

Student leaders enhance campus life while gaining life enhancing skills



M. Geoffrey Murray and UW Colleges and UW-Extension Chancellor Ray Cross sign an agreement formalizing students' rights in governance April 23, 2012, in Madison.

Entrepreneurial spirit and Fond du Lac roots run deep in M. Geoffrey Murray's family. While Geoff grew up in Libertyville, Ill., his grandparents are the long-time proprietors of Fond du Lac's renowned Christmas Kringle shop. Several years ago, Geoff set up his own computer business in Fond du Lac to be closer and of more help to his family.

Then his drive for computers crashed.

"The computer business had stopped mentally engaging me," he says. "I decided I needed a change. I lived here, and UW-Fond du Lac made more sense than commuting to Oshkosh. The UW piece drew me in. Both of my parents are UW-Madison grads, and the faculty here have the same hiring standards - professional development, terminal degree. I'm a data-driven individual, and I did my homework."

He started with a summer course, to decide if higher education was his best choice.

"I tend to dive into things. I'm not usually a half-way person," he says, recalling his response when he learned that Wisconsin law provided students with a say in how public universities are run so that they could vote on student life and interests. "I was intrigued. It's different in Wisconsin than anywhere else in the country. There are a lot of details and information, and I feed on that. Minutia is not boring to me."

The student governing bodies of all 13 campuses of UW Colleges join together in the [University of Wisconsin Colleges Student Governance Council](#) [1]. Geoff quickly accepted an appointment as financial director of the council when a student colleague said, "You ran your own business. Why don't you do it?"

Geoff was elected president of both the UW-Fond du Lac Student Government Association and of the Council, which has led to visiting all 13 campuses. "I'm busier than I intended to be," he admits.

Sen. Jessica King invited him as the only student testifying with a group of educators before the

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Wisconsin State Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Higher Education in November 2011.

"I tried to express my feeling that the UW system is an incredibly important part of the state and of the community where they lie," Geoff says. "UW-Fond du Lac gave me the opportunity to engage in education and come out engaged in the civic community around me. I want to be an advocate for public education. I feel it is very important."

He stresses that he found his UW-Fond du Lac coursework rigorous and engaging, and that the leadership skills he developed in groups are invaluable.

"I'm a fairly critical person, but I honestly have no complaints," Geoff says. "'Liberal arts' is a nebulous idea, but UW-Fond du Lac really does present the opportunity to learn and grow in so many directions."

For information please contact us at:

Phone: 920-929-1122

E-mail: fdlinfo@uwc.edu [2]

Links:

[1] <http://www.uwc.edu/students/council>

[2] <mailto:fdlinfo@uwc.edu>