

# The Advance-Titan

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Jess Duch / Advance-Titan

UWO students protest Chancellor Andrew Leavitt's decision to move forward with contract negotiations to outsource bookstore employees to the Follett Corporation Monday.

## 'Save our bookstore'

### Students protest Leavitt's decision to move forward with outsourcing bookstore

By Jacob Link  
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Chants of "save our bookstore" rang out inside Reeve Memorial Union, where UW Oshkosh students, staff and faculty protested Monday against the university's decision to outsource University Books and More employees to the Follett Corporation.

Protestors said they wanted to show their support for University Books and More after UWO Chancellor Andrew Leavitt announced in a blog post March 5 that the Universities of Wisconsin had begun negotiating a contract with Follett to manage the bookstore.

First year student Adrian Wall said they protested because they were concerned about how the outsourcing of bookstore employees will impact UWO students.

"There's no guarantee that the programs that certain students rely on will continue if we outsource it to somebody else that we don't

know," Wall said. "If we can't guarantee that the students are comfortable and safe living there, then what's the point? We're just going to lose more students, and then the financial situation won't improve as quickly, because you won't have as much money coming in from tuition and housing."

Third year student Elizabeth Frohn Hengst said that they made signs and stood outside of University Books and More to protest the addition of a corporate entity into UWO.

"I have very extreme concerns with the financial safety, especially [because the Universities of Wisconsin] were looking at outsourcing to Barnes and Noble and Follett, and both those are having financial issues," Frohn Hengst said. "If you even go and look at Follett's website, or even search them up, you'll see that they have layoffs. They're closing school bookstores. So, it seems very unwise to sell out our bookstore to a company that has

been having financial trouble."

According to Leavitt, UWO made the decision to outsource employees to a third party based on a report the university published Aug. 9, 2024, that found University Books and More had a \$1 million deficit due to post-pandemic recovery, inflation and a decrease in enrollment.

The Bookstore Business Model Task Group's report said the university had a choice between two options.

The first option would include keeping the bookstore independently owned, making their own "immediate and long-term changes" to save on costs and generate revenue. Some of these changes could include slashes in job opportunities and hours of operations as well as a spike in prices.

The second option was to outsource to a third-party vendor to run the bookstore, which would help University Books and More reach an estimated positive financial balance by 2026. University officials

acknowledged in the report that outsourcing would help the business receive more immediate financial relief, but UWO would most likely see a decrease in service and control of the bookstore in the future.

The group determined that no changes at all to current bookstore operations were not financially viable.

Leavitt said the decision to move forward with the outsourcing option was a matter addressing the financial imbalance of University Books and More.

"I need the more business-oriented units, such as the bookstore, or, say, the childcare center or food services, so and so forth, they need to be able to at least, break even, but at best, to contribute to the overall financial stability of the institution," Leavitt said. "That certainly has not been the case, and that was certainly indicated in that report that in the last five years we've been losing money through a self-operated bookstore. [The report] really

sort of indicated that we needed to do something completely different in order to make sure that it was a financially viable unit from the university."

The university's report on University Books and More found that the bookstore has lost money every year since 2020, except for 2023, when it saw a profit of over \$180,000 in COVID-19 federal relief funds.

Last year, the bookstore was expected to generate \$3,911,076 of revenue, but because it costs the university over \$4 million to run, the business was estimated to be \$160,000 in the red by the end of 2024.

Leavitt said that once the university made the decision that it would have to outsource bookstore employees in order for the business to make money, the decision on which company would take over University Books and More was turned over to the procurement office of the Universities of Wisconsin.

Turn to **Bookstore** / Page 2

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# Bookstore: Leavitt confident in Follet

## From Page 1

"It's actually outside of the university," Leavitt said. "We have a centralized facility group of people at the system level. They put out the request for proposal (RFP), and it's my understanding that eight different companies replied or responded to the RFP, of which two were considered to be qualified to do the work that was laid out in the RFP ... Follett won the bid, if you will, since they had the criteria which best fit the criteria we laid out in the RFP. So Follett was the name that was forwarded to us, and then I had the decision to make, with an intent to engage with and negotiate a contract with Follett, which I asked to be done."

The Bookstore Business Model Task Group found that in the past, Follett has had issues making commission payments to UW schools.

"Follett indicated that their delinquency was due to industry-wide issues, including a lack of rebound from COVID-19, a decline in traditional course materials and the rise in Instant Access programs," the committee said. "Follett shared with UW System partners that they are working to right-size their business and improve their liquidity, and assured UW of full payment of outstanding commission payments by the end of August. Follett will likely be renegotiating their contracts at UW System schools, with some contracts at risk for termination."

Leavitt said that he's not concerned about Follett having issues making commission payments to UWO.

"I have done a little bit of my own research in that regard," Leavitt said. "What happens is that if the population in the school changes radically, or the school itself doesn't have a lot of students at it, it's hard on a scale basis, if you will, in order for outsourced activities to do well."

Leavitt said UWO is large enough, like eight other schools in the system that hold contracts with Follett, that there should be no issues working with a third party.

