**More higher education dominos fall**

By WisPolitics.com

The higher education landscape in Wisconsin is rapidly changing.

Two more higher ed dominos have recently fallen at private and public institutions -- and there's probably more to come because of declining enrollments and other issues.

--UW-Oshkosh Chancellor Andrew Leavitt recently announced the university’s Fox Cities campus will close in June 2025 due to low enrollment — the sixth two-year campus in two years to either end in-person instruction or shut completely;

--And at Alverno College in Milwaukee, the number of undergrad majors will be dropping from 43 down to 29, forcing layoffs. But the school does plan to continue to educate all existing undergrads even if their major is one that's being cut.

The UW-Oshkosh decision spurred criticism from Outagamie County Exec Tom Nelson, a former Democrat lawmaker. Nelson also ripped UW President Jay Rothman.

Nelson said if Leavitt and Rothman had read the children’s book “All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten,” they would understand “the importance of playing fair, taking responsibility, saying sorry when mistakes were made and putting things back as they were found.”

“Instead, Leavitt and Rothman let down the students and families of UW Fox and betrayed their trust — and now it will be up to the rest of us to clean up their mess. Shame on you,” Nelson said.

Leavitt called it a difficult but responsible decision.

“We reach this decision after spending a year analyzing UWO Fox Cities enrollment, the region’s and state’s changing demographics, student participation rates, the regional higher-education landscape, potential for new and unique academic offerings and economic trends in the competitive Fox Valley marketplace,” Leavitt said.

The decision comes as enrollment has declined by nearly 67% over the past 10 years, with a five-year average decline of nearly 19%. The campus had just 454 full-time equivalent students in the fall.

And with the number of high school graduates in the state expected to go down 13% over the next 10 years, a UW-Oshkosh analysis projected the possibility of fewer than 100 students at the Fox Cities campus by 2032.

The UW-Oshkosh release noted Rothman “reviewed UWO’s analysis, supports its conclusions and has directed the university to move forward.”

It's a similar story at Alverno.

Christy Brown, Alverno College president, also said enrollment is a big factor. He noted that changes to the nursing, education and business programs will see no changes now because the market currently demands them.

But Brown told Milwaukee media that Alverno has seen a 40% drop in enrollment in the last 10 years -- a trend expected to continue.

"So we're reaching something called the demographic cliff, where there will be less 18-year-olds after 2025 for a period of time," Brown said.

The declaration means: layoff of 22 full-time faculty and 11 full-time staff, the discontinuing of track and field and other cuts. Brown expects the moves to save Alverno about $6.4 million.

"It's in times like these that our leadership is tested, and I think that during these times we have to be a leader, and that means, you know, making hard choices but also making choices that ensure that we're going to be here for the future," Brown told Milwaukee media.

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