

**APPROVAL OF THE 2027-29 BIENNIAL OPERATING  
BUDGET REQUEST**

**REQUESTED ACTION**

Adoption of Resolution I., approving the 2027-29 Biennial Operating Budget Request.

- Resolution I.** That, upon the recommendation of the Interim President of the University of Wisconsin System, the Board of Regents approves the submission of:
- (1) the Board's 2027-29 Biennial Operating Budget request, totaling \$730,000,000 biennially in General Purpose Revenue (GPR) for key initiatives;
  - (2) a request to the Higher Educational Aids Board to fully fund tuition remissions for eligible veterans along with their spouses and children as required by Wisconsin law;
  - (3) a request to the newly elected Governor and state legislators to provide funding to Wisconsin school districts to expand dual enrollment opportunities;
  - (4) the Wisconsin Grant-UW request to the Higher Educational Aids Board for inclusion in its 2027-29 biennial budget request totaling \$10,500,000 in ongoing funds;
  - (5) two statutory language requests that would modify an allocation model and change an appropriation of funds first provided in 2025 Wisconsin Act 15;
  - (6) the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory's request for additional funding for services and equipment totaling approximately \$220,000 in one-time funds and an additional \$82,300 in ongoing funds;
  - (7) the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene's request for additional funding for services and equipment totaling approximately \$720,000 in one-time funds and an additional \$3,121,500 in ongoing funds.

In addition, the Board of Regents delegates authority to the UW System President to approve and submit a 0% and 5% biennial budget reduction plan, as required by 2015 WI Act 201, and to revise the

standard budget adjustment amount as needed, when calculated and finalized by the State's Department of Administration (DOA).

## **SUMMARY**

The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System is required to submit a budget request to the DOA by September 15 of each even-numbered year. The UW President provides the Regents, for their consideration, a recommended submission at the August meeting in the same even-numbered year.

The 2027-29 biennial budget request includes General Purpose Revenue (GPR) to address college affordability for Wisconsinites and enable the Universities of Wisconsin to address some of the state's most pressing needs. The UW request, which totals \$730 million over the biennium and is summarized in Attachment A, includes funding focused on three promises that continue to ensure "Wisconsin's Future is Built Here" at the Universities of Wisconsin:

- Ensure every Wisconsinite has access to an affordable, high-quality UW education
- Build Wisconsin's workforce and next generation of businesses
- Advance life-saving discoveries and improve access to health care across Wisconsin

The budget presentation will include remarks from three UW Chancellors and their guests, who will share their perspectives on the importance of these initiatives to their universities and to the students and communities they serve. For these initiatives, a summary of the funding that would be provided to each UW university is included in Attachment A.

The request also includes standard budget adjustments and recommended statutory language changes. The budget recommendation also includes forwarding a request to the state's Higher Educational Aids Board to raise the maximum Wisconsin Grant award amount and further the goal of covering half of the average tuition and fee costs at the comprehensive universities. Lastly, the request includes items for the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene, which require Board approval as they are administratively attached to UW-Madison.

## **Presenters**

- Julie Gordon, Vice President for Finance & Administration, UW Administration
- Lynn Akey, Chancellor, UW-Parkside
- Tammy Evetovich, Chancellor, UW-Platteville
- John Chenoweth, Interim Chancellor, UW-River Falls

## **Related Policies**

- [Chapter 16.42](#), Wis. Stats.
- [Chapter 36](#), Wis. Stats.
- [Chapter 230](#), Wis. Stats.

## **ATTACHMENT**

- A) 2027-29 Biennial Operating Budget Request



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# **2027-29**

# **Biennial Operating Budget Request**

Universities of Wisconsin  
August 2026

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**2027-29 BIENNIAL OPERATING BUDGET REQUEST  
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## SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

The UWs Board of Regents is required to submit a budget request to the Department of Administration (DOA) by September 15 of each even-numbered year. The UW President provides the Regents, for their consideration, a recommended submission at the August meeting in the same even-numbered year.

The 2027-29 biennial budget request includes General Purpose Revenue (GPR) to address college affordability for Wisconsinites and enable the Universities of Wisconsin to address some of the most pressing needs of our state. The Universities of Wisconsin will address these challenges by building on its 175-year history of preparing Wisconsinites for the careers of today and tomorrow, as well as advancing discoveries that help save lives every day.

The UW request, which totals \$730 million over the biennium and is summarized below, includes funding focused on three promises that continue to ensure Wisconsin's Future is Built Here at the Universities of Wisconsin:

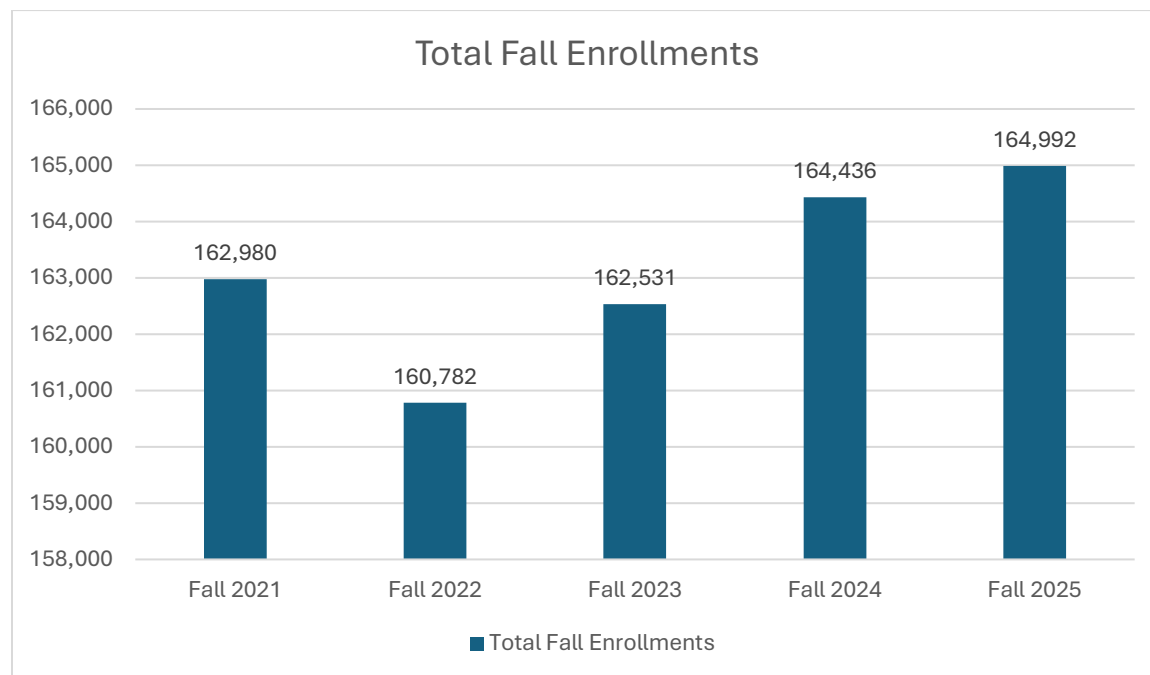
- Ensure every Wisconsinite has access to an affordable, high-quality UW education
- Build Wisconsin's workforce and next generation of businesses
- Advance life-saving discoveries and improve access to health care across Wisconsin

