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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** They to sync the cameras? Yeah, often. Although you can hear how I react to that. Often they make, the guest clap just before I say welcome, I'd like to ask you, you know, it's really.

[00:00:14] **Speaker 2** Well, I'm glad for myself, if that's. That's okay.

[00:00:17] **Speaker 1** I don't like it. I think it's weird. But anyway. Yes, Wisconsinites are nice.

[00:00:22] **Speaker 2** They are. Yeah, yeah. So thanks for for the opportunity.

[00:00:26] **Speaker 1** Yeah, yeah. We so appreciate you talking to us about it. And. Yeah, we can go ahead. It's just being a lifelong Wisconsin resident and an alum here. You know, what's happening with the UW system is, it's something to see. You know, you never thought that, you would see that, but that's just the preamble. Because I do want to thank you for sitting down with us.

[00:00:51] **Speaker 2** Well, I'm pleased to be here. Thank you for the invitation.

[00:00:54] **Speaker 1** So, you held a position, at UW colleges where you managed enrollment. How in your mind could this have been avoided?

[00:01:04] **Speaker 2** Well, I think if there had been a collective approach to looking at what was going to be coming down the line in about 10 or 15 years, with really, acute thinking about what we want it to be as a system, as, as universities. As we approached 2030 and 2035, taking into consideration things that we knew were real demographics. Right? We we've known for years, not just in Wisconsin, but across the country, that there was going to be a major change in the demographics that were going to impact colleges and universities. That's certainly one thing, but there are some things that we couldn't really anticipate. You know, one of those obviously being how people feel about a college or university education. And what Gen Z was going to do or be interested in when they got to college, or what type of experience they wanted and how much they were willing to pay. Those things we couldn't really see. But the thing that we could was simple demographics. And had we started thinking about it in a proactive way early on, I think we could have had a robust conversation and come up with some reasonable solutions. I don't think that that would have meant that nothing would have changed, or that there wouldn't have been things that might have, contracted, but it might have been done in a way that I think people would have found a little bit more reasonable.

[00:02:35] **Speaker 1** It is true that people have been talking about that so-called demographic cliff for decades. Why the inaction?

[00:02:47] **Speaker 2** Well, I, you know, I'll just speak broadly about higher education in general. I've worked in a number of different states. I think that there is this concept that if we continue to do what we're doing, which is really, really good, truthfully, if we continue to do it, the forces, the market forces, the demographic forces won't impact us because what we're doing is really, really good work. And it's having a major impact on society and the economy. So I think higher education has often been shielded from what businesses find to be a harsh reality. And now in higher education across the country and of course, Wisconsin as well, we find ourselves in the middle right and directly in the middle of that reality.

[00:03:32] **Speaker 1** As to the two year colleges, which are the ones that are being announced, are closing or have closed already. Was there ever a benefit to the duplication of the four year and the two year campuses?

[00:03:45] **Speaker 2** Sure. There was absolutely. For years and years, the two year UW was really behaved like the elastic band for the system. So as enrollment changed over time, sometimes there would be ballooning enrollments and then sometimes there would be a decline. And so the UW colleges for years served as that elastic band that really managed, I think, quite well. How many students were going into the four year institutions and managing that on the front end? And so I think there was a time where it did work really well. The other thing is, you know, years ago there just wasn't the technology available to do anything remotely or by distance. And that certainly over the past 20 or 25 years has changed things as well. And I think also, and this is just my opinion, but there was a significant tie to local communities. The students coming out of high schools had. And that's changed quite dramatically as well.

[00:04:44] **Speaker 1** What about the duplication with the really robust technical college system?

[00:04:49] **Speaker 2** Well. I'm not sure that there's the amount of duplication that that people think. Certainly the technical colleges now offer the Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees, which the the former UW colleges offer. But there's very different students that go to the two different institutions and two different systems. A lot of the students that come into the technical college system are very, very part time, picking up classes when they can in the evenings, after work. And for those that are coming directly out of high school, they generally know what they want to do. And my experience in the UW colleges is that the students that came to the colleges were truly looking to transfer as their primary goal. And that's not true of many of the students to enter into the to the technical college system.

[00:05:40] **Speaker 1** And yet that has been kind of, pushed that you can go to a technical college and then transfer immediately into, a for you.

[00:05:49] **Speaker 2** That's true. And we are quite honestly, we are talking about that because that's the reality, I think, as it relates to the technical college systems, technical college system. But I'll talk about Waukesha because that's the college where I serve as president. We really feel like we've got an obligation to offer all taxpayers everything we possibly can, and not just some, because we're really beholden to the taxpayers in our communities. And so if they want to come to us for that type of degree, then we should offer it. And I just if I can make one final point on that for decades, I think I came to Wisconsin in 2003 or 4 working for the UW colleges. We have been talking about increasing the number of baccalaureate degree holders in the state, and that's been a real priority. But not a lot of things have been done to actually do that. Now, we can argue that there are certain priorities and programs that have been put into place, but by Crea, by increasing the access points in the freshman and sophomore year to be able to transfer to a baccalaureate degree. That's one of the ways that we're helping the state increasing the number of baccalaureate degrees across across all counties.

