

EDITORIAL

The Dispatch

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When we dare to dream

"Together we dared to dream." — Dr. Jack Thomas, president, Western Illinois University and Dr. Joseph Rives, vice-president WIU-Quad Cities.

As Q-C visionaries had dreamt and hoped for decades, the Moline riverfront has become a magnet to lure bright young people here to the community's first and only public university: Western Illinois University-Quad Cities.

Today the legion of leaders who had a hand in bringing this first-class operation to the Quad-Cities were to gather to celebrate at the campus where the newly completed first phase gleams with the promise of more.

Students begin attending classes this week in a beautiful new building that is a fitting beginning to its bright future and an apt tribute to Western Illinois University's century-old commitment to the Quad-Cities.

And make no mistake, this is not only a regional college, but a bistate one.

Though WIU-QC is part of the Illinois public university system, it offers in-state tuition to our friends in Iowa (as well as those in Missouri, Wisconsin and Indiana, who care to come here). Its bistate partnerships include dual-enrollment programs with Black Hawk College, the Eastern Iowa Community College system, and Western co-hosts the Quad Cities Graduate Center with St. Ambrose University. It also offers classes in our community at places such as Nahant Marsh, Niabi Zoo, Figge Art Museum, the Moline Police Department and the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center in Rock Island. It truly is a community member. For example, when the Quad-



WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

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Cities public television station WQPT needed saving, WIU-QC was there to rescue it, turning it into a university asset.

WIU-QC is also a great fit for our hardworking Midwestern community. That's reflected

in the 15 undergraduate, 14 graduate and doctorate degree programs and seven post-baccalaureate certificates aimed at putting people to work. As Drs. Thomas and Rives noted in a letter to the community that appeared in your Sunday newspaper, we got what we asked for: "a responsive, student-centered and community-oriented university."

At the groundbreaking last spring, we offered a long, but almost certainly not inclusive, list of the people, organizations and companies who could take a bow over the Quad-Cities' first public university. Their hard work and dedication deserve a curtain call now that it is open for business.

Among them are Renew Moline and Porter McNeil, who helped sell the project here and in Springfield. Then-CEO Rick Baker and his Illinois Quad City Chamber of Commerce helped keep the pressure on, and the chamber's community needs assessment helped make the case to Illinois education leaders and politicians for locating a university in the largest population area in the state not served by one.

Of course, Deere & Co., whose land is where the beautiful campus rises, tops the list. Donation of the 20-acre property on Moline's riverfront gave the project not only a site, but instant credibility. So did the support of WIU trustee and Deere retiree Caroline Ehlerl Fuller, of Milan.

Moline city leaders pitched the project endlessly, and other public sector and business leaders in the bistate region stepped up to support it. None of it could have happened without the support of Western Illinois University leadership, including its president, Al Goldfarb. Area labor unions lent their support; so did area colleges and universities.

Still it might all have come to nothing without the work of state Sen. Mike Jacobs, D-East Moline, and Rep. Pat Verschoore, D-Rock Island, who would not take no for an answer. Cheers also to former state representative Mike Boland, of East Moline, for his commitment to a university here.

Give a hand, as well, to Gov. Pat Quinn who promised to include WIU-QC in his capital program and then followed through. Federal money also came thanks to former U.S. Rep. Phil Hare, D-Rock Island, and U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill.

Anyone else who had anything to do with this marvelous achievement, thank you to you, too. That includes citizens whose support provided momentum for the project.

It's impossible to exaggerate the transformative impact this campus can have on our community as Phase II and Phase III become a reality. We urge our readers to join in celebrating the contributions of those who made this dream come true and, just as importantly, in recognizing our work is not yet done.

Drs. Thomas and Rives stand ready to make WIU-QC "the public choice for the Quad-Cities and beyond."

As for the rest of us, the sky is the limit so long as we all continue to share the dream and dare to make it happen.