The request also includes items for the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (WVDL) and the Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene (WSLH), which require Board approval as they are administratively attached to UW-Madison. The budget recommendation includes forwarding a request to the state's Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) to raise the maximum Wisconsin Grant award amount and further the goal of covering half of the average tuition and fee costs at the comprehensive universities. Lastly, the budget includes standard budget adjustments. A summary of individual requests by UW university is provided within the narrative of each initiative.

| Promise                                                           | FY28                 | FY29 Ongoing Request | Biennial Request     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Ensure Affordable, High-Quality Education for Wisconsinites       | \$137,000,000        | \$173,000,000        | \$310,000,000        |
| Build Wisconsin's Workforce and Businesses                        | \$120,000,000        | \$120,000,000        | \$240,000,000        |
| Advance Life-Saving Discoveries and Improve Access to Health Care | \$57,500,000         | \$57,500,000         | \$115,000,000        |
| Standard Budget Adjustments                                       | \$32,500,000         | \$32,500,000         | \$65,000,000         |
| <b>Recommendation</b>                                             | <b>\$347,000,000</b> | <b>\$383,000,000</b> | <b>\$730,000,000</b> |

Despite demographic and international recruitment headwinds, the Universities of Wisconsin have grown enrollment over the last several years, reversing recent declines. University leadership has taken the necessary steps to ensure both short- and long-term financial sustainability, leading to the elimination of structural deficits across all 13 universities and the dedication of more resources

to academic instruction, student support services, and ensuring every student is career ready upon graduation.



Wisconsin's biggest workforce challenge over the next decade is not a lack of jobs—it's a lack of workers. An aging population, retirements, and relatively slow labor-force growth mean employers will compete intensely for talent across several sectors. The greatest shortages are expected in health care; engineering and advanced manufacturing; computer science, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and data analytics; education; and business, supply chain and logistics, with health care representing the single largest workforce challenge due to an aging population and resource utilization. By continuing to keep higher education affordable, addressing student needs, and further shortening time to degree, the Universities of Wisconsin are uniquely positioned to help educate today's students to meet the needs of Wisconsin employers.

From Cisco, Epic Systems and Microsoft to Culvers, Menards and Kimberly Clark, Universities of Wisconsin graduates—which number 30,000 strong every year—have founded or led some of Wisconsin's and the nation's most iconic brands and businesses. Many of their stories start out the same. An innovative idea nurtured by hard work and perseverance and forged with the knowledge and leadership acquired during their time at their alma mater sparks success that breeds a growing and thriving business. The Universities of Wisconsin prepare thousands of undergraduate and graduate students as the next generation of entrepreneurs and business leaders. Furthermore, colleges and schools within our UWs, along with continuing education programs, UW Extension, and UW Office of Business and Entrepreneurship, provide technical assistance and training to Wisconsinites looking to start or expand businesses in all 72 counties.

Researchers, faculty, staff and students across the Universities of Wisconsin are also on the cutting edge of scientific discoveries that help improve our daily lives and make the once impossible

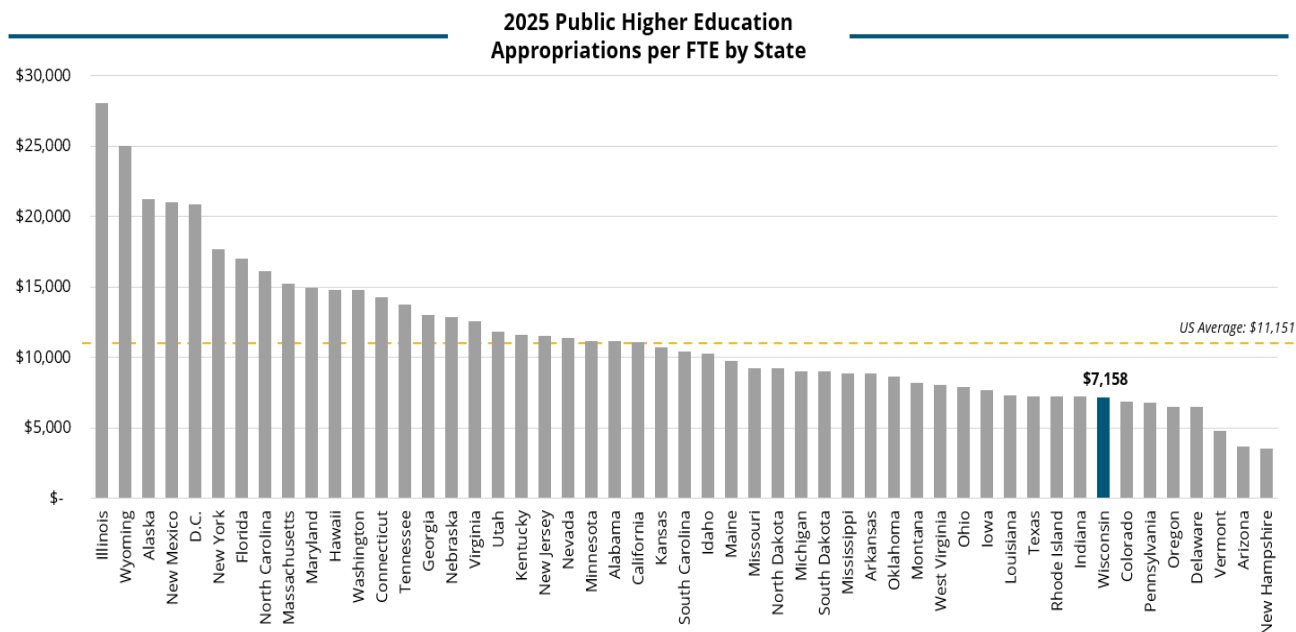
treatment or cure possible. The Universities of Wisconsin have a long history of being on the forefront of medical advances, including vitamin discoveries and vitamin D fortification, new drug advances such as the chemotherapy drug 5-fluorouracil, transplantation, and medical device innovation in areas such as medical imaging, diagnostics, digital health sensors, neuromodulation/brain-mapping devices, and healthcare informatics.

