A WISCONSIN ROADMAP TO SUCCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

PROPOSED REPORT

Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges

Senator Roger Roth, Chair

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Committee Report adopted on {Date}

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Senator Roger Roth, Chair

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Introduction

Senator Roth, chair of the Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges, initiated a series of informational hearings for the members of the committee to learn more about pertinent topics under the purview of higher education in Wisconsin. These informational hearings were held around the state between February and April 2021. The committee heard from a variety of speakers on the topics of demographics, campus free speech, student readiness, and budget provisions.

This committee report summarizes the testimony of those committee meetings and presents policy options and recommendations from those who testified.

Based on the testimony provided, the committee recognizes that higher education will face serious challenges in the near future. It is clear that the way our state's higher education systems have developed over time does not match an ideal design if they were created today. The committee grasps the opportunity at hand to make reforms now and prevent more serious consequences in the long term.

The committee provides its findings and recommendations guided by the following goals:

✓ Strengthen the state of higher education in Wisconsin, in accordance with the statements of purpose and mission in Wis. Stat. § 36.01 (University of Wisconsin System) and Wis. Stat. § 38.01 (Wisconsin Technical College System).

✓ Advance our higher education delivery systems to become more robust and relevant models in the twenty-first century, further fulfilling Wisconsin's drive toward academic and economic excellence.

✓ Keep higher education accessible and affordable for Wisconsin students.

✓ Ensure our higher education systems are attractive to students of all ages in Wisconsin and other states and are revered around the world.

Statutory Mission Statements

Wis. Stat. § 36.01—Statement of purpose and mission, University of Wisconsin System

(1) The legislature finds it in the public interest to provide a system of higher education which enables students of all ages, backgrounds and levels of income to participate in the search for knowledge and individual development; which stresses undergraduate teaching as its main priority; which offers selected professional graduate and research programs with emphasis on state and national needs; which fosters diversity of educational opportunity; which promotes service to the public; which makes effective and efficient use of human and physical resources; which functions cooperatively with other educational institutions and systems; and which promotes internal coordination and the wisest possible use of resources.

(2) The mission of the system is to develop human resources, to discover and disseminate knowledge, to extend knowledge and its application beyond the boundaries of its campuses and to serve and stimulate society by developing in students heightened intellectual, cultural and humane sensitivities, scientific, professional and technological expertise and a sense of purpose. Inherent in this broad mission are methods of instruction, research, extended training and public service designed to educate people and improve the human condition. Basic to every purpose of the system is the search for truth.

Wis. Stat. § 38.001—Mission and Purpose, Wisconsin Technical College System

(1) The legislature finds it in the public interest to provide a system of technical colleges which enables eligible persons to acquire the occupational skills training necessary for full participation in the work force; which stresses job training and retraining; which recognizes the rapidly changing educational needs of residents to keep current with the demands of the work place and through its course offerings and programs facilitates educational options for residents; which fosters economic development; which provides education through associate degree programs and other programs below the baccalaureate level; which functions cooperatively with other educational institutions and other governmental bodies; and which provides services to all members of the public.

Reorganize the University of Wisconsin System

- The committee finds that regionalization, consolidation, and collaboration to increase operational efficiency have strong advantages, and these advantages have been realized in other states to a greater extent than in Wisconsin.

- The committee directs the Board of Regents to continue its successful 2017 consolidation of the UW Colleges by further consolidating the campuses of the UW System into four geographic regions, plus UW–Madison.

- The Board of Regents should consolidate and integrate administrative operations and services, budgeting functions, and educational programs among the UW institutions within a region. At least 15 percent of current expenditures should be saved through the plan and then reinvested toward student affordability, increasing faculty pay where deficiencies exist, and expanding online programming.

- The committee recommends that the UW System reevaluate the program offerings at each UW institution, including determining whether departments can be combined and whether programs can collaborate or be eliminated or expanded. Each institution should redefine its mission statement to include its unique emphasis and identify an area of specialization that sets itself apart from other institutions.

- While the committee recognizes that UW–Madison is not experiencing the same demographic challenges as most other campuses in the UW System, if no action is taken now to address the looming demographic crisis and attendant decline in enrollment within the UW System, ultimately the result will be the closure of several comprehensive campuses.

- The committee recognizes the need to resolve inefficiencies and duplication between the UW System and WTCS instructional missions. The committee recommends forming a commission, including representatives from both systems and other stakeholders, to identify areas of duplication and propose changes that will further each institution's mission to help students graduate with skills that lead to successful careers.

Advance Higher Education Pathways

- The committee recommends that the UW take a system-wide approach to develop online programming, aspiring to make the UW System one of the nation's premiere institutions of online instruction by the end of the decade and removing barriers to online instruction

so that anyone around the nation, or world, can easily access distance learning opportunities through the UW System.

- The committee recommends that institutions of higher education strive to reach students through their preferred pathways. The committee further recommends that the UW System adopt measures targeting student recruitment and retention, including expanding attracting and retaining more nontraditional students, using plain-language guidance on student financial aid, increasing participation by faculty in student advising, and incorporating career-related credentialing into existing bachelor's degrees.

Protect Academic Freedom

- Free speech should be championed, especially on college campuses. The committee endorses enforcement of the current Board of Regents' free speech policy and encourages more robust training to provide students and faculty with a better understanding of the policy.

- The committee recommends that certain forms of civil immunity for public university administrators be modified in order to incentivize UW System schools to more rigorously enforce existing policy relating to free expression.

- The committee recommends an independent commission of experts to study the impediments to free expression in the UW System. The commission would review free speech incidents on campuses and develop recommendations for improvements to be made by the Board of Regents or the legislature.

Expand Dual Enrollment Opportunities

- Because of a current low participation rate of schools and students in dual enrollment programs, the committee recommends a requirement that all Wisconsin high school students have the opportunity to earn college credit in at least one semester before graduating from high school. Dual enrollment programs give high school students the opportunity to gain credits in higher education, setting them on a career path sooner and at lower cost.

- The committee recognizes that, to realistically expand dual enrollment, school districts will need to increase the availability of dual enrollment classes that are taught directly in the high school. In this vein, as a practical matter, the committee recommends that high schools follow the example of the Neenah Joint School District and develop a spectrum of concurrent enrollment options taught at the school suitable for a variety of educational or career interests, learning abilities, and educational backgrounds.

- The committee recognizes that expansion of dual enrollment will require collaborative effort among the Department of Public Instruction, UW System, WTCS, the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, tribal colleges, and other stakeholders.

- The committee intends to further review the Higher Learning Commission's requirement regarding teacher qualifications within concurrent dual enrollment programs and find ways to advance dual enrollment for all high school students in Wisconsin.

Budget Considerations

- *Tuition:* The committee recommends that the tuition freeze implemented in the 2013–15 Biennial Budget Act and continued through the 2019–21 Biennial Budget Act be left to expire at the end of the current fiscal biennium and in its place a system that allows only gradual and limited future adjustments, such as capping increases at the rate of inflation, be established. Another option would be to establish a system of cohort tuition, which provides a set rate for incoming freshman who are residents and would not increase during the first four years of their education.

- *Capital Budget*: The committee recommends that a UW System institution's enrollment levels be considered before a project is enumerated for the campus under the state building program. The committee concludes that it is necessary, as part of the capital budget process, to evaluate whether investing millions of dollars in the infrastructure of a campus with a shrinking student population is an appropriate allocation of the state's resources.

- *Wisconsin Grants:* The committee recommends establishing greater parity in the funding levels for Wisconsin Grants to technical college students and UW System students. Wisconsin Grants for technical college students have significantly lagged compared to those for UW System students, while technical college students have nearly twice the financial need of their UW System counterparts.

- *Charter Authorizers*: The committee views the Office of Educational Opportunity as an important option in the charter school sector to retain quality educational opportunities for parents and their children. The committee thus recommends retaining the Office of Educational Opportunity as well as seeking ways to improve the process and increase authorization of schools.

INFORMATIONAL HEARINGS: SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

State Demographics

On February 9, 2021, the Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges and the Senate Committee on Education held a joint informational hearing in the state capitol. The topic of the meeting was demographics in Wisconsin and their impact on the current and future education needs of the state. The committees met jointly in order to cover the topic in its totality, from K-12 to institutions of higher education in Wisconsin.
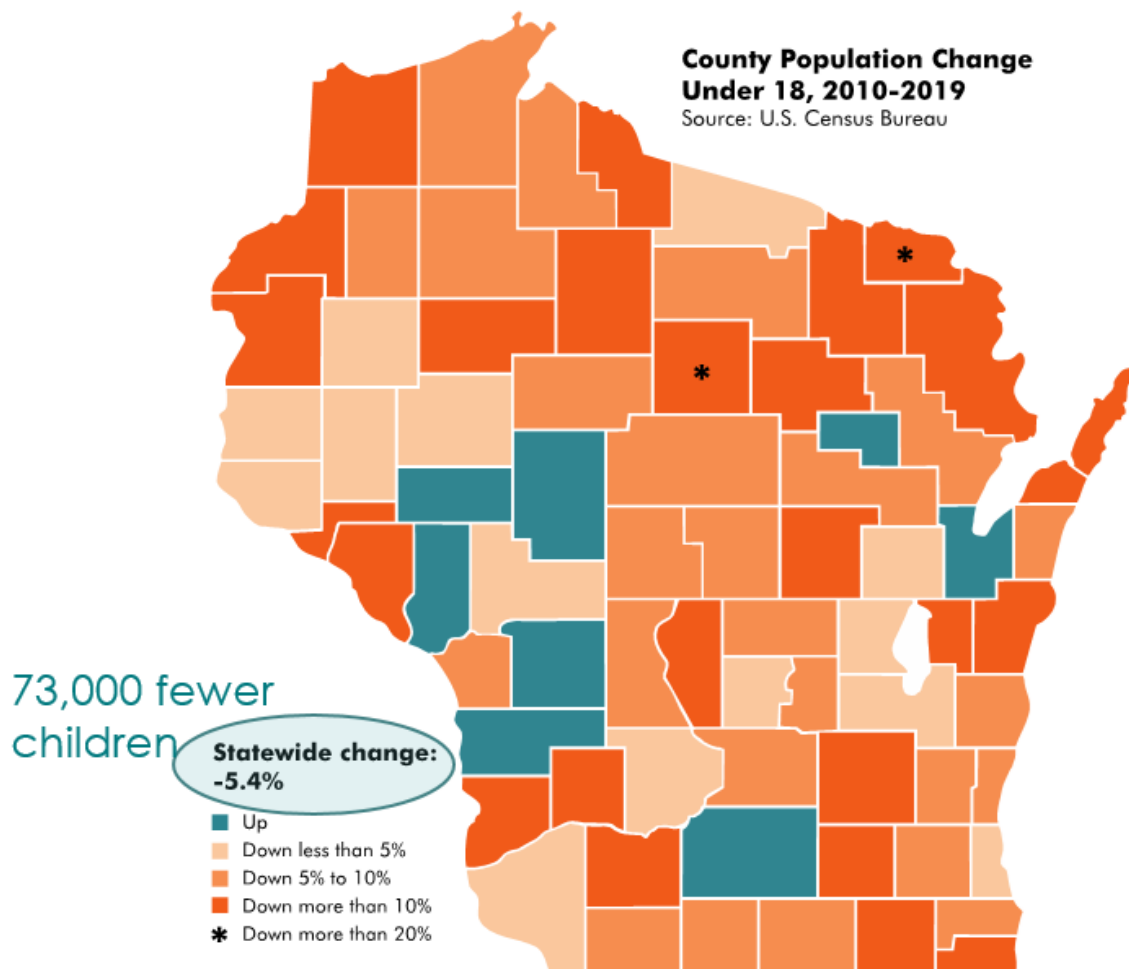
Graphic courtesy of Mr. Dale Knapp during his presentation at hearing 1.

The following information summarizes the testimony of the invited speakers.

NATHAN GRAWE, PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, CARLETON COLLEGE

Nathan Grawe is the Ada M. Harrison Distinguished Teaching Professor of the Social Sciences at Carleton College where he has served on the faculty since 1999. Nathan earned his BA from St. Olaf College and his MA and PhD in Economics from the University of Chicago. His work in labor economics explores family background and its influence on choices to acquire higher education.

Dr. Grawe's 2019 book, *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education,* examines how recent demographic shifts are likely to affect demand for higher education. His second book, *The Agile College*, provides examples of how institutions can prepare for forecasted demographic disruptions.

Dr. Grawe presented on the demographic changes in the Midwest that have, are, and will be affecting enrollment at both public and private institutions of higher education. Dr. Grawe explained that fertility rates across the nation have been declining since the great recession and, as a result, institutions of higher education can expect to see a decline in enrollment in future years.

According to Dr. Grawe, though overall enrollment in institutions of higher education increased from 2008 to 2016, many individual institutions saw enrollment declines. Specifically, during that period, 61 percent of individual two-year institutions saw enrollment decline, 38 percent of individual public four-year institutions saw enrollment decline, and 45 percent of individual private four-year institutions saw enrollment decline. Additionally, Dr. Grawe explained that college-going students are becoming more racially diverse.

Recommendations:
- Increase international student recruitment.
- Increase outreach to traditionally underrepresented groups.
- Focus on student retention and success.
- Ensure that academic programming is relevant and students can see how their degrees will be useful after they graduate.
- Establish collaborations between two- and four-year institutions to make transferring more seamless.

DALE KNAPP, DIRECTOR, FORWARD ANALYTICS

Dale Knapp leads Forward Analytics, a Wisconsin-based research organization that provides state and local policymakers with nonpartisan analysis of issues affecting the state. The mission of Forward Analytics is to use available data to highlight challenges facing Wisconsin.

Forward Analytics has released a series of reports in recent years including, *An Economic Evolution* (July 2019), *The Birth Dearth* (October 2019), *The Rural Challenge* (February 2020), and *Deconstructing Depopulation* (June 2020). These reports highlight the challenges Wisconsin faces in falling population levels and the consequences of a shrinking workforce with fewer jobs and businesses.

Mr. Knapp presented on the obstacles in education facing Wisconsin with a decreasing population. Mr. Knapp explained that population decline is a problem throughout the state, but particularly in Northern Wisconsin. According to Mr. Knapp, not only are birth rates declining, but also migration out of Wisconsin is increasing and migration into Wisconsin is decreasing. This is especially true for young adults and young families. As such, Mr. Knapp recommended focusing on making Wisconsin attractive for recent college graduates and young families.

Recommendations:
- Target telecommuters by increasing broadband access.
- Make an effort to pull in more young families with a focus on quality schools, safe neighborhoods, recreational activities, and access to art and culture.

DAVE LOPPNOW, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE FISCAL BUREAU (LFB)

Dave Loppnow from the LFB presented on state funding for both K-12 education and higher education in Wisconsin. According to Mr. Loppnow, a little over half of the state's general purpose revenue (GPR) is spent on K-12 and higher education. Mr. Loppnow also explained how school districts' revenue limits establish the resources available to and how the equalization aid formula functions. The equalization aid formula is meant to minimize differences between the tax bases of different school districts by providing more funding to districts with lower property values.

Recommendations:
- Mr. Loppnow made no specific recommendations to the committee.

JENNIFER KAMMERUD, SENIOR POLICY ADVISOR, WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (DPI)

Jennifer Kammerud's presentation focused on educational options, student demographics, academic testing, and support of student transitions from high school to postsecondary education. The vast majority, 81.8 percent, of students in Wisconsin attend traditional public schools, while 11.6 percent are enrolled in private school, 4.4 percent in charter schools, 0.1 percent in tribal schools, and 2.2 percent are homeschooled. According to Ms. Kammerud, more than 60 percent of Wisconsin school districts saw a decline in enrollment in the 2019–20 school year.

In her presentation, Ms. Kammerud emphasized that homelessness and poverty are growing issues for students in Wisconsin; she explained that addressing these issues will increase student success.

Her presentation also addressed current academic testing requirements. Wisconsin students are tested annually on English language arts and mathematics from grades 3 to 11. Additionally, Wisconsin students are assed annually in science and social studies in grades 4, 8, 9, 10, and 11.

Finally, Ms. Kammerud described DPI's efforts surrounding providing effective transitions out of high school. Specifically, DPI provides the Dropout Early Warning System (DEWS) which aims to notify administrators of students at a high risk of dropping out so that districts can ensure such students are supported and able to complete their high school educations. Ms. Kammerud suggested that policy efforts focus on early literacy, student mental health, and teacher recruitment and retention.

Recommendations:

- Ms. Kammerud made no specific recommendations to the committee.

DR. BEN PASSMORE, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN (UW) SYSTEM

Dr. Ben Passmore, the associate vice president for policy analysis and research, spoke on behalf of the UW System. Dr. Passmore's presentation focused on enrollment trends, applicant demographics, and student persistence and success. Enrollment is declining in most ways: transfers are down and the rate of students enrolling immediately out of high school is also down. Regarding student persistence, Dr. Passmore commented on student graduation rates and remediation clearance to demonstrate gaps between white students and students from underrepresented backgrounds. Dr. Passmore explained that the UW System is working to combat its lower participation rates by focusing on recruiting new students, retaining current students, and recovering students who started but did not finish their postsecondary degrees.

Recommendations:

- Dr. Passmore made no specific recommendations to the committee.

CONOR SMYTH, PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER, WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM (WTCS)

LAYLA MERRIFIELD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE DISTRICT BOARDS ASSOCIATION (WTCDBA)

Mr. Smyth and Ms. Merrifield presented on the challenges WTCS is facing and the strengths of WTCS, especially in this moment of disrupted learning. Mr. Smyth's presentation began with an overview of WTCS: more than 90 percent of WTCS students are part-time, the average age of a WTCS student is 32, and WTCS awards 28,000 credentials annually. Though WTCS has seen a drop in enrollments recently, the presentation really focused on WTCS's strengths, which lie in its connections to employers and how its model is designed to be flexible and adaptable.

Recommendations:

- Mr. Smyth and Ms. Merrifield made no specific recommendations to the committee.

DR. ROLF WEGENKE, PRESIDENT, WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITIES (WAICU)

Dr. Wegenke presented on how WAICU has been addressing decreasing enrollment rates and the evolving needs of students. Dr. Wegenke suggested increasing outreach to nontraditional, traditionally underrepresented, and out-of-state students. He also recommended increasing public-private partnerships and collaborations, using the example of the UW System and Concordia University partnering to create a new pharmacy school. Finally, Dr. Wegenke explained that WAICU has managed to control operational costs by sharing the cost of back-office operations among all member institutions.

Recommendations:

- Dr. Wegenke made no specific recommendations to the committee.

Campus Free Speech

On February 24, 2021, an informational hearing was held at UW–Whitewater on the topic of campus free speech. Chancellor Dwight Watson provided welcoming remarks.

Photo: University of Wisconsin –Whitewater, [virtual tour photos](https://www.youvisit.com), https://www.youvisit.com.

Senator Roth made the following opening remarks:

> The topic before the committee today is free speech on college campuses. I chose this issue for the committee to consider today because protecting and fostering the free exchange of ideas is vital to the lifeblood of our universities—in fact our university system is built on that very foundation.

> Chapter 36 of the Wisconsin State Statutes, which lays out the statement of purpose and mission of the University of Wisconsin System, states in part that our state's system of higher education "enables students of all ages, backgrounds and levels of income to participate in the search for knowledge and individual development," "to discover and disseminate knowledge," and that "basic to every purpose of the system is the search for truth."

> In order to truly search for knowledge, truth, and individual development, there must be an environment that encourages intellectual curiosity and the free exchange of ideas.

In contrast, many state universities over the years adopted speech codes. Every time such a code has been challenged, a court has found the code to violate the First Amendment. In the years since, we've seen a trend toward promoting an accepted orthodoxy of thinking and speaking, and suppressing ideas that are deemed not acceptable. Such a mentality does a disservice to students, their parents, the taxpayers who pay for our public institutions, and the institutions themselves.

In one First Amendment case, the US Supreme Court stated that, "Government action that stifles speech on account of its message, or that requires the utterance of a particular message favored by the Government, contravenes this essential right."

Of all places, the freedom of the First Amendment should be championed on a college campus, yet a recent poll jointly from The Thompson Center and the UW Survey Center found that 63 percent of respondents agreed to some degree that "the government should be able to punish hate speech," 53 percent agreed the government should restrict the speech of "racially insensitive" persons, and 35 percent agreed that a public university should be able to revoke invitations for guest speakers whose speech may be offensive.

Throughout history influential thinkers have faced repression, censorship, and backlash because their views offended the convention of an institution, often coming from those with whom they might otherwise align. Socrates in ancient Greece, Galileo with his work on heliocentrism, Edmund Burke with his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*— thinkers who each provided significant contributions to academia that put them on the wrong side of the governing institutions in their day. Each an example of free thinking and resiliency that we should champion in our universities, particularly in a time when commitment to such free thought and rigorous debate is shunned in society.

With these concerning trends in mind, today our committee will hear from a variety of speakers with firsthand experiences and knowledge of this issue within college campuses, and may also suggest possible responses and remedies.

Dan Schmidt and Emily Hicks from the nonpartisan Legislative Council provided a presentation on the overview of free speech in the law and previous legislation regarding campus free speech.

The following information summarizes the testimony of the invited speakers.

KATIE IGNATOWSKI, CHIEF COMPLIANCE OFFICER, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION

Ms. Ignatowski described the history of the Board of Regents' commitment to freedom of expression within the University of Wisconsin System. She indicated that the recent freedom of expression policies were based on the University of Chicago statement of academic free speech. She described the current Regent Policy 4-21 and gave examples of its application, including a number of events on UW System campuses. She indicated that the enforcement portions of Regent Policy 4-21 that require modifications to Wis. Admin. Code ch. UWS 17 (Student Nonacademic Disciplinary Procedures) were not approved by the governor and that the rule process for making these modifications had expired. She stated that freedom of speech does not begin and end with compliance with a policy, but requires consideration of institutional values. Ms. Ignatowski stated that in the three years that the current policy has been in place there have been three formal complaints, one of which resulted in formal sanctions. She also indicated that the UW System is not encountering any barriers in regard to the use of the current policy on free speech.

Recommendations:
- Ms. Ignatowski made no specific recommendations to the committee.

JOHN MCADAMS, PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

Dr. McAdams teaches American Politics, Public Opinion, and Voter Behavior at Marquette University. He has previously taught at Harvard University and Boston University and been a National Fellow at the Hoover Institution. Dr. McAdams was involved in a free speech controversy on campus, culminating in a Wisconsin Supreme Court case and resulting in his reinstatement.

Dr. McAdams described several examples of free speech issues, including his own lawsuit that occurred at Marquette University. He indicated that the summation of these events is a demonstration that the intolerance for free speech demonstrated at Marquette University is the same intolerance that is found at many public institutions. He stated that there is a tendency for university officials to display a lack of courage in the face of "marginalized groups." He indicated that the First Amendment does not apply to Marquette, which is a private institution, but that the university receives state aid from Wisconsin. He encouraged the committee to consider cutting funding to Marquette University if it does not permit freedom of expression on campus.

Recommendations:

- Consider adopting "explicit statutory provisions for suing bureaucrats in their personal capacities" for violations of academic free speech.
- Cut state aid to Marquette University if the university violates principles of free expression on campus.
- University administrators who permit disruption of a speaker should face strict tort liability for negligence in protecting the free speech rights of that speaker.