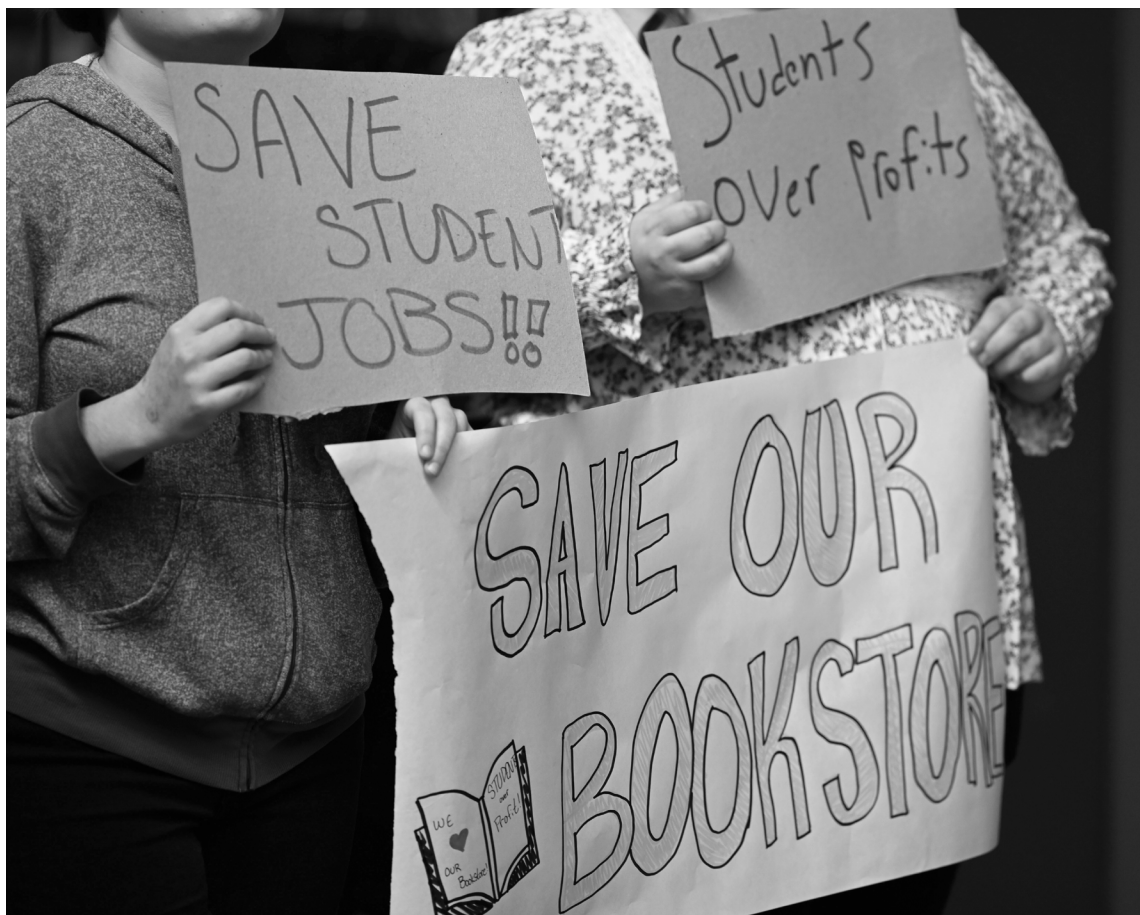
"Even if we did, we're under the guise of a contract, and so that contract gives the legal framework for us to negotiate or renegotiate a deal as needed ... we're confident that they will be met and that we believe that they will bring a very high degree of service and bring a level of financial stability to the bookstore for the university," Leavitt said.

Frohn Hengst said that protesters are worried Follett will take advantage of its employees because it is a private company.

"With [the bookstore] being under the university, [employees] are generally paid more and we have more of them," Frohn Hengst said. "What is that going to look like in the future, and how will we continue to provide jobs to not only those students who are working there now, who are on work study and are going to be continuing, but any new students coming looking for work study as well?"

UWO Professor Paul Van Auken, who is the chair of the department of sociology, said that as an executive board member for the united faculty and staff of Oshkosh and a union member, he wanted to protest to show his support for fellow workers.

"We supported custodial and grounds crew people when they were being threatened with outsourcing two years ago, because people deserve to be treated well and be able to keep their jobs unless



Jess Duch / Advance-Titan

Students hold signs in front of University Books and More in protest of its outsourcing to Follet Corp.

there's some really compelling reason for them to lose those jobs," Van Auken, who is a member of the local American Federation of Teachers chapter, said. "We haven't heard any compelling reasons for that to date."

Van Auken said that as a member of a union, he is against outsourcing public goods to private companies.

"This is the latest example of many, many things like this happening across society that take things that are meant to be for everyone and outsource them, which leads to poorer-core service, higher prices and less humane interactions," Van Auken said.

The Advance-Titan reported in December that bookstore employees were worried about losing their jobs if the university decided to outsource, but Leavitt said that there are options for both student workers and the eight full-time employees to transition to Follett.

"We put in as a requirement that those employees have the ability to interview for jobs right at the beginning of once a contract is adopted by a third party vendor," Leavitt said. "So it would be our expectation that Follett would interview those employees and then they would make their own decision as to whether or not to bring those employees into Follett."

A student employee at the bookstore, who wished to remain anonymous, confirmed that Follett had told current staff that they can keep their jobs if they apply for them again when the company takes over. According to the employee, Follett is expected to take over the bookstore April 21, and Leavitt said it would be mid-April before University Books and More is outsourced.

Leavitt said that UWO has a commitment to keeping full-time employees on the university payroll through June 30.

"We want to make sure they're taken care of to the extent that we can, regardless of what happens with Follett," Leavitt said. "But again, they have the opportunity to interview for those jobs with Follett. And you know, I think that the bookstore has been run very well. I've never had a problem with customer service or performance. I think it's been excellent. It's more of what it's been doing financially."

Frohn Hengst said that they are concerned that Follett will raise prices on textbooks after they take over.

"Generally speaking, most private companies will end up raising prices to make a profit," Frohn Hengst said. "But to be honest, I tried to research Follett and it's very shady. It's really hard to find out how they do things."

Leavitt said that he is in talks with Follett to add a textbook rental program to help with textbook costs and he said the private company has agreed to make physical updates to the inside of the bookstore.

"I'd very much like to see [a textbook rental program] here, because that really cuts the costs that students have to pay for books," Leavitt said. "As a matter of fact, if you look across the system, we have one of the highest budgets for books, if not the highest budget for books in our cost of attendance budget, compared to the other comprehensives, simply because in many instances, they have a textbook rental program where we do not."