[00:06:58] **Speaker 1** So you you speak to of being accountable to the taxpayers. In that regard, technical colleges are flush with funding. As opposed to the state university system. Why not just kind of have the technical college system take over the UW two years?

[00:07:20] **Speaker 2** Yeah. So if I could make a couple of points, there's no doubt that the technical college system is well funded, but I think that there's been. Sort of a misunderstanding about one of the recent studies that came out that's that focused on full time equivalencies. Most of the students at the technical College system are part time. Many at a four year university are full time. And so when you look at headcount versus full time students, you get very, very different funding structures. The other thing I'll say is that the technical college system educates somewhere around 280,000 students a year. I think the UW system is somewhere around 160,000, I think somewhere around there. So the technical college system headcount is really, really high. And the way to think about the expense of a student is it's not based on how many full time students you have. It's based on the number of head counts, head count that you have. Because for each student there's an expense. But let's get back to to your original question. And I think it was why not just merge these two systems together or the two year systems together? My immediate thinking on that is what merger does is it simply moves an existing issue or problem somewhere else. It doesn't solve that problem. So, for example, if the two two year systems colleges and the tech colleges were combined, the problem still exists. The number of campuses, the declining enrollments, the number of faculty, and the overall financial picture that doesn't change at all. It just shifts where that issue goes and who has to solve it. And so for that reason, merger isn't a solution. It just moves the problem to a different place.

[00:09:14] **Speaker 1** And yet I thought I read that you said, that, for example, at your technical college, you have capacity, you have space, you have the infrastructure. So what does that mean?

[00:09:25] **Speaker 2** Well, I can give you a real life example of what we're doing right now. So Chancellor Moni, Chancellor, Chancellor Launius, the chancellor at UW Milwaukee. Good friend and colleague of mine. We've been talking for a number of years. And recently you've probably heard that UW Milwaukee is closing their Waukesha campus. So what Chancellor and I decided to do was not simply bring those the majority of those students over, should they want to continue to CTC. We decided to take a significant leap forward. And I think what could be a model for the state, and that is we're going to build a UW, university center right on our campus so that students can participate with CTC as well as UW. And what we really know is going to happen is that a lot of students will start in their associate degree of a variety of fields and end up taking baccalaureate degree classes right on our campus. The concept is that anybody in the community can take anything from a short term certificate all the way through graduate programs right on our campus, with seamless interaction, so that students really don't feel the sort of jerky thing that happens during a traditional, transfer process.

[00:10:47] **Speaker 1** And how is that being looked at, on the part of administration, UW administration or other campuses like it is a model?

[00:10:55] **Speaker 2** Well, I think and to their credit, the other campuses are thinking we're going to wait and see if Chancellor Mahoney and President Barnhouse and their teams can pull this off. We know that we will. We're very excited about it. And I think that the the response from both systems has been, I would say, very positive and really supportive. And I think for the legislators that I've spoken with, they're also quite supportive of us taking a different look at how we can provide higher education in a really strong partnership way, almost like siblings. And delivering for the community.

[00:11:35] **Speaker 1** Getting back to the announcements of the closures of, two year campuses, what do you think of the way that's been managed?

[00:11:44] **Speaker 2** Well, I'll just start by personally saying that, you know, I worked for the UAW colleges for nine years, initially as an assistant campus dean on the UW Sheboygan campus and then as associate vice chancellor for student services and enrollment, here in Madison. So for me, it's, professionally, certainly I understand the decisions that have to be made. I do, sitting in the seat of president, I understand, with enrollments and funding and, competing demands that you have to make decisions, particularly as it relates to enrollment. And when enrollment reaches a certain point on any campus, you have to make a decision about, can we afford to do this, or does it draw a tremendous amount of resources away from the other parts of of the university? So for me, there's a little bit of sadness, because I know many of of the faculty and staff, that were on all 13 of the two year campuses. But I also understand, professionally and practically that with declining enrollments, and without a comprehensive plan, university leaders, college leaders have to make the decisions that are in the best interests of the long term viability of their institutions.

[00:13:02] **Speaker 1** And so you would still be, calling for a comprehensive plan.

[00:13:08] **Speaker 2** I think that ten years ago, for sure, if I'm thinking back to 2013, 14, I think at that time there could have been, some consideration given to what does a comprehensive plan look like, and how do we put an enrollment plan in place for a system? I think at this point in time, all of us in, in higher education are in the situation now that we were looking down the road at it's here now. And so I still think that any type of plan would be, beneficial. It's just that when you're in the situation, right, once you're in the theater, so to speak, the time to build a comprehensive plan has changed.

[00:13:55] **Speaker 1** Is past, perhaps. What do you predict going forward?