JAMES PESTA, PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-OSHKOSH

Dr. Pesta discussed the circumstances of the investigation and lawsuit against him in regard to alleged Title IX sexual discrimination and sexual harassment violations. He indicated that he spent $40,000 in legal representation fees and many hours of personal time in order to defend against complaints against him before the complaints were ultimately dropped. Dr. Pesta stated that the complaint process is the punishment in cases such as this despite the fact that UW–Oshkosh policy prohibits further punishment when complaints are dropped. He stated that the UW Board of Regents policy requires every UW institution to conduct mandatory free speech training to incoming freshmen and that this has never been done at UW–Oshkosh. He stated that such free speech training should be mandatory and should be conducted as required by current policy. He also stated that the state should provide legal counsel for professors who are accused of violations like those for which he was accused. He indicated that professors with conservative views receive less leeway regarding speech from UW institutions than professors espousing liberal views.

Recommendations:

- Enforce free speech training requirements at UW institutions as required by Board of Regents Policy.
- Use the power of the legislature to enforce balance in political views at the UW institutions by providing transparency in the complaint process.
- Provide professors accused of similar violations with legal counsel paid for by the state.
- Require the Board of Regents to appoint, in conjunction with the legislature, a committee outside the University of Wisconsin System to hear academic speech complaints and require that the results of investigations be reported to the appropriate legislative committee.

RYAN OWENS, PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON AND DIRECTOR OF THE TOMMY G. THOMPSON CENTER ON PUBLIC LEADERSHIP

Dr. Owens indicated that he was speaking for himself, in his personal capacity only, and not representing the University of Wisconsin. He stated that intellectual diversity is very important and that higher education currently suffers from an intellectual monopoly. He indicated that free speech is the best defense against bad government and that students need exposure to a broad range of views in order to learn effectively. He stated that ideological dominance has taken over campuses, citing research showing that liberal views prevail on university campuses. He is concerned that such dominance of political ideology will result in diminution of our universities. He added that when students are exposed to liberal ideas only, they will not be prepared for "real-world" political situations and that the perception of legitimacy of a university education suffers when only one side of political issues is represented, particularly for parents of students.

Recommendations:

- Encourage policy seeking balance in political and intellectual views being expressed at the University of Wisconsin institutions.
- Ensure that UW campuses respect the free speech of students and instructors.
- Ensure that the UW System offers a variety of speakers and instructors of both liberal and conservative ideological persuasions.

POLLY OLSEN, FORMER STUDENT, NORTHEAST WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Ms. Olsen described her lawsuit in which she was disciplined at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) for randomly distributing Valentine's Day cards containing religious messages to students on the NWTC campus. She indicated that the lawsuit was ultimately decided in her favor on the basis of NWTC's violation of her freedom of speech rights. She also indicated that cases such as hers are instances in which institutions of higher education are intimidating both students and instructors in an attempt to prevent them from expressing their political views on campuses.

Recommendations:

- Enforce requirements that students receive education regarding their First Amendment rights to free speech.
- Prohibit censorship of conservative views at UW System and WTCS institutions.

DR. MICHAEL BERNARD-DONALS, PRESIDENT, PUBLIC REPRESENTATION ORGANIZATION OF THE UW–MADISON FACULTY SENATE (PROFS)

Dr. Bernard-Donals discussed the importance of academic and student free speech at institutions of higher education in order to foster "democratic competence." He cited the provisions of current UW System policy protecting free speech and questioned the need for further laws to protect the First Amendment. He indicated that prior legislative proposals would have had the opposite effect of their stated intent. He indicated that there is no evidence of political indoctrination at UW campuses, however, anecdotal evidence indicates that in some instances conservative students have perceived faculty challenges to their political and ideological positions as violations of academic speech. He added the purpose of college is to challenge students' positions, to encourage students to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their positions, and to figure out what to do as a result. He stated this has resulted in some conservative students feeling "unduly challenged" by their professors, but that studies show that this is not the uniform perception across students holding conservative views.

Recommendations:

- Additional legislation to address free speech on UW campuses is not necessary.
- Allow the UW institutions to sort out the occasional issues of free speech with current UW System policy.

WILL HINTZ, INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR, WHITEWATER STUDENT GOVERNMENT

Mr. Hintz, currently a sophomore student at the UW–Whitewater, gave a brief statement on the importance of free speech in higher education. He stated that free speech is a core element of the learning process. He indicated that while there may be a number of issues in the past around the country, he has not experienced and has not been made aware of any such issues at the UW–Whitewater. His enquiries with the administration have also indicated that such situations have not been an issue. He indicated that demonstrations occur and that students are comfortable speaking freely on the UW–Whitewater campus.

Recommendations:

- Ensure that students receive education regarding their free speech rights.

TIM HIGGINS, PRESIDENT, FREE SPEECH FOR CAMPUS, INC.

Mr. Higgins discussed his experience as a Regent of the UW System. He indicated that in his experience parental claims that the university campuses were indoctrinating their children with a liberal ideology were accurate. He stated that campus administrators and faculty, aided by student activists, impose a liberal ideology on colleagues and students. He added that the current "callout culture" on campuses is used to punish individuals who hold non-conforming opinions. He indicated that the blocking of ideas damages the quality of students' education. Both students and instructors suffer from this situation. He indicated that the UW System needs to seek more diversity of thought in order to ensure critical thinking skills. He stated that faculty and administrators have good intentions, but their notions have gotten out of control and diminished the quality of education.

Recommendations:

- Create an impartial commission to study the impediments to free speech and thought in the institutions of the UW System.

- Ensure UW System President Thompson's successor considers the commission's recommendations a priority.

Student Readiness and Educational Opportunities

On March 10, 2021, an informational hearing was held at UW–Stevens Point on the topic of student readiness and educational opportunities, including dual enrollment, readiness issues during COVID-19, online instruction, and program authorization. Chancellor Thomas Gibson provided welcoming remarks.

Dan Schmidt and Emily Hicks from the nonpartisan Legislative Council provided a presentation on the 2020 Legislative Interim Research Report on Dual Enrollment,[1] released in December 2020.

Photo: University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, sunset at Old Main, https://twitter.com/UWStevensPoint.

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[1] Emily Hicks and Dan Schmidt, "Dual Enrollment," *Legislative Interim Research Report* (Madison, WI: Legislative Council, Dec. 2020), https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.

The report reviews the history of current dual enrollment programs under which students may simultaneously earn both high school and college credit, the Early College Credit program, and the Start College Now program. The report describes these programs and provides recommendations from stakeholders regarding the adequacy of opportunities for student participation, course costs, and the division of expense between students, secondary, and postsecondary institutions. The report also gathers recommendations regarding the appropriateness of maintaining separate programs for technical colleges and other institutions of higher education and may include options for resolving any ambiguities that exist under the current programs; creating more uniformity among the current programs; or consolidating the current programs.

The following information summarizes the testimony of the invited speakers, by topic.

Dual Enrollment

SARA BAIRD, CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION TEAM ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (DPI)

KARIN SMITH, DUAL ENROLLMENT EDUCATION CONSULTANT, DPI

DPI's presentation focused on dual enrollment opportunities and how such opportunities relate to academic and career planning. The presenters explained how dual enrollment programs help K-12 students be better prepared for life after graduation, whether that means postsecondary education or beginning their careers. In the 2019–20 school year, 49,628 Wisconsin students participated in dual enrollment. Additionally, DPI presented on academic and career planning, with a particular focus on new software being used by DPI and K-12 schools: Xello. Xello is a career and academic planning tool students can use in grades 8 to 12 to explore different career options and pathways. Xello has many helpful features, including one that shows students which courses they can take through dual and concurrent enrollment courses to further their academic and career goals before high school graduation.

Recommendations:

- Ms. Baird and Ms. Smith made no specific recommendations to the committee.

DR. MARY PFIEFFER, SUPERINTENDENT AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR, NEENAH JOINT SCHOOL DISTRICT (NJSD)

Dr. Pfieffer presented on how NJSD has been encouraging dual enrollment participation by incorporating it into its graduation requirements. In NJSD, postsecondary course opportunities include dual credit technical college courses, AP courses, and Cooperative Academic Partnership Program (CAPP) courses, for a total of 59 course offerings. Beginning with the class of 2023, each NJSD high school graduate will be required to enroll in and complete at least one postsecondary credit-receiving course in order to be eligible to graduate. NJSD has partnered with several higher education institutions in this effort, including the UW–Oshkosh, St. Norbert College, and Fox Valley Technical College.

Recommendations:
- Remove or reduce the cost of dual enrollment courses for all students.
- Help schools pay for their teachers to become credentialed to teach concurrent enrollment courses.
- Incentivize teachers to pursue advanced degrees.

DR. BOBBI DAMROW, VICE PRESIDENT, MID-STATE TECHNICAL COLLEGE (MSTC)

DR. MANDY LANG, VICE PRESIDENT, MSTC

Drs. Damrow and Lang's presentation focused on MSTC's K-12 partnerships and their effect on student success. MSTC has campuses located in Adams, Marshfield, Stevens Point, and Wisconsin Rapids. MSTC serves approximately 6,700 students every year. MSTC offers degree-earning programs for associate degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates, in addition to apprenticeship programs, incumbent workforce training, and continuing education courses. Dr. Lang explained MSTC's focus on serving rural districts, as demonstrated by a recent partnership between MSTC and Adams County High School. Additionally, Dr. Lang described several of MSTC's programs including the Stainless Steel Welding Program at the Mid-State Marshfield campus, the Construction Trades Technical Diploma at the Mid-State Wisconsin Rapids campus, and the Fire Academy.

Recommendations:
- Drs. Damrow and Lang made no specific recommendations to the committee

DR. MORNA FOY, PRESIDENT, WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM (WTCS)

LAYLA MERRIFIELD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE DISTRICT BOARD ASSOCIATION (WTCDBA)

Dr. Foy and Ms. Merrifield presented on WTCS's dual credit programs. WTCS defines a dual credit program as a single course that meets high school graduation requirements and earns college credit. The dual credit programs WTCS offers include Start College Now, Transcripted Credit, Youth Apprenticeship, 38.14 Contracts, and Advanced Standing courses. The majority of WTCS dual credits are earned through Transcripted Credit (79 percent). Finally, the presentation covered a spotlight of a recent partnership between Menomonee Falls High School and Waukesha County Technical College.

Recommendations:

- Dr. Foy and Ms. Merrifield made no specific recommendations to the committee.

ANDREW LEAVITT, CHANCELLOR, UW–OSHKOSH

BARBARA BALES, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND EDUCATION INNOVATION IN PK–20 AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS, UW SYSTEM

Chancellor Leavitt's presentation focused on UW–Oshkosh's CAPP. CAPP currently operates in more than 140 high schools, providing high school students with postsecondary credits that are transferrable nationally. Students pay $100 per CAPP course. Additionally, CAPP has its own full-time academic advisor to assist students in creating their academic and career plans. Ms. Bales's portion of the presentation focused on the Early College Credit Program throughout the UW System, which has seen an increase in participation. The UW System is interested in growing participation in ECCP because studies show students who participate in ECCP and other dual enrollment programs are more likely to earn higher grades in and graduate from high school and enroll in and graduate from a postsecondary institution.

Recommendations:
- Explore and ameliorate barriers that limit students' access and participation in ECCP.
- Strive for a more balanced cost-sharing structure.

REBECCA LARSON, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADVOCACY, WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (WAICU)

According to Ms. Larson, 21 of WAICU's 23 member institutions offer courses through ECCP. Ms. Larson highlighted a few WAICU dual enrollment programs, including Lakeland University's Concurrent Academic Progress Program, St. Norbert College's College Jumpstart Program, the Medical College of Wisconsin's Apprenticeship in Medicine (AIM) and Research Opportunity for Academic Development in Science (ROADS) programs, Carrol College's pre-college programs in nursing and business, and the Milwaukee School of Engineering's Project Lead the Way.

Recommendations:
- Modify the statutory application deadlines.
- Utilize means-tested targeted funding.
- Simplify the current teacher credentialing grant program.

Student Readiness during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Online Instruction, and Programming

DR. IKE BRANNON, VISITING FELLOW, BADGER INSTITUTE

Dr. Brannon, a former economics professor at the UW–Oshkosh, presented on how the UW System can improve student retention and outcomes for graduates. According to Dr. Brannon, many UW System institutions have a fairly high attrition rate: nearly a third of UW–Oshkosh students don't return after completing their freshman year. Dr. Brannon attributes this to lack of preparation in high school, lack of support while in college, and lack of engagement during students' freshman years.

Recommendations:
- Place a greater emphasis on teaching, rather than research, especially at the UW System's non-research institutions.
- Close one or more campuses in order to maintain a high quality of education provided.
- Provide more and higher quality academic and career advising.
- Decrease class sizes to increase student engagement.

DR. MORNA FOY, PRESIDENT, WTCS
LAYLA MERRIFIELD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WTCDBA

Ms. Merrifield and Dr. Foy presented on the WTCS's pandemic response. WTCS has made classroom renovations to ensure that its facilities are a safe environment amidst the pandemic. Additionally, WTCS has made use of virtual reality to expand its laboratories, allowing students greater access to hands-on experience in areas like mechanics. Since the pandemic began, WTCS has expanded its student support services, offering counseling and advising in multiple formats and for more hours of the day. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, WTCS has had to suspend its programming with incarcerated populations. Finally, WTCS plans to move toward a blended/hybrid teaching and learning model even beyond the pandemic.

Recommendations:

- Ms. Merrifield and Dr. Foy made no specific recommendations to the committee.

JASON STEIN, RESEARCH DIRECTOR, WISCONSIN POLICY FORUM

Mr. Stein presented on the Forum's 2020 report, *Falling Behind*,[2] which describes the challenges the UW System currently faces related to funding, enrollment, and program restructuring. Online enrollment in the UW System has been expanding since 2007, but Mr. Stein believes more can be done to increase online efforts at institutions with declining enrollments, such as UW–Milwaukee and UW–Stevens Point. Additionally, Mr. Stein explained that Wisconsin has the second-lowest nationwide rate of students transferring out of technical colleges: expanding efforts to encourage technical college students to pursue bachelor's degrees may help combat the UW System's declining enrollments.

Recommendations:
- Expand digital learning.
- Increase transfer rates.
- Better serve minority students.
- Cut "slower enrollment" majors.
- Restructure current programs throughout the UW System in order to cut costs.
- Pass legislation authorizing the UW System to issue debt for either operations or capital needs, grant new flexibility in areas such as procurement of construction, and reduce mandated reports.

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[2] Jason Stein, Mark Sommerhauser, Muhammad Shayan, *Falling Behind? The State of Wisconsin's Public Universities and Colleges* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Policy Forum, Dec. 2020), 54, https://wispolicyforum.org.

THOMAS GIBSON, CHANCELLOR, UW–STEVENS POINT
DEBORAH FORD, CHANCELLOR, UW–PARKSIDE
MARK MONE, CHANCELLOR, UW–MILWAUKEE

Chancellors Gibson, Ford, and Mone presented on the UW System's Summer Bridge Programs, which assist students in making an effective transition into university life. Students who participate in Summer Bridge programs are typically first generation college students, eligible for the Pell Grant, and come from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education. The chancellors' presentation focused on three programs in particular, UW–Milwaukee's MKE Scholars Program, UW–Parkside's Kick-Start Program, and UW–Stevens Point's Jumpstart Program. UW–Milwaukee's MKE Scholars Program is a four-credit summer bridge experience with a service learning component that offers students the opportunity to meet and work with student success coaches. UW–Parkside's Kick-Start Program features peer mentors and a freshman seminar course. UW–Stevens Point's Jumpstart Program focuses on student wellness and holistic growth and offers students the opportunity to earn credits and work with mentors. The chancellors are looking to double Summer Bridge Program participation this year in an effort to combat the learning and social loss created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendations:

- Chancellors Gibson, Ford, and Mone made no specific recommendations to the committee.

DR. CARLEEN VANDE ZANDE, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND FACULTY ADVANCEMENT, UW SYSTEM

Dr. Vande Zande presented on the process of program development within the UW System. The program development process is complex and involves many individuals and entities. Program development is guided by UW System and board policies, which utilize criteria outlined by the Higher Learning Commission. When an institution is considering a new program, it first collects data about the need for the program and what the institution would need to do to create that program, including whether the institution has the capacity for the program. After data gathering, if a campus is still interested in creating a program, it must submit a notice of intent, including a preliminary plan, to the UW System. A more concrete plan including a program description and budget follows. This detailed proposal must be approved by the chancellors, then the UW System, then, finally, the Board of Regents.

Recommendations:

- Dr. Vande Zande made no specific recommendations to the committee.

DR. ANNY MORROBEL-SOSA, VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS, UW SYSTEM

Dr. Morrobel-Sosa presented on online education and the impact COVID-19 has had on UW System operations. Dr. Morrobel-Sosa's presentation focused on faculty training related to virtual education and outlined the Renewed Wisconsin Idea. The UW System's efforts to quickly provide digital instruction in response to the pandemic required a focus on faculty and staff training. An anonymous donation of $2 million greatly helped the UW System expand instructor training and knowledge; over 3,200 staff were able to receive training in effective online instruction. The "Renewed Wisconsin Idea for the 21st Century" aims to provide affordable access to education that is flexible and relevant and to create lifelong engagement in learning.

Recommendations:

Dr. Morrobel-Sosa made no specific recommendations to the committee.

University of Wisconsin Budget

On March 31, 2021, an informational hearing was held at UW–Green Bay on the topic of the University of Wisconsin budget. Chancellor Thomas Gibson provided welcoming remarks.

Invited speakers were asked to comment on the governor's budget recommendations or the agency's budget request. The following information summarizes the testimony of the invited speakers.

Photo: University of Wisconsin–Green Bay Cofrin Library, website photo.

DAVE LOPPNOW, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, LEGISLATIVE FISCAL BUREAU

Mr. Loppnow presented on the governor's proposed budget for the University of Wisconsin System (UWS) for the 2021–23 biennium. Mr. Loppnow's presentation focused on explaining certain items of the governor's proposed budget. The governor's proposed budget would continue the undergraduate tuition rate freeze and provide an increase in GPR to the UW System for foregone revenues. Additionally, the governor's proposed budget would expand the tuition promise to all UW campuses so that all low-income students can attend a UW institution at no cost of tuition or fees; the budget would also provide for increased GPR to replace lost revenue from this program. The governor's proposed budget would also allow the UW System Board of Regents to receive credit from a lender under certain circumstances and would transfer oversight of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Reciprocity Agreement from the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) to the Board of Regents. Finally, Mr. Loppnow explained the governor's proposed budget would also provide for some new initiatives related to student mental health, freshwater research, nurse educators, UW–Extension, and introducing baccalaureate degrees in the state's prisons.

Recommendations:
- Mr. Loppnow made no specific recommendations to the committee.

TOMMY THOMPSON, PRESIDENT, UW SYSTEM

President Thompson presented on the UW System's goals and his vision to recharge the Wisconsin Idea. President Thompson explained both the challenges and triumphs the UW System faced because of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the research and health initiatives generated by the UW System. According to President Thompson, the UW System experienced a net loss of about $170 million due to the pandemic and has attempted to address this loss with employee furloughs, restricted travel, unfilled vacancies, and some layoffs. President Thompson pointed out a few key initiatives the UW System aimed to address in its budget request: creating the UW Tuition Promise; expanding opportunities for online education; increasing the number of K-12 teachers and nurse educators in the state; expanding the System into the prisons and jails; repairing, renovating, and replacing obsolete buildings; and growing partnerships between the UW System and the WTCS. President Thompson also emphasized the importance of summer bridge programs to help prepare incoming students for the college experience.

Recommendations:
- President Thompson requested that the committee support the UW System budget request.
- President Thompson indicated that there is a need to resolve duplication between the UW System and WTCS in certain degree programs and recommended a study to resolve inefficiencies between the UW System and WTCS instructional missions.

CONNIE HUTCHISON, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, HIGHER EDUCATIONAL AIDS BOARD (HEAB)

Ms. Hutchison presented on the transfer of oversight of the Wisconsin-Minnesota Reciprocity Agreement from HEAB to the UW System Board of Regents. Ms. Hutchison explained the HEAB believes it should continue oversight of that agreement, but that the money gained from the agreement should be directed to the UW System rather than the state general fund. Ms. Hutchison also believes that HEAB may be better equipped for administration of the Nursing Educator Program created in the governor's proposed budget.

Recommendations:
- Ms. Hutchison recommended the legislature maintain HEAB as the administrator for the Wisconsin-Minnesota Reciprocity Agreement, but direct the funds raised from the agreement to the UW System rather than to the general state fund as provided in the UW System budget proposal.

STEVE BAAS, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS, METROPOLITAN MILWAUKEE ASSOCIATION OF COMMERCE

Mr. Baas presented on the provision in the governor's proposed budget related to the removal of the Office of Educational Opportunity (OEO) and transfer of all charter schools chartered by that office to the chancellor of the UW–Madison. According to Mr. Baas, political pressures have led most local Milwaukee charter school authorizers to choose not to authorize charter schools. Mr. Baas described OEO as "outside the cauldron of political pressure" and thus a more viable authorizer for Milwaukee area charter schools.

Recommendations:
- Mr. Baas requested that the committee oppose the elimination of the OEO.

ANANTH SESHRADI, PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, UW–MADISON

Dr. Seshradi presented on the relationship between the UW System and the State. According to Dr. Seshradi, the legislative control over the UW System in the form of tuition freezes is unique amongst its peer institutions. Dr. Seshradi's research has shown that though the "sticker price" of a college education has increased drastically compared to increases in income, the net price of tuition has actually risen at the same rate as income. Additionally, the return on the investment in a college education is much higher now than it was a generation ago (with the caveat that the return on investment varies by college major). Dr. Seshradi explained that, according to his research, the college debt crisis may be overstated and that lack of information, rather than lack

of access, is a larger barrier preventing low-income students from attending college. Dr. Seshradi questioned the lack of independent bonding authority for the UW System, stating that such independent authority was commonplace for other large state universities. He indicated that such authority could result in a substantial positive economic impact for the state. Finally, Dr. Seshradi stated that the UW System tuition freeze negatively affects both the quantity and quality of education in the state and urged the committee to support its removal.

Recommendations:
- Dr. Seshradi recommended removing the resident tuition freeze and giving the UW System independent bonding authority.

WTCS Budget and Programming

On April 5, 2021, an informational hearing was held in the state capitol on the topic of the Wisconsin Technical College System budget and programming.

Invited speakers were asked to comment on the governor's budget recommendations or the agency's budget request. The following information summarizes the testimony of the invited speakers.

Photo: Fox Valley Technical College Oshkosh campus, website photo.

DAVE LOPPNOW, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, LEGISLATIVE FISCAL BUREAU

Mr. Loppnow presented on the governor's proposed budget for the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) for the 2021–23 biennium. Mr. Loppnow explained that the governor's proposed budget includes an $18 million increase in general aid to WTCS. The proposed budget also includes a provision that would prohibit each district board from increasing its revenue by a percentage that exceeds the greater of either 2 percent or the district's valuation factor. Additionally, the governor's proposed budget includes an appropriation for district boards to acquire updated fire fighter certification software and a requirement that each technical college issue student identification cards that meet the requirements for voter identification by August 1, 2021. Finally, Mr. Loppnow explained that the governor's budget contains nonresident tuition exemptions for undocumented individuals, certain tribal members, and relocated service members.