Outside health sciences, Universities of Wisconsin research can be found in Wisconsin homes, businesses, and factory floors. Cutting-edge research has led to discoveries in fields such as biotechnology, agriculture, freshwater, and advanced manufacturing, leading to the creation of thousands of jobs, lower costs for consumers, and improved quality and safety for workers and consumers.

## Prior State Investments

2025 marked the first significant state investment in higher education after decades of reductions or minimal non-debt service or compensation related priorities. This historic level of lagging financial support continues to constrain the Universities' ability to meet the state's needs and ensure that a University of Wisconsin education is affordable for Wisconsinites.

The latest SHEEO analysis of public higher education financing, reflecting state support, shows that Wisconsin currently ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> out of the 50 states in public funding to support 4-year universities. The UWs received GPR of \$7,158 per student (FTE) while the national average was \$11,151. For comparison, Wisconsin technical colleges received GPR \$14,099 per student on average, ranking them 8<sup>th</sup> highest amongst two-year institutions in the country.



## Biennial Budget Promises

This \$730 million ongoing biennial budget request allows the Universities of Wisconsin to address affordability and pressing needs across the state of Wisconsin and includes initiatives in three strategic areas, along with an estimate for standard budget adjustments. Each of these areas are aligned with the 2023-28 strategic plan approved by the Board of Regents in December 2022. A summary of each of the strategic areas is set forth below with additional detail starting on page 7.

- Promise #1: Every Wisconsinite will have access to an affordable, high-quality UW education.

The Universities of Wisconsin will be the Midwest leader in college affordability as measured by tuition relative to median household income. Central to addressing affordability, the Board of Regents is committing to freeze undergraduate resident tuition over the next two academic years (2027-28 and 2028-29) upon passage of its budget request. In addition to a tuition freeze for the 2027-29 biennium, the Universities of Wisconsin would limit any potential increases in the 2029-31 biennium to no more than the rate of inflation. To close the opportunity gap, the Wisconsin Work and Learn Promise would cover tuition through financial aid for Wisconsin students attending any UW university from households below the median household income, while requiring a work component. The initiative is comparable to other states' efforts to ensure educational opportunities for all their residents. Additionally, it will provide the Universities with funding to support the needs of our veterans, their children and spouses, and the state-mandated tuition remissions.

- Promise #2: Build Wisconsin's workforce and next generation of businesses.

The Universities of Wisconsin will graduate 300,000 new career-ready workers, upskill one million workers for better jobs, and assist Wisconsinites in creating 2,500 new businesses over a decade. These initiatives are designed to help Wisconsinites advance their careers, start new businesses, and work with employers to support their workforce needs. Funding would be provided to accelerate career readiness beginning in high school through the expansion of dual enrollment college courses and continue into college through increased enhanced academic and career counseling, additional internship and student work experiences, and increased student support services. Continuing education, online programs, professional learning, and credentialing programs will be expanded to assist Wisconsin adults looking to learn new skills, complete a degree, or retrain to stay relevant in today's workforce. Lastly, University of Wisconsin faculty and researchers will harness new ideas to help Wisconsin businesses bring products to market and expand their Made in Wisconsin brands across the globe.

- Promise #3: Advance life-saving discoveries and improve access to health care across Wisconsin.

The Universities of Wisconsin will improve access to care by increasing the number of health care professionals serving Wisconsin communities by 35,000 health care professionals by 2037. UW researchers will advance our knowledge to find new cures and treatments for illnesses and diseases such as cancer, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's. Funding will support increased enrollment capacity, expanded faculty and instructional resources, development of new academic programs, and strengthened educational pathways that prepare more qualified professionals to serve communities across the state. Investments will also expand behavioral health training opportunities and increase the number of licensed providers available to meet growing demand for healthcare and mental health services throughout Wisconsin. Additionally, investments would support research and innovation across a broad range of health challenges, including infectious and inflammatory diseases, neurological disorders, and other significant conditions. These

initiatives strengthen the entire innovation pipeline, from discovery and translation to commercialization by expanding research capacity, clinical and community partnerships, student training opportunities, and technologies that enhance quality of life, prevention, and care.

- Standard Budget Adjustments:** This estimate includes items that will need to be requested to support current operating levels such as fringe benefit increases.

Additionally, the Board is being asked to approve funding requests for the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and the State Lab of Hygiene, which are administratively attached to UW-Madison, and for the UW's Wisconsin Grant program, which will be forwarded to the Higher Educational Aids Board for inclusion in its 2027-29 biennial budget request.

Lastly, the Universities of Wisconsin 2027-29 biennial budget recommendation includes a request for two statutory changes. 2025 Wisconsin Act 15, the 2025-27 biennial budget, provided additional funding to universities with declining enrollment over the past 10 years. While this funding is appreciated, relatively small enrollment increases and decreases result in some universities frequently switching from being eligible and ineligible for this funding. The Universities of Wisconsin request that the funding be allocated on a student credit hour basis to eliminate the volatility of the current allocation methodology. Second, Act 15 also provided additional funding for high-demand faculty in a separate UW appropriation. The Universities of Wisconsin request that this funding be added to the UW's general operating appropriation. Through coding within Workday, the UWs will still be able to track and monitor this funding to ensure legislative intent is met.

