

April 19, 2011

The Honorable Alberta Darling
The Honorable Robin Vos
Co-Chairs, Joint Committee on Finance
Wisconsin State Legislature
Room 305 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Re: Support for New Badger Partnership and UW-Madison Public Authority Status

Dear Senator Darling and Representative Vos:

For the past eighteen months, UW-Madison Chancellor Bidly Martin has worked toward obtaining greater flexibility for UW-Madison. We were pleased to hear Representative Vos's comments on the UpFront program that greater flexibility for UW-Madison is a distinct possibility. In this letter, we write, as UW-Madison department chairs and program directors, to express our strong support for the New Badger Partnership and to urge you to take a continued look at the possibility of public authority status for UW-Madison. We write on our own behalf and not as formal representatives of our departments.

We recognize the reality of a state budget that is stretched to fund many vital needs, and we appreciate the generous support the taxpayers of Wisconsin have provided for this institution. We also recognize that the national and international competitive pressures facing UW-Madison continue to grow. **Increased flexibility and public authority status would allow UW-Madison to preserve and enhance its world-class status and its ability to serve as an economic engine for our state, while also reducing strains on the state budget.**

Increased flexibility

Two separate UW-Madison reaccreditation reports have cited the problems and costs imposed on the university by redundant bureaucracy and by rules and procedures that were not developed for, and are not suited for, a major research university. We are persuaded that the flexibility provided by the New Badger Partnership and public authority status would address those concerns through the following means:

- A human resource system tailored for a major research institution
- A pay and compensation plan specific to UW-Madison that allows it to compete effectively nationally and internationally
- Hiring policies that are relevant for a research-oriented academic institution
- Policy making specific to the needs of a major research university as determined by a board of trustees
- Streamlined grant administration and processes
- Innovative, cost saving purchasing procedures
- Creating and maintaining new revenue streams to reduce reliance on state funding

- Establishing tuition levels that do not disadvantage us in comparison to peer institutions, paired with financial aid policies that make education at Madison even more accessible

Our departments compete not only with other top-tier public institutions but also with top-tier private institutions, and increasingly we compete with institutions outside the United States. As department chairs and program directors, **we see firsthand how the university can be hampered by procedures that do not make sense for an academic institution and that place us as a competitive disadvantage** in recruiting and retaining top faculty and graduate students. This problem is critical for our undergraduate students as well, because it is the research and teaching strength of faculty and graduate students that encourage Wisconsin undergraduates to want to study at UW-Madison.

Public authority status

The move to public authority status would in no way diminish our deep commitment to the Wisconsin Idea, a cherished principle on campus. Our determination to provide an accessible education to all Wisconsinites, another strongly held principle, will remain paramount. With regard to UW-Madison's relationship to the UW System, virtually all of what we now do could continue under a public authority arrangement. For students, the major area of concern is transferability of courses and transferring from one campus to another. **Transferability need not be hampered by public authority status** for UW-Madison. Institutions need not be in the same system make transferability work. For example:

- At the graduate level, we currently have transferability of credits among Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) institutions, which are all the Big Ten institutions plus the University of Chicago.
- Around the country, consortia of institutions allow undergraduate students to take classes at different campuses and credit to be transferable.
- UW-Madison has transfer arrangements with the Wisconsin Technical College System, though UW-Madison is not a part of that system.

UW-Madison with public authority status and the UW System would continue to have a tightly linked relationship that would benefit students. Chancellor Martin has stated that all the transfer arrangements across campuses will continue.

Likewise, **cooperation of faculty across the campuses would remain**—faculty collaborate because it makes research or instructional sense to do so, not because of a formal and technical linkage of one campus to another.

As for concerns that UW-Madison with public authority status would lead to unnecessary duplication of programs across the UW System and UW-Madison, we don't believe that is a necessary or likely outcome. **System leadership can prevent duplication across the System campuses, and System and Madison consultation can deter duplication across Madison and other campuses.** Representation of the System on the UW-Madison board would further ensure that these cost-saving dialogues take place.

A System that is able to focus more closely on the issues confronting the member institutions without also trying to accommodate Madison and its different mission and needs would be a stronger system. **This new System should be considered a tremendous opportunity for creative campus leaders, not a problem.** The campuses within that new System would benefit from having a System focused intently on

their needs, as would the regions of the state where they are located. These benefits would be increased even further by granting the System campuses added flexibility through the budget bill, as Chancellor Martin has recommended, while also providing UW-Madison with public authority status. **These are excellent institutions not because they are tied to UW-Madison, but because they have unique strengths and characteristics that could be further developed in a System dedicated to their missions and their regional economic development needs.**

Similarly, a UW-Madison campus that had its own governing authority and board would be a stronger institution for the reasons discussed above. Even with an innovative idea like the Wisconsin Idea Partnership, a single System that includes Madison would be faced with juggling multiple sets of rules and policies or would arrive at half-best one-size-fits-all solutions, leading to inefficiencies and confusion. **Separate governing authority tailored to the needs of the System schools and UW-Madison, respectively, would be more efficient and more nimble** in these fast-changing times, ultimately providing greater benefits to Wisconsinites and the Wisconsin economy. **Significant ongoing state government oversight would continue through the System Board of Regents and the UW-Madison Board of Trustees, as well as accountability measures.**

In higher education, as in many other sectors of society, the time for business as usual is over, and the time for bold thinking is the present. **The New Badger Partnership and UW-Madison public authority status are forward-looking reforms for a new era.** A new UW System and a UW-Madison with public authority status would constitute a leading force of higher education in the United States and a tremendous resource of which this state can be justifiably proud. Compared to what exists in other states, Wisconsin would continue to have an extraordinarily integrated set of excellent higher education institutions. The State of Wisconsin can maintain and enhance the benefits and positives of the current System while also acknowledging that UW-Madison is distinctly different and requires additional flexibility to thrive and fulfill its mission as a major research institution. This flexibility is best ensured with public authority status. We urge you to give the New Badger Partnership and public authority status for UW-Madison your support.

Sincerely,

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