Recommendations:
- Mr. Loppnow made no specific recommendations to the committee.

DR. MORNA FOY, PRESIDENT, WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM (WTCS)

LAYLA MERRIFIELD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE DISTRICT BOARD ASSOCIATION (WTCDBA)

DR. JASON WOOD, PRESIDENT, SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE (SWTC)

Dr. Foy, Ms. Merrifield, and Dr. Wood presented on WTCS's budget request to the governor and how WTCS has met the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Foy began the presentation with a brief explanation of WTCS's mission and how WTCS has continued to fulfill its mission throughout the pandemic. Dr. Wood gave a description of how SWTC adjusted quickly to the pandemic and prioritized certain programs to return rapidly to in-person instruction so that program participants could complete their degrees on time. Drs. Foy and Wood then explained WTCS's comprehensive program approval process, focusing on the role that data collection and advisory committees play in that process. Then, Ms. Merrifield explained WTCS's budget request and which components of that request the governor implemented in his proposed budget. Specifically, included in WTCS's budget request but not in the governor's proposed budget, were (1) removal of the UW System Board of Regents from the approval process for Associate of Arts and Associate of Science programs; and (2) realignment of statutorily required reports.

Recommendations:
- WTCS representatives recommended that the statutory provision requiring that WTCS receive permission from the UW System Board of Regents to expand its collegiate transfer programs be removed.
- WTCS requested an appropriation that may be used toward recruiting nontraditional students to begin or continue their education because federal funds cannot be used for marketing purposes.

CONNIE HUTCHISON, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, HIGHER EDUCATIONAL AIDS BOARD (HEAB)

Ms. Hutchison briefly spoke about concerns with the noted WTCS agency budget request to change the current 10-semester or six-year limit on students receiving Wisconsin Grant funding to a limit of 128 credit hours of funding, with no limit regarding the number of semesters or years of attendance. Ms. Hutchison indicated that it was HEAB's position that this change would require HEAB to change the eligibility time standard for all four sectors of Wisconsin Grant recipients (technical colleges, UW System, independent colleges, and tribal colleges), necessitating agreement among all of the institutional providers. In addition, the process would be costly because all current students in all of the Wisconsin Grant programs would need to have their semesters or years converted to credit hours. Due to the expense, HEAB opposed the inclusion of the provision in the governor's proposed budget.

Recommendations:
- Ms. Hutchison made no specific recommendations to the committee.

CHARLES SPOEHR, BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVE, NORTH CENTRAL STATES REGIONAL COUNCIL OF CARPENTERS AND FOX VALLEY TECHNICAL COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Mr. Spoehr has worked in the residential and commercial construction industry for over 24 years and completed a four-year carpentry apprenticeship at Fox Valley Technical College in 1999. He presented on the value of apprenticeship programs, focusing on how such programs allow students to "earn while they learn" and provide curriculum specifically tailored to industry needs. He also described the carpenter's apprenticeship application and candidate selection process. According to Mr. Spoehr, apprenticeships are currently a highly sought learning experience, with many programs having waitlists, particularly in the construction trades. He indicated that there are efforts to expand apprenticeship programs to sectors such as manufacturing and the service

industry. He added that apprenticeship training is paid for by the trade union and the technical colleges.

Recommendations:

- Mr. Spoehr made no specific recommendations to the committee.

COMMITTEE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Demographic Trends Point to Rightsizing UW

In the committee's first informational hearing on Wisconsin's demographic trends, the committee learned that population decline is a serious problem that will likely continue, which will affect enrollment in Wisconsin's higher education institutions. The state's postsecondary enrollment declines are already exceeding the nation.[3]

As discussed by Dr. Grawe in his testimony, demographic changes in the Midwest that have, are, and will be affecting enrollment at both public and private institutions of higher education in the coming years. In his book, *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education* (2018), Dr. Grawe's national forecast in the four-year sector points to modest enrollment increases before significant contraction beginning in the mid-2020s.[4] Stated further in his book *The Agile College* (2021), Dr. Grawe points to projections for two-year and regional four-year schools that may see "a modest rise through 2025 followed by a fall of about 10% in the subsequent decade that nets a loss of 5% to 6% over the entire time period."[5]

In Wisconsin, the picture is similar to national and regional trends. Dale Knapp, director of Forward Analytics, explained that population decline is a problem throughout the state, but particularly in northern Wisconsin. He said the population under 18 has already declined 5.4 percent between 2010 and 2019.

In addition, the Applied Population Laboratory in 2019 released an updated brief on demographic analyses and school enrollment projections.[6] The Applied Population Laboratory is a group of research professionals at the University of Wisconsin–Madison specializing in population studies and geographic data analysis. Its study on Wisconsin's 4K–12 public school enrollment included the following findings:

- The recent decline (in birth trends) is often attributed to the Great Recession. Although the economy has shown signs of recovery over the subsequent decade, births in Wisconsin have not rebounded.

- Wisconsin's population is growing older.

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[3] See Jason Stein, Mark Sommerhauser, Muhammad Shayan, *Falling Behind? The State of Wisconsin's Public Universities and Colleges* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Policy Forum, Dec. 2020), 54, https://wispolicyforum.org.
[4] Nathan D. Grawe, *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 69.
[5] Nathan D. Grawe, *The Agile College* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021), 30.
[6] See Applied Population Laboratory, *Projecting Public School Enrollment in Wisconsin*, University of Wisconsin–Madison (2019), https://cdn.apl.wisc.edu.

- There will be a decrease in total enrollment at the state level for the foreseeable future.

- Public school enrollment is projected to decrease by 6.4 percent overall in the next 10 years. Grades K–5 will decline for the foreseeable future with average decreases of 6.2 percent. Grades 6–8 are projected to remain steady for two years followed by decline by as much as 8.3 percent. Grades 9–12 are projected to increase over the next five years then decrease.

- In 10 years, statewide high school enrollment may well decrease by 5 percent.

Declines have already begun occurring in the UW System. The Legislative Fiscal Bureau reports that "between 2009 and 2019, headcount enrollments decreased at every UW institution except UW–Madison, UW–Green Bay, UW–La Crosse, UW–Oshkosh, and [UW–]Whitewater. Total system wide enrollment decreased by 6.3% from 2009 to 2019."[7]

Table 1. **Change in Enrollment (Headcount), 2009–19.**[8]

Institution(s)	Fall 2009	Fall 2014	Fall 2014	Change from 2009 to 2014		Change from 2014 to 2019		Change from 2009 to 2019	
				Num.	%	Num.	%	Num.	%
Madison	41,654	42,865	44,993	1,211	2.9	2,128	5.0	3,339	8.0
Milwaukee	30,418	28,013	23,992	-2,405	-7.9	-4,021	-14.4	-6,426	-21.1
Eau Claire	11,216	10,692	10,730	-524	-4.7	38	0.4	-486	-4.3
Green Bay	6,638	6,921	7,975	283	4.3	1,054	15.2	1,337	20.1
La Crosse	10,009	10,664	10,604	655	6.5	-60	-0.6	595	5.9
Oshkosh	13,192	14,542	13,942	1,350	10.2	-600	-4.1	750	5.7
Parkside	5,303	4,584	4,420	-719	-13.6	-164	-3.6	-883	-16.7
Platteville	7,803	8,901	7,762	1,098	14.1	-1,139	-12.8	-41	-0.5
River Falls	6,728	6,184	5,977	-544	-8.1	-207	-3.3	-751	-11.2
Stevens Point	9,209	9,322	7,307	113	1.2	-2,015	-21.6	-1,902	-20.7
Stout	9,017	9,371	8,393	354	3.9	-978	-10.4	-624	-6.9
Superior	2,794	2,589	2,608	-205	-7.3	19	0.7	-186	-6.7
Whitewater	11,139	12,159	11,586	1,020	9.2	-573	-4.7	447	4.0

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[7] Erin Probst, "University of Wisconsin System Overview," *Informational Paper* #34 (Madison, WI: Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Jan. 2021), 9, https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.
[8] Table 1 reproduced from Erin Probst, "University of Wisconsin System Overview," *Informational Paper* #34.

Institution(s)	Fall 2009	Fall 2014	Fall 2014	Change from 2009 to 2014		Change from 2014 to 2019		Change from 2009 to 2019	
				Num.	%	Num.	%	Num.	%
Colleges*	13,789	14,172	7,399	383	2.8	-6,773	-47.8	-6,390	-46.3
Total	178,909	180,979	167,688	2,070	1.2	-13,291	-7.3	-11,221	-6.3

*Includes online enrollments.

Similarly, enrollment in the WTCS has declined every year in the last decade, with full time equivalent student enrollment decreasing by 23.4 percent (19,606 FTEs) since 2010–11.[9]

Table 2. **WTCS Statewide FTE Enrollment, 2010–11 to 2019–20.**[10]

Years	FTEs	% Change
2010–11	83,920	—
2011–12	80,068	-4.6
2012–13	77,679	-3.0
2013–14	74,479	-4.1
2014–15	71,358	-4.2
2015–16	68,370	-4.2
2016–17	65,890	-3.6
2017–18	65,554	-0.5
2018–19	65,317	-0.4
2019–20	64,314	-1.5

Students from Wisconsin make up the majority of all undergraduate students enrolled in UW institutions (74.8 percent of total undergraduate enrollments).[11] According to the University of Wisconsin System Accountability Dashboard, the percentage of Wisconsin high school graduates that enroll in the UW System has historically been 32 percent but has gone down in recent years.[12]

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[9] Christa Pugh, "Wisconsin Technical College System," *Informational Paper* #33 (Madison, WI: Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Jan. 2021), 5, https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.
[10] Table 2 reproduced from Christa Pugh, "Wisconsin Technical College System," *Informational Paper* #33.
[11] Erin Probst, "University of Wisconsin System Overview," *Informational Paper* #34, 9.
[12] "Accountability Dashboard: Access," University of Wisconsin System, https://www.wisconsin.edu.

Table 3. **Participation Rate of Wisconsin High School Graduates Enrolling in the UW System.**
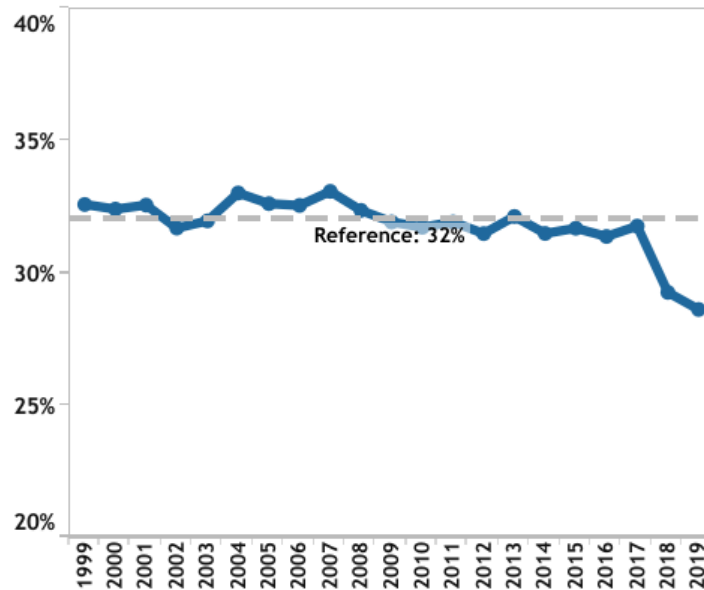
In his testimony, Dr. Ike Brannon of the Badger Institute suggested closing one or more campuses to maintain a high quality of education provided in the UW System.

Given the current trends in demographics and forecast for the coming years, this committee would be warranted in recommending reductions or consolidation of one or more campuses, or that a number of campuses be reduced or consolidated in the University of Wisconsin System.

The cost of maintaining all existing institutions is immense and closing one or several campuses could be reallocated into the System. The four smallest schools without branch campuses (UW–Superior, UW–Parkside, UW–River Falls, and UW–Stout) had budgets collectively totaling over $500 million in 2020–21 (all funds). *See table 5 for the budget totals of all UW institutions.*

The Board of Regents could weigh a number of factors when reviewing which campuses should be reduced including steepest enrollment declines, lower than average retention rates, low graduation rates, proximity to other institutions, and schools that serve the lowest number of resident students.

Table 4. **First-to-Second Year Retention Rate, Six-Year Graduation Rate, and Credits to Degree by UW System Institution.**[13]

Institution	First-to-Second Year Retention Rate (%)		Six-Year Graduation Rate at Same Institution (%)		Average Attempted Credits by Bachelor's Degree Recipients	
	Fall 2008	Fall 2018	Fall 2003	Fall 2013	2008–09	2018–19
Eau Claire	85.7	81.9	64.5	66.8	139	128
Green Bay	74.4	73.3	51.8	52.8	136	128
La Crosse	83.9	84.0	68.9	69.5	140	133
Madison	93.8	95.3	81.0	87.6	127	122
Milwaukee	73.3	76.5	42.7	43.9	145	143
Oshkosh	75.8	73.8	51.4	61.2	148	138
Parkside	64.3	72.5	26.7	44.5	142	140
Platteville	74.0	78.8	56.1	55.9	146	138
River Falls	74.9	73.8	55.2	57.9	137	126
Stevens Point	78.4	75.2	60.5	60.2	143	134
Stout	71.0	72.0	55.4	60.0	141	132
Superior	71.6	63.8	41.4	48.1	135	131
Whitewater	78.0	80.1	55.7	62.5	141	134
Total	80.2	82.1	59.7	65.4	138	131

If no action is taken now to address the looming crisis of declining enrollment, the result will likely be the closure of several campuses. Several of the speakers from the informational hearings offered alternative options to avoid closures. In particular, Dr. Grawe recommended five overarching strategies to combat demographic problems: recruitment, retention, program reforms, reorganization, and collaborative action. The committee has chosen not to recommend closures at this time in favor of the recommendations in the following sections.

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[13] Table 4 reproduced from Erin Probst, "University of Wisconsin System Overview," *Informational Paper* #34, 17.

Table 5. **University of Wisconsin System, 2021–21 Budget.**[14]

Institution	2020–21 Budget ($)
Madison	3,606,812,342
Milwaukee	684,240,836
Subtotal	4,291,053,178
Eau Claire	248,428,379
Green Bay	146,870,525
La Crosse	236,317,534
Oshkosh	252,618,927
Parkside	107,794,078
Platteville	188,436,051
River Falls	142,418,134
Stevens Point	209,039,641
Stout	206,562,850
Superior	71,413,344
Whitewater	271,076,834
Subtotal	2,080,976,297
System-wide	167,228,113
Total	6,539,257,588

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[14] Table 5 reproduced from Erin Probst, "University of Wisconsin System Overview," *Informational Paper* #34, 25.

Photos: University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire (top) and University of Wisconsin–Platteville (bottom).

Restructure UW System

In November 2017, the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System approved a plan to restructure the system's two-year campuses (then known as the UW Colleges) and the UW Extension "to ensure the future viability and sustainability of all our campuses."[15] The Board of Regents' Resolution[16] stated in part:

- Demographic trends across Wisconsin indicate the decline in the number of high school graduates currently presents and will continue to pose considerable enrollment challenges for the UW Colleges.

- Full-time student equivalent enrollment at UW Colleges campuses has declined 32% in the past seven years, and several UW Colleges campuses currently enroll only 200 FTE students.

- The UW System aims to leverage resources at UW institutions to move more students through the educational pipeline to better meet Wisconsin's current and projected workforce needs, which is in the economic interest of Wisconsin's citizens.

The primary objectives of the 2017 restructuring plan included (1) expanding access; (2) maintaining affordability; (3) reducing barriers to transferring credits; (4) regionalizing administrative operations and services to more efficiently use resources; (5) leveraging resources and shared talent at UW institutions to get more students into and through the educational pipeline successfully; and (6) better aligning universities to meet Wisconsin's projected workforce needs.[17]

This committee recommends following the successful model of the 2017 consolidation of the UW Colleges and UW–Extension to further consolidate UW System campuses into four regions, plus UW–Madison. This plan to continue the restructuring of the UW System builds on many of the same findings and objectives brought forward by the Board of Regents in the 2017 restructuring plan. The state's flagship campus in Madison is not included in this restructuring because of the different needs and attributes of UW–Madison in comparison with the outstate UW campuses. The plan does not involve the closing of any campus. Each campus will retain its own identity but consolidation and collaboration will be required to leverage the efficiencies of the UW System as a whole. The committee recommends dividing the 12 universities of the

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[15] See "UW Colleges and UW Extension Restructuring: Overview," University of Wisconsin System, https://www.wisconsin.edu.

[16] See Board of Regents Resolution 10956, dated Nov. 7, 2017, https://www.wisconsin.edu/uw-restructure/download/Board-of-Regents-Restructuring-Proposal-Resolution-7.pdf.

[17] See Board of Regents Resolution 10956, dated Nov. 7, 2017, https://www.wisconsin.edu/uw-restructure/download/Board-of-Regents-Restructuring-Proposal-Resolution-7.pdf.; see also UW System Substantive Change Proposal Summary (Abstract), https://www.wisconsin.edu/uw-restructure/download/hlc-document/HLC_UWSystem_Application.pdf.

System (excluding UW–Madison) and their branch campuses into the following geographic regions:

> Northwest region: UW–Eau Claire; UW–River Falls; UW–Stout; UW–Superior.

> Northeast region: UW–Green Bay; UW–Oshkosh; UW–Stevens Point.

> Southwest region: UW–La Crosse; UW–Platteville.

> Milwaukee region: UW–Milwaukee; UW–Parkside; UW–Whitewater.

This committee recommends directing the Board of Regents to continue its successful 2017–18 restructuring to regionalize and reorganize UW System institutions, as outlined above, to achieve the following goals: (1) maximize efficiency in operations and efficient use of resources while retaining separate institutional identities; (2) find savings of at least 15 percent in efficiencies by combining administrative services as well as educational departments and programs; (3) use these savings to increase faculty pay, hold down instruction costs for students, and expand online programming; and (4) by bringing the institutions together, strengthen the institutions and enhance collaboration among them and within their communities. These goals may be achieved by a combination of the following, subject to approval by the Higher Learning Commission:

- Consolidating and integrating administrative operations and services among the UW institutions within a region.

- Consolidating and integrating budgeting functions among the UW institutions within a region.

- Standardizing and regionalizing educational operations and programs among the UW institutions within a region, including facilitating credit transfer between these institutions and aligning degree programs.

Transparency and accountability must be a priority. Each geographic region, including UW–Madison, should consolidate oversight of each campus to set policies and procedures, manage financial resources, and ensure each institution within the region fulfills its unique mission.

The committee recommends that the president of the UW System submit to the Board of Regents a two-phase plan as follows:

- Phase 1: A plan for restructuring the administrative operations and services of all UW institutions within each region. The plan must include recommendations for consolidating and integrating administrative functions such as information technology, human resources, and procurement.

- Phase 2: A plan for continued restructuring that includes other administrative operations and services, budgeting functions, and educational operations and programs of all UW

institutions within each region. The plan must include recommendations for consolidating and integrating these administrative operations and services and budgeting functions and for standardizing and regionalizing educational operations and programs.

The Board of Regents should develop and implement a plan of restructuring designed to achieve the stated objectives and submit the plan to the standing committees of each house of the legislature having jurisdiction over higher education matters. This step is necessary to ensure the intent has been met and the desired savings will be achieved.

As discussed by Dr. Grawe in his testimony before the committee on February 9, 2021, along with the UW System's 2017–18 restructuring, many other institutions have turned to consolidation and collaboration as a means of reducing costs and increasing efficiencies in the face of enrollment declines and financial uncertainty. The committee finds that regionalization, consolidation, and collaboration to increase operational efficiency has strong advantages, and these advantages have also been recognized in other states:

- New Hampshire: In New Hampshire, among the asserted advantages of a plan to restructure the state's college and university system were the decreased costs of sharing online course management software among institutions and the benefit of allowing students to take classes at other institutions within the system and readily transfer the credits.[18]
- Pennsylvania: A restructuring plan in Pennsylvania sought to integrate six colleges by partnering them into three "pairs" to consolidate academic programs and reduce expenses for the system.[19] The proposal eventually evolved into a plan to create operational efficiencies by consolidating operations and developing program specialization while maintaining brand identity of the six campuses.[20]
- Maine: The plan for restructuring the University of Maine System declined to close any of the system's campuses but instead called for consolidating and centralizing certain operations in an effort to create greater system-wide efficiency. The system had previously consolidated information technology and purchasing services, resulting in millions of dollars in savings. The new plan for the system would further consolidate and centralize budgeting, academic programming, and staff work, along with a more focused mission of each campus of the system.[21]

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[18] See Emma Whitford, "New Hampshire Merger Proposal Takes Shape*," Inside Higher Ed* (Mar. 3, 2021), https://www.insidehighered.com; Ian Lenahan, "Here's the Reaction to Sununu's Desire to Merge NH Colleges and Universities*," Portsmouth Herald* via *Seacoastonline* (Feb. 20, 2021), https://www.seacoastonline.com.
[19] See Emma Whitford, "Pennsylvania System Surprises with New Integration Proposal*," Inside Higher Ed* (Sept. 15, 2020), https://www.insidehighered.com.
[20] See Jeremy Bauer-Wolf, "Plans for Merging Pennsylvania Public Universities Would Allow Them to Keep Their Brands," Higher Ed Dive (Feb. 5, 2021), https://www.highereddive.com.
[21] See Ry Rivard, "Maine Central Planning," Inside Higher Ed (Jan. 27, 2015), https://www.insidehighered.com.

- Georgia: The University System of Georgia (USG) is nearing completion of its second and last phase of a comprehensive, system-wide initiative focused on improving administration through creating efficiencies, streamlining processes, and finding ways to be more effective with USG resources. This comprehensive administrative review involves an in-depth examination of all non-faculty administrative functions (i.e., not teaching and research) across the system.[22] The review, led by a steering committee, analyzes organizational structure and activities in order to identify opportunities to improve management processes and eliminate unnecessary duplication of efforts and redundant processes. Among activities subject to review are audit and compliance activities; auxiliary activities; departmental support; facilities and grounds maintenance; financial management; fundraising, external relations, and communications; human resources; information technology; library management; pre- and post-award grants and contract activity; safety (environmental, public, etc.); and student and student-related services (enrollment management, admissions, financial aid, etc.). The review attempts to identify opportunities for savings through a combination of more efficient and effective processes, realignment of positions, and the restructuring and centralizing of certain operations.[23]
- Connecticut: A restructuring plan in Connecticut proposed to create regional partnerships between the state's four-year universities and two-year colleges and to decrease colleges' costs by consolidating administrative services and back-office functions like human resources, purchasing, and information technology.[24]

Creating efficiencies and cost savings through institutional collaboration is not limited to public institutions. In Connecticut, three private colleges worked collaboratively to acquire a fourth private college that was failing. The collaboration would retain the academic programs of the fourth college; share costs among all the colleges for common services like the library, security, and recreation; and generate revenues by leasing vacated campus facilities to third parties.[25] In his testimony on February 9, 2021, Dr. Rolf Wegenke testified that the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU) has helped its member institutions collaborate to share back-office functions like purchasing and certain audit services with an estimated savings to these institutions of $206 million.

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[22] "Comprehensive Administrative Review," University System of Georgia, https://www.usg.edu.