| Ensuring Affordability to Every Wisconsinite |                      |                      |                      |             |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Initiative                                   | FY28                 | FY29 Ongoing Request | Biennial Request     | FTE Request |
| 4-Year Tuition Pledge                        | \$85,000,000         | \$105,000,000        | \$190,000,000        | 89.0        |
| Wisconsin Work & Learn                       | \$17,000,000         | \$33,000,000         | \$50,000,000         | 0.0         |
| Veterans Tuition Remissions                  | -                    | -                    | -                    | -           |
| UW Excellence                                | \$35,000,000         | \$35,000,000         | \$70,000,000         | 0.0         |
| <b>Recommendation</b>                        | <b>\$137,000,000</b> | <b>\$173,000,000</b> | <b>\$310,000,000</b> | <b>0.0</b>  |

### 4-Year Tuition Pledge

**\$105.0M Ongoing**

Affordability has been and continues to be a primary focus of the Universities of Wisconsin, resulting in UW tuition rates consistently at or near the lowest of their peer groups. To further solidify the UWs' long-standing position as a leader in affordability, this funding allows the UWs to freeze tuition for resident undergraduate students during the 2027-29 biennium. To provide additional predictability, the UWs would commit to limiting any potential tuition increases in the 2029-31 biennium to no more than the rate of inflation.

Past tuition increases have largely been driven by the requirement that the UWs cover 30% of the State's pay plan and fringe benefits, as well as inflationary pressures on goods and services. The requested funding would address these needs. In addition, this request includes \$45.0 million annually to further develop the UW's artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities in an ethical manner. Funding for increasingly costly AI infrastructure and resources ensures students, faculty and staff have access to vital technology that supports teaching and learning without the need for tuition increases.

The UW's AI approach is multi-faceted, including:

- AI infrastructure to build and operate a high-performance computing environment for large-scale AI work. The investment covers the hardware, software, and networking infrastructure required to run advanced AI systems, as well as the staff needed to manage the environment and support faculty and students in their AI research and coursework. Rather than renting computing power from commercial vendors at escalating costs, this infrastructure would be owned and operated by the Universities of Wisconsin, giving Wisconsin universities reliable, affordable access to the computing resources needed to train and develop AI tools.
- Enterprise licenses that provide appropriate coverage for UW faculty, staff, and students to access the leading AI tools currently available, such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and specialized AI platforms, at a level beyond the free versions available to the general public.
- Data infrastructure and cybersecurity enhancements to further ensure that AI can be deployed safely and effectively at scale across the UWs and that the UWs' capabilities keep pace with the evolving threats of an AI-enabled world.

- Resources and staffing needed to ensure that UW faculty, staff, and students have the knowledge and confidence to use AI responsibly and effectively. This includes access to external training programs, online learning platforms, and fellowship opportunities, as well as dedicated specialists at each university who work directly with faculty and instructional staff to thoughtfully incorporate AI into courses and academic programs, research, and operations.

## **Wisconsin Work & Learn**

**\$33.0M Ongoing**

The Wisconsin Work & Learn program will cover the cost of tuition and segregated fees for eligible students and, in turn, require those students to work while attending school. Work may include employment both on and off campus, including internships, co-ops, service learning, practicums, and student teaching.

Eligible students include incoming Wisconsin freshman and transfer students beginning in the fall of 2027 whose household adjusted gross income (AGI) is \$77,500 or less, the median AGI in Wisconsin. This is a “last dollar” program, meaning the Work & Learn program dollars will be applied after all other scholarships and grants have been exhausted. Freshmen will be eligible for four years and transfer students will be eligible for two years.

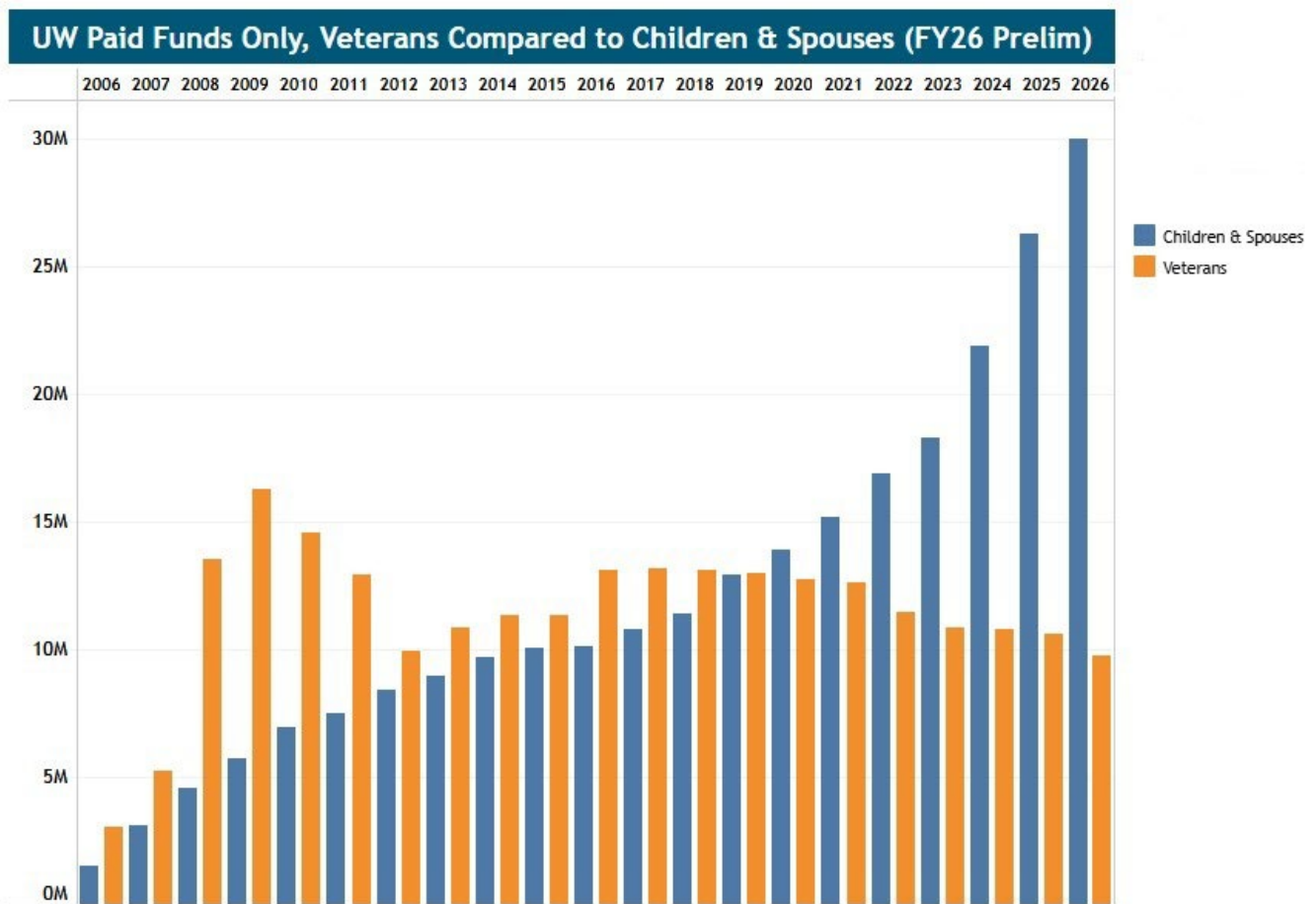
The total cost for a four-year cohort is estimated to be \$108 million, benefiting approximately 6,000 Wisconsin students in the first two years.