Leavitt also said that the Corner Convenience Store, located next door to the bookstore and currently owned by University Books and More, will not be closing with the decision to outsource.

"As a matter of fact, the corner store is going to become a part of the next RFP process, which will occur next year for food service," Leavitt said. "It makes a lot more sense for the food service vendor to run the corner store compared to, say, a bookstore."

Leavitt said he wants to make sure people know that UWO is going to continue to have a physical bookstore for students, staff and faculty to buy all the materials and other supplies they need.

"What I'm really excited about is what Follett will do with the space itself," Leavitt said. "My understanding is they're very happy and impressed with the space, the square footage, and when they infuse their own capital into that facility in order to make their own improvements, it's going to be an exciting space to be in. That's something we simply couldn't afford to do as a remodel, but there will be remodel as a result of this next contract."

Both Van Auken and Frohn

Hengst said they were angry with the way Leavitt released the official decision to outsource.

"I didn't even know that the chancellor had a blog [before this]," Frohn Hengst said. "So I think he did that in a way to keep students in the dark, because he knows he had the situation with the layoffs, with the deficit, and of course, recently, with the possibility of the Rec Plex closing, students got very upset. I think he knows if he brings it up again, students would be upset again."

Van Auken said the university has not had an open process when it comes to the decision to outsource.

"Initially, the questions and the information that was being put out there was actually squashed," Van Auken said. "Why? Why shouldn't the whole campus know what's going on? So when bookstore employees are telling us they're doing this, that or the other, we can't hear from people in charge as to why you're not addressing these concerns. That's a big problem."

Leavitt, who said that he has been limited on what he can announce because contract negotiations are ongoing, said that he's been talking about the financial issues and the possibility of outsourcing the bookstore for almost two years.

"I have telegraphed this and talked about this in public any number of times," Leavitt said. "We've been very upfront, I believe, with the employees, and notifying them that we were going to go into a bid process after the study was done. I made the conclusion that I really think that we need to look at third party vendors to see what they could do for us. So each step of the way, I believe that we have kept people informed."

Leavitt said he believes the university will see a better outcome in the bookstore if it is outsourced to Follett.

"They are a national vendor, and so I don't see any diminishment in the service or the quality of the bookstore experience," Leavitt said. "At the same time, we're still going to be able to run the bookstore, which certainly, again, at least breaks even, but in this case, because of the commissions that would come our way, will actually add to the financial stability of the institution."

# Oshkosh City Council Preview

By Jess Duch  
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Wisconsin's spring election is coming up on Tuesday, April 1, and three common council positions will be open along with the mayoral position. Once elected, each candidate will serve a term of two years. Three candidates, Karl Buelow, Paul Esslinger and Joe Stephenson are already serving on common council and are running for reelection. Brad Spanbauer is a new candidate. Matt Mugerauer is running for reelection as mayor. Visit [advancetitan.com](http://advancetitan.com) to see candidates' answers to more questions than is listed below.

To see who is on the ballot for the spring election, Oshkosh residents can visit [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org) or [www.myvote.wi.gov](http://www.myvote.wi.gov). Voters can register on election day at their polling location and must bring a proof of residence and a form of identification. The closest polling location near UWO is the Culver Family Welcome Center.

## What are your key priorities if you are elected?



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My key priorities for serving as a city council member is to ensure that city budgets and priorities align with setting up Oshkosh for a strong, resilient future and protecting what makes Oshkosh unique — all while ensuring good communication, transparency and accountability. My background as an ecologist helps me see networks of people as an ecosystem, each with a role to play in the sum of all the parts. My work as a campus administrator has allowed me to become familiar with budgets, strategic utility management and planning for the future of the [UW Oshkosh's] physical development. For example, by developing a strategic plan around our utilities at UWO, the work I am leading with our facilities team has allowed the campus to realize a savings of \$562,000 since July 1, 2024. I will bring this kind of critical thinking and analysis to my role as a city council member.



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My priorities are the same as they've always been: to listen to the residents of Oshkosh and represent their interest as best as I can. I also strive to make sure that the taxes that they contribute to Oshkosh are utilized for what they want them to be used for.



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1. Continue expanding affordable and workforce housing initiatives to ensure that Oshkosh remains a place where everyone, regardless of income, has access to quality housing. This includes advocating for mixed-use developments, updating zoning policies to encourage diverse housing types, and leveraging grants and public-private partnerships. I also want to ensure the city-led housing developments are not a one-off but an initiative that continues into the future.

2. Strengthen efforts to promote Oshkosh's downtown as a hub for business, culture and recreation. Support local businesses, enhance pedestrian and bike-friendly infrastructure, and activate public spaces to create a vibrant, welcoming atmosphere. I would like to see the downtown 2.0 plan started and key areas within the downtown redeveloped.

3. Strengthen ties with

neighborhood associations, ensuring they have a voice in shaping their communities. Support initiatives that empower neighborhoods to address local issues, improve public spaces and foster a sense of belonging. A city thrives when its neighborhoods are engaged, connected and supported.

4. Craft a budget that reflects the needs of all residents while ensuring financial sustainability. Advocate for a fair and transparent property assessment policy to distribute the tax burden equitably. We need to start assessing on a regular basis and not just whenever we feel like it.

5. Expand green spaces and improve tree canopy coverage. Given that Oshkosh has one of the worst tree canopy coverages in the state, prioritize urban forestry initiatives, increase tree plantings in underserved areas, and integrate green infrastructure into development projects.



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Housing, housing and housing ... next question.

In all seriousness, housing will continue to be my primary focus. We have some amazing projects in the works now, but study after study reveals we are in need of housing options at almost all levels of the continuum. I am also focused on transportation accessibility. At [the Oshkosh Area Community Food Pantry and Day By Day Warming Shelter], I worked with many community members who rely on our public bus system, and we need to make sure that stays available and attainable to them. I serve as the council member on the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and it is vital that this committee stays engaged and activated to ensure Oshkosh continues to become a more welcoming and accepting community.