[23] See "White Paper: Comprehensive Administrative Review," University System of Georgia, https://www.usg.edu. See also Charles Sutlive, "University System Launches Comprehensive Administrative Review," Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia (Apr. 19, 2017), https://cviog.uga.edu; Rick Seltzer, "Georgia's Next Stab at Efficiency," Inside Higher Ed (Apr. 19, 2017), https://www.insidehighered.com.

[24] See Rick Seltzer, "Consolidating Community Colleges," Inside Higher Ed (Apr. 4, 2017), https://www.insidehighered.com.

[25] See Goldie Blumenstyk, "The Edge: As Colleges' Finances Get Shakier, What Lessons Does This 'Sorta' Merger Offer?" *Chronicle of Higher Education* (July 8, 2020), https://www.chronicle.com.

Since the 2017–18 restructuring, the UW System has also taken some steps toward operational review and administrative efficiency. The UW System considers itself to be a leader among comparable institutions in resource efficiency and in finding new mechanisms to consolidate and streamline administrative operations. The UW System declares, "To demonstrate administrative excellence, we will focus on ways to harness the collective power of the UW System to drive down costs while still providing excellent services, especially in areas where services are statewide, such as in information technology, human resources, financial services, and procurement."[26] The UW System identifies among its goals "maximizing use of resources to reduce all non-instructional costs" and "redirecting operational savings from non-instructional costs to academic programs."[27] The UW System also promises, "The UW System will continue to create operational efficiencies by standardizing, consolidating, and streamlining non-instructional operations."[28]

The UW System's Commitment to Operational Reform and Excellence (CORE) programs seek to standardize and improve the UW System's business processes in an effort to increase the effective and efficient use of System resources. According to the UW System, "For many years, the percentage of UW System's annual budget devoted to administrative costs has been significantly below the national average, but we remain committed to identifying ways to lower it even further, through the use of innovative business practices."[29] The four guiding principles of CORE are business process standardization; partnerships; reallocation and reinvestment of resources; and transformational change. CORE is also focused on six strategic operational areas: administrative services; budget; capital planning and budget; financial administration; human resources; and information technology. Projects undertaken under the CORE umbrella include the installation of an automated electronic procurement system; the merger of information technology teams; adoption of electronic tools to assist employees with questions about their benefits; and a new budget forecasting system.[30]

The UW System's accountability dashboard notes an overall "limited progress" toward achieving these CORE projects and goals, although some initiatives have made significant progress. The System is continuing a system-wide HR modernization effort; a program to approve and manage UW System construction projects funded by gifts and grants and to manage the purchase and leasing of real estate; and implementation of a new budget creation and forecasting tool. The System has decided to create a UW Shared Services unit "to provide human resources, information technology, and procurement services to UW System campuses and their employees in a standardized, cost-effective way."[31] The System's efforts at long-term operational efficiencies may involve significant up-front costs. The Legislative Audit Bureau has

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[26] See "2020FWD: Operational Excellence," University of Wisconsin System, https://www.wisconsin.edu
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] See "CORE: What is CORE?" University of Wisconsin System, https://www.wisconsin.edu.
[30] Ibid.
[31] See "2020FWD: Report Card," University of Wisconsin System, https://www.wisconsin.edu.

noted that the UW System's planned Administrative Transformation Project (ATP)—a system-wide, integrated, cloud-based enterprise resource planning system to replace the current payroll, HR, and financial systems—is projected to cost about $212 million.[32]

Despite the UW System's intent to standardize and improve business processes to increase the effective and efficient use of System resources, a recent Legislative Audit Bureau report relating to UW information technology projects makes clear that implementation can fall short of these goals. The report found a number of deficiencies of the UW System and UW institutions in the IT needs assessment and procurement process for significant IT projects. The LAB concluded that the Board of Regents needs to improve its oversight of IT projects.[33] The LAB has also found that the UW System's financial management processes need to be improved.[34]

This committee recommends that the UW System continue to consolidate system-wide operations where possible, and to pursue regional consolidation where system-wide consolidation is not achievable, in an effort to maximize operational efficiencies for the System and its institutions.
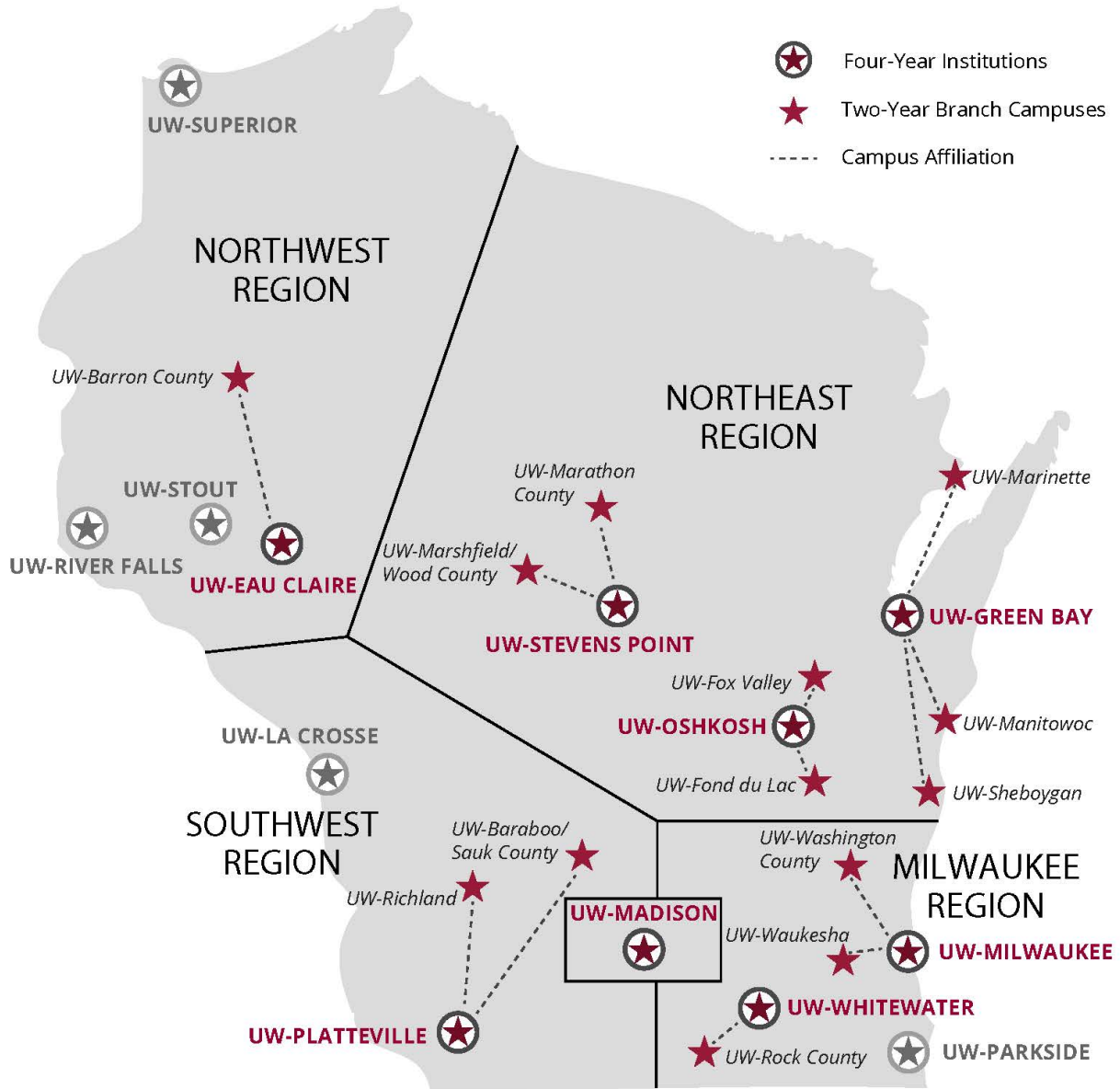

Photo: University of Wisconsin–La Crosse.

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[32] See Legislative Audit Bureau, "University of Wisconsin System: Fiscal Year 2019–20," *Report* 20-29 (Madison, WI: LAB, Dec. 2020), https://legis.wisconsin.gov.
[33] See Legislative Audit Bureau, "IT Needs Assessment, Procurement, and Security: University of Wisconsin System," *Report* 20-10 (Madison, WI: LAB, Sept. 2020), https://legis.wisconsin.gov.
[34] See Legislative Audit Bureau, "University of Wisconsin System, *Report* 20-7 (Madison, WI: LAB, July 2020), https://legis.wisconsin.gov; Legislative Audit Bureau, "University of Wisconsin System: Fiscal Year 2017–18," *Report* 19-5 (Madison, WI: LAB, May 2019), https://legis.wisconsin.gov.

PROPOSED REGIONALIZATION OF THE UW SYSTEM

Legend:
- ⭐ (circled) Four-Year Institutions
- ⭐ Two-Year Branch Campuses
- ---- Campus Affiliation

NORTHWEST REGION
- UW-SUPERIOR
- UW-Barron County
- UW-STOUT
- UW-RIVER FALLS
- UW-EAU CLAIRE

NORTHEAST REGION
- UW-Marathon County
- UW-Marshfield/Wood County
- UW-STEVENS POINT
- UW-Marinette
- UW-GREEN BAY
- UW-Fox Valley
- UW-OSHKOSH
- UW-Manitowoc
- UW-Fond du Lac
- UW-Sheboygan

SOUTHWEST REGION
- UW-LA CROSSE
- UW-Baraboo/Sauk County
- UW-Richland
- UW-MADISON
- UW-PLATTEVILLE

MILWAUKEE REGION
- UW-Washington County
- UW-Waukesha
- UW-MILWAUKEE
- UW-WHITEWATER
- UW-Rock County
- UW-PARKSIDE

UW–Madison Stands Apart

UW–Madison has largely been excluded from the reorganization and restructuring recommendations. As the state's flagship institution, UW–Madison's overall economic and research impact vastly outweighs the 11 comprehensive institutions in the UW System.

UW–Madison accounts for $30 billion annually in economic impact to Wisconsin. In addition, the university differs from the others with the diversity of its revenue stream, the largest portion (25 percent) being from the federal government.

Most of the federal funding is competitively awarded to UW–Madison for specific research projects and funds research facilities. UW–Madison is one of the largest research institutions, ranking eighth in the nation.

The committee finds that UW–Madison has not experienced the same enrollment issues found in the rest of the UW System. Enrollment in the UW System as a whole has been falling since it peaked in 2010, while UW–Madison continues to grow.

It is for these reasons the committee has chosen not to include UW–Madison in its regionalization plan. UW–Madison, as part of the UW System, is subject to all of the other recommendations provided in this report.

Photo below: University of Wisconsin–Madison aerial lake view, https://pbs.twimg.com.

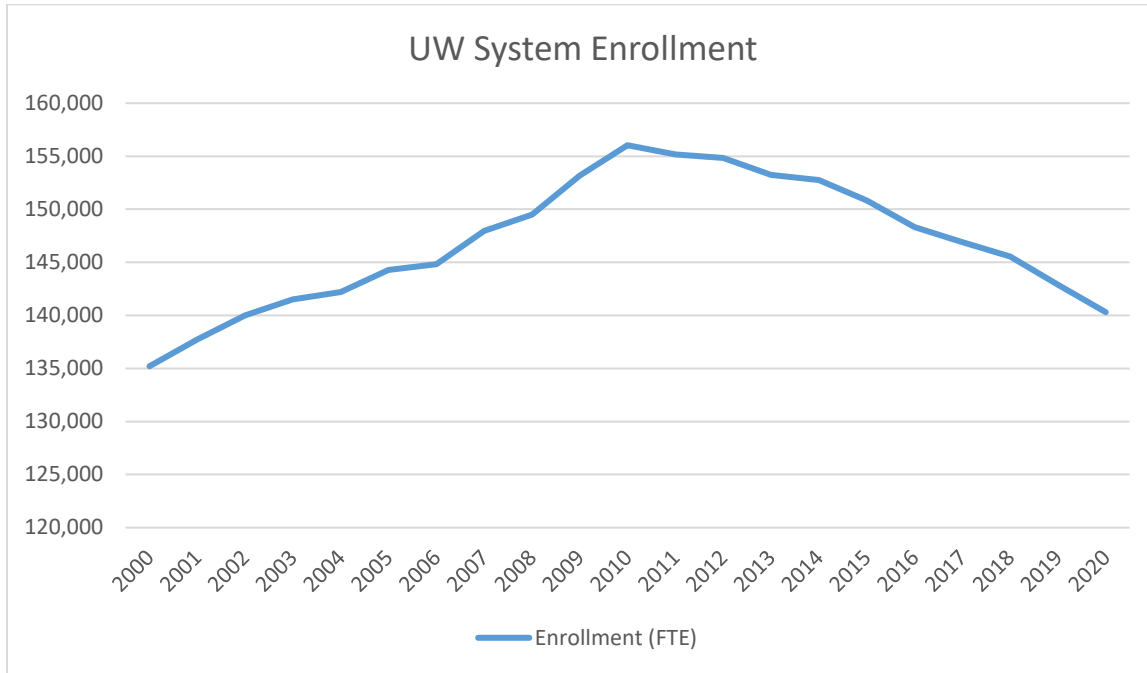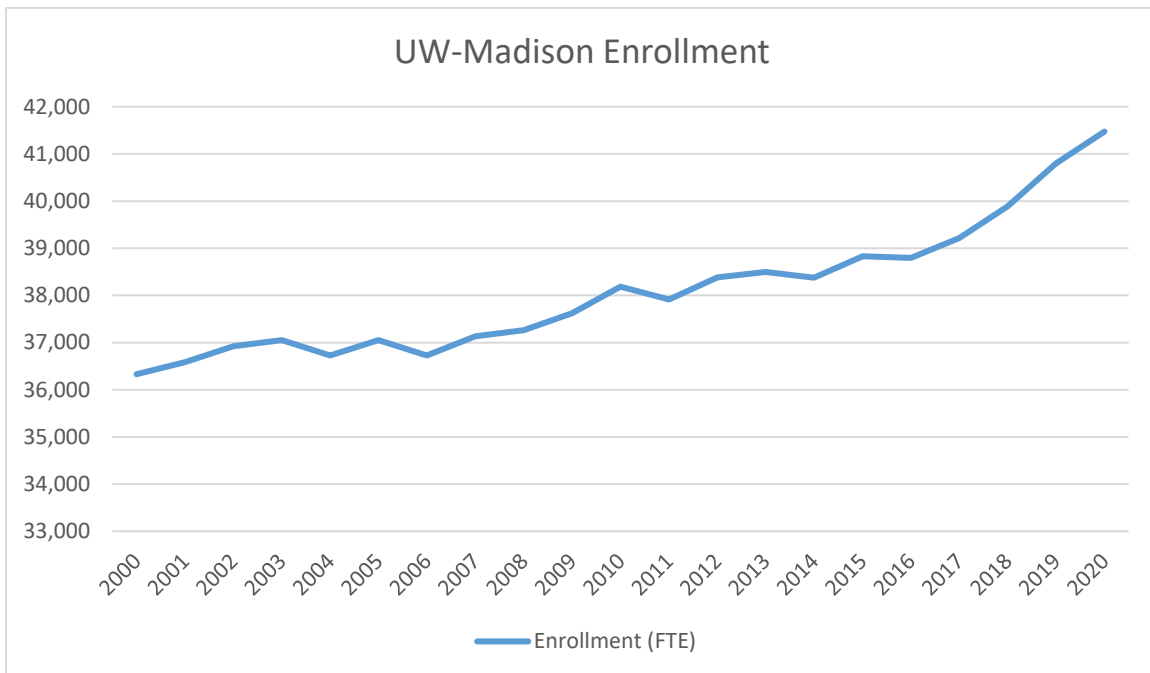Chart 1. **UW System Enrollment (FTE), 2000–20.** Based on data from "Enrollments," UW System, accessed April 21, 2021, http://www.wisconsin.edu/education-report-statistics.

Chart 2. **UW–Madison Enrollment (FTE), 2000–2020.** Based on data from "Enrollments," UW System, accessed April 21, 2021, http://www.wisconsin.edu/education-report-statistics.

Savings Derived from Restructuring

Three areas where regionalization and reorganization of UW institutions could generate savings are in the budgeted expenditure categories of instructional costs, academic support, and institutional support.

As defined by the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, those broad categories currently include:

Instructional Costs

All activities through which a student may earn credit toward a degree or certificate granted by the University. Expenditures for remedial instruction are also included even though these courses do not carry degree credit. This program also includes costs for curriculum development, departmental research, and public service not separately budgeted; course catalogs, bulletins, and timetables; computing costs charged back to users; library, media services, and special course fees; departmental computer labs; credit bearing internships; recruitment and retention of instructional faculty; and the administration of study abroad programs. Instruction excludes (a) all non-credit instruction other than remedial instruction; (b) separately budgeted academic advising; (c) separately budgeted course and curriculum development; (d) professional development for faculty members and sabbaticals; and (e) campus, college, or school-wide computer labs.[35]

Academic Support

Activities that primarily support the institution's instructional, research, and public service missions. These activities include (a) the retention, preservation, and display of educational materials, generally in libraries or museums; (b) the provision of services that directly assist the academic functions of the institution, such as demonstration schools; (c) media, such as audiovisual services, and technology, such as computing support; (d) academic administration and personnel development; and (e) separately budgeted support for course and curriculum development.[36]

Institutional Support

This program includes (a) executive management, including the chancellor, the chancellor's cabinet, and their immediate office support staff, costs related to the Board of Regents and the faculty Senates, and legal services; (b) fiscal operations, including the accounting office, budget office, bursar, and audit functions; (c) general administration and logistical services, including personnel administration and payroll, space management, risk management, purchasing, institutional research, campus-wide communications, and protective services; (d) administrative

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[35] Erin Probst, "University of Wisconsin System Overview," *Informational Paper* #34 (Madison, WI: Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Jan. 2021), 23, https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.
[36] Ibid.

computer support; and (e) public relations and development. Institutional support excludes administrative duties related to specific functions, like an academic department secretary or a research grant administrator, which are included under the functional area they support, such as instruction or research.[37]

As discussed in the previous section, the Board of Regents should realize savings of at least 15 percent in current expenditures through regionalization and reorganization. Deeper savings should be found in the category of institutional support by combining multiple administrative functions from each campus into one regional office. Based on this goal, savings in these three categories could generate nearly $200 million. Additional efficiencies may be derived in other expenditure categories as well.

The savings generated by regionalization could be used to strengthen the UW System by holding down costs at institutions, expanding digital learning (addressed in a following recommendation), and enhancing professor salaries where appropriate.

Data from UW System indicate that faculty compensation lags behind that of their peer institutions, with the percentage behind ranging from 10.8 percent at UW–Milwaukee, to 15.6 percent at UW–Madison, and 19.0 percent at the comprehensive institutions, using data adjusted for the cost of living.[38]

Therefore, the committee recommends that the Board of Regents use savings generated by regionalization to increase professor compensation where deficiencies exist.

Table 6. **Average Salaries of Full-Time, Nine-Month Faculty, 2019–20.**[39]

Institution	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor	Average
Madison	$148,900	$112,500	$97,100	$69,900	$115,400
Milwaukee	108,500	81,900	76,000	58,400	78,300
Eau Claire	82,000	69,100	69,100	56,600	70,000
Green Bay	71,700	63,200	62,000	74,000	61,400
La Crosse	83,000	69,100	67,500	NA	66,000
Oshkosh	79,900	66,200	70,500	NA	67,800
Parkside	76,000	67,700	62,900	61,700	62,500
Platteville	76,400	64,800	62,800	NA	63,100
River Falls	78,800	68,400	68,000	56,200	69,500

[37] Ibid., 24.
[38] Legislative Fiscal Bureau, *Joint Committee on Finance Paper #760* (May 2019), https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.
[39] Table 6 reproduced from Erin Probst, "University of Wisconsin System Overview," *Informational Paper* #34, 35.

Institution	Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Instructor	Average
Stevens Point	72,100	59,800	59,500	NA	62,800
Stout	76,100	68,500	64,800	62,600	65,700
Superior	69,100	58,600	60,400	NA	58,700
Whitewater	80,100	71,800	77,900	NA	70,500
National Average Public (Doctoral)	$145,900	$99,700	$86,800	$59,100	$104,600
National Average Public (Comprehensive)	$102,000	$83,100	$73,000	$52,700	$80,500

Reevaluate UW Programs

As discussed in the recommendations section above, many institutions of higher education are evaluating program consolidation and collaboration, including increasing program specialization among the campuses of a public system.

The committee recommends that the UW System reevaluate the program offerings at each UW institution. In particular, in light of the regionalization described in the section above, the committee recommends that the Board of Regents and the institutions within each region evaluate the program authorization and deauthorization process with a goal of creating efficiencies by combining departments or providing for program collaboration among institutions. Effective program collaboration must create a seamless transfer process so that students can move about the region as necessary—both among physical campuses and online— and must ensure that course credits for students involved in the collaborative program not only transfer but also are fully applied toward the student's degree requirements.

The committee also recommends that the Board of Regents and UW institutions further define each institution's mission statement to include the institution's program emphasis and the graduate programs offered by the institution. Further, each of the 11 comprehensive institutions should identify an area of specialization to emphasize its strengths and the programs that set it apart from the other schools. By doing so, each region will ensure a diversity of programming among the schools within the region. The process of identifying and assigning schools with areas of expertise should be done under the supervision of the Board of Regents so that there is a diversity of specialization within the UW System.

UW System institutions offer 300 undergraduate majors.[40] In his testimony before the committee on March 10, 2021, and in the Wisconsin Policy Forum report titled *Falling Behind?*, Jason Stein identifies some little-used programs and majors that may not be cost-effective to continue offering widely at UW institutions.[41] The committee recommends an examination of programs like these to determine whether they should be eliminated or consolidated among institutions, particularly if a program can be maintained by offering it online (discussed in the next section) to UW students with different home campuses.

Although the committee heard testimony that the UW System administers a program review, approval, and termination process for all UW institutions, the process must be robust and demanding in the System's current financial climate. In her testimony before the committee on March 10, 2021, Dr. Carleen Vande Zande, the UW System's associate vice president for

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[40] Transmittal letter to Governor Tony Evers, Senate Chief Clerk Jeff Renk, and Assembly Chief Clerk Patrick Fuller from UW System President Tommy Thompson and UW–Madison Chancellor Rebecca Blank, Oct. 22, 2020, https://www.wisconsin.edu.

[41] See Jason Stein, Mark Sommerhauser, Muhammad Shayan, *Falling Behind? The State of Wisconsin's Public Universities and Colleges* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Policy Forum, Dec. 2020), 29 and 49, https://wispolicyforum.org.

Academic Program & Faculty Advancement, testified to the System's complex process for reviewing program array and program authorization and deauthorization.[42] Dr. Vande Zande testified to the annual program array management reports required of institutions, to the way the System handles low-performing programs, and to the System's increasing use of multi-institutional collaborative programs such as the data science program, which are generally offered online. Dr. Vande Zande testified that the UW System has a business model in place to offer collaborative programs involving shared courses and shared faculty and that the System plans to offer more collaborative programs in the future. (Collaboration in UW System online programs is discussed further in the next section.)

While the UW System is obviously moving in the right direction, the committee recommends that the UW System undertake a thorough review of all criteria used in its program evaluation process. For example, Dr. Vande Zande testified that a new program will not be authorized if it results in program duplication, but the definition of program duplication is that the program is offered in 50 percent or more of the System's universities. If there is duplication, the System will look to collaboration instead of authorizing a new program. Given the current technological capability for collaboration, the committee believes that a "50%" standard in this situation may be unnecessarily high and believes the System should reconsider all standards and criteria it presently uses for program review.

