

Creation of statue lacked student input

On Oct. 28, UW-Whitewater's University Center became home to a life-sized bronze statue of Willie the Warhawk leaning over a bench.

The \$40,000 statue, funded through program fees, departmental carryover, gift funding and Residence Life, was meant to embody UW-Whitewater pride and school spirit.

While the statue's price tag may seem costly, it is less expensive compared to other school monuments, such as the University of Maryland's Jim Hensen and Kermit Statue, which cost more than \$200,000.

The university often looks for ways to make the UW-W campus a more beautiful place, from installations to sculptures to water features. This statue undoubtedly helps improve the appearance of our campus, but it lacks one crucial thing: input from the students. The student body should have been informed and involved in the decision-making process, since funding wasn't completely from an external donation.

Shouldn't those who are meant to feel pride and spirit be involved in the development? The statue is meant to inspire everyone who sees it, after all. It would make sense to have the students of UW-W involved in what they think would be the best symbol of pride on campus. With the input received from students, a statue that exemplifies school spirit would be the monument that everyone could see and be proud of because they all had a part in its creation. Currently, the statue's placement in the UC raises a few concerns. Several seats, tables and a bulletin board, all used by students, were removed in order to make room for the statue.

Where the monument sits between Beans coffee shop and Graham Street Café, while frequented, is still somewhat secluded compared to other parts of campus. A different place the statue could have been installed would have been inside the Williams Center.

The Williams Center is used for several of the university's major events, including sporting events, commencement for graduating students, and welcoming incoming freshmen and transfers at the beginning of the school year.

Incoming students, guests and graduates would have the opportunity to be greeted by or bid farewell to the bronze statue as they pass through the Williams Center. Willie the Warhawk is

also a traditional symbol of the Athletic Department, so it would make sense for it to be installed near the Williams Center.

Groups of students and family members also would have more room to crowd around the statue to have photos taken with Willie.

Other university statues, such as UW-Madison's Abraham Lincoln statue or Wisconsin Lutheran College's Divine Servant statue, reside outside in heavily trafficked areas. Why not do the same here? The original plan for the Willie statue was to be outside, but weather concerns resulted in a change of plans. The cost of maintaining the statue is an issue if it were to be placed outside, but this should have been taken into account ahead of time. More reasonable prices preservation methods would include a coat of wax every couple of months to keep the bronze from oxidizing and turning green. All preservation costs aside, having the statue outside in a heavy traffic area would better serve the purpose for which the statue was intended.

The sidewalks between Hyland Hall and the Visitor's Center would be ideal places for the statue to be placed. Students and faculty en route to classes, as well as visiting families and prospective students, would be greeted by the bronze monument.

Willie the Warhawk also could be placed in the courtyard on the south side of the UC.

During spring, summer and fall months, several benches and tables are placed in the courtyard for students and faculty to enjoy the weather. Why not have Willie out there with them?

School spirit and pride are a pivotal part of any university, and having a statue to reflect those feelings is great; however, students should have been given a voice in the process. Many of these dollars are supposed to be for our benefit.