**APRIL 1**  
*April 1 is Election Day!*  
**Make sure to vote**



Jess Duch / Advance-Titan

The UW Oshkosh women's basketball team celebrates its 59-49 win over Bethel University March 8 at the Kolf Sports Center to secure a spot in the Sweet 16.

## Titans advance to third Sweet 16 in four years

By Nolan Andler  
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The UW Oshkosh women's basketball advanced to the Sweet 16 in the 2025 NCAA Division III tournament at the Kolf Sports Center over the weekend, beating Calvin University (Michigan) 61-52 March 7 and Bethel University (Minnesota) 59-49 March 8.

In the game against the Knights, despite being held off the scoreboard for the entire first quarter, Kayce Vaile managed to lead the team in points with 16.

Vaile said the key to managing the double team defense she faced was to slow the game down.

"It all came down to slowing down and communication," Vaile said. "I really relied on my teammates to communicate where the double team was coming from."

The first quarter was all about defense. After Knights forward Hannah Sall made a jumper to put Calvin up 4-2, three minutes went off the clock without a score. UWO guard Sammi Beyer

drilled a three to not only break the scoreless drought but also give the Titans the lead for the first time in the game at 5-4. After Beyer responded to a Calvin bucket with a jumper to reclaim the lead at 7-6, both teams again held each other scoreless for the immediate 2:01 that followed. UWO's Kate Huml broke the scoring drought with a jumper to extend the Titans' lead at 9-6.

Behind six second chance points from the Knights, Calvin went on a 9-0 run to claim a 15-9 lead. But a 3-pointer by Alex Rondorf got UWO right back in it to end the first quarter down 15-12. Second chance points also were the story for Calvin in the second quarter, with 13 of the Knights' 17 points coming off of second chance opportunities. But in the quarter, UWO never faced a deficit larger than seven points as UWO was able to go into the half only down 32-29.

The Titans started the third quarter on a 7-2 run to reclaim the lead at 36-34 and held onto the lead for the rest of the game. UWO pulled away with a 14-7

run in the third quarter behind eight points in the quarter from Rondorf to go into the fourth up 43-39. In the fourth, UWO had an answer to nearly every run the Knights had. With 4:36 left in the game, Calvin got the score down to 49-48, but the Titans responded with a 3-pointer from Beyer to get the lead back to a two score game. UWO kept the lead at multiple scores the rest of the quarter and pulled away from Calvin to win by nine points.

Coach Brad Fischer said the Titans were able to flip a switch in the second half.

"We've been coming out of halftime pretty strong," Fischer said. "We talked at halftime about day one habits and I thought we were so much better."

The Titans shifted their attention to the round-of-32 matchup against Bethel that took place the next day, where the Titans took down the Royals, 59-49 to advance to the Sweet 16.

Beyer and Rondorf led the Titans in the win with 16 and 13 points respectively. Three of Beyer's field goals came from

beyond the 3-point line along with four of Rondorf's.

Beyer said she was thankful for all her teammates did in the win.

"It's a testament to my teammates, they're giving me the ball," she said. "It is a testament to coach for putting me out there and having full confidence in me."

It was a back-and-forth start to the first quarter. Neither team held a lead larger than 3 points the entire way. However, with 5:52 left in the quarter in a 4-4 tie, a 3-pointer from Beyer gave the Titans the first lead of the game and UWO never fully relinquished it the rest of the way as the Titans ended the quarter up 20-18.

The second quarter was where most of the damage came for the Titans. UWO, behind two 3-pointers from Rondorf, blew open the game, outscoring the Royals 15-8 in the second quarter to go into the half up 35-26.

Despite a 4-0 start to the second half by the Royals, UWO scored 5 points in the quarter from Avery Poole, and Oshkosh was able to

build its largest lead of the night at 45-32. The Royals were only able to cut the gap down to 49-38 to end the quarter.

In the fourth quarter, Bethel cut the deficit down to 53-49 with 3:36 left in the game. Similar to the night before, when Calvin University (Michigan) cut the lead down to one, UWO responded with a huge 3-pointer from Rondorf to calm things down. After a great sequence of defensive plays from Sarah Hardwick, the Titans were able to hit the game sealing 3-pointer from Beyer with 1:11 to go to clinch a 59-49 win.

Hardwick finished the game with six defensive rebounds, along with two blocks and two steals.

"Last two minutes was all (Hardwick)," Fischer said. "Regardless of what we did offensively, she was guarding their All American player and her steals gave us 25 seconds off the clock."

The Titans will head to Bloomington, Illinois, to take on No.4 Illinois Wesleyan University in the Sweet 16 at 7:30 p.m. Friday.

## Women's wrestling ends season at nationals

By Dylan Eckhart  
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UW Oshkosh's Annesley Day, Mya Delleree and Alivia Davey all won matches at the National Collegiate Women's Wrestling Championship on March 7 and 8 in Coralville, Iowa.

Day and Delleree both competed at 124-lbs, and Alivia Davey was the lone Titan competing at 207-lbs.

Day and Delleree both started strong as Day won her first match by technical fall at 44 seconds over Hannah McCarley of Gannon University (Pennsylvania). Delleree earned a first match pin at 2:03 over Miram Hopson of Grand Valley State (Michigan).

Day lost her second match by technical fall to Amani Jones of North Central College (Illinois), who went on to win the national title at 124 lbs.

Delleree lost her second match by technical fall to Montana Delawder of King University (Tennessee), who placed fourth at 124 lbs.

In the consolation bracket, Day battled back with two wins, earning a victory by pin over Waverly Kanlong of East Stroudsburg University (Pennsylvania), and an 8-4 decision over Linda Holeman of Western New England University (Massachusetts).