[00:13:59] **Speaker 2** Well, I think what we're going to see, in, in the state of Wisconsin is largely what we're going to see across the United States. And that is, more campus closures and and more trimming of, of faculty and staff and of programs and colleges and universities making decisions on the curricular array that they provide and how robust and how comprehensive that can be. I do think that the future in Wisconsin might take a look at what UW, Milwaukee and CTC are doing in building a university center on a vibrant technical college campus. And I think that that UW and CTC will really show a path for the state and in many parts of the country about how we're able to move forward and still provide unbelievable public higher education. And doing it in a way that's, I think, responsible to the taxpayer, something that that legislative officials can get behind and something that ultimately delivers for, for the community and for the region and for the state.

[00:15:08] **Speaker 1** Great. Rich Barnhouse, thanks very much.

[00:15:10] **Speaker 2** Thank you very much.

[00:15:13] **Speaker 1** That was great. Overview. Really? Yes. It was really, really good and really interesting. And it really, I think, shed a lot of light, on this circumstance that we find ourselves in and it's, it's so awesome that you had that both that experience with colleges and now as the president of the Waukesha.

[00:15:33] **Speaker 2** Thank you.

[00:15:34] **Speaker 1** College.

[00:15:34] **Speaker 2** I really thank you.

[00:15:36] **Speaker 1** And and it is really exciting. This thing has already started or is that so?

[00:15:43] **Speaker 2** We've we've started with it's all legal right. So we've started with MOU use. We've applied for accreditation because they need to have accreditation to offer programs on our site. But I'll be honest with you, I didn't want to get into too much to put the UT over my skis. We're going to offer PhDs on campus. You know, that that some of our faculty, a lot of our faculty are terminally degreed. So some of our faculty will teach. We already have Lakeland University on campus, which I probably should have mentioned, I apologize. And so they're transferring there instead of walking across town or across the state. They're walking down the hall and in and, entering into their baccalaureate degree on campus with Lakeland and Lakeland, like, they're going to do what we need them to do, which is be responding to what the local taxpayer local businesses needs are. So, you know, we're not going to offer, a baccalaureate degree in medieval history, for example. Right? Because the employers would say, Rich, what are you doing? So but, you know, MBAs for sure. Economics, finance, accounting, robotics. You know, we've got the first artificial intelligence program in the state at the undergraduate degree level. And, so we're working with UW, we're looking forward to them adding artificial intelligence and machine learning because our, you know, we'll transfer right into there. So the sky's really the limit. I'm thankful that I've got a partner in Mark Mahoney who just said, yep, let's do this.

[00:17:19] **Speaker 1** And so when is the expectation of this.

[00:17:22] **Speaker 2** So they're going to we're going to have some of their staff on campus in January. So I would imagine some advisors, some administrative folks. And then we'll start offering classes whenever they're ready to do. So. And we're going to, we're going to offer them all over campus. So it's not like everyone's going to be stuck in this one area. You know, you could be walking across campus and you could be going from a diesel tech program and walking past somebody working on a master's degree in something in a classroom over here.

[00:17:55] **Speaker 1** Seems brilliant to me.

[00:17:57] **Speaker 2** Thanks. You know, it just seems like common sense. Really? It really, really does.

[00:18:00] **Speaker 1** Wow. Interesting. Awesome. Ask about.

[00:18:05] **Speaker 2** What kind of started us on this topic. About Minnesota.

[00:18:12] **Speaker 1** Oh, yeah. We we started talking in the newsroom about this. Because I read an article about Minnesota and how their enrollments are up. And they, they have this huge budget surplus, as we did. And they poured a lot of that into higher education. And their enrollments are up. And, you know, it just sounded wonderful compared to right across the river. And so I guess the question is. What's different?

[00:18:53] **Speaker 2** Well, simply adding money doesn't solve the problem. So if you add a tremendous amount of money and there's no change that occurs, that that happens first or part of the process. In my experience, whatever state you're in, you amplify the problem and it doesn't get better. So without knowing exactly what they did in Minnesota, I have some idea, there has to be change made and there has to be a student population that's going to react to it. In Wisconsin, there's probably not the same student population that's going to react. As we look at the demographic decline. And to have that kind of enrollment boost, they would also have to have some of the things in place that would improve the process for students. So more students coming in, but a change in the way they sort of do business, as well as the degree programs that students are looking for. Gen Z is totally different, right? They want to what they're calling a skinny college experience. So they want the very best academic training experience that they can get at the lowest cost without a lot of the frills, which is totally different than the millennials and their parents, for that matter, who wanted they wanted the $80 million recreation facility, right? And I'm not saying that no Gen Zers want that. Of course they do. But they're looking at education differently. And it's talked about in the Chronicle of Higher Education recently about students are looking at what is my salary going to be? What is my career going to be? 15 years ago, it was, you know, I think I'd like to find myself and learn more about myself. And I want to find my purpose. And and Gen Z certainly wants that. But they're far more pragmatic and far more practical. And so making sure that the degree programs are lined up for those students as well is different. So I'm not a proponent of, simply putting more money in. That's helpful, but it will amplify what's already there. It won't solve what's there.

[00:20:54] **Speaker 1** All right. Thank you. I do know. And we can. We can stop the madness now. We can stop recording, please. Oh.

[00:21:06] **Speaker 2** I'm going to take that.