In his testimony to the committee on February 9, 2021, Dr. Nathan Grawe recognized the need for institutions to prioritize, to create a sense of mission and purpose, and to make sure that programs are aligned with the institution's mission. But the institution must also adopt a judicious and deliberative approach to program review. An institution seeking to reduce costs by eliminating duplicative or little-used programs must be aware of the continuing need to attract new students. If cost-cutting program reduction eliminates programs that are essential or that students highly value, the negative effect on future enrollment could create a "death spiral" for the institution.

In conducting their program evaluations, institutions should look not only at eliminating or consolidating little-used programs but also at developing or expanding in-demand programs. In his testimony to the committee on February 9, 2021, Dr. Rolf Wegenke discussed the success of WAICU member institutions in attracting new students by developing new programs in high-demand areas. For example, assessing a strong need for it, Concordia University created the state's second pharmacy school. After the Milwaukee School of Engineering created a new program in Artificial Intelligence, it saw an uptick in applications and enrollment.

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[42] See also "UW Policies—Policy on University of Wisconsin System Array Management: Program Planning, Delivery, Review, and Reporting," UW System Administrative Policy 102, University of Wisconsin System, https://www.wisconsin.edu.

In *Reimagining Higher Education in the United States*,[43] the authors suggest for institutions that one path forward to future viability may be specialization—"doing fewer things better"—and differentiation—emphasizing characteristics or programs that set the institution apart. "By defining their areas of distinction and then directing resources to support them, higher-education institutions can set themselves apart—making them stronger and enabling them to deliver high-quality programs and outcomes."[44] This approach applies to academic offerings, support services, and amenities. "The core mission of colleges and universities is instruction, research, and service. In recent decades, though, many have engaged in the so-called student-amenities arms race, with expansive offerings in areas such as entertainment, gourmet dining, and wellness."[45] Institutions may be better off providing fewer, better ancillary services.[46]

In a Deloitte report, *The Hybrid Campus: Three major shifts for the post-COVID university*, the authors stress the importance of institutional collaboration, particularly in low enrollment but critical academic programs. The report notes that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, seven institutions in the Big 10 (not including UW) entered into a course-sharing agreement to allow students at each institution to take an array of courses at peer institutions at no charge. [47]

In the past year, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UW System has learned to function partly in a virtual world. Many experts believe that the hybrid system—both in-person and online—for delivering instruction and providing student support services will continue beyond the pandemic. The next section discusses online programs, including hybrid learning, in more detail. The UW System must seek to maximize efficiencies within a campus and among campuses within a region as it simultaneously provides academic programs and student support services both in-person and online.

The committee recommends that additional savings could be generated by a deeper analysis of the following types of programs:

- Those that produce very few graduates.

- Those that serve only to fulfill general education requirements

- Those that result in poor earnings and job prospects or with career prospects that are primarily limited to replacing faculty in those programs

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[43] See André Dua, Jonathan Law, Ted Rounsaville, and Nadia Viswanath, "Reimagining Higher Education in the United States," *McKinsey & Company* (Oct. 26, 2020), https://www.mckinsey.com
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] See Jeffrey Selingo, Cole Clark, Dave Noone, and Amy Wittmayer, *The Hybrid Campus: Three Major Shifts for the Post-COVID University* (Deloitte Center for Higher Education Excellence, 2021), https://www2.deloitte.com.

- Those that prepare students for occupations with college degree requirements even though the skills could be obtained without a college degree.

- Those that are duplicative programs at nearby campuses or within the same region as defined under the reorganization plan defined in the previous section.

- Those that can be delivered closer to students or through a competency-based format or both, rather than on comprehensive campuses that are expensive to maintain.

- Graduate programs at comprehensive campuses, with a focus on the number of graduate programs offered at each campus.

Photo: University of Wisconsin–Stout.

Boost Digital Learning

Testimony before the committee made clear that the expansion of online education in Wisconsin must increase enrollment, especially among nontraditional populations, and facilitate student success, as measured in retention and completion rates. Success toward each of these goals relies on expansion efforts that acknowledge the main appeals of digital learning for prospective students: cost, convenience, and flexibility. Based on these considerations, the committee recommends that the UW System Board of Regents (1) attract and retain more nontraditional students and shift the focus for these populations from traditional physical campuses to online programs; (2) set a 10-year goal to make the UW System one of the nation's premiere institutions of online instruction; and (3) remove barriers to online instruction to facilitate worldwide access distance learning opportunities through the UW System.

Appeals of online learning. Although most college undergraduates prefer to be on campus—where they can socialize at the student union, attend sports and cultural events, and study in libraries and lecture halls—a growing number of students elected to pursue online degrees even before the pandemic.[48] Online programs are appealing for their convenience and flexibility, especially among nontraditional students (i.e., adults 25 years of age or older), who face more constraints relating to work and childcare. Respondents to a survey of online learners in California, for example, cited "convenience with their work schedule" as the top priority in choosing an online class.[49] Respondents to a similar survey of Virginia students likewise reasoned that "the flexibility of online learning helped them better balance their schedule," adding that if online courses were not an option, they would simply enroll in fewer classes.[50] For all these reasons, university administrators have increasingly recognized online education as a "preferred learning pathway" through which institutions must attract and retain students.[51]

Even in their infancy, flexible and reduced-cost online programs have eliminated barriers with respect to the time, expense, and logistics of attaining a degree. As an example of such a program, Georgia Tech launched an online-only master's program in computer science in 2014. The program's reliance on asynchronous instruction provided students with the flexibility to

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[48] Jeffrey Selingo, Cole Clark, Dave Noone, and Amy Wittmayer, "The Hybrid Campus: Three Major Shifts for the Post-COVID University," Deloitte Insights (2021), http://www2.deloitte.com. This is also supported by the testimony of Dr. Ike Brannon and Chancellor Mark Mone before the committee on March 10, 2021. A survey of high school students conducted during the pandemic also found that only 11 percent of Wisconsin high school students believe that online learning is as effective as in-person learning. See Will Patch, "COVID-19 Survey Results Explorers," Niche Partners (April 13, 2020), http://www.niche.com.

[49] LeBaron Woodyard and Erin Larson, *Distance Education Report*, California Community College Chancellor's Office (2017), 32.

[50] Shanna Smith Jaggars, "Choosing Between Online and Face-to-Face Courses: Community College Student Voices," *American Journal of Distance Education* 28 (2014): 32.

[51] See UW–Milwaukee, *Think Tank 2030+ Recommendations: Final Report*, May 28, 2020, http://www.uwm.edu.

learn at times convenient to their work and family schedules.[52] Costs per class amounted to about one-tenth of similar costs at other top-ranked programs[53] and one-sixth the cost of Georgia Tech's in-person program.[54] Enrollment quickly reached about 4,000 students, averaging age 35, by comparison to in-person enrollment of 300 students, averaging age 24.[55] In short, the program dramatically increased enrollment among nontraditional populations. Moreover, an academic study of the program found that it "increase[d] overall enrollment in education, expanding the pool of students rather than substituting for existing educational options."[56] In other words, students not accepted into the program did not enroll elsewhere.[57]

Like Georgia Tech, other institutions have increasingly relied on online programs to eliminate some of the barriers to higher education. For example, while total tuition easily exceeds six figures at many top MBA programs, some public institutions have begun offering online-only MBA programs at substantially lower tuition rates.[58] The University of Illinois offers an online-only program with total tuition costs of $22,500.[59] (By comparison, total tuition for another online program at University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill tops $125,000 for the current academic year.[60]) Private institutions are also developing online-only options, such as a physician assistant program at Yale University[61] whose out-of-state students "would have had to uproot their lives and move to pursue a degree from such an iconic institution."[62]

[52] Joshua Goodman, Julia Melkers, and Amanda Pallais, "Can Online Delivery Increase Access to Education?" National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 22754 (September 2017), http://www.nber.org/papers/w22754, 4.

[53] Kevin Carey, "An Online Education Breakthrough? A Master's Degree for a Mere $7,000," *New York Times*, September 28, 2016.

[54] As of 2017, the cost of these respective programs at Georgia Tech were $7,000 and $45,000 for out-of-state students. Joshua Goodman, Julia Melkers, and Amanda Pallais, "Can Online Delivery Increase Access to Education?" National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 22754 (September 2017), http://www.nber.org/papers/w22754, 1.

[55] Kevin Carey, "An Online Education Breakthrough? A Master's Degree for a Mere $7,000," *New York Times*, September 28, 2016.

[56] "Abstract" in Joshua Goodman, Julia Melkers, and Amanda Pallais, "Can Online Delivery Increase Access to Education?" National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 22754 (September 2017), http://www.nber.org/papers/w22754.

[57] Kevin Carey, "An Online Education Breakthrough? A Master's Degree for a Mere $7,000," *New York Times*, September 28, 2016.

[58] Arlene Weintraub, "Six Options to Cut the Cost of an MBA," U.S. News & World Report, March 26, 2018, http://www.usnews.com.

[59] "iMBA," University of Illinois, Gies College of Business, accessed March 15, 2021, http://www.onlinemba/illinois.edu.

[60] "Tuition & Financial Aid," University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, Kenan–Flagler Business School, accessed March 15, 2021, http://www.onlinemba.unc.edu.

[61] "Yale School of Medicine Physician Assistant Online Program," Yale School of Medicine, accessed March 24, 2021, http://www.paonline.yale.edu.

[62] Chip Paucek, "What Matters Most: Quality, Access, Outcomes and Sustainability," *Inside Higher Ed*, April 17, 2019, http://www.insidehighered.com. See also Goodman et al, "Can Online Delivery Increase Access to Education?" 4–5.

Growth of online learning. Data documenting the expansion of online education underscores the appeal of these kinds of programs. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), nearly 3.3 million students enrolled exclusively in distance education programs in fall 2018.[63] (Students in such programs usually earn the same degree as on-campus students if an institution is accredited to award degrees for both in-person and online programs.[64]) Moreover, a significant number of college students completed at least some portion of coursework online before the pandemic. According to NCES, about 5.7 million undergraduate students—more than one in three—enrolled in at least one online course in 2018. If graduate students are included, this proportion is even higher.[65]

Data from the federal Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) show more students studying online at nearly all types of postsecondary institutions as recently as 2018. These data demonstrate that online education remains the main driver of growth in postsecondary enrollments, with slightly greater growth in exclusively online programs versus hybrid programs, i.e., those offering a mix of in-person and online classes. Graduate students are the most likely to take at least some courses online (nearly 40 percent), followed by undergraduate students at four-year institutions (34.5 percent), and undergraduate students at two-year institutions (33.8 percent). Examined from a different perspective, these data reveal an increasing percentage of undergraduate students at four-year and two-year institutions enrolled in online-only programs (17.3 percent in 2019, up from 14.7 percent in 2016) and a decreasing percentage of the same student population not enrolled in any online classes whatsoever (63.4 percent, down from 68.8 percent in 2016).[66]

Against this backdrop, speakers before the committee presented the expansion of online instruction as a means to simultaneously increase access to higher education and ensure the vitality of the UW System. Dr. Ben Passmore, UW System Vice President for Policy Analysis and Research, testified that a key to address the looming trend of declining higher education participation rates is to expand online education to enhance the academic experience for students in general and facilitate access among working adults in particular. Likewise, Dr. Nathan Grawe of Carleton College recommended seeking new ways to retain existing students and attract nontraditional students, and Dr. Ike Brannon of the Badger Institute identified online learning as an effective means to this end. Jason Stein of the Wisconsin Policy Forum also expressed his belief in the benefits of expanding online learning.

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[63] "Accredited Online Colleges," U.S. News & World Report, accessed March 19, 2021, http://www.usnews.com.
[64] Ibid.
[65] "Fast Facts," National Center for Education Statistics, accessed March 19, 2021, http://www.nces.ed.gov. See also "Accredited Online Colleges," U.S. News & World Report, accessed March 19, 2021, http://www.usnews.com.
[66] IPEDS Data Explorer, National Center for Education Statistics, accessed April 21, 2021, http://www.nces.ed.gov. See also *Inside Higher Ed*, Online Enrollment Grows, But Pace Slows (Dec. 11, 2019); Doug Lederman, "The Biggest Movers Online," *Inside Higher Ed*, December 17, 2019, http://www.insidehighered.com.

Online learning in Wisconsin. In March 2016, the Wisconsin Legislature established the foundation for the state's institutions of higher education to expand their digital learning footprint. 2015 Wisconsin Act 208 created the Distance Learning Authorization Board to act on behalf of the state in entering into the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) developed by the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). This agreement provides standards for distance education programs and facilitates distance learning by allowing an institution that is a SARA member and has obtained approval from its home state to provide distance education courses to students residing in other states without obtaining further approval from that state if the state also participates in SARA.[67] The purpose of SARA is to facilitate interstate distance education by creating a common standard and avoiding the requirement that a national provider of distance education obtain a separate approval from the regulator in every state where an online student is located. As of December 2020, every state except California had joined SARA.[68] Approximately 50 Wisconsin institutions are SARA members, including all 13 universities of the UW System.[69]

Data maintained by NC-SARA are helpful in understanding Wisconsin's role in the distance learning market. According to 2019 data, Wisconsin institutions that are SARA members enrolled 6,552 students in states other than Wisconsin and California, and enrolled another 423 students in California, for a total of 6,975 out-of-state students in Wisconsin institutions. In contrast, 17,828 Wisconsin residents were enrolled at out-of-state SARA-member institutions during this same period.[70] In other words, for every out-of-state student enrolled in a Wisconsin institution's online degree program, there are more than 2.5 Wisconsin residents enrolled in an online degree program delivered by an institution outside of Wisconsin.

In comparison, Wisconsin has a much better import/export balance in overall postsecondary student population in terms of out-of-state students attending Wisconsin institutions versus Wisconsin students attending out-of-state institutions, according to information from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). For in-person first-time freshmen, Wisconsin brings in about 1.3 out-of-state students for every Wisconsin student who attends an out-of-state institution.[71] This proportion is in stark contrast to the NC-SARA data for online education, which translates to Wisconsin bringing in only about 0.4 out-of-state online students for every Wisconsin student who enrolls in an out-of-state online program.

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[67] See Wis. Stat. §§ 15.675 (1) and 39.85. See also "About NC-SARA," The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements, accessed March 17, 2021, http://www.nc-sara.org.
[68] Terri Taylor Straut and Marianne Boeke, "NC-Sara Data Report: Fall 2019 Distance Education Enrollment & 2019 Out-of-State Learning Placements," National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (December 2020), http://www.nc-sara.org.
[69] "NC-SARA Institution Directory," National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements, accessed March 19, 2021, https://nc-sara.org/.
[70] Straut and Boeke, "NC-Sara Data Report."
[71] "State Profile Report" and "Import/Export Ratio of College-Going Students," NHEMS Information Center, accessed March 18, 2021, http://www.higheredinfo.org.

Online learning in the UW System. In her testimony, Dr. Anny Morrobel-Sosa, the UW System's vice president for academic and student affairs, testified to the significant progress the UW System has made in delivering online education. The UW System has about 10,000 students enrolled in online programs throughout its 13 universities, although this accounts for less than 8 percent of the online education market in Wisconsin and the upper Midwest. Through e-Campus, the UW System offers more than 150 online programs leading to a certificate, associate degree, bachelor's degree, or graduate degree, including more than 60 online graduate degree programs.[72]

Additionally, the UW Extended Campus program offers degree programs and non-degree education to working adults throughout the state and beyond.[73] Through Extended Campus, the 13 universities of the system can collaborate to deliver distance learning to 6,000 students across 27 programs. A focus of UW Extended Campus is delivering affordable online education to adult learners with some college credit but no degree and who are more interested in workforce skills, credentials, or certificates than a bachelor's degree. According to UW System officials, this population of prospective students is substantial, with national census data showing 815,000 Wisconsin residents with some college credit but no degree, and of this group, around 300,000 have indicated they are pursuing online courses.[74]

A key part of the UW System's online education offerings is competency-based education (CBE). CBE programs allow students work at a self-directed pace outside of a semester schedule; assessment is based on competency and skills rather than credit completion; and cost is often time-based rather than credit-based. Motivated students may complete coursework faster than they could in a traditional semester system, allowing them to save money by completing degree or credential requirements more quickly. The UW System was the first public university to offer competency-based education (CBE) programs as part of the UW Flexible Option program.[75] This program offers online, competency-based programs that grant degrees and certificates in a variety of career-related fields. According to Dr. Morrobel-Sosa, the UW Flexible Option program is the only statewide CBE program in the country, has received accolades for its design and success, and has a student retention rate of twice the national average.

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[72] "UW Flexible Option" and "UW Flexible Option Programs," UW Flexible Option, accessed March 18, 2021, http://www.flex.wisconsin.edu; "UW College Courses Online" and "UW System Substantive Change Proposal Summary (Abstract)," University of Wisconsin, accessed March 18, 2021, http://www.online.uwc.edu; "Online Degree Programs," UW System eCampus, accessed March 18, 2021, http://www.ecampus.wisconsin.edu; "Our Academic Programs," UW–Madison Graduate School, accessed March 18, 2021, http://www.grad.wisc.edu.

[73] "UW Extended Campus," University of Wisconsin Extended Campus, accessed March 19, 2021, https://ce.uwex.edu/.

[74] Rich Kremer, "Thompson Pushes Unified UW System Programs," Wisconsin Public Radio, April 10, 2021, http://www.urbanmilwaukee.com.

[75] National Conference of State Legislatures, *Competency-Based Education*, Postsecondary Education Policy Paper (October 15, 2019).

In addition to Extended Campus and Flexible Option, each university offers certain of its own online degree programs. According to Dr. Anny Morrobel-Sosa, in 2020, the UW System dramatically increased the number of faculty and academic staff qualified to teach online courses, which require a very different approach for planning, development, and delivery than in-person courses. The UW System is looking closely at ways to develop and promote its online programs, with an understanding that a critical component of multiple-institution collaborative online programs is ensuring that credits are easily transferred and applied to degree requirements.

UWS and the online learning market. Despite its efforts and accomplishments, the UW System has not been a significant player in the national online degree market, which is intensely competitive. More than 1600 colleges and universities in the U.S. are accredited to award degrees through online programs.[76] The UW System and its institutions rarely appear in online rankings of the biggest, best, or most affordable online undergraduate degree programs.[77] (UW–La Crosse does appear in one ranking, where it was recognized for "exemplary" quality online education programs by the Online Learning Consortium.[78]) These same lists include numerous public institutions that would be considered competitors of the UW System's online programs, such as the University of Illinois, the University of Minnesota, Ohio State, Indiana University, and Oregon State. Among online graduate programs, some of those cited as the best include programs offered by Columbia, UCLA, Purdue, Indiana University, Carnegie Mellon, University of North Carolina, Duke, and Ohio State.

Data from the U.S. Department of Education for 2018 show that 2,500 colleges offer online programs, but the 100 largest providers have captured about 50 percent of student enrollment. No UW System institution was listed in the top 100 institutions having the most students who took at least one online course.[79] Separate 2019 data from NC-SARA show that the top 10 institutions in terms of number of students enrolled in distance education programs account for 23.5 percent of

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[76] "Online Schools," Get Educated, accessed April 5, 2021, http://www.geteducated.com.

[77] "Accredited Online Colleges," U.S. News & World Report, accessed March 19, 2021, http://www.usnews.com; "The Best Online Colleges & Universities of 2021," The Best Schools, updated February 10, 2021, http://www.thebestschools.org; "Best Online Colleges and Top Online Universities of 2021," Best Colleges, accessed April 5, 2021, http://www.bestcolleges.com; "The Most Affordable Online Colleges in 2021," Affordable Colleges Online, accessed April 5, 2021, http://www.affordablecollegesonline.org; "Best Online Colleges and Universities," CollegeChoice, accessed April 5, 2021, http://www.collegechoice.net; "29 Best Online Universities in 2021 (Compare Colleges)," Best Value Schools, updated March 29, 2021, http://www.bestvalueschools.org; "The Best Online Colleges & Universities," Learn How to Become, updated July 1, 2020, http://www.learnhowtobecome.org; "10 Most Affordable Accredited Online Colleges," accessed April 5, 2021, http://www.edsmart.org.

[78] See "The Best Online Colleges & Universities of 2021," The Best Schools, updated February 10, 2021, http://www.thebestschools.org; "Online Education," University of Wisconsin–La Crosse, accessed March 19, 2021, https://www.uwlax.edu/online/; "Online Learning Consortium," Online Learning Consortium, accessed March 19, 2021, https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/.

[79] See Sean Gallagher and Jason Palmer, "The Pandemic Pushed Universities Online. The Change Was Long Overdue," *Harvard Business Review*, September 29, 2020, http://hbr.org. See also Doug Lederman, "The Biggest Movers Online," *Inside Higher Ed*, December 17, 2019, http://www.insidehighered.com.

all enrollments, marking a significant decline in concentration from 2018, highlighting the increasing competitiveness of the online education marketplace.[80]

University of Maryland Global Campus was the first public institution to rank among the top ten distance education providers in 2019. Of the other nine, five were for-profit private institutions and four were non-profit private institutions. The largest provider by enrollment—Western Governors University, with total enrollment of 120,000 students—had an enrollment more than three times higher than the tenth largest provider. Among public institutions, the online programs of University of Maryland, Arizona State, Purdue, and Penn State rank in the top ten in enrollment size. Although public institutions have not been the largest providers of online education, they enroll about 53 percent of all students enrolled in online education, with the other 47 percent split between private for-profit and private non-profit institutions.[81]

Competitive strategies. The online education marketplace is intensely competitive and primarily dominated by private institutions that pioneered digital delivery of degree programs. Consumers are more price-sensitive for an online degree than an on-campus degree, and significant technology investment is necessary to deliver an online program at a sufficiently low cost to be competitive. The UW System brand carries significant competitive advantages over many of the private for-profit and nonprofit institutions that lead the market because students prefer a degree from a known and respected institution. But other renowned public and private institutions have also entered the online education marketplace and made substantial investments therein. When competing against these institutions, the UW System brand offers less competitive advantage than it does against online-only institutions.

Prior to the pandemic, as many as two dozen public institutions had undertaken or were planning ambitious online degree programs[82] The business model among these institutions has varied, with some establishing a separate online institution to exclusively handle online programs and others integrating online programs within the existing institution. Most institutions partner with an online program manager, a third-party that provides an online learning platform, which is efficient but expensive. [83] Platforms such as Coursera and EdX, for example "[use] machine learning to automatically grade assignments and deliver adaptive content and assessments."[84] Another option is for an institution to build a platform internally, such as the University of

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[80] Straut and Boeke, "NC-Sara Data Report."
[81] Straut and Boeke, "NC-Sara Data Report."
[82] Doug Lederman and Mark Lieberman, "How Many Public Universities Can 'Go Big' Online?" *Inside Higher Ed*, March 20, 2019, http://www.insidehighered.com.
[83] Doug Lederman and Mark Lieberman, "How Many Public Universities Can 'Go Big' Online?" The online program management business is discussed further in Lindsay McKenzie, "Crowded OPM Market Begins to Consolidate," *Insider Higher Ed*, October 10, 2018, http://www.insidehighered.com. See also Lindsay McKenzie, "Grand Canyon's OPM Business Takes Shape," *Inside Higher Ed*, December 19, 2018, http://www.insidehighered.com.
[84] Gallagher and Palmer, "The Pandemic Pushed Universities Online. The Change Was Long Overdue"; Doug Lederman, "Faculty Confidence in Online Learning Grows," *Inside Higher Ed,* October 6, 2020, http://www.insidehighered.com.