Day's competition ended in her third consolation match with a loss by pin to Alyssa Mahan of Presbyterian College (South Carolina).

Delleree was pinned in her first consolation match by Emarie Bolosan of William Jewell College (Missouri).

Davey lost her first match in a 15-12 decision to Abbie Miles of Albion College (Michigan).

Davey bounced back in the con-



Courtesy of Terri Cole / UWO Athletics

UWO's Annesley Day competes in an event during the meet against Northern Michigan University earlier this year.

solation bracket with a 4-3 decision win over Mackenzi Laforest of D'Youville University (New York).

Davey lost her third match of the day against Destiny Vaughns of

Greensboro College (North Carolina) by an 8-5 decision.

The Titans placed 37th among the 64 teams, earning a total of six points and the program's first wins in history at the national level.

The inaugural year is in the books for UWO's women's wrestling team, which will transition to NCAA competition for the 2025-26 season.



## Scoreboard

### Thursday, March 6

**Baseball**  
RussMatt Central Florida Invitational  
UWO - 9  
Keystone College - 1

### Friday, March 7

**Women's Wrestling**  
UWO - 37/64, 6 points  
at NCWWC Championship  
at Coralville, Iowa

**Baseball**  
RussMatt Central Florida Invitational  
UWO - 9  
University of Dubuque - 2

**Women's Basketball**  
UWO - 61  
Calvin University - 52

### Saturday, March 8

**Women's Wrestling**  
UWO - 37/64, 6 points  
at NCWWC Championship  
at Coralville, Iowa

#### Softball (Game 1)

UWO - 6  
MSOE - 0

#### Softball (Game 2)

UWO - 17  
MSOE - 8

#### Gymnastics

UWO - 1/8, 193.925 points  
at WIAC/NCGA West Regional  
Championship

#### Baseball

RussMatt Central Florida Invitational  
UWO - 6

Saint Mary's University - 2

#### Women's Basketball

UWO - 59  
Bethel University - 49

### Sunday, March 9

#### Baseball

UWO - 8  
Concordia Moorhead - 7

## Upcoming Events

### Friday, March 14

#### Track & Field

at NCAA Division III Championship  
at Rochester, New York

#### Men's Wrestling

at NCAA Division III Championship  
at Providence, Rhode Island 9 a.m.

#### Women's Basketball

at NCAA Division III Championship  
at No. 4 Illinois Wesleyan, 7:30 p.m.

### Saturday, March 15

#### Track & Field

at NCAA Division III Championship  
at Rochester, New York

#### Men's Wrestling

at NCAA Division III Championship  
at Providence, Rhode Island at 9 a.m.

#### Baseball

at Lexington, Kentucky  
vs University of Chicago at 12 p.m.  
vs Transylvania University at 3 p.m.

### Sunday, March 16

#### Baseball

at Lexington, Kentucky  
vs Transylvania University at 11 a.m.

### Wednesday, March 19

#### Women's Swimming

at NCAA Division III Championship  
at Greensboro, North Carolina



Courtesy of Keara Chaperon / UWL Athletics

The UWO gymnastics team poses with the WIAC championship banner in Mitchell Field House at UW-La Crosse on Saturday.

## UWO wins fifth straight WIAC title

By Zach Bellin  
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The UW Oshkosh gymnastics program won its fifth straight Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Conference title in La Crosse March 8.

Eight different schools participated, but the Titans were the only team to achieve a score higher than 193, bringing home the program's 19th WIAC title with 193.925 score. This broke their previous WIAC championship score record of 193.1. UW-La Crosse finished second with 192.975 and UW-Whitewater came in third with 192.85 points.

The event also served as the National Collegiate Gymnastics Associate West Regional Qualifier, which means UWO and UWL earned automatic bids to the NCGA championship.

UWO senior Delaney Cienkus was named the Kwik Trip Gymnast of the Year. Cienkus received the award because of her performances on the balance beam and floor exercise, as well as being on the No. 1 ranked team in the nation.

"Being able to graduate this year and know that I have had an impact on this program means everything to me," Cienkus said. "If you had told me my freshman year that I would accomplish everything that I have, I would have never believed you."

UWO collectively placed top three in each of the four events of the day, winning the uneven bars with a score of 48.4 and in the floor exercise with 48.875. On the vault, UWO tied with UW-Stout for third, both scoring 48.475 points. On the balance beam, the Titans scored 48.175 points, good enough for second place.

In the Titans' first rotation of the day, they took part in the vault event. Amaya McConkay was the Titans highest scorer, recording a 9.775 in a three way tie for fifth, and Mia Lucero tied for eighth after scoring a 9.75. Notably, not a single Titan scored under 9.5 in the event.

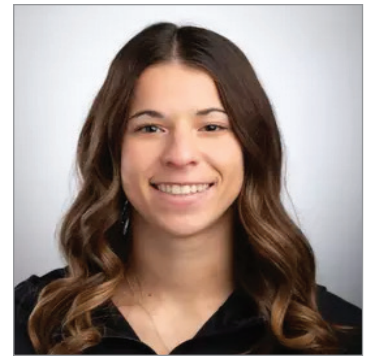
On the uneven bars, McConkay was the Titans highest scorer with 9.8, winning the event and crowning herself as an individual champion. Reanna McGibboney placed

second with a 9.75 and Lydia Hayden tied for fourth with a score of 9.7. Zoe Krull scored a 9.6 for the Titans, and Sam Zeilinger and Averie Evans each added a 9.55 and 9.45, respectively.

Hayden led the Titans with a 9.725 and tied for fifth in the balance beam. UWO's Liz Romano scored a 9.7, good enough for seventh place, and Cienkus tied for eighth with a 9.675. Jay Ratkowski was the next highest scoring Titan with a 9.6. Jurnee Warkentien and Emma Steele scored a 9.475 and 9.35, respectively, for UWO.