## **Veterans Tuition Remissions**

The Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) currently receives a state appropriation to reimburse the Universities of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Technical Colleges for tuition remissions mandated by the Wisconsin GI Bill. However, the approximately \$5.4 million appropriated to the UWs supports less than 15% of current remissions. As part of the 2027-29 biennial budget, the Universities of Wisconsin recommend that HEAB include a request in its budget to fully fund the UW remitted tuition.

While the number of veterans eligible for Wisconsin GI Bill benefits has been relatively stable, the number of children and spouses of veterans with federally determined service-connected disability ratings has risen sharply at both the state and federal levels. As a result, over the last 5 years, Wisconsin GI Bill tuition remissions have grown by an average of 8.3% annually. Below is a table showing historical UW funding for Wisconsin veteran-related students.

Assuming the trend continues and if the current HEAB funding remains flat as it has over the past several years, the unfunded remissions are projected to total nearly \$80.0 million over the biennium. The UWs are honored to educate Wisconsin veterans and their families, and full funding from the state would ensure that universities have the resources to provide all students the quality education and services they deserve.



## UW Excellence

**\$35.0M Ongoing**

The UWs' talented faculty and staff are some of our greatest assets. To ensure a high-quality educational experience and well-run organization, the UWs need to ensure they are compensated at rates comparable to the local, regional, and sometimes national markets.

Unfortunately, compensation for several categories of UW employees now lag behind those markets. For example, instructional academic staff, which include, but are not limited to, lecturers and clinical instructors, are currently 17% behind the national median at the UW comprehensive universities. UW-Milwaukee's instructional academic staff lag the national median by 42%. In addition, UWs are also experiencing retention issues with certain university staff titles, such as police officers, custodians, and power plant operators, who often leave for other governmental positions or the private sector. While the requested funding does not close the entire gap, it allows UWs to raise starting salaries to be more competitive and provides some funds for limited market-based increases.

**Ensuring Affordability to Every Wisconsinite – FY 2028 Funding by UW University (in millions):**

| University           | Tuition Pledge |             | Work and Learn |            | UW Excellence |            |
|----------------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|------------|---------------|------------|
|                      | Funding        | FTE         | Funding        | FTE        | Funding       | FTE        |
| UW-Eau Claire        | \$4.7          | 5.5         | \$1.0          | 0.0        | 2.4           | 0.0        |
| UW-Green Bay         | 3.9            | 5.1         | 0.8            | 0.0        | 1.8           | 0.0        |
| UW-La Crosse         | 5.3            | 5.9         | 1.5            | 0.0        | 2.7           | 0.0        |
| UW-Madison           | 35.1           | 26.1        | 6.0            | 0.0        | 10.6          | 0.0        |
| UW-Milwaukee         | 9.1            | 8.6         | 2.6            | 0.0        | 4.8           | 0.0        |
| UW-Oshkosh           | 4.2            | 5.3         | 0.7            | 0.0        | 2.0           | 0.0        |
| UW-Parkside          | 1.9            | 3.9         | 0.2            | 0.0        | 0.8           | 0.0        |
| UW-Platteville       | 3.6            | 4.8         | 0.7            | 0.0        | 1.7           | 0.0        |
| UW-River Falls       | 2.7            | 4.3         | 0.4            | 0.0        | 1.2           | 0.0        |
| UW-Stevens Point     | 4.2            | 5.2         | 1.4            | 0.0        | 2.1           | 0.0        |
| UW-Stout Polytechnic | 3.3            | 4.7         | 0.8            | 0.0        | 1.6           | 0.0        |
| UW-Superior          | 1.4            | 3.6         | 0.3            | 0.0        | 0.5           | 0.0        |
| UW-Whitewater        | 5.6            | 6.0         | 0.8            | 0.0        | 2.8           | 0.0        |
| UW Administration    | 0.0            | 0.0         | 0.0            | 0.0        | 0.0           | 0.0        |
| <b>Totals</b>        | <b>\$85.0</b>  | <b>89.0</b> | <b>\$17.0</b>  | <b>0.0</b> | <b>35.0</b>   | <b>0.0</b> |

**Ensuring Affordability to Every Wisconsinite – FY 2029 Funding by UW University (in millions):**

| University           | Tuition Pledge |             | Work and Learn |            | UW Excellence |            |
|----------------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|------------|---------------|------------|
|                      | Funding        | FTE         | Funding        | FTE        | Funding       | FTE        |
| UW-Eau Claire        | \$6.1          | 5.5         | \$1.9          | 0.0        | 2.4           | 0.0        |
| UW-Green Bay         | 4.9            | 5.1         | 1.5            | 0.0        | 1.8           | 0.0        |
| UW-La Crosse         | 6.9            | 5.9         | 2.9            | 0.0        | 2.7           | 0.0        |
| UW-Madison           | 41.2           | 26.1        | 12.0           | 0.0        | 10.6          | 0.0        |
| UW-Milwaukee         | 11.9           | 8.6         | 4.9            | 0.0        | 4.8           | 0.0        |
| UW-Oshkosh           | 5.3            | 5.3         | 1.4            | 0.0        | 2.0           | 0.0        |
| UW-Parkside          | 2.3            | 3.9         | 0.3            | 0.0        | 1.7           | 0.0        |
| UW-Platteville       | 4.5            | 4.8         | 1.3            | 0.0        | 0.8           | 0.0        |
| UW-River Falls       | 3.4            | 4.3         | 0.7            | 0.0        | 1.2           | 0.0        |
| UW-Stevens Point     | 5.4            | 5.2         | 2.6            | 0.0        | 2.1           | 0.0        |
| UW-Stout Polytechnic | 4.2            | 4.7         | 1.5            | 0.0        | 1.6           | 0.0        |
| UW-Superior          | 1.7            | 3.6         | 0.5            | 0.0        | 0.5           | 0.0        |
| UW-Whitewater        | 7.2            | 6.0         | 1.5            | 0.0        | 2.8           | 0.0        |
| UW Administration    | 0.0            | 0.0         | 0.0            | 0.0        | 0.0           | 0.0        |
| <b>Totals</b>        | <b>\$105.0</b> | <b>89.0</b> | <b>\$33.0</b>  | <b>0.0</b> | <b>35.0</b>   | <b>0.0</b> |

