Speaking of Education
By Dean Yohnk, UW-Barron County
May 2014

If you are a loyal reader of The Chronotype you may have noticed many news stories in recent weeks focused on UW-Barron County’s ongoing and expanding programs in international studies, global awareness, and multicultural education.

Like the majority of liberal arts colleges and universities across the state and nation, UW-BC is focusing more and more on educational and cultural programming that helps highlight and promote intercultural learning and awareness in the increasingly diverse global world – and regional community -- in which we all live.

Recently The Chronotype has featured stories about our new One World International Student Club, our ongoing One World Art and Film Series, and our recent “Taste of Nations” event featuring tasty ethnic foods prepared by students and staff from the 14 nations represented in our campus community.

You may have also read about or attended the very successful Japanese Dinner recently held on campus as a fundraiser to help fund playground equipment being built by 14 UW-BC students and faculty who will be working in the Tsunami Zone in Japan in late May as a part of a UW Colleges Study Abroad educational program.

I have been contacted about a recent front page story in The Chronotype that introduced the community to the innovative educational collaboration that has been established between UW-BC and the new North Cedar Academy in Ladysmith. As noted in this cover story by Ryan Urban, the partnership with this international collegiate academy promises to positively impact UW-BC and the entire region in a number of ways, including the significant economic impact that increased student enrollments will have on the campus and region.

It is important to note, however, that as we strive to become a growing diverse campus with more local and global students enrolled, we will become enriched in many ways that are not simply financial. The globalization of our campus will help to provide our students, employees, and community with invaluable multicultural opportunities in the classroom and in various cultural enrichment programs.

These initiatives and programs will help us to address and combat prejudice and discrimination amongst individuals of different backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and religions as we come together to achieve a stronger awareness, understanding, and appreciation of those who are different than “us.”

“International education promotes the relationship building and the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people in the United States and around the world, which is necessary in solving today’s global challenges,” explained Evan M. Ryan, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs in a recent interview.

He further explains that the connections made during international education experiences last a lifetime. International students enrich classrooms, campuses, and communities in ways that endure long after students return to their home countries. He encourages U.S. schools and communities to continue to welcome more international students to their campuses and to do more to make intercultural study abroad a reality for all students.

The future careers of our students will be global in nature. Successful employees and citizens will need to function effectively in a wide array of multicultural settings. We will all need to understand the cultural differences and historical experiences that divide us, as well as the common values and humanity that unite us.

Multicultural programming is a critical component of the comprehensive educational opportunities that we are committed to providing at UW-BC.