UWO took part in the floor exercise in their final rotation of the day. Not a single Titan scored under 9.7. Ratkowski was crowned individual champion of the event after she scored a 9.825. Lucero came second in the event with a score of 9.8. UWO's Aleah Radojevich and Warkentien found themselves in a tie for third with three other participating athletes with scores of 9.775 each. Cienkus and McGibboney both added a 9.7, respectively.

The team faced adversity this season when they experienced their first regular season loss since 2023,



Delaney Cienkus

but have earned an automatic bid to potentially win its fourth straight national title.

"I believe the losses we experienced this season were the push we needed to find our way back to being the team we knew we could be," Cienkus said. "I don't think we would have been able to get to where we are at this point in the season without having to fight through the adversity that those losses presented us with."

Cienkus and Titans gymnastics return to action at the NCGA championship, hosted by Gustavus Adolphus College in Saint Peter, Minnesota, March 22.

## Titans win doubleheader against MSOE

By Christian Cortez  
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The UW Oshkosh softball team scored 23 runs in a double header against the Milwaukee School of Engineering March 8.

The Titans swept the Raiders, winning 6-0 in the first game and 17-8 in the second game.

The first game was a blowout with UWO shutting out MSOE after the sixth inning, with most of the action in the third and fifth innings.

The first run scored in the game was by Cali Devito after her teammate Sydney Rau hit a single down the left field line. Then the next scoring for the game happened in the fifth inning with Sydney Rau hit a triple down the foul line and teammate Olivia Ullman scored.

Morgan Rau hit a single to let her sister score making the score 3-0. The Titans continued to score three more times, making

the score 6-0. MSOE did not get a point in the final inning and the Titans took the first game.

Game two started with MSOE scoring a run in the first inning making the score 1-0. But after MSOE's inning was over, UWO took a commanding lead by scoring 10 runs in the second inning.

MSOE also went on a run after the second inning scoring and cut down the lead to 11-8. UWO again went on a run with Halie Wittman after Devito bunted to first and Amanda Martineck scored after Ullman hit a double to left field.

UWO then scored 3 points after Morgan Rau hit a triple to center field letting Ullman, Devito and Sydney Rau score. The final points came from Morgan Rau due to a throwing error allowing her to score.

UWO will continue its season March 21 when they will play Ramapo College (New Jersey) in Florida at 9 a.m.



Courtesy of Steve Frommell / UWO Athletics  
Sydney Rau (19) hits an inside the park home run, driving in Amanda Martineck (32) against MSOE at the UW Oshkosh Rec Plex.

# Breaking Down Barriers conference

## Bonny Shade preaches importance of intentionality, community and humanity

By Anya Kelley  
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In order to break out of inertia, Bonny Shade, lead speaker and educator at Bonny Shade Speaks, LLC, wants everyone to be human and be intentional within their community.

UWO's Center for Student Success and Belonging held a Breaking Down Barriers conference on March 8 to encourage students to "[break] down barriers to your wellbeing."

Shade had never planned on becoming a public speaker. She received an undergraduate degree in biology with a minor in chemistry and creative writing in hopes of becoming a veterinarian. While in school, she was heavily active in Greek life.

"I would joke that I was majoring in orientation or Greek life and biology was on the side," Shade said.

After realizing she loved the college experience, she received her masters degree in college student personnel from Bowling Green State University.

During her studies, she noticed that college students needed someone to talk to them in a way that made them feel like adults.

"We often forget that the life struggles that you all are going through are things that we also experience as your professors, as your teachers, as your mentors and advisers," Shade said. "And so from that, I just kind of started developing some curriculum and writing

some things and figured out what I thought college students might need to hear in a way that did make them feel like adults."

Shade said she wanted to make big topics feel digestible. Shade survived an experience with sexual violence when she was in college. That moment sparked her passion for speaking with college students specifically.

In a short group exercise, Shade asked the crowd to identify their community.

"What you're going to do is you are going to turn to the person next you, you're going to introduce yourself and say hi, and then I want you to tell them about your community," Shade said. "Whatever the word community means to you."

Shade said community can be a number of things – from where someone grew up to the interests they have – but, in finding community people can also become stuck.

"You just kind of trip, stumble and fall and you're like 'oh, cool here are my people,'" Shade said. "But if we want to do this differently sometimes we have to think differently about how we define community because it's really easy for us to just kind of fall into this bubble, or fall into this thing, or do what we've always done to find community, right?"

That's where inertia comes in. Shade focused her speech on Newton's First Law: an object in motion stays in motion unless acted on by an external force.

"Friends, it's really easy for us

in our sense of community and our sense of belonging and our sense of purpose to just kind of do what we do," Shade said. "What we're going to talk about today is how you can be that external force, how you can be that one person that maybe challenged the status quo of that group."

Caprice Swanks, a student, found community at UWO in the African-American Studies Library in Sage Hall. It was a safe space for her to be herself. After listening to Shade's speech, she said she realized she needs to sit with her discomfort more.

"That is where growth begins, and to really allow yourself to sit with those feelings that you're feeling, don't ignore them," Swanks said. "Let them soak in and muster. I feel like that's what's going to help you understand yourself a bit more..."

Kiersten Lewis, a former UW Fox Cities student before the campus closure, has struggled to find her place at UWO.

"I don't know anybody here," Lewis said. "I never did a tour here. I feel like a freshman that was just kind of plopped in here and it sucks."

She felt like she reached a point where she was ready to meet people, and being alone was taking its toll. Her go-to spot to work on campus is the Hub in Reeve Memorial Union.

While Lewis was sitting in the Hub, Eliza Farrow, the student services coordinator, approached

Lewis and asked if she'd like to sign up for the conference.