| <b>Building Wisconsin's Workforce &amp; Next Generation of Businesses</b> |                      |                             |                         |                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Initiative</b>                                                         | <b>FY28</b>          | <b>FY29 Ongoing Request</b> | <b>Biennial Request</b> | <b>FTE Request</b> |
| Tech for Tomorrow                                                         | \$45,000,000         | \$45,000,000                | \$90,000,000            | 71.80              |
| Accelerate WI                                                             | \$25,000,000         | \$25,000,000                | \$50,000,000            | 95.95              |
| U Succeed                                                                 | \$25,000,000         | \$25,000,000                | \$50,000,000            | 117.65             |
| UW for U                                                                  | \$25,000,000         | \$25,000,000                | \$50,000,000            | 123.00             |
| Wisconsin Jump Start                                                      | -                    | -                           | -                       | 0.0                |
| <b>Recommendation</b>                                                     | <b>\$120,000,000</b> | <b>\$120,000,000</b>        | <b>\$240,000,000</b>    | <b>408.40</b>      |

## **Tech for Tomorrow**

**\$45.0M Ongoing**

Tech for Tomorrow will ensure Wisconsin's economic and workforce competitiveness will be strengthened through investments in emerging technologies, research, workforce training, industry partnerships, and experiential learning. These efforts will accelerate the transition of new technologies from research labs to commercialization and help Wisconsin consumers and businesses in areas such as agriculture, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, and freshwater innovation. Expanding capacity in areas such as these will attract investment, support strategic industries, improve environmental and health outcomes, and develop a highly skilled workforce prepared to meet the state's evolving needs. Examples of proposed university investments include:

UW-Madison would use this funding to address the needs for modernization and additional capital equipment investments at the state's 15 agricultural research stations. The research stations support Wisconsin's agricultural economy through applied crop, soil, livestock, and environmental research used directly by producers. They also provide critical information to state agencies, conservation partners, and communities on water quality, climate adaptation, and natural resource management. In addition, the stations provide hands-on research experiences that help prepare the state's future agricultural and environmental workforce. Modernization and capital equipment investments at the stations would further facilitate student learning opportunities across UW-Madison, UW-Platteville, and UW-River Falls.

UW-La Crosse would create an Empowering Quality, Use, And Innovation in Practical Technology (EQUIPT) program that will function as a regional catalyst for emerging technologies, strengthening partnerships between the university, local employers, and community organizations to address workforce needs and regional challenges in the areas of agriculture, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing and freshwater industries. By connecting academic expertise with real-world applications, EQUIPT will help advance emerging technologies from research to commercialization while expanding opportunities for applied research, innovation, and talent development. Wisconsin businesses and consumers will benefit from greater access to faculty expertise,

research capabilities, and a pipeline of skilled graduates prepared to meet evolving workforce demands.

UW-Milwaukee would use this funding to establish a multidisciplinary artificial intelligence (AI) for manufacturing initiative that expands research and teaching capacity, strengthens partnerships with Wisconsin manufacturers, and prepares the future workforce through enhanced student research opportunities. The addition of a dedicated faculty expert and student research fellowships is expected to attract significant external funding, engage more than 100 students in research experiences, and position the university as a leader in advanced manufacturing innovation across multiple industries.

## **Accelerate WI**

**\$25.0M Ongoing**

Accelerate WI will strengthen Wisconsin's economic competitiveness by supporting entrepreneurship, business creation and expansion, commercialization, responsible AI adoption, and workforce development. Investments will help move new technologies from research to market, expand entrepreneurship education and business support, develop new Wisconsin products and markets, and address workforce needs through industry-responsive education and training. These efforts will foster business growth, support emerging entrepreneurs and underserved communities, and position Wisconsin for continued economic growth, innovation, and workforce success. Examples of proposed university investments include:

UW-Stevens Point would establish the Central Wisconsin Entrepreneurship Center at UW-Stevens Point by bringing together the Sentry School of Business and Economics and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in the future Sentry Hall, creating a consolidated and visible hub for entrepreneurship services and programming. The Center would expand the scale and scope of both credit and noncredit entrepreneurship education, provide one-on-one mentorship for student entrepreneurs, offer fractional expertise and operational services to help emerging businesses grow, and establish long-term funding for the SBDC site in Antigo to continue serving northern Wisconsin. It would also serve as a regional entrepreneurship touchpoint by convening partners, coordinating services, expanding networking opportunities, supporting entrepreneurship financing efforts, collaborating with entrepreneurship programs across the Universities of Wisconsin, and connecting alumni entrepreneurs with students and community entrepreneurs to strengthen the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem.

UW-Platteville would expand entrepreneurship, rural business development, and e-commerce across Southwest Wisconsin. This investment would strengthen the region's agricultural, manufacturing, and small business sectors through enhanced business support and expanded innovative programs such as UW-Extension business support, mobile processing units, innovation center expansion and strengthened corporate partnership pipelines. Focused on hands-on training, digital literacy, and commercialization, this initiative aims to modernize rural economies and supply chains while supporting rural business growth, expanding entrepreneurship opportunities across counties, and advancing agricultural workforce development.

