF has finalized details establishing an Experience Puebla exchange program at the Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla (UFAEP), a private university that offers 42 undergraduate programs in Puebla, Mexico. The program allows formal academic experiences to be combined with local community life and travel experiences, providing a rich, holistic learning experience. Participants will be able to engage in service learning and internship opportunities, and take part in host family programs and guided field trips, and they can choose to either live on campus or with carefully vetted Mexican families.

Innovative:

Undergrads exhibit greenwall research at Minnesota State Fair. UW-River Falls exhibited its greenwall research at the 2016 Minnesota State Fair, Aug. 25-Sept. 5. The exhibit included a full-size version of the foliage wall, or vertical vegetation system (greenwall), installed on campus in 2015 to study the effects of greeneries and plants on student behavior, mood and classroom performance. A multidisciplinary team of UW-River Falls student and faculty researchers studied the benefits of a greenwall in a classroom setting over the 2014-15 academic year including indicators such as workspace satisfaction, psychological restoration, academic self-efficacy, student worry, and mood. Results from the most recent greenwall research at UW-River Falls has confirmed the psychological benefits of living plants and provided preliminary evidence that plants may also improve academic performance. Ongoing research includes analyzing and testing the UWRF greenwall for optimal design features and upkeep protocols to maintain a healthy and sustainable greenwall system.

Students and professor selected for $25,000 Ideaadvance grants. UWRF Director for the Center for Innovation and Business Development Danielle Campeau announced that students Michael Mader and Edward Matsushima and Associate Professor of Physics Matthew Yorck had each been selected for a $25,000 Ideaadvance grant. IdeaAdvance is a seed fund created by the University of Wisconsin System and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and is administered by UW-Extension. IdeaAdvance grants support UW student, staff or faculty entrepreneurs while they test the viability of products and business ideas. Both Mader and Matsushima had previously competed in the Innovation Challenge offered through the Center for Innovation and Business Development within the College of Business and Economics. Professor shares cutting-edge research at National Cancer Moonshot Summit. UW-River Falls biology Professor Tim Lyden and his Duluth industrial partner co-presented cutting-edge cancer research at the first White House sponsored National Cancer Moonshot Summit regional event at the UM-Duluth Medical School June 29. During the summit, Lyden presented ongoing 3D cancer modeling research to the public. In concert with staff from BRTI LifeSciences, LLC, samples of 3D artificial tumor structures developed at UW-River Falls with the BRTI product Cell-MateTM as well as natural scaffolds and hanging drop spheroids were shown. The research, developed by Lyden, as the director the UW-River Falls Tissue and Cellular Innovation Center (TCIC), is the continuation of summer 2015 research involving four TCIC Team Brazil exchange students. The research is now the focus of a new student researcher, with Lyden as mentor and project developer, in the 2016 UW-River Falls Summer Scholars Program.

Excellent:

Food science and technology program reinstated. The College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) at UW-River Falls has completed the process of reinstating its food science and technology program that was suspended several years ago. Students are now being accepted into the program. The college is currently engaged in a major renovation of its Dairy Pilot Plant, which is being funded primarily through private donations from industry. Many of the supporters of this project indicated their interest in bringing back the program. The Agricultural Engineering Technology Department in the college recently hired a faculty member with expertise in food process engineering. She will be working closely with the food science and technology program as that department looks to build its curriculum in the food processing and technology area. Successful $20 million fundraising campaign celebrated. UW-River Falls celebrated the conclusion of its first-ever comprehensive campaign, Rising to Distinction, on September 23 as part of UWRF’s Homecoming Weekend. The five-year campaign was a stellar success with an influx of gifts at the end of 2015 that enabled UWRF to cross the $20 million threshold six months before their anticipated June 30 campaign conclusion. The campaign raised $21,910,619 from July 1, 2011, to June 30, 2016, with a remarkable 93% of pledges already paid and currently at work on the UWRF campus. Among the campaign’s most important accomplishments were increasing annual scholarship awards from $588,000 to $1.1 million, establishment of the Falcon Scholars program, renovation of Smith Stadium at Ramer Field, support for the Falcon Center project, and private funds raised to support the soon-to-be-revived Dairy Pilot Plant.

Professor secures third National Science Foundation grant. Jamie Schneider, professor of chemistry and biotechnology at UW-River Falls, was recently awarded a third grant through the National Science Foundation (NSF), serving as the principle investigator on two of them. The new grant, funded through the Improving Undergraduate STEM Education (IUSE) program for $498,483, will support a research project, “Optimizing Testing Feedback for Improved Student Learning,” that aims to generate evidence about the role of testing feedback to promote and support learning in general chemistry through four related sets of studies. The new NSF IUSE program was created to support projects that address immediate challenges and opportunities related to the teaching and learning of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) at the undergraduate level.

For more information about these and other UW-River Falls stories, visit www.uwrf.edu/news