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## UW-Parkside Parkside honors 2nd chancellor with new center

Tim MacKenzie UW-Parkside May 17, 2019

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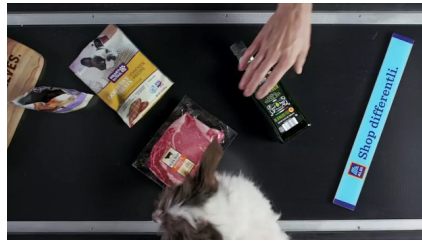
Alan Guskin, the University of Wisconsin-Parkside's second chancellor, shakes hands with current chancellor Deborah Ford. The school honored Guskin's legacy May 2 by naming the new Alan E. Guskin Center for Community and Business Engagement after him.

Alyssa Nepper/UW-Parkside

SOMERS — People flocked to the University of Wisconsin-Parkside's Bedford Concert Hall on May 2 not to hear a concert, but to welcome back the school's second chancellor, Dr. Alan Guskin.

Guskin was on campus as part of a dedication celebration for the new Alan E. Guskin Center for Community and Business Engagement. During the ceremony, UW-Parkside students, faculty and staff took the opportunity to honor Guskin for his legacy of leadership and stewardship of community connections at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside.

Dr. Rob Ducoffe, provost and vice chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs took a moment to speak as the university honored Guskin.



“As we conclude UW-Parkside’s 50 Years Celebration and look forward to the future and the milestones that will define our next 50 years, it’s fitting that we take one more look back to celebrate the vision and energy of our university’s bold beginnings,” Ducoffe said.

Those bold beginnings were the theme of a panel event earlier in the day. Guskin spoke about a “young institution looking to define itself,” as well as community engagement and how UW-Parkside would provide vital higher education opportunities to students from this region and local communities.

Appearing on the panel alongside Guskin was Esther Letven, who began her career as Guskin’s executive assistant and later became associate vice chancellor for extended services.

Tom Krimmel, former director of development and alumni relations while Guskin was chancellor, who has returned to the university as associate chancellor, also appeared on the panel. Even though the itinerary only had Guskin speaking a few minutes, he spoke at length about UW-Parkside’s history and his involvement, much to the delight and adoration of the listeners.

“The most prominent thing I remember is the shock in the community, for the merger,” Guskin said, thinking back on the merger between former University of Wisconsin and Wisconsin State University institutions, when he got his start at UW-Parkside. “It was a major issue for the campus. All of a sudden, based on a lot of politics and probably a lot of fighting ... the legislature and the government said, ‘A pox on all your houses, you’re joining together in one system.’”

The result of this merger is the University of Wisconsin System that we know today, which UW-Parkside is a part of. During the panel, Guskin waxed nostalgic about the community response to the event and what challenges this brought.

“I was chosen (to be chancellor). I was 38 years old at the time and I had been an acting president for a year, a provost at a private university, Clark University,” he said. “I think I was chosen because of my youth and energy, and I figured they needed someone to redo the university’s mission. And so the whole notion for me was, how do we figure this out? How do we make lemonade from these lemons?”

The answer, he said, was to think back to the roots of the university — to take the virtues of this new entity, which was different from what people expected, and make it important,

viable and distinctive. The goal was to focus on the community.

Guskin recalled that in the 1970s, a majority of Kenosha and Racine area high school graduates attended UW-Parkside. Yet, community engagement wasn't a thing then.

"The university was thought to have a wall around it," he added. "Even though the university served the community, the community was like a client."

The notion of the university and the community coming together was rather new. So, how did Guskin manage to engage with the community? What would draw people in?

Ultimately, the message was clear. UW-Parkside was going to be an undergraduate university with a high-quality faculty, offering high-quality education and was going to care about the students.

"I believed that the future of the university was going to be based on that, if we were going to be successful," Guskin said. The former chancellor then touched on myriad programs, initiatives and attractions that UW-Parkside adopted over the years, which attracted students and community members to the campus: cultural weekends, overseen by Rita Tallent (for whom the arts building is named); the UW-Parkside library; the family practice residency with the Medical College of Wisconsin; and the thriving nursing program.

UW-Parkside students put their learning into action in a variety of ways. Students complete internships, fieldwork and clinical placements. They also engage with the university and community through many unique campus events. By supporting programs that engage students in pressing community issues and substantial work, the new Center for Community and Business Engagement will help faculty and staff, community partners and employers prepare graduates who are active citizens and leaders in business, government and nonprofit organizations.

"This work is a key element of UW-Parkside's role as an institution of higher education, creating well-rounded and community-minded citizens, as well as our role as a talent provider for our region and beyond," Ducoffe said. "We continue to build on the foundation of community engagement laid by Chancellor Guskin and other leaders of UW-Parkside throughout its history."