UW-River Falls proposes a targeted investment to strengthen Wisconsin's entrepreneurial ecosystem and support the creation and expansion of value-added agricultural and food-based businesses, both within UW-River Falls and with regional partners. This initiative builds on the

university's established strengths and existing infrastructure, including its Meat Plant, Dairy Pilot Plant, laboratory farms, and University Business Collaboration Center, which together provides a unique, integrated platform for product development, testing, and market entry. The proposed investment will expand the university's capacity to support entrepreneurs, small businesses, and industry partners by enhancing coordination, technical expertise, and facility utilization.

## **U Succeed**

**\$25.0M Ongoing**

U Succeed will ensure UW students have the academic, career, and support services needed to succeed in college and graduate ready for tomorrow's workforce. Investments in advising, career counseling, mental health services, high-impact learning experiences, and financial and basic needs support will improve student retention and graduation rates while expanding access to internships, undergraduate research, experiential learning, and other career-connected opportunities that prepare graduates to meet Wisconsin's workforce needs. Examples of proposed university investments include:

UW-Green Bay will strengthen student success by providing proactive, personalized support from enrollment through graduation, improving retention, degree completion, career readiness, and post-graduation outcomes. Investments in internship coordination, career advising, community-based learning coordination, academic advising, success coaching, peer mentoring, tutoring, and student success technology will help students navigate their academic pathways, connect coursework to career opportunities, access timely support, and build stronger connections to campus and the workforce.

UW-Whitewater would enhance student support services by expanding access to licensed mental health counselors to reduce wait times, restore regular counseling for students, and improve the quality, privacy, security, and effectiveness of clinical services through facility, technology, and operational improvements. It would also expand financial literacy education, financial aid assistance, and personal financial coaching through campus support centers. They would also add professional academic advisors dedicated to graduate students in both in-person and online programs, providing targeted support while strengthening academic support for graduate students to aid in persistence.

## **UW for U**

**\$25.0M Ongoing**

UW for U strengthens Wisconsin's workforce pipeline by expanding degree completion, competency-based education, continuing education, online learning, workforce-aligned programs, and industry-responsive credentials. Developed in partnership with employers and informed by labor market needs, these efforts will increase access to workforce-relevant education, strengthen transfer and experiential learning pathways, and prepare learners of all backgrounds for high-demand careers while supporting economic growth across Wisconsin. Examples of proposed university investments include:

UW-Stout Polytechnic has supported working professionals through flexible educational pathways since 1999. This investment would strengthen the infrastructure needed to expand competency-based education by aligning student services and learning delivery through a coordinated systems

approach, ultimately increasing degree and certification completions. The funding would also enhance support for re-entry students by providing dedicated academic advising, tutoring and peer mentoring helping students successfully return, persist, and graduate on time. Additionally, scholarships may be provided to make a polytechnic college education affordable.

UW-Superior will collaborate with external workforce development partners to develop and deliver ten new noncredit professional development microcredentials and/or customized training offerings, ten new credit-bearing microcredentials that address workforce and learner needs and build one reduced credit degree program. They will also design and host an annual one-day event on high-demand topics with a target enrollment of 50 participants.

### **Wisconsin Jump Start**

This is a pivotal time for a state investment to expand dual enrollment opportunities for all Wisconsin high school students through a comprehensive, statewide funding model that supports dual enrollment in all its forms including Early College Credit Programs (ECCP), Start College Now, concurrent enrollment partnerships between institutions and school districts (also referred to as College Credit in High Schools, Dual Enrollment at the High School, or Transcribed Credit, among other terms) and dual credit. Such an investment will reduce financial barriers for Wisconsin students, provide sustainable funding and avoid financial burdens on school districts, and increase access to high-quality college coursework, particularly for students in rural and underserved communities.

Expanding dual enrollment opportunities will accelerate student success, strengthen pathways to post-secondary credentials, and help meet Wisconsin's future workforce needs by allowing more students to earn transferable college credit while still in high school. Generally, in states with the highest levels of dual enrollment participation, the state, rather than students, pays most or all the tuition, and the program is available statewide, not through isolated local agreements.

The Board of Regents recommends that the state include such a program in its biennial budget. No amount is included within the UW's request because the money would be allocated to an administering state agency, for distribution to Wisconsin school districts.

**Building Wisconsin's Workforce and Next Generation of Businesses – Annual Funding by UW University (in millions):**

|                      | <b>Tech for Tomorrow</b> |              | <b>Accelerate WI</b> |              | <b>U Succeed</b> |               | <b>UW for U</b> |               |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| University           | Funding                  | FTE          | Funding              | FTE          | Funding          | FTE           | Funding         | FTE           |
| UW-Eau Claire        | \$2.0                    | 5.00         | \$1.7                | 5.00         | \$1.6            | 7.00          | \$1.7           | 8.50          |
| UW-Green Bay         | 1.5                      | 5.00         | 1.3                  | 10.00        | 1.3              | 11.00         | 1.3             | 15.00         |
| UW-La Crosse         | 2.7                      | 5.00         | 2.0                  | 6.25         | 1.9              | 7.00          | 2.0             | 8.00          |
| UW-Madison           | 20.0                     | 7.00         | 7.6                  | 24.00        | 7.7              | 8.00          | 7.6             | 27.00         |
| UW-Milwaukee         | 6.4                      | 11.00        | 3.4                  | 8.00         | 3.5              | 27.00         | 3.4             | 17.00         |
| UW-Oshkosh           | 1.7                      | 11.00        | 1.4                  | 8.00         | 1.2              | 7.90          | 1.4             | 9.00          |
| UW-Parkside          | 0.9                      | 1.00         | 0.6                  | 3.00         | 0.6              | 6.5           | 0.6             | 3.00          |
| UW-Platteville       | 1.3                      | -            | 1.2                  | 3.00         | 1.2              | 8.00          | 1.2             | 3.00          |
| UW-River Falls       | 1.1                      | 4.00         | 0.9                  | 4.00         | 0.9              | 7.00          | 0.9             | 8.00          |
| UW-Stevens Point     | 2.0                      | 8.80         | 1.5                  | 10.00        | 1.5              | 14.25         | 1.5             | 12.00         |
| UW-Stout Polytechnic | 1.6                      | 6.00         | 1.1                  | 5.20         | 1.2              | 7.00          | 1.1             | 7.00          |
| UW-Superior          | 1.0                      | 4.00         | 0.3                  | 1.50         | 0.4              | 3.00          | 0.3             | 1.50          |
| UW-Whitewater        | 2.8                      | 4.00         | 2.0                  | 8.00         | 2.0              | 4.00          | 2.0             | 4.00          |
| UW Administration    | -                        | -            | -                    | -            | -                | -             | -               | -             |
| <b>Totals</b>        | <b>\$45.0</b>            | <b>71.80</b> | <b>\$25.0</b>        | <b>95.95</b> | <b>\$25.0</b>    | <b>117.65</b> | <b>\$25.0</b>   | <b>123.00</b> |