"I looked at it and I'm like, sure why not?" Lewis said. "To meet people? Solid, that's the thing I'm desperate for. That's how I found out about this and why I'm here."

Shade said seeking community is daunting, but people need to be afraid and do it anyway.

"I want you to be human because oftentimes the world tells us that our fears are something we should not talk about," Shade said. "I'm going to tell you this. Life gets a lot better when you stop letting other people 'should' on you."

Shade shared the story of her first date with her husband Chris. In a moment of vulnerability, she decided to open up about the thoughts, feelings and fears that she had been holding on to.

Chris told her he was feeling the same way.

"I finally, for the first time in my life, felt seen, felt validated," Shade said. "I felt like I was enough just as I was."

She said "that is the life we miss out on if we're rooted in our fear," and when we are human together it's a beautiful thing.

Shade said that a community might not always be equipped to respond, but that doesn't change the validity of a person's story.

"Keep sharing these things regardless of what that person on the other end's response is," Shade said.

Intentionality was Shade's last lesson. Shade wants everyone to be



Bonny Shade

intentional with their time, energy, words and community because that is how human relationships thrive.

Intentionality offers an opportunity to let go of fears and be human with one another.

"What I'm asking you is to pick one, overcome that fear," Shade said. "Start talking about what makes you, you, or be intentional with the opportunity that you've been given. Try just one and see how it begins to change your trajectory of inertia."

"My hope is to be who I needed when I was in college, to college students, to college men, to college women, just to people who are experiencing life," Shade said. "Whether that be through the belonging piece, through the community piece or through tragedy. I want to be able to be the person that they need to seek."

To learn more about Shade and her work, visit [www.bonnyshade.com](http://www.bonnyshade.com).

## Paine exhibit honors Indigenous traditions

By Izaak Downie  
downieiz81@uwosh.edu

The Paine Art Center and Gardens is opening up a new exhibition starting this Saturday that showcases the art of Native American basket weaving and preservation efforts.

Titled "Weaving a Legacy: Ho-Chunk Black Ash Basketry," more than 100 works of Ho-Chunk basket makers will be on display at The Paine, located at 1410 Algoma Blvd. in Oshkosh.

A wide range of basket styles will be showcased with pieces ranging from the early 1900s to the modern day.

Along with displaying these Native American works, the exhibition is also bringing light to preserving the art of basket making.

An invasive insect called an emerald ash borer has become a threat to basket makers who use black ash trees to create their pieces. With rising numbers, the insects have destroyed many of these trees in the Upper Midwest.

This exhibition stands as the only one devoted to this issue.

Ho-Chunk basket making using black ash fully emerged in Wisconsin by the 1820s. Designs for baskets were inspired by Native traditions of hand-woven twill and wool, and later incorporating Euro-

pean trade goods into their works.

Creation and demand for baskets expanded with the growth of the tourist industry through the decades. Designs and uses for baskets evolved over time as well to mirror specialties of the artists who made them. These baskets now have over 50 different shapes and functions including picnic baskets, hampers and funerary urns.

Modern and contemporary works of Ho-Chunk basket making stem from a belief in individuality and uniqueness. This exhibit features artists who have had their works showcased and major museums in the U.S., like the National Museum of the American Indian and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The curator for this exhibition is Ho-Chunk artist Tom Jones, a photography professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Jones has collected and studied thousands of these baskets for over a decade.

The display is organized by the Museum of Wisconsin Art in West Bend, the leading institution in showcasing and preserving the work of artists in the state.

"Weaving a Legacy: Ho-Chunk Black Ash Basketry" opens up to the public Saturday March 15. For more information about The Paine and the different events and exhibits it hosts, visit [www.thepaine.org](http://www.thepaine.org).

March  
**13**

**Feminist Research Panel**  
A discussion on feminist research methods and focus with Dr. Nicholls, Dr. Moua, and Dr. Graf.  
Sage 1214  
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.



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March  
**17**

**Go Green for Menstrual Hygiene**  
Discover eco-friendly menstrual options and their impact. Also, get a free kit.  
The Hub (Reeve 104)  
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.



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March  
**18**

**Queer and Trans Womxn Icons**  
A panel discussion highlighting queer and trans womxn shaping history.  
Sage 1214  
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.



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March  
**19**

**Virtual Speaker: A Tale of 3 Cities: Being Black Doula, Nurse & Midwife**  
Uchenna Jones shares her experience as a Black doula, nurse, and midwife working in Wisconsin.  
Online  
12:40 p.m. - 1:40 p.m.



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March  
**21**

**Crafts, Coffee, and Community**  
Join CBBS for Blackout Poetry, coffee, and conversations with fellow students.  
The Hub (Reeve 104)  
2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.



Graphic by Jess Duch

Letters to the editor

# Save University Books and More

By the United Faculty and Staff of Oshkosh Executive Board

Dear Editor,

University Books and More is a strong partner to students, faculty and instructional academic staff, and it has been for many years. It is a face of the university for prospective students, and serves athletes, artists and a variety of scholars in search of apparel, specialty supplies and of course, books.

Bookstore employees think hard about how to reduce barriers for students, finding the most affordable options for textbooks, whether in print or digital formats. University Books and More has been a team player, pulling more than its financial weight during the COVID-19 shutdown period.

This past August, a university task force on the bookstore reported that changes must be made to the bookstore for financial viability, and that:

While current volatility in the chain bookstore industry makes the exact timeline and financial benefits of outsourcing difficult to predict at this early stage in

the process, the trade-off here can likely be summarized as one between a) accepting a bit longer time period before the bookstore is in the black (estimated by end of FY26) but retaining most of our bookstore's high service quality and commitment to mission or b) receiving more immediate financial relief but accepting an inevitable decrease in service and less control over an uncertain future (An Analysis of Self-Operated and Third-Party Business Models for the UW Oshkosh Bookstore, 8-9-24).

