

## 2015 Distinguished Alumni Award

### Kyle Bakkum

1982 Marketing

Western's Distinguished Alumni Award recognizes dedicated service to the community or nation, leadership, personal growth and achievement, professional achievement, and contributions to the Western district. Western Technical College's Alumni Association awarded this year's Distinguished Alumni Award to Kyle Bakkum, CEO of Vernon Memorial Healthcare in Viroqua, Wis.

Bakkum, '82 Marketing, of Westby, started his career at Bethany St. Joseph's in La Crosse as a CNA. It is a job he calls one of the most rewarding he's ever had. It combined his love of people with the satisfaction of serving others. From there, he went to materials management and then to purchasing manager. In 1992, he started at Vernon Memorial Hospital, working his way from purchasing manager to manager of clinical operations, then assistant administrator, chief operating officer, and finally chief executive officer in 2012.



Bakkum believes Western was essential in helping him discover his desire to help people. He credits the Marketing program with providing the hands-on skills, people skills, and public speaking opportunities that gave him a good base for his career. He now oversees about 500 employees at Vernon Memorial Healthcare.

His role as CEO gives him opportunities to partner with area agencies and healthcare providers to offer additional services to patients in the communities that Vernon Memorial serves. That spirit of cooperation extends to Western. Vernon Memorial has provided space in the hospital for a Nursing Skills Lab to give students the opportunity to observe modern rural healthcare. Vernon Memorial also supports scholarships through the Western Foundation.

In addition to his work, he serves on the board of a number of organizations, including Family and Children Center, La Crosse; Tri-State Ambulance, La Crosse; Shared Purchasing Solutions, La Crosse; and 7 Rivers Alliance, La Crosse.