Florida's UF Online.[85] However, experts views this as a precarious option. [86] Finally, some public universities have partnered with existing online universities rather than adopt third-party platforms or build their own. Most notably, Purdue University recently purchased Kaplan, a private and for-profit institution, to create Purdue University Global.[87]

All of these models require substantial investments in "infrastructure and wraparound supports," particularly in light of the fact that education has traditionally been one of the least digitized, most labor-driven sectors of the economy.[88] To support successful online programs, institutions facilitate faculty training and access to support services, i.e., staff who provide IT services and help implement online courses.[89] They must foot the costs of individual course development, which ranges from $10,000 to $60,000 for each individual course.[90] Moreover, some institutions have found it necessary to invest in advanced technologies, such as machine learning, to deliver adaptive content and assessments that scale to expanding enrollments and adapt to increasingly competitive price points. Georgia Tech, for example, has "pioneered the use of an AI-based teaching assistant in its online degree programs."[91]

These costs raise the possibility "that online instruction is *more* expensive for colleges to offer"—at least in the short term.[92] But technological capability is core to survival for online education providers.[93] Over the long term, expansion efforts may raise revenues from tuition without increasing infrastructure expenses related to in-person instruction. In online learning environments, enrollment within a given class may increase without adversely affecting student success or imposing additional instructional costs.[94] Granted, experts caution against losing sight of student success in the drive to lower costs for both students and institutions. "For online courses to be a cost-effective alternative," researchers Hans Johnson and Marisol Cuellar Mejia advise, "they not only need to be less expensive but must also yield comparable student

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[85] Doug Lederman and Mark Lieberman, "How Many Public Universities Can 'Go Big' Online?"
[86] Doug Lederman and Mark Lieberman, "How Many Public Universities Can 'Go Big' Online?"
[87] Paul Fain, "Fine Print and Tough Questions for the Purdue-Kaplan Deal," *Inside Higher Ed*, May 30, 2017, http://www.insidehighered.com.
[88] Doug Lederman and Mark Lieberman, "How Many Public Universities Can 'Go Big' Online?"
[89] K. Fox, G. Bryant, N. Lin, and N. Srinivasan, "Time for Class–COVID-19 Edition Part 1: A National Survey of Faculty during COVID-19," Tyton Partners and Every Learner Everywhere, July 7, 2020, http:///www.everylearnereverywhere.org/resources, 10.
[90] Di Xu and Ying Xu, "The Promises and Limits of Online Higher Education," 20. See also Russell Poulin and Terri Taylor Straut, *Distance Education Price and Cost Report*, WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies, February 2017.
[91] Gallagher and Palmer, "The Pandemic Pushed Universities Online. The Change Was Long Overdue."
[92] William Casement, "Will Online Learning Lower the Price of College?" *Journal of College Admission* (2013): 16.
[93] Gallagher and Palmer, "The Pandemic Pushed Universities Online. The Change Was Long Overdue."
[94] Di Xu and Ying Xu, "The Promises and Limits of Online Higher Education," American Enterprise Institute (March 2019), 20.

outcomes."[95] Institutions must ensure that online course offerings meet the same standard of quality—and facilitate equal or better retention and completion rates—as in-person courses.

With the sudden transition into digital learning in 2020, the year became "a critical turning point . . . when digital, online, career-focused learning became the fulcrum of competition between institutions." Experts predict that the inevitable push to expand online instruction will be accompanied by intense pricing pressure, opening a "Pandora's box" for institutions looking for online expansion to solve budget woes.[96]

Hybrid learning and other lessons from the pandemic. A Deloitte report on the effect of the pandemic predicts the demise of the traditional residential, face-to-face delivery model for higher education in favor of a hybrid model, i.e., one combining in-person and online academic experiences. In the authors' view, hybrid learning must be accompanied by support services, such as academic advising, career counseling, financial aid assistance, and health and well-being services. The challenge for each institution is making strategic decisions about which programs and services are best delivered in-person and which can easily or more effectively be delivered online.[97] Likewise, a McKinsey report confirms that "Remote and online learning are here to stay." The question for institutions will not be *whether* but *how* to facilitate online learning: "The need is to determine what combination of remote and in-person learning delivers the highest educational quality and equity."[98]

Long before the pandemic, the University of Central Florida (UCF) grappled with these questions and grew adept in the art of the hybrid campus. As early as the mid-1990s, campus administrators learned that many students enrolled in online classes were not "distant learners but rather local students who liked the convenience and flexibility of virtual learning." Since then, UCF has adopted a hybrid model "in which the class meets face-to-face only once a week, and the rest of the work is shifted online." Nine of 10 enrolled students currently participate in these kinds of classes, which may serve as a useful model for other institutions.[99]

During the pandemic, higher education administrators in Wisconsin learned first-hand how hybrid classes may create valuable flexibility for students. Dr. Morna Foy, President of the WTCS, said that the technical colleges would be moving toward a hybrid educational model, with a combination of in-person and online instruction. She explained that, during the pandemic, technical colleges have even been using virtual reality technology to provide what otherwise would have been "hands-on" lab experiences. Going forward, online delivery may allow students from different institutions to take the same class. Within the UW System especially, this type of

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[95] Hans Johnson and Marisol Cuellar Mejia, "Online Learning and Student Outcomes in California's Community Colleges," Public Policy Institute of California, 2014, http://ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_514HJR.pdf, 3.

[96] Gallagher and Palmer, "The Pandemic Pushed Universities Online. The Change Was Long Overdue."

[97] Selingo et al, "The Hybrid Campus: Three Major Shifts for the Post-COVID University."

[98] André Dua, Jonathan Law, Ted Rounsaville, and Nadia Viswanath, "Reimagining Higher Education in the United States," McKinsey & Company, October 26, 2020, http://www.mckinsey.com.

[99] Selingo et al, "The Hybrid Campus: Three Major Shifts for the Post-COVID University."

institutional collaboration may allow classes or programs with low enrollment to continue to be offered.

Conclusions. The UW System has made significant inroads into the online learning market. To succeed in the competitive marketplace, the UW System must avail itself of all available technological innovation while complying with requirements to maintain accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission. UW System institutions must walk the fine line between expanding online enrollment without losing on-campus enrollment. If a significant number of students who would otherwise be on-campus elect to pursue an exclusively online degree, the loss of auxiliary services revenue—housing, food service, student union, campus events, etc.—may have a net negative effect on the finances of the institution, particularly if marketplace competition also creates intense price pressure for online programs.

At the same time, expanding online enrollment requires an expansion of some student services that are unique to online students. Online students need a level of tech support that on-campus students do not. They may need unique features for library access, such as increased digitization of materials, as well as innovative approaches to lab requirements. Growing online enrollment also means greater investment in Canvas or other online program management platforms, along with training in the use of these tools. Devising a scalable approach to online program delivery, while maintaining competitive pricing, will be critical to the UW System's success.

The committee recommends that the Board of Regents expand student opportunities for online coursework and online degree programs throughout the UW System. To this end, the Board of Regents should facilitate hybrid learning options for students at each institution and develop methods of integrating online delivery into existing degree programs, particularly the top programs by enrollment and career earnings data.

As stated earlier, the committee sets forth a challenge to reach this goal by the end of the decade. This will require innovation, major investment, and a system-wide approach by the UW System in order to become competitive in this space.

Photo: University of Wisconsin–Superior.

Student Recruitment and Retention

The committee recommends that the UW System adopt additional measures targeting student recruitment and retention.

Recruitment. At the committee hearings, Drs. Nathan Grawe, Ben Passmore, and Rolf Wegenke testified to the importance of reaching out to adult learners, underrepresented populations, and nontraditional students. [100] Adult learners are generally considered to be persons age 25 or older who have not attended college or who have some college but no degree. Online programs are particularly important in attracting adult learners and other nontraditional students. Dr. Grawe stated that efforts to increase enrollment may include expanding into adult learner markets, including retraining programs and targeting lifelong learning. Dr. Passmore testified that even though Wisconsin high school graduation rates are forecast to be fairly stable, the new freshman participation rates of high school graduates in higher education are projected to fall. Therefore, there is a need to figure out better ways to attract new high school graduates to the UW System and to bring working adults back into the System.

The committee recommends that the UW System's recruitment and outreach programs include more plain-language guidance on student financial aid. In *Reimagining Higher Education in the United States*, the authors note that the complicated pricing system of higher education is a psychological deterrent for many potential first-generation students. "Institutions manage a complicated pricing system in which higher-income and international students effectively subsidize needier ones. This lack of price transparency feeds into the perception of the increasing costs—and unaffordability—of college. In fact, from 2007–17, net costs rose only 4 percent, reversing the trend of previous decades. Yet the perception of unaffordability means that some young people might be discouraged from trying to attend: they see the high sticker prices and assume that they are priced out." [101] In recruitment efforts, educating potential students on the financial aid system may facilitate recruitment success.

The Deloitte report, *The Hybrid Campus: Three Major Shifts for the Post-COVID University*, recommends that institutions adopt next-generation student information systems that manage students as lifetime learners, [102] and Dr. Grawe testified to a similar approach. Adult learners

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[100] See André Dua, Jonathan Law, Ted Rounsaville, and Nadia Viswanath, "Reimagining Higher Education in the United States," *McKinsey & Company* (Oct. 26, 2020), https://www.mckinsey.com; and Robert Maxim and Mark Muro, *Restoring Regional Public Universities for Recovery in the Great Lakes* (Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings: June 2020), https://www.brookings.edu. Both sources emphasize the need for better recruitment of underrepresented and nontraditional students.

[101] See André Dua, Jonathan Law, Ted Rounsaville, and Nadia Viswanath, "Reimagining Higher Education in the United States," *McKinsey & Company* (Oct. 26, 2020), https://www.mckinsey.com.

[102] See Jeffrey Selingo, Cole Clark, Dave Noone, and Amy Wittmayer, *The Hybrid Campus: Three Major Shifts for the Post-COVID University* (Deloitte Center for Higher Education Excellence, 2021), https://www2.deloitte.com.

have generally been considered to be individuals in their prime working years (approximately ages 25 to 45) who do not have a degree.

There is a population of well-educated individuals seeking a "twilight" career for whom additional education is beneficial. For example, a successful business executive may retire and return to school to learn how to run a charitable foundation or nonprofit, or a physician may retire to pursue a passion for American history.

Stanford University's Distinguished Careers Institute and organizations like Modern Elder Academy recognize the educational needs of an aging population. Deni Ellis Béchard, author of "Some Assembly Required: Here's How People Looking for a Fresh Start are Cultivating Potent New Versions of Themselves," writes that "more than half of American baby boomers plan to work past the age of 65 or not retire at all, and the number of workers in the 65 and older demographic is expected to increase at a faster rate than any other age group. In 2025, we will likely have three times as many 65-year-olds working in this country than we did 30 years earlier, and the number of workers age 75 and older is expected to increase by an unprecedented 6.4 percent annually through 2024."[103] The Stanford Distinguished Careers Institute (DCI) "seeks to improve the life journey of accomplished individuals in midlife by helping them renew their purpose . . . [and] also seeks to foster intergenerational engagement in an academic setting to help create a new paradigm for the university of the future."[104]

The committee recommends that UW institutions expand their concept of an adult learner and recommends that the UW System's recruitment plans consider that some students may be lifelong learners who will be interested in returning to an educational program as part of a twilight career or post-retirement passion.

Retention. Institutions of the UW System retain new freshmen entering full-time at a rate (77.2 percent) lower than the national average (81.2 percent).[105]

Dr. Grawe stated that some institutions have increased student retention rates by emphasizing relevance, i.e., making connections between education and the "real world" such as through career internships. The committee recommends that UW institutions implement "credegree" programs. These are programs that allow a student to obtain a career-related credential or certificate on the path to a bachelor's degree, which helps the student become better qualified to obtain career-related summer internships or other employment during college.[106] Dr. Grawe

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[103] See Deni Ellis Béchard, "Some Assembly Required: Here's How People Looking for a Fresh Start are Cultivating Potent New Versions of Themselves," *Stanford Magazine* (July 2020), https://stanfordmag.org.

[104] See Stanford | Distinguished Careers Institute, https://dci.stanford.edu.

[105] Transmittal letter to Governor Tony Evers, Senate Chief Clerk Jeff Renk, and Assembly Chief Clerk Patrick Fuller from UW System President Tommy Thompson and UW–Madison Chancellor Rebecca Blank, Oct. 22, 2020, https://www.wisconsin.edu.

[106] See Jeffrey Selingo, Cole Clark, Dave Noone, and Amy Wittmayer, *The Hybrid Campus: Three Major Shifts for the Post-COVID University* (Deloitte Center for Higher Education Excellence, 2021), https://www2.deloitte.com.

referred to a Minnesota college that changed the sequence of courses to provide up-front skills or credentialing courses earlier so the student is more qualified for employment right away, while continuing with the rest of the degree course. Denison University refers to its "credegree" program as a Launch Lab because it helps the student launch a career.[107]

In testimony, Dr. Ike Brannon suggested that UW students need more faculty advising—they need additional and higher quality information. He believes that most advising is done by staff in their twenties on campus and that the quality of this advising is inferior to that offered by faculty. The committee recommends increased participation by UW faculty in student advising at any UW institution where advising is presently delivered primarily by staff.

Photo: Mid-State Technical College.

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[107] See Bianca Quilantan, "How the Pandemic Forever Changed Higher Education," *Politico* (Jan. 25, 2021), https://www.politico.com.

Protecting Academic Freedom

The committee recommends that certain forms of civil immunity for public university administrators be modified in order to incentivize UW System schools to more rigorously enforce existing policy relating to free expression.

In 2017 and subsequent years, the UW System Board of Regents amended its policy relating to free expression, adopting various provisions of 2017 Assembly Bill 299.[108] As amended and passed by the assembly, this bill required the UW System Board of Regents to adopt a policy on free expression that included various statements affirming the role of UW System institutions with respect to speech protected under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and these institutions' authority to sanction individuals who interfere First Amendment rights. In addition, the bill required various disciplinary sanctions for anyone under an institution's jurisdiction who engages in violent or other disorderly conduct that materially and substantially disrupts the free expression of others. It also established required procedures for disciplinary cases involving such conduct. Among other things, the bill required each UW System school to notify freshmen and transfer students of free expression policies and rules as part of their orientation programs and to train new employees on free expression policies and rules upon hiring.[109]

Although Assembly Bill 299 was not enacted, the Board of Regents adopted resolutions that reproduced key components of the bill. Resolution 10906, adopted in July 2017, affirmed the UW System's commitment to freedom of expression. Resolution 10952, adopted in October 2017, created Regent Policy Document 4-21 to codify this commitment and announce the board's plan to pursue related administrative rules.

Regent Policy Document 4-21 is "substantively very similar" to Assembly Bill 299, as Dan Schmidt of the Wisconsin Legislative Council noted during the committee hearing on February 24, 2021. For example, section 5 of the policy requires the UW System to report on efforts to uphold the policy. Section 7 requires UW schools to notify new students of the free expression policy as a part of freshman and transfer student orientation. Finally, Section 2 affirms the authority of UW schools "to address disruptive behavior by students, employees, and visitors" and describes procedures for investigating and hearing formal complaints relating to such behavior. The Board of Regents has proposed changes to Wis. Admin. Code chs. UWS 17–18 that would formalize Section 2 by requiring one semester suspension for any student twice found responsible for misconduct and expulsion for any student three times found responsible for misconduct, but these rules have not gone into effect.[110]

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[108] For a discussion of this bill and subsequent policy changes implemented by the Board of Regents, see Mark Kunkel, "Campus Free Speech: The First Amendment and the Case of 2017 Assembly Bill 299," *Reading the Constitution* 3, no. 2 (Madison, WI: Legislative Reference Bureau, Nov. 2018), http://www.docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.

[109] Engrossed 2017 Wis. AB 299, http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov.

[110] Scope Statement SS 071-18, https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/.

On February 24, 2021, the committee heard testimony that existing UW System policy is robust on paper but ineffective in practice. Katie Ignatowski, chief compliance officer for the UW System, described current policy as being based on the Chicago Statement, a "gold standard for university free speech."[111] Undergirding this policy, said Dr. Michael Bernard-Donals (UW–Madison), president of UW–Madison PROFS, is "a strong culture of free speech at the state's public universities."[112] However, other individuals depicted inadequate enforcement of UW System policy and related policies elsewhere. For example, Dr. John McAdams (Marquette University) suggested that institutions of higher education only "nominally" implement their free expression policies. Although Dr. Bernard-Donals described current UW System policy as "overboard," he cited misguided disciplinary actions as evidence of institutions failing to follow their own policies rather than lacking proper policies.

To this point, the committee also heard testimony regarding underutilization of disciplinary procedures outlined under current policy. While Ignatowski cited the small number of student disciplinary actions as evidence of the policy's success, other speakers cited the same number as evidence of its disuse. Dr. McAdams characterized students as being deterred by the "hassle" of making a complaint and participating in subsequent processes. For their part, individuals who were the subject of complaints relating to free expression—Dr. James "Duke" Pesta (UW–Oshkosh) and former student Polly Olsen (Northeast Wisconsin Technical College)—described unduly long and arduous investigatory processes.

Moreover, individuals testifying before the committee suggested that training requirements under current policy are not meaningfully enforced. Both Olsen and Dr. Pesta indicated their support for implementation of more robust trainings to provide students and employees with a better basis of understanding of protected and unprotected forms of speech under the First Amendment. Such trainings could deter individuals from making unfounded complaints and empower others to make founded complaints.

In sum, testimony before the committee reinforced the need to incentivize current policy rather than mandating new policy by law. Dr. Pesta advocated for "enforcing what regents policy already says" instead of reinventing the policy. Other speakers, like Dr. Bernard-Donals, suggested that legislative attempts to create new policy relating to free expression could be the target of court challenges for "stifling speech allowable by the First Amendment."[113] Although other states have enacted laws similar to Assembly Bill 299,[114] Dan Schmidt and Emily Hicks of

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[111] The Chicago Statement is shorthand for a report by the Committee on Freedom of Expression at the University of Chicago in 2014. See *Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression*, University of Chicago Provost's Office, http://www.provost.uchicago.edu.

[112] PROFS stands for Public Representation Organization of the Faculty Senate, Inc.

[113] For a discussion of federal court rulings relating to overbreadth and vagueness of free speech policies, see Kunkel, "Campus Free Speech," 10–11.

[114] For a general discussion of state laws in Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana, and North Carolina relating to free expression on campus, see Kunkel, "Campus Free Speech," 10–11. See also 1992 Cal. SB 1115 and 2005 Cal. AB 2581, 2015 Mo. SB 93, 2017 Colo. SB 17-062, 2017 Ky. SB 17, 2017 Tenn. SB 723, 2017 Utah HB 54, 2017 Va.

Wisconsin Legislative Council noted that those laws are too recent to form an idea of guiding case law.

Accordingly, the committee recommends modifying various forms of civil immunity for public university administrators as a means to prompt more vigorous enforcement of existing policies relating to free expression. Under current law, public university administrators may not be sued for certain actions taken in their official capacities. Crafting statutory exceptions to such immunities—for example, in cases relating to free speech rights under the state constitution— could create an incentive structure for UW System administrators to more rigorously enforce provisions of current UW System policy relating to free expression.

The committee endorses the recommendation to offer more training and enforcement of the Board of Regents policy at UW institutions. A more robust commitment to the policy will indicate the importance of this issue at our public institutions. When speech is suppressed, it hurts everyone within an institution and the institution itself. A truly successful university requires intellectual diversity and the open debate of differences.

There are myriad examples of stifled free speech on campuses across the country. The University of Wisconsin and Wisconsin's technical schools are not immune from these issues. Transparency around speech policies, both for faculty and students, is absolutely vital in protecting everyone's free speech rights.

The committee further recommends an independent commission of experts to study the impediments to free expression in the UW System. The importance of an independent commission would provide an outside perspective on the current culture within the UW System and highlight deficiencies in full view for review by the Board of Regents, students, faculty, the legislature, and the public.

Qualified commissioners would have a background in academia, public service, or the private sector with an understanding of how universities work internally. They should also have experience with different roles within the university community or the governing structure of the university.

The commission would be responsible for collecting and examining data about incidents of harassment, ostracism, deplatforming, career blight, self-censorship, and indoctrination. The commission would review prevalent attitudes about free speech on campuses, speech policies, and censorship of nonconforming speech. The commission could then develop recommendations for improvements to be made by the Board of Regents or the legislature.

HB 1401, 2018 Fla. SB 4, 2018 Iowa SF 274, 2019 Ala. HB 498, 2019 Ark. SB 156, 2019 Iowa SF 274, 2019 Ky. HB 254, 2019 Okla. SB 361, 2019 S.D. HB 1087, 2019 Tex. SB 18, and 2020 Ohio SB 40.

Expand Dual Enrollment Opportunities

The committee recommends that students in all of Wisconsin's public and private high schools be afforded the opportunity to earn college credit in at least one semester of high school by participating in a dual enrollment class.

At the committee's hearing on March 10, 2021, Dan Schmidt of the Legislative Council summarized the state's various dual enrollment options, as described below.[115]

Early College Credit Program: The Early College Credit Program (ECCP) is a program created by statute in which a high school student takes a class taught at a University of Wisconsin institution, a private nonprofit college, or a tribal college. The program is available to any student in grades 9 to 12 at a public or private high school, but there are a number of program limitations. Through the application process, the student must identify each course the student wishes to take and state whether the course is being taken for college credit, high school credit, or both. A student can take the course only if there is space available in the course and if the student meets the course prerequisites. If the student intends to take the course for high school credit or for simultaneous high school and college credits, the student's school board or private school governing body must then determine whether high school credit can be awarded for the course, and the school board or governing body may deny the award of credit if the course is comparable to one offered by the school district or private school. If the student takes the course for high school credit or high school and college credits and there is no comparable high school course available to the student, the student pays nothing for the course and the school district or governing body pays the student's tuition, although 25 percent of this cost is reimbursed by the Department of Workforce Development (through the Department of Public Instruction). If there is a comparable course, the student pays 100 percent of the tuition. In all circumstances, the tuition amount charged is discounted compared to tuition charged to postsecondary students at the institution.

Start College Now: Start College Now (SCN) is a program created by statute in which a high school student takes a class taught at a technical college. The program is available to most public high school students in grades 11 and 12, but there are a number of program limitations. A student must apply to the technical college to take the course, and the student can take the course only if there is space available in the course and the student meets the course prerequisites. The student's school board must determine whether the course meets high school graduation requirements and, if the student is taking the course for high school credit, whether the course is comparable to a course offered by the school district. If the student takes the course for high school credit and there is no comparable high school course available to the student, the student pays nothing for the course and the school district pays the student's tuition. If there is a

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[115] See also Emily Hicks and Dan Schmidt, "Dual Enrollment."

comparable course or if the student takes the course for college credit, the student pays 100 percent of the tuition.