In the last month, UWO administration entertained bids to outsource book sales to a for-profit corporation. University Books and More was not allowed to make a bid in this process. Meanwhile, an outside consultant was paid to make recommendations about outsourcing our state university bookstore to a private vendor. Outsourcing would include the layoff of UWO employees who have many years of experience helping students find affordable books. UWO administration wants those employees to be offered jobs with the outside corporation, but the wages, benefits, job descriptions and priorities set by a new employer are all unclear. Now, Chancellor Andrew Leavitt reports



Advance-Titan File Photo

Students buy their textbooks in the basement of University Books and More at the start of every semester.

in his blog that the university is negotiating with Follett Corporation to take over University Books and More. That outside corporation would have the goal of maximizing profit more than serving our students as part of our public university. Moreover, Follett has been plagued by layoffs over the last decade, including in 2024, according to employee reports on indeed.com. Given the certain downsides and uncertain upsides to outsourcing the bookstore, we urge Leavitt

to choose the task force's option A: invest time in our current bookstore instead.

Given time, University Books and More can have an opportunity to bounce back from its COVID-19-related deficit. Given time, our university administration can make a better-informed decision on this important question: whether our in-house bookstore or a for-profit corporation would best serve students. University Books and More has done

so much for students and for our university. We urge Leavitt to give it a chance to keep this business in the hands of university employees, for whom student success is top of mind.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Loiacono, together with Bryan Engelhardt, Ben Hallett, Michelle Kuhl, Tony Palmeri, Stephanie Spehar and Paul Van Auken, all on behalf of the United Faculty and Staff of Oshkosh Executive Board.

# The U.S. needs a Mesothelioma registry

By Jonathan Sharp

While cancer research has experienced significant developments in the past two decades, resulting in considerable improvements in survival rates, for some cancers, progress is painfully slow.

Most of these conditions are considered orphan diseases because of the little interest they receive in research and developments for diagnosis and treatment. However, it is important to recognize that this interest directly correlates with the number of people affected.

One of these cancers is mesothelioma, with an average of 3,000 new cases diagnosed each year in the U.S. More than 80% of all cases can be traced back to asbestos exposure. As a result, this condition has a significantly high incidence among asbestos-industry workers and former military personnel who were exposed during service. The latter group represents almost a third of the total annual number of cases.

To address the limited available data on diagnosis methods and potential treatment pathways for mesothelioma, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) proposed the implementation of a National Mesothelioma Registry to enhance research, diagnosis and treatment of this rare asbestos-related cancer. While more research is needed to test the feasibility of this shared national database, this registry is a much-needed devel-

opment, even today, as decades of asbestos use across America continue to impact population health.

### Mesothelioma's growing impact in Wisconsin

In Wisconsin, between 1999 and 2017, a total of 6,815 asbestos-related deaths were recorded, of which 1,295 were attributed to mesothelioma and 362 to asbestosis. Certain areas in the state show particularly high concentrations of asbestos-related fatalities. Winnebago County, for example, recorded an estimated 224 deaths linked to asbestos exposure over this period.

Asbestos exposure in Wisconsin has been a significant concern due to the state's extensive history of industrial activities, particularly in manufacturing, paper milling and shipbuilding. This state also has a significant veteran population, counting 283,767 people who served in the army. The military also used asbestos extensively for insulation and construction, so this population may be at risk. Almost half of these people served in the military when asbestos regulations for protection were yet to be developed. Now, these people not only risk developing mesothelioma, but may also face poor quality care because of limited treatment options and high misdiagnosis rates.

### Accelerating Research for Diagnosis and Treatment

The U.S. cancer reporting system currently provides cancer es-

timates based on previous years. However, this is ineffective for patients with mesothelioma. For example, the latest real-world data for mesothelioma statistics provided by the CDC in 2025 is based on data collected in 2021. The average survival rate for pleural mesothelioma, accounting for most of all diagnosed cases, is just 9-12 months. Hence, by the time researchers can contact these patients for study participation, many are already dead.

Changing this system to instant real-world data reporting allows researchers to identify patients much sooner. At the same time, as new diagnosis methods develop, the registry also aims to implement a case-finding methodology by periodically inviting at-risk populations, such as veterans and industrial workers, to be screened. For patients with a diagnosis, and especially for those who are not seeing positive results from chemotherapy, immunotherapy or combination therapy, participating in clinical trials and testing out the latest cutting-edge treatments may be a final glimpse of hope.

### Connecting Mesothelioma patients with specialized clinics: how a national registry could improve care

As mesothelioma is so rare, clinical expertise on this condition is also scarce, resulting in suboptimal care for patients. In this sense, the mesothelioma registry would record diagnosed cases as they are

discovered and work as a database for specialized mesothelioma clinics, allowing patients to connect with the best possible healthcare providers.

Furthermore, as mesothelioma has a particularly high symptom burden, suboptimal palliative care may result in a degradation of the quality of life at the end, leaving patients to suffer from severe pain, breathlessness and other debilitating symptoms. The registry could significantly improve their quality of life and overall outcomes by ensuring that patients are directed to specialized clinics with expertise in mesothelioma treatment and palliative care.

### Why veterans and researchers must push for action

Although the National Mesothelioma Registry presents a crucial opportunity to revolutionize how this rare cancer is

diagnosed, studied and treated, this initiative has yet to be implemented, leaving mesothelioma patients and researchers without a centralized resource for advancing treatment.

Given that nearly one-third of all mesothelioma cases affect veterans, it is imperative that the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs actively support the creation of this registry. Many of those diagnosed were exposed during military service, yet they face limited treatment options and misdiagnosis risks. Additionally, mesothelioma research groups, charities and advocacy organizations should also push for its implementation. Increased funding and legislative support could expedite the process, ensuring that those affected, especially veterans, receive the care and treatment they desperately need.

Tangled

MAR  
15  
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