

Dr. James C. Schmidt, Chancellor University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

A champion of American public higher education, Dr. James C. Schmidt has served as chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire since July 2013. During his tenure, UW-Eau Claire has been ranked among the top 10 regional public universities in the Midwest by U.S. News. It was named the top masters-level university for excellence in undergraduate research by the Council for Undergraduate Research in 2016 and is currently the only master's-level university in Wisconsin among the top 20 nationally for student participation in study abroad. UW-Eau Claire has produced two Rhodes scholars since 2005 and leads master's level institutions in Wisconsin and Minnesota in the number of Fulbright students.



Previous tenures included service as vice president for university advancement at Winona State University in Winona, Minnesota, and vice president for student affairs at Riverland Community College in Austin, Minnesota. He holds a doctorate in educational policy and administration from the University of Minnesota, a master's degree in business administration from the University of St. Thomas in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and a bachelor's degree in political science from Winona State University.

Creative Collaborations

The ground-breaking research collaboration with The Mayo Clinic—only the second of its kind in the world—brings physicians, faculty and students together in service to regional and national health challenges. The collaboration has produced investments of more than \$1.5 million in faculty research and student scholarships in biomedical and healthcare programs in addition to a pledge of more than \$13 million for dedicated facilities in the new Science and Health Sciences Building, slated to break ground in 2024.

Mayo Clinic Health System is a primary partner in Governor Evers' recently announced \$9.4 million workforce innovation grant to UW-Eau Claire. The grant will produce more nurses for Wisconsin, add six new health programs and pilot an innovative rural-health initiative to place care coaches in northwest Wisconsin counties to improve patient care. The grant also partners with 13 rural school districts and seven counties to support rural teachers and social work placements.

A new super-computing center at UW-Eau Claire was launched in 2021, thanks to a collaboration with Hewlett Packard Enterprise, which matched an NSF grant to enable advanced data research to address healthcare and business challenges.

Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Chancellor Schmidt's commitment to social justice and equity, diversity, and inclusion has focused on efforts to eliminate the opportunity gap and increase diversity at UW-Eau Claire. He created the first vice chancellor for equity, diversity and inclusion and implemented one of the

few programs in the nation for annual evaluation of faculty and staff contributions to equity and diversity. In 2021 UW-Eau Claire was named among only 30 national “Best of the Best” institutions and first in Wisconsin by Campus Pride for its support of LGBTQ students. The University has received a perfect five-star rating for four consecutive years.

In 2020-21 student of color participation in immersion experiences, study abroad and undergraduate research exceeded participation by majority students. The number of students of color at UW-Eau Claire has increased by 18% since 2015.

Campus Transformation

During Chancellor Schmidt’s tenure he has led the University and the UW-Eau Claire Foundation to forge creative collaborations that are transforming both the campus and the community.

They include:

- A new arts complex, the Pablo Center at the Confluence, built in collaboration with the city, county and philanthropic supporters, opened in 2018 in downtown Eau Claire.
- An event and sports complex, The County Materials Complex, was funded by a \$70 million gift from John and Carolyn Sonntag in 2021. When completed, the development will include a sports medicine center for Mayo Clinic Health System and represent an investment of nearly \$125 million in improvements to benefit both the university and Eau Claire community.
- Improvements to Simpson Field, allowed the expansion of the sports array to include baseball, men’s soccer and women’s lacrosse.
- Redevelopment of Garfield Avenue on campus, using state, institutional and private funding provided riverfront improvements. More than \$1 million in private funds enhanced UW-Eau Claire’s status as Wisconsin’s “Most Beautiful Campus.”
- The Flesch Family Welcome Center, funded entirely with private dollars, opened in 2021 to welcome prospective students and alumni.

Financial Leadership

Since 2015, Chancellor Schmidt has grown institutional resources by raising almost \$200 million for UW-Eau Claire.

The combined Pablo Center and adjacent Haymarket Landing student housing owned by the Foundation spurred more than \$100 million in additional development in Eau Claire’s downtown and has led to Eau Claire being listed in numerous national publications as one of the top places in the country to live, start a business and retire.

Chancellor Schmidt was nationally recognized by *Inside Higher Ed* for UW-Eau Claire’s response to the 2015 state budget reductions to the university. He created a voluntary separation incentive program, widely adopted across the UW System, and led the university to a balanced budget within one year by consolidating major service functions, enhancing student advising and reducing senior administration.