Concurrent enrollment: Concurrent enrollment occurs when a high school student takes classes taught in the student's high school but the class is eligible for both high school and college credits—sometimes referred to as transcripted credit. Concurrent enrollment programs are not created by statute but by contract between the high school (school district) where the class is taught and the postsecondary institution with which the high school has partnered for course content and the awarding of college credit. The course instructor is typically a high school teacher approved and supervised by the postsecondary institution and must be qualified to teach at the postsecondary level according to standards established by the Higher Learning Commission. However, some concurrent enrollment programs are taught by college faculty in the high school classroom. Although the high school student receives college credit for the course, unlike with ECCP and SCN, the high school student never becomes an enrolled student of the postsecondary institution. There is no state funding mechanism for concurrent enrollment programs. Cost sharing between the school district, student, and postsecondary institution depends on the particular arrangement and contract terms.

In addition to ECCP and SCN, the UW System and WTCS also sponsor concurrent enrollment programs taught in high school classrooms. The UW System's program is called College Courses in High Schools (CCIHS) and the WTCS program is called Transcripted Credits. The UW System and WTCS also offer other forms of dual enrollment, like the UW System's "high school specials" program and various WTCS dual enrollment options, including a program that places technical college instructors in high school classrooms. In addition, some private nonprofit colleges offer concurrent enrollment programs.

At the committee's hearing on March 10, 2021, Sara Baird and Karin Smith of DPI testified that, in the last two years, the participation rate statewide for high school students in dual enrollment was about 18–19 percent. In other words, only about 18–19 percent of students in grades 9 to 12 took a dual enrollment class during the school year. For those who did participate, most dual enrollment courses were taught in high schools and taken for technical college credit.

The *Legislative Interim Research Report*, "Dual Enrollment," prepared by the Legislative Council,[116] and a 2019 budget paper titled *Dual Enrollment*, prepared by the Legislative Fiscal Bureau,[117] contain helpful data related to student participation in dual enrollment programs. The majority of student participation in dual enrollment takes the form of concurrent enrollment – high school students earning college credits by taking classes taught in the high school. In the 2018–19 school year, of the 19.4 percent of students who participated in some type of dual enrollment course, only 1.3 percent participated in ECCP.[118] Of the dual enrollment courses

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[116] Emily Hicks and Dan Schmidt, "Dual Enrollment."
[117] Legislative Fiscal Bureau, *Dual Enrollment*, Paper #593 (May 2019), https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.
[118] Emily Hicks and Dan Schmidt, "Dual Enrollment," 32.

taken for UW credit, only about 12–16 percent were ECCP courses on a UW campus, while about 77 percent were CCIHS courses taught in a high school (with the remainder attributable to another program).[119] Of the dual enrollment courses taken for technical college credit, only about 6.5 percent were SCN courses at a technical college, while about 84.7 percent were transcripted credit courses taught in a high school (with the remainder attributable to other programs).[120]

Looking at data provided to DPI by public school districts only, the aggregate numbers differ slightly but the picture is the same. In the 2018–19 school year, approximately 17.5 percent of public school district students participated in a dual enrollment course taught at the high school. In contrast, about 3.85 percent of public school district students participated in a dual enrollment course taught at a postsecondary institution (about 2.55 percent at a technical college, 1.15 percent at a UW institution, and about 0.15 percent at a private college).[121]

The UW System reported serving nearly 9,700 students in 2018–19 who were still in high school, through UW course offerings and through college credit programming at participating high schools. In 2018–19, high school students attempted over 48,000 UW credits through these courses.[122]

Examining the school districts rather than the students, DPI data for the 2018–19 school year shows that 18.3 percent of school districts had no dual enrollment participation. In 43.2 percent of school districts, less than 10 percent of students in grades 9 to 12 participated in a dual enrollment course.[123]

In the DPI testimony, Sara Baird and Karin Smith addressed some of the barriers to achieving higher participation in dual enrollment by high school students. Proximity and access are important factors in assessing whether an ECCP or SCN course—taught at the postsecondary institution's campus—will work for a high school student. With regard to concurrent enrollment courses taught at the high school, some school districts view the costs as unjustified and, according to DPI, need help understanding the value of concurrent enrollment programs to the students.

At the March 10, 2021, committee hearing, the committee also heard testimony from Dr. Mary B. Pfeiffer regarding the Neenah Joint School District's successes with dual enrollment. The Neenah Joint School District has been developing its dual enrollment program for more than two decades, offers 59 dual enrollment courses, and partners with UW–Oshkosh, St. Norbert's College, and Fox Valley Tech College. Dr. Pfeiffer believes that providing high school students with a postsecondary educational experience is one of the most important ways to prepare these

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[119] Legislative Fiscal Bureau, *Dual Enrollment*, 5.
[120] Legislative Fiscal Bureau, *Dual Enrollment*, 6.
[121] Emily Hicks and Dan Schmidt, "Dual Enrollment," appendix 1 to DPI letter.
[122] UW System Accountability Dashboard, select "Legislated Accountability Report, https://www.wisconsin.edu/accountability/download/legislated/2020-Supplement-Act-32.pdf#Page=2
[123] Emily Hicks and Dan Schmidt, "Dual Enrollment," appendix 3 to DPI letter.

students to be college and career ready. Beginning with the class of 2023, each Neenah High School student must enroll in and complete at least one postsecondary credit-yielding course in order to graduate. Since rolling out this initiative in the 2018–19 school year, Neenah High School's participation rates for dual enrollment courses have steadily risen, culminating in the following participation rates during the 2019–20 school year: 49 percent of 9th graders; 61 percent of 10th graders; 69 percent of 11th graders; and 81 percent of 12th graders.

The committee recommends that other school districts build on the success of the Neenah Joint School District. Dr. Pfeiffer testified to the incredible value dual enrollment courses provide to students in preparing them for the future. Yet, some school districts offer no dual enrollment courses at all. The committee believes that students, whether in a public or private school and regardless of district, should have the opportunity to enroll in at least one semester-long dual enrollment course while in high school.

Although students theoretically have the opportunity to participate in dual enrollment, regardless of district, through ECCP or SCN, limitations on these programs often make them unfeasible. Even if the student lives near a UW, technical college, or private college campus and can harmonize high school and college schedules, the limitations on the programs mean that many students will not end up completing a postsecondary, credit-yielding class. For example, the desired class may not have space available, as many college courses are full and the institution's existing students usually have priority in course registration. The twin requirements that the student meet class prerequisites and also not take a class that is comparable to one offered in the student's school district can mean that no class is available to the student. A student who wishes to participate in ECCP or SCN faces significant uncertainty as to whether he or she will actually be able to take the course—and, if so, at what cost.

Because of these limitations on participation in ECCP or SCN, and because concurrent enrollment programs are so convenient, concurrent enrollment programs represent the vast majority of dual enrollment offerings. To realistically expand dual enrollment, school districts will need to increase the availability of dual enrollment classes taught in the high school. This will be more of a challenge for some school districts than others.

The partnership of postsecondary institutions and high schools offering dual enrollment is subject to qualifications established by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), one of six regional institutional accreditors in the United States.

The United States Department of Education (USDE), pursuant to and guided by federal law and rules, has been tasked by Congress with formally recognizing higher education accrediting associations, such as HLC. Higher education accrediting associations are private groups which accredit institutions of higher education, effectively marking accredited institutions as legitimate and high quality.

Recognition of an accrediting association by USDE means that institutions or programs accredited by that association are eligible for certain federal funds related to higher education. Other than recognizing accrediting associations, USDE has little control over accrediting associations' policies and standards. Relevantly, current federal law permits (but does not require) accrediting associations to develop separate faculty requirements for traditional instructors and dual credit instructors.

Despite the fact that it could hold dual credit instructors to a different standard than traditional higher education faculty, HLC will require that all instructors of postsecondary credit-earning courses have the same credentials. Beginning in September 2023, a concurrent enrollment teacher must have either (1) a master's degree or higher in the applicable area of instruction; or (2) a master's degree or higher in a different area of instruction and must also have completed 18 graduate credits in the applicable area of instruction.[124]

This means a postsecondary institution, if it wishes to remain accredited by HLC, cannot partner with a high school to offer a concurrent enrollment class for postsecondary credit unless the course teacher meets applicable qualifications established by the Higher Learning Commission.

As a result, some school districts may have an insufficient number of teachers who are qualified to teach dual enrollment classes. School districts that lack a sufficient number of teachers with the credentials necessary to teach concurrent enrollment courses may need to collaborate with other districts to share faculty or courses.

As noted in the Legislative Council research report on dual enrollment, "many teachers have master's degrees in education, but few have advanced degrees in subjects outside of general education." It further stated that the Dual Enrollment Credential Grant program was created to provide funding to teachers to attain the required credentials, however, the program has not been fully utilized.

The HLC's interpretation, combined with a number of extensions it has already granted thereby delaying enforcement of this policy, raises questions for the committee. The committee does not believe this barrier, whether it exists or not, should stand in the way of its recommendation to expand dual enrollment options. The committee intends to further review the stance of the Higher Learning Commission and find ways to advance dual enrollment for all high school students in Wisconsin.

School districts might also consider providing dual enrollment courses online, which could allow a qualified teacher to reach a broader audience of students. In her testimony before the committee on March 10, 2021, Rebecca Larson of the Wisconsin Association of Independent

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[124] Emily Hicks and Dan Schmidt, "Dual Enrollment," 15, 28. The Higher Educational Aids Board administers a grant program that assists teachers in attaining the credentials necessary to teach dual enrollment courses. See Wis. Stat. § 39.51.

Colleges and Universities advised that Marquette University provides an online computer science class to students in Milwaukee Public Schools. School districts might also see fit to bring technical college faculty into the high school to teach the dual enrollment course.[125] In her testimony on March 10, 2021, Dr. Morna Foy of the WTCS described the technical colleges' authority to contract under Wis. Stat. § 38.14 to provide dual enrollment classes in high schools delivered by technical college instructors.

In summary, due to the low participation rate of schools and students in dual enrollment programs, the committee recommends a requirement that all Wisconsin high school students have the opportunity to earn college credit of at least one semester (18 credits) before graduating from high school. As a practical matter, public and private high schools will need to follow the example of the Neenah Joint School District and develop a spectrum of concurrent enrollment options taught at the school suitable for a variety of educational or career interests, learning abilities, and educational backgrounds. The Department of Public Instruction should take the lead in helping high schools meet this goal.

The expansion of dual enrollment will require collaborative effort among DPI, UW System, WTCS, WAICU, and other stakeholders.

Photo: Chippewa Valley Technical College.

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[125] A faculty member of a postsecondary institution may teach in a high school without obtaining a license from DPI. See Wis. Stat. § 118.19 (1c).

Budget Considerations

Federal Stimulus

According to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, funding in higher education in Wisconsin under the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Security Act, also known as the CARES Act; the Consolidated Appropriations Act, also known as CAA; and the American Rescue Plan Act, also known as ARPA is as follows:

Higher Education Emergency Relief, in millions:

CARES Act	$176.7
CAA	$318.0
ARPA	$560.2

The ARPA of 2021 allocates these funds using the same formula as the CAA, as follows: (a) 37.5 percent based on FTE enrollment of Federal Pell Grant recipients; (b) 37.5 percent based on headcount enrollment of Pell Grant recipients; (c) 11.5 percent based on FTE enrollment of non-Pell Grant recipients; (d) 11.5 percent based on headcount enrollment of non-Pell Grant recipients; (e) 1 percent based on the relative share of FTE enrollment of students who were Federal Pell Grant recipients and who were exclusively enrolled in distance education courses prior to the qualifying emergency; and (f) 1 percent based on the relative share of the total number of students who were Federal Pell Grant recipients and who were exclusively enrolled in distance education courses prior to the qualifying emergency.

The American Council on Education has prepared estimates of the amounts each of the sectors in higher education could receive, including: (a) UW System institutions—approximately $275 million; (b) Wisconsin Technical Colleges—approximately $170 million; and (c) private nonprofit colleges—approximately $115 million.

Similar to the CAA, higher education institutions may use funds received under the ARPA to defray expenses associated with coronavirus, including lost revenue, reimbursement for expenses already incurred, technology costs associated with a transition to distance education, faculty and staff trainings and payroll, or to provide financial aid grants to students, including students exclusively enrolled in distance education, which may be used for any component of the student's cost of attendance or for emergency costs that arise due to coronavirus, such as tuition, food, housing, health care (including mental health care), or child care. However, with the exception of the 2 percent of funds allocated on the basis of relative shares of FTE and headcount of students exclusively enrolled in distance learning, the ARPA requires institutions of higher education to use at least 50 percent of allocated funds to provide emergency financial aid grants to students. In making financial aid grants to students, an institution of higher

education is required to prioritize grants to students with exceptional need such as students who receive Federal Pell Grants. As under the CAA, higher education institutions may not use the funds for recruitment activities, athletics facilities, endowments, religious instruction, or senior administrator salaries, bonuses, or stock options.

Officials from both the UW System and the WTCS indicated challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to President Thompson, the UW System experienced a net loss of about $170 million due to the pandemic and has attempted to address this loss with employee furloughs, restricted travel, leaving vacancies unfilled, and implementing some layoffs.

The committee notes that it is vital to view all higher education funding and policy considerations through this lens.

Tuition

The committee recommends a thawing of the University of Wisconsin System tuition freeze that was established in 2013 and has been continued since.

The 2013 Biennial Budget Act (2013 Act 20) established the current tuition freeze. Act 20 prohibited the Board of Regents from charging resident undergraduate students at UW institutions more in tuition during the 2013–14 and 2014–15 academic years than it charged these students in the 2012–13 academic year.[126] This provision originated during the budget process as part of the Joint Committee on Finance deliberations.[127]

The policy underlying the provision was detailed in the Legislative Fiscal Bureau's Joint Committee on Finance Paper #675,[128] and the provision reflects alternative B.1. of that paper. As detailed in the paper, in the prior 10-year period (fiscal years 2002–03 to 2011–12), the UW System's program revenue (PR) balance from student tuition increased more than 600 percent from $70 million to $459 million. In other words, the amount of tuition that the UW System collected from students but set aside as reserves instead of spending on academic programs increased by nearly $400 million. In general, maintaining operating balances is a common practice, as these funds can be drawn on later in the event of revenue shortfalls or other budget emergencies. The UW System has the opportunity to establish reserves, i.e., carry forward balances, only in its program revenue (PR) appropriations and not in its general purpose revenue (GPR) appropriations. The UW System can maintain operational balances in its PR appropriations as a means of managing risk, such as projected decreases in future tuition revenue resulting from declining enrollment. In 2013, the UW System justified, in part, its buildup of PR balances derived from tuition as a reserve against expected future declines in GPR funding from

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[126] 2013 Wis. Act 20, section 9148 (4n) (a) 1.
[127] Legislative Fiscal Bureau, *Comparative Summary of Provisions, 2013 Act 20* (Aug. 2013), https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.
[128] Legislative Fiscal Bureau, *Joint Committee on Finance Paper #675*, (May 23, 2013), https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.

the legislature. However, while GPR support did in fact decline during this period, instead of drawing on the tuition reserves to compensate, the UW System actually increased its tuition reserves. As the Legislative Fiscal Bureau stated, "In crafting a policy regarding operating balances, policymakers should balance the UW System's ongoing need to manage its finances with the public policy goal of keeping higher education affordable for state residents by controlling tuition increases."[129]

During the period of accumulating reserve balances of tuition revenues, the UW System significantly increased tuition rates. In other words, the UW System raised tuition for existing students not to support instruction and academic programs for those students but to build a reserve for future years. As stated by the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, "The Board of Regents increased base resident undergraduate tuition by 5.5% in each year from 2007–08 to 2012–13. Given that the tuition appropriation balance increased in each of those years, one could argue that the tuition increases approved by the Board of Regents were higher than were necessary to fund the UW System's ongoing operations."[130]

These substantial annual tuition increases made college less affordable for Wisconsin families. As stated by the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, "Data on student indebtedness shows that the percentage of students who graduate with student loan debt and the amount of that debt has increased in recent years indicating that many resident students and their families have not been able to afford these tuition increases. Based on data from the UW System, 67% of resident undergraduates who completed a bachelor's degree in 2006–07 graduated with some student loan debt; student loan debt averaged $21,104 for those students. By 2011–12, the percentage of resident undergraduates who graduated with debt had increased to 72% and the average amount of debt those students had increased to $28,002. Base resident undergraduate tuition and average student debt have increased by approximately the same amount over that time period. From 2006–07 to 2011–12, base resident tuition increased by a total of 30.7% while average student debt increased by 32.7%."[131]

In response to these factors, the Joint Committee on Finance included the tuition freeze in the 2013 Act 20. As stated in Joint Committee on Finance Paper #675, the justification for the freeze was that the Board of Regents should draw down the large balance it had accumulated in tuition revenues before undertaking any further tuition increases. Paper #675 expressly recognized that the UW System would face additional costs for the 2013–15 fiscal biennium, but instead of raising tuition to meet these increased costs, the System could draw down the balance accumulated in tuition it had already collected. As the Legislative Fiscal Bureau stated, "In the case of a tuition freeze, the Board of Regents could draw down the tuition appropriation balance

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[129] Legislative Fiscal Bureau, *Joint Committee on Finance Paper #675*, (May 23, 2013), 1 https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.
[130] Ibid., 3.
[131] Ibid., 3–4.

to fund costs included in the biennial budget that generally would have been funded in part with revenues generated by tuition increases."[132]

As we begin the process for the 2021–23 biennial budget, the committee recognizes that the tuition freeze has been continued since 2013, the UW System has had eight years to draw down its tuition reserves to a more appropriate balance, the System has in fact drawn down these reserves, and there are now monitoring mechanisms in place to track UW System reserves.[133] And if tuition reserves are a "rainy day fund" to hedge against unforeseen budget challenges, the rain arrived with the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his testimony before the committee on March 31, 2021, Dave Loppnow of the Legislative Fiscal Bureau testified that the pandemic has caused an across-the-board decline in UW System revenues from all sources. The Board of Regents calculated that, from March to December 2020, the net financial impact to the UW System was estimated to be a loss of $318 million (excluding any offsetting federal relief payments). According to Mr. Loppnow's testimony, if the tuition freeze is continued in the 2021–23 fiscal biennium, the UW System will forego about $20 million per year in revenue that could otherwise be available. The freeze causes zero growth in the revenue pool of resident undergraduate tuition, a pool estimated to be about $840 million. Without the freeze, tuition revenue would be expected to grow at a rate of about 2 percent per year, which would generate about $20 million per year in additional revenue.[134] Because resident undergraduate tuition represents about 33 to 36 percent of the total pool of UW System GPR and PR funding, providing for no growth in this component of base operating revenue is significant given that operating expenses are not similarly frozen.[135]

In his testimony before the committee on March 31, 2021, UW System President Tommy Thompson described the pandemic's financial impact. The combined total of increased costs and lost revenue to the UW System attributable to COVID-19 is estimated to be about $640 million. Although the UW System received $290 million in federal aid and other financial help for COVID testing, the UW System estimates its net loss through the 2021 spring semester to be almost $170 million.

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[132] Ibid., 9.
[133] See Erin Probst, "University of Wisconsin System Overview," *Informational Paper* #34. In his testimony before the committee on March 31, 2021, Dr. Seshadri (whose testimony is described more fully below) testified that the UW System has significantly drawn down its reserves since "reservegate" in 2013.
[134] See also Legislative Fiscal Bureau, *Summary of Governor's Budget Recommendations—University of Wisconsin System* (March 2021), 603–14, https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.
[135] See Legislative Fiscal Bureau, *Joint Committee on Finance Paper #755*, (May 2019), https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.

In his testimony before the committee on March 31, 2021, and in his policy paper, *Unfreezing In-State Tuition*,[136] and white paper, *UW-Madison and the State of Wisconsin*,[137] Dr. Ananth Seshadri, professor of economics at UW–Madison, offers reasons for it being good public policy to lift the UW System's tuition freeze and restore the Board of Regents' full authority to establish all tuition rates. Important to Dr. Seshradi's testimony is the understanding that the tuition freeze targets the "sticker price"—the base or posted tuition amount—rather than the "net price" of tuition—the cost after financial aid and the true measure of cost to the student.

First, if the tuition freeze was intended to check soaring tuition costs, the freeze is based on a misperception. According to Dr. Seshadri, although the tuition sticker price has outpaced inflation and income for the past two decades, the net tuition price for a full-time student at a four-year college has risen during this period at about the same rate as income.

Second, according to Dr. Seshadri, the tuition freeze does not actually increase access. For low-income students, the net tuition is already significantly discounted. In many instances, such as with the UW–Madison's Bucky's Tuition Promise, low-income students pay no tuition so it does not help them to reduce the tuition sticker price. It helps only middle- and high-income families. Research also refutes the notion that a higher tuition rate excludes low-income students because they are unable to obtain student loans (i.e., borrow against future earnings). This research concludes that other factors are primarily responsible for the lower participation rates in higher education among low-income students in comparison with their higher-income counterparts. Moreover, access is not being impeded by a student debt crisis. While students today graduate with more debt on average than their parents, today's students graduate with higher earning power than their parents. The burden of student loan debt is a misleading narrative in the media; the reality is that the student loan debt burden for students attending four-year institutions (excluding for-profit institutions) is modest and more than offset by a student's increased earning power generated by the college degree.

Third, the tuition freeze is a state benefit that rewards students for undertaking an activity that in fact primarily helps the student. The price distortion of keeping tuition flat, despite rising costs to operate the UW System, amounts to a subsidy of resident undergraduate students by the students not eligible for the tuition freeze and by the taxpayers, including taxpayers who did not attend college. Yet, the estimated average lifetime benefit of a four-year college degree is more than $500,000 in greater earnings in comparison to having only a high school diploma, even after netting out the tuition cost. Even if the student graduates with significant debt, the earning power of the college degree is much greater than it was decades ago and more than offsets student loan

[136] Ananth Seshadri, "Unfreezing In-State Tuition," *Fetzer Initiative on Economic Opportunity Policy Brief* (Madison, WI: Center for Research on the Wisconsin Economy, Oct. 2019), https://crowe.wisc.edu.
[137] Ananth Seshadri, "UW-Madison and the State of Wisconsin," *Fetzer Initiative on Economic Opportunity White Paper* (Madison, WI: Center for Research on the Wisconsin Economy, Sept. 10, 2018), https://crowe.wisc.edu.

debt incurred. Public policy does not favor subsidizing a student to engage in behavior that provides the student such great personal benefit, i.e., substantially greater lifetime earnings.

Fourth, the tuition freeze is a price control that negatively affects the quantity and quality of education and results in underinvestment in the UW System, with negative effects worsening over time. According to Dr. Seshadri, UW–Madison is falling behind peers such as the University of Minnesota and University of Michigan because the funding limitations created by the tuition freeze have stifled growth in instructional staff and high-demand majors compared to these peer institutions. "Larger class sizes and an inability to grow at a fast-enough pace in high demand areas is one of the many negative consequences of a tuition freeze. Diminution of quality and reduced research activity, which eventually leads to loss of research support as well as ranking and reputation, are other consequences of a tuition freeze."[138] Continuing the tuition freeze would raise concerns about the long-term health of the UW System. Resident undergraduate students need to fairly contribute to the UW System funding mix by paying modest increases in tuition so that they can continue to enjoy a high-quality education in Wisconsin.

The original justification for the tuition freeze no longer applies. The tuition freeze impedes the UW System's ability to raise revenue, instead economically favoring certain students over taxpayers generally. And there is no other public policy justification for continuing the moratorium on adjusting resident undergraduate tuition of UW System students to reflect present economic circumstances.

In summary, the committee recommends that the tuition freeze implemented in the 2013–15 Biennial Budget Act and continued through the 2019–21 Biennial Budget Act be left to expire at the end of this fiscal biennium, and in its place a system that allows only gradual and limited future adjustments, such as capping increases at the rate of inflation, should be established. Another option to achieve moderate tuition adjustments would be a system of cohort tuition, which provides a set rate for incoming freshman who are residents and would not increase during the first four years of their education.

UW Capital Budget

The committee recommends that consideration be given, in evaluating proposed UW System additions to the state building program, to whether the campus on which the project is proposed has undergone a significant decline in enrollment.

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[138] Ananth Seshadri, "Unfreezing In-State Tuition," 12.

State building program. The Building Commission is responsible for developing and implementing the state building program, often referred to as the state's capital budget. The building program consists of those projects recommended by the Building Commission and approved by the legislature. The Building Commission is responsible for overseeing the construction and renovation of most state building projects and for maintaining over 6,300 existing state buildings and facilities totaling over 84 million square feet of space. So much of the Building Commission's work involves UW System facilities that the commission's subcommittees are divided into two groups: the Higher Education Subcommittee devoted to UW System projects, and another subcommittee responsible for the projects of all other state agencies. For projects funded by debt issuance, the Building Commission issues bonds for the state.[139]

The process by which a capital project is included in the state building program—referred to as enumeration—is lengthy. Each agency must maintain a long-range (six-year) capital plan for facilities investment detailing specific proposed projects. Each biennium, the agency may submit, as part of the budget process, a capital budget request for projects to be included in that biennium's state building program. The request must include a list of the agency's projects over $1 million (known as major projects) in order of priority, with a description of each project, its justification, its projected cost, and its projected timeline. The Department of Administration's Division of Facilities Development and Management (DFDM) reviews these requests with the governor, and the governor recommends which projects should be included in that biennium's state building program. The Building Commission then meets to consider the governor's recommendations and may delete or add items to requests and make other changes. The commission's recommendations of projects to incorporate into the state building program are prepared for inclusion in the budget bill (as a nonstatutory provision listing the project title, budget, funding source, and whether any new bonding is needed) and submitted to the Joint Committee on Finance, which may make modifications. The biennium's state building program is then considered by the legislature with the biennial budget bill, and project changes can be made as part of budget deliberations. The state building program, or capital budget, generally consists of those projects identified in the budget bill as enacted by the legislature and signed by the governor. These projects are considered "enumerated." It is possible, but not common, for subsequent legislation in the same session to add new projects or modify or delete projects enumerated in the budget act, and it is not uncommon for enumerated projects to be modified in subsequent sessions' budget acts. After legislative approval, projects are implemented by the Building Commission in coordination with the requesting agency.[140]

UW System. At its hearing on February 9, 2021, the committee heard testimony from several witnesses regarding the significant decline in enrollment at many UW System institutions. The

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[139] See Erin Probst, "State Building Program," *Informational Paper* #80 (Madison, WI: Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Jan. 2021), https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.
[140] See Erin Probst, "State Building Program," *Informational Paper* #80.

enrollment decline has been particularly dramatic at certain campuses. Over the 10-year period from 2009 to 2019, enrollment declined at eight of the 13 four-year campuses and enrollment declined by more than 20 percent at UW–Milwaukee and UW–Stevens Point.[141] Data from 2011 to 2019 show with six of these campuses showing enrollment declines of about 10 percent or greater.[142] The enrollment picture for the two-year campuses was much worse, with enrollment declines of more than 40 percent during this period and many two-year campuses having fewer than 300 FTE student enrollments as of 2019. In contrast to the four-year campuses, two-year campuses are generally owned and maintained by local governments and not the state.[143] Despite a shrinking student body, many UW campuses have been approved for major projects in the state's capital budget.

In the 2019–21 state building program (2019 Wisconsin Act 9), more than half of the total cost of new projects enumerated were UW System projects. Of the $1.735 billion in projects for all state agencies, UW System projects accounted for about $1.025 billion. There were three projects enumerated for UW–Milwaukee totaling more than $177 million, including a $40 million student union renovation.[144] The 2017–19 state building program included more than $85 million for projects at UW–Milwaukee.[145] The 2015–17 state building program included almost $17 million for a dining center renovation at UW–Stevens Point.[146]

For the 2021–23 capital budget, the UW System requested enumeration of new projects totaling more than $1.3 billion, and the governor recommended approving just over $1.0 billion of this request.[147] The amount of UW System projects recommended for approval by the governor accounted for about 42 percent, by cost, of all building projects that the governor recommended approving for the 2021–23 state building program.[148] The UW System's request to the governor of $1.3 billion in project authority for 28 projects was significantly less than that proposed to the Board of Regents by the 13 four-year institutions, which together asked the UW System for authority in the 2021–23 state building program to undertake 185 projects at a total cost of about $5 billion.[149]

[141] See Erin Probst, "University of Wisconsin System Overview," *Informational Paper* #34, 9.
[142] See Jason Stein, Mark Sommerhauser, Muhammad Shayan, *Falling Behind? The State of Wisconsin's Public Universities and Colleges* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Policy Forum, Dec. 2020), 11, https://wispolicyforum.org.
[143] See Erin Probst, "University of Wisconsin System Overview," *Informational Paper* #34, 6 and 9; Jason Stein, et al., *Falling Behind? The State of Wisconsin's Public Universities and Colleges.*
[144] See Erin Probst, "State Building Program," *Informational Paper* #80, table 3.
[145] See Emma Drilias "State Building Program," *Informational Paper* #78 (Madison, WI: Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Jan. 2019), table 3, https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.
[146] See Emma Drilias "State Building Program," *Informational Paper* #78, table 3.
[147] See *2021–23 State of Wisconsin Capital Budget Agency Requests and Governor's Recommendations*, https://doa.wi.gov. See also "Capital Planning and Budget: Capital Plan," University of Wisconsin System, https://www.wisconsin.edu.
[148] See *2021–23 State of Wisconsin Capital Budget Agency Requests and Governor's Recommendations*, https://doa.wi.gov.
[149] Rich Kremer, "UW Campuses Identify $5 Billion New Construction, Renovation Needs," *Wisconsin Public Radio* (Mar. 3, 2021), https://www.wpr.org.

The committee recommends that a UW System institution's enrollment levels be considered before a project is enumerated for the campus under the state building program. As mentioned earlier in the report, the campuses that have experienced growth over the last decade are UW–Green Bay, UW–La Crosse, UW–Madison, UW–Oshkosh, and UW–Whitewater.

The committee concludes that it is necessary, as part of the capital budget process, to evaluate whether investing millions of dollars in the infrastructure of a campus with a shrinking student population is an appropriate allocation of the state's resources. The evaluation should also consider the purpose of the project and whether the project advances the institution's mission and unique emphasis or contributes to the goals of institutional collaboration, operational efficiencies, and program alignment set forth in this report's recommendations.

Wisconsin Grants

The committee recommends that the allocation of state funding for Wisconsin Grants be adjusted to increase the relative percentage of grant funds awarded to technical college students.

The Wisconsin Grant program is the state's predominant need-based financial aid program for postsecondary students. Created in 1973 as the Wisconsin Higher Education Grant program,[150] the Wisconsin Grant program provides need-based grants to residents who are enrolled at least half-time as undergraduate students at one of four types of institutions: UW System institutions, Wisconsin technical colleges, private nonprofit colleges, or tribal colleges.[151]

Students who are eligible for Wisconsin Grants may receive funding for up to 10 semesters. Minimum and maximum awards vary depending on the type of institution, and amounts are set annually by the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB). HEAB also approves annually—based on recommendations from the UW System, the WTCS, the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, and tribal colleges—the formulas that are used to calculate grant awards for each student. These formulas generally consist of three components: student budget (including tuition, room, board, and other expenses); expected family contribution as determined by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); and student award percentage, which varies depending on the type of institution.[152]

Funding for Wisconsin Grants is provided through four separate appropriations.[153] Since the 2018–19 fiscal year, annual funding has remained at the following levels: $61,894,100 (54.4 percent of total grant funding) for UW System grants;[154] $22,971,700 (20.2 percent of total grant

[150] Ch. 90, Laws of 1973 (§ 196s).

[151] Wis. Stat. §§ 39.30 and 39.435.

[152] Wis. Stat. §§ 39.30 (3) and 39.435 (4); Higher Educational Aids Board, "Wisconsin Grant—Program Description," *Board Report* #21-11 (Madison, WI: HEAB, Oct. 30, 2020), https://heab.state.wi.us.

[153] Wis. Stat. § 20.235 (1) (b), (fe), (ff), and (km).

[154] Higher Educational Aids Board, "2021–22 Wisconsin Grant—UW Program Formula," *Board Report* #21-12 (Madison, WI: HEAB, Oct. 30, 2020), 4, https://heab.state.wi.us.

funding) for technical college grants;[155] $28,504,600 (25.0 percent of total grant funding) for private nonprofit college grants;[156] and $481,800 (0.4 percent of total grant funding) for tribal college grants.[157] Grants for UW System students, technical college students, and private nonprofit college students are funded with general purpose revenue (GPR) from the general fund, while grants for tribal college students are funded with program revenue (PR) from tribal gaming receipts.[158] HEAB over-awards grant funding each year based on the percentage of students who are expected to decline the award.[159] Once all funds are obligated, the remaining students do not receive grants; priority is based on the date that the application was received by HEAB.[160]

During the 2019–20 academic year, nearly 65,000 students received Wisconsin Grants; 27,026 of these students were attending UW institutions (18.0 percent of all enrolled undergraduate UW students), 27,818 were attending technical colleges (9.7 percent of all enrolled technical college students), 9,431 were attending private nonprofit colleges (21.1 percent of all enrolled private college students),[161] and 319 were attending tribal colleges (60.2 percent of all enrolled tribal college students).[162]

Average award amounts during the 2019–20 academic year totaled $2,303 for students at UW institutions, $787 for students at technical colleges, $2,888 for students at private nonprofit colleges,[163] and $1,429 for students at tribal colleges.[164] Award amounts for UW institutions, private colleges, and tribal colleges have increased in recent years, while the number of students receiving awards has decreased; for technical colleges, the number of awards has generally increased since 2010, while the average award amount has steadily decreased.[165]

According to Dr. Morna Foy, president of the WTCS, for the past two decades, the state's investment (GPR funding level) in Wisconsin Grants for technical college students has significantly lagged that for UW System students, while technical college students have nearly twice the financial need of their UW System counterparts. To address this decline and help close the funding gap, the WTCS requested for the 2021–23 budget an increase in HEAB's GPR funding for Wisconsin Grants to technical college students of $11.8 million in each fiscal year of

[155] Higher Educational Aids Board, "20–21 and 2021–22 Wisconsin Grant—Technical Colleges Program Formula," *Board Report* #21-15 (Madison, WI: HEAB, Oct. 30, 2020), 3, https://heab.state.wi.us.
[156] Higher Educational Aids Board, "2021–22 Wisconsin Grant—PNP Program Formula," Board Report #21-13 (Madison, WI: HEAB, Oct. 30, 2020), 2, https://heab.state.wi.us.
[157] Higher Educational Aids Board, "2021–22 Wisconsin Grant—Tribal Program Formula," *Board Report* #21-14 (Madison, WI: HEAB, Oct. 30, 2020), https://heab.state.wi.us.
[158] Erin Probst, "Student Financial Aid," *Informational Paper* #36 (Madison, WI: Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Jan. 2021), 9, https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.
[159] Erin Probst, "Student Financial Aid," *Informational Paper* #36.
[160] Higher Educational Aids Board, "Wisconsin Grant—Program Description," *Board Report* #21-11.
[161] Erin Probst, "Student Financial Aid," *Informational Paper* #36, 9.
[162] Higher Educational Aids Board, "2021–22 Wisconsin Grant—Tribal Program Formula," *Board Report* #21-14.
[163] Erin Probst, "Student Financial Aid," *Informational Paper* #36, 9.
[164] Higher Educational Aids Board, "2021–22 Wisconsin Grant—Tribal Program Formula," *Board Report* #21-14.
[165] Erin Probst, "Student Financial Aid," *Informational Paper* #36, 9.

the biennium in order to increase the average Wisconsin Grant award to a technical college student to $1,100.[166] The governor's proposed 2021–23 budget, however, does not address the Wisconsin Grant funding disparity between technical college students and UW System students, and instead proposes an across-the-board increase in Wisconsin Grant funding for all sectors by 10 percent in fiscal year 2021–22 and 20 percent in fiscal year 2022–23.[167]

The committee recommends establishing greater parity in the funding levels for Wisconsin Grants to technical college students and UW System students. Presently, in addition to lower grant amounts, the percentage of technical college students receiving Wisconsin Grants is barely more than half (9.7 percent vs. 18.0 percent of that for UW System students. This results in part from two decades of proportionally lower state investment in these grants. The committee recommends that a greater percentage of the total GPR funding for Wisconsin Grants be allocated to the appropriation for grants to technical college students in order to rebalance funding levels and compensate for the state's historical underinvestment in these grants.

Charter School Authorizers

Charter schools are operated according to a contract between the charter school and a school board or another authorizing entity.

In addition to a school board, several specified entities may create a charter school. State law originally authorized only the City of Milwaukee, UW–Milwaukee, UW–Parkside, and MATC to create a charter school. Subsequent legislation expanded the authority to include the Waukesha County executive, any UW institution, any technical college district board, certain Native American tribal colleges, and the Office of Educational Opportunity (OEO) in the UW System. [Wis. Stat. § 118.40 (1m) and (2m) to (2x).]

An independent charter school created by one of the original authorizers—the City of Milwaukee, UW–Milwaukee, UW–Parkside, or MATC—received payments of $9,165 per student in the 2020–21 school year. To provide the state funding for these charter school students, the general school aid available to traditional public schools is reduced statewide. School districts can levy property taxes to make up for the reduced funding.

An independent charter school created by a technical college district board, a UW institution other than UW–Milwaukee or UW–Parkside, the Waukesha County executive, or the OEO receives per pupil payments in the same amount as those received by other independent charter schools. Unlike students who attend a charter school created by one of the original independent charter school authorizers, students attending a school created by other charter authorizers are

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[166] Higher Educational Aids Board, "2021–2023 Biennial Budget Issues: Technical College System, *Board Report* #21-02 (Madison, WI: HEAB, July 24, 2020), 2, https://heab.state.wi.us.

[167] See Legislative Fiscal Bureau, *2021-23 Wisconsin State Budget, Summary of Governor's Budget Recommendations* (Madison, WI: LFB, Mar. 2021), 313–14, https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov.

counted for revenue limit and general aid purposes by the resident school district. To provide funding for these students, the general school aid available to a particular school district will be reduced on the basis of students who live within the district but attend one of these independent charter schools. A school district's general aid payment will be reduced by the same amount that is paid to the independent charter schools. School districts are not allowed to increase tax levies to make up for the reduced funding. [Wis. Stat. § 118.40 (2r) (e) to (g) and (2x) (e) and (f).]

The governor's budget recommendation deletes the OEO in the UW System, and transfers oversight responsibilities for the charter schools currently authorized by the OEO from the OEO director to the chancellor of UW–Madison. A contract entered into before the effective date of the bill by the director of the OEO with a person to operate a charter school under the statutory authority of the OEO remains in full force and effect, but the chancellor may not renew or modify the contract.

Steve Baas, from the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, testified before the committee on March 31, 2021. He stressed the importance of retaining the OEO as an additional authorizing option that is outside the realm of political pressures that have led other charter school authorizers not to authorize additional charter schools.

The committee views the OEO as an important option in the charter school sector to retain quality educational opportunities for parents and their children. The committee thus recommends retaining the OEO as well as seeking ways to improve the process and increase authorization of schools.

Photo: Western Technical College, website photo.

Duplication in Higher Education

Currently state statute defines the respective educational roles of the UW System and the WTCS. The Board of Regents may not broaden the UW System's mission to include training for new skilled trade occupations without approval from the WTCS Board. Similarly, the WTCS Board may not broaden its collegiate transfer program offerings without the approval of the Board of Regents.

Currently six of the 16 districts of the WTCS may offer Associate of Arts (AA) and Associate of Science (AS) degrees. These colleges include Chippewa Valley Technical College, Madison College, Milwaukee Area Technical College, Nicolet College, Western Technical College, and Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College.

An associate's degree usually satisfies the first two years of general education requirements for four-year colleges and universities.

WTCS representatives said its system is seeking the removal of the statutory provision that requires permission from the UW System Board of Regents in order to expand its collegiate transfer programs to additional technical schools.

President Thompson indicated that there is a need to resolve duplication between UW System and WTCS in certain degree programs and recommended a study to resolve inefficiencies between the UW System and WTCS instructional missions.

The committee agrees that this issue requires more analysis and discussion in light of each institution's mission statement. Technical programs are the core of the WTCS mission. Students are well served in the system when vocational programs help them partner with employers and gain careers leading directly to employment.

Associate of Arts degree programs focus more on general education than career-ready skills. Many students intend to use associate degrees on their path toward a bachelor's degree. Unfortunately, many students with that goal in mind never earn a bachelor's degree. Studies have shown a small percentage of students (14 percent) originally enrolled in an associate degree program completed a bachelor's degree within six years. Another 45 percent had no degree and were not enrolled in any postsecondary institution.[168]

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[168] Mark Schneider and Matthew Sigelman, *Saving the Associate of Arts Degree: How an A.A. Can Become a Better Path to Labor Market Success* (American Enterprise Institute: Jan. 2018), https://www.burning-glass.com.

More pathways for students are often desirable. Associate degrees allow students to receive two years of education, often at a lower cost, before transferring to a four-year institution to complete a bachelor's degree. Because associate degrees are primarily designed as transfer degrees, students are often left without marketable skills if they do not pursue bachelor's degrees, and they experience a wage penalty compared to their peers completing career and technically oriented degrees.[169]

This gives pause to the committee to entertain proposals that promote such degrees without first understanding how those degree pathways can be improved.

Both the UW and WTCS must review their missions and the programs and services they offer. Taxpayers should be rightly concerned when they are asked to fund similar or identical services and programs in both public postsecondary systems. Institutions should also evaluate how they can inject relevant and marketable skills into existing programs.

For these reasons, the committee recommends forming a commission to undergo a thorough review of its existing programs, identify areas of duplication, and propose changes that will further each institution's mission to help students graduate with skills that lead to successful careers.

This commission will require collaborative effort and should include the input of representatives from UW System, WTCS, DPI, employers, technical trades, faculty, students, and other stakeholders. This commission will develop recommendations for actions to be taken by the Board of Regents, the WTCS Board, and the legislature. Any legislative proposals should be considered with this collaborative approach in mind.

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[169] Mark Schneider and Matthew Sigelman, *Saving the Associate of Arts Degree: How an A.A. Can Become a Better Path to Labor Market Success*.

Public Institutions of Higher Education
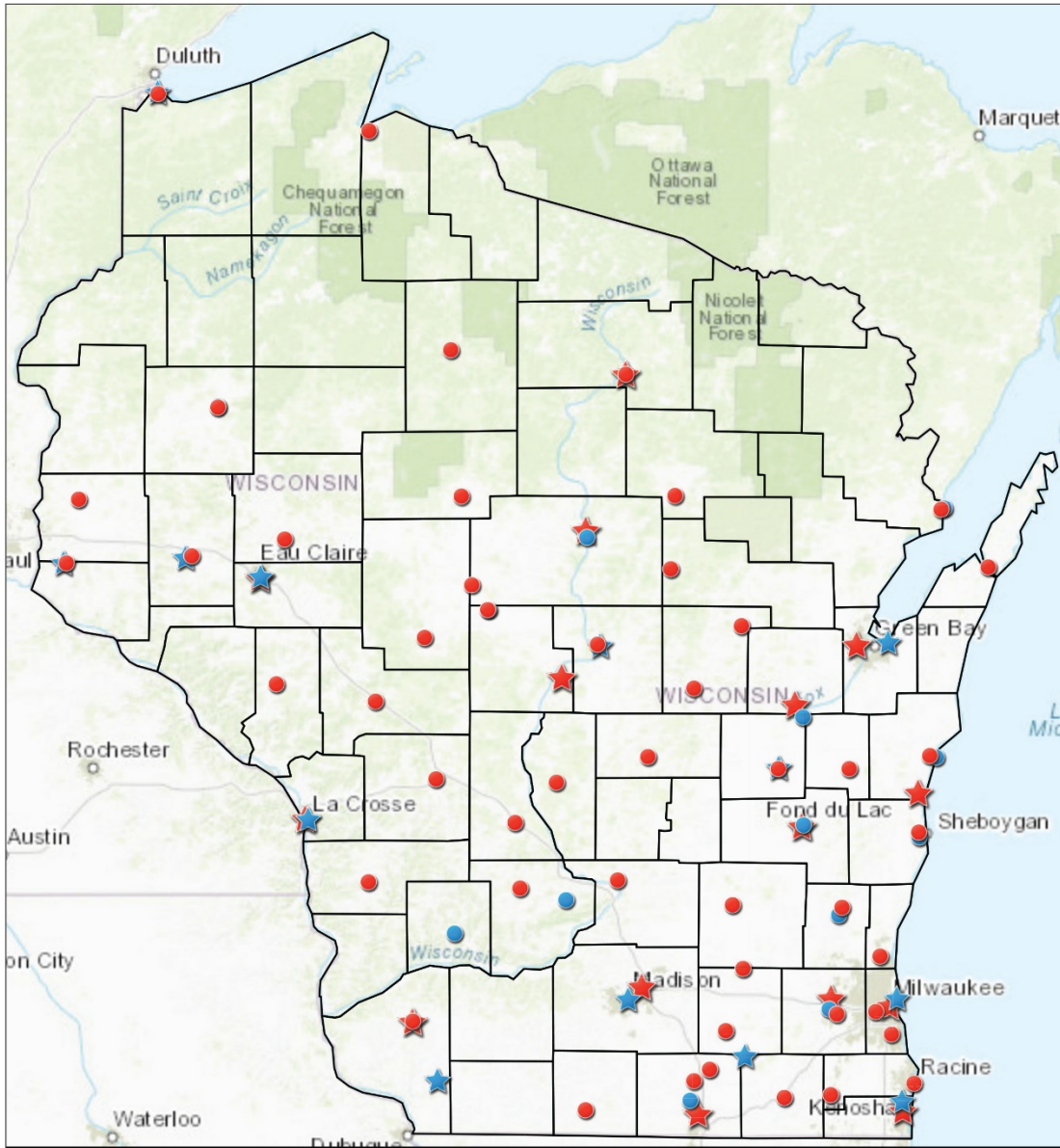
Source: www.wtcsystem.edu

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CONCLUSION

After undergoing a series of informational hearings on issues in higher education, the Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges presents its findings and recommendations in this report as an effort to strengthen the systems of higher education in Wisconsin.

It is without question we are in a time when higher education is facing serious challenges. We are uniquely situated to take action today. The recommendations in this report address those challenges head on and help reset the course of higher education.

Failure to act in the near term will likely mean more dire consequences in the long term, such as the closure of several university campuses and the deterioration of the reputation our institutions have today.

By strengthening our position now, our higher education systems can continue their relevance and importance to all Wisconsinites as drivers of excellence in attaining lifelong skills for the workplace and personal advancement. Our goal must be to ensure that our higher education systems are held in even higher esteem in Wisconsin, the nation, and around the world.