| <b>Advancing Discoveries &amp; Improving Access to Health Care</b> |                     |                             |                         |                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Initiative</b>                                                  | <b>FY28</b>         | <b>FY29 Ongoing Request</b> | <b>Biennial Request</b> | <b>FTE Request</b> |
| Healthy Wisconsin                                                  | \$45,000,000        | \$45,000,000                | \$90,000,000            | 82.50              |
| Cures for Tomorrow                                                 | \$12,500,000        | \$12,500,000                | \$25,000,000            | 42.00              |
| <b>Recommendation</b>                                              | <b>\$57,500,000</b> | <b>\$57,500,000</b>         | <b>\$115,000,000</b>    | <b>124.50</b>      |

## Healthy Wisconsin

**\$45.0M Ongoing**

Wisconsin continues to face significant workforce shortages across healthcare and behavioral health professions, including nursing, pharmacy, allied health, healthcare administration, counseling, social work, and other emerging fields. To address these critical needs, funding will support increased enrollment capacity, expanded faculty and instructional resources, development of new academic programs, and strengthened educational pathways that prepare more qualified health care professionals to serve communities across the state. Investments will also expand behavioral health training opportunities and increase the number of licensed providers available to meet growing demand for healthcare and mental health services throughout Wisconsin. Examples of proposed university investments include:

UW-La Crosse will grow its healthcare programs, such as those for physician assistants, physical therapists, and radiation therapy. The requested funding will allow faculty, instructional academic staff, and support staff to provide student services, including instruction, academic success support, career advising, financial aid, and enhanced clinical training opportunities in rural environments for medical and all health care students. UW-La Crosse will implement a preceptor training program to train practicing professionals to provide guidance, teaching, and evaluation within the students' clinical sites. Investments in distance education technology and infrastructure, lab enhancements, and other student spaces will be necessary.

UW-Parkside will expand healthcare education opportunities in southeastern Wisconsin by developing accredited nursing programs that increase the pipeline of qualified healthcare professionals entering Wisconsin's workforce. Through expanded clinical partnerships with hospitals, health systems, long-term care facilities, and community health organizations, students will gain greater access to high-quality hands-on training and experiential learning opportunities. These partnerships will strengthen alignment between academic programming and employer workforce needs, ensuring graduates develop the clinical, technical, and professional competencies most in demand across healthcare settings. By creating stronger pathways from education to employment and responding directly to regional workforce shortages, UW-Parkside will increase the number of practice-ready healthcare professionals available to improve access to care and support the health needs of communities throughout Wisconsin.

UW-Oshkosh will enhance health-related academic programs and training capacity to increase the number of qualified healthcare professionals entering Wisconsin's workforce. By strengthening programs across nursing, health professions, STEM, population health, and health informatics, the university will provide more students with access to high-quality clinical, simulation, and

community-based learning experiences that prepare them for practice in today's evolving healthcare environment. The integration of digital care, analytics, artificial intelligence, and population health competencies into curricula will support growth in program enrollment and graduate output. These efforts will strengthen workforce readiness, create additional pathways into high-demand healthcare careers, expand the availability of health professionals, and improve access to care throughout Wisconsin.

## **Cures for Tomorrow**

**\$12.5M Ongoing**

Advancing the Universities of Wisconsin's mission to improve human health and accelerate cures, these investments support research, innovation, and workforce development across a broad range of health challenges, including cancer, infectious and inflammatory diseases, neurological disorders, and other significant conditions. These initiatives strengthen the entire innovation pipeline, from discovery and translation to commercialization by expanding research capacity, clinical and community partnerships, and technologies that enhance quality of life, prevention, and care. Through collaboration across UW universities, these efforts reinforce Wisconsin's biomedical innovation ecosystem, promote interdisciplinary research, and position the state for sustained leadership in healthcare advancement, scientific discovery, and economic growth. Examples of proposed university investments include:

UW-Madison would use this funding to sustain the infrastructure that has enabled significant growth in clinical trials across the School of Medicine and Public Health, a critical investment that can no longer rely solely on the annual support UW-Madison has provided since FY21. Expanding clinical trials remains one of the most effective ways to accelerate the development of treatments and cures for complex diseases, with the number of active trials increasing steadily during this period, including a substantial portfolio at the Carbone Cancer Center. Beyond this growth, clinical trials have driven important advances in patient care, including innovative cellular therapies that harness a patient's immune system to fight cancer and theragnostic approaches that both identify tumor locations and deliver targeted radiation treatment.

UW-Milwaukee will accelerate the discovery and translation of new treatments and cures for Alzheimer's disease, cancer, neurological disorders, infectious diseases, and other major health challenges by expanding interdisciplinary research capacity, advancing drug discovery, strengthening rehabilitation and human performance innovation, and enhancing pathways from laboratory discoveries to real-world patient care. Leveraging UWM's nationally recognized strengths in brain health, neuroscience, digital health, and translational research, this work will support research infrastructure, partnerships with healthcare systems and regional universities, and shared innovation resources that accelerate the development, testing, and commercialization of new therapies, medical technologies, and diagnostics.

UW-Eau Claire will advance innovative treatments and community-based solutions for neurological conditions and chronic diseases, including stroke, Parkinson's disease, dementia, traumatic brain injury, aphasia, and other age-related health challenges. Building on the university's strengths in health sciences and community partnerships, the Blugold Brain Health program and Healthspan Research & Education Center will expand access to evidence-based care, support healthier aging, improve health outcomes, and help translate research into practice, particularly in rural communities.

**Advancing Discoveries and Improving Access to Health Care – Annual Funding by UW University (in millions):**

| University           | Healthy WI    |              | Cures for Tomorrow |              |
|----------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|
|                      | Funding       | FTE          | Funding            | FTE          |
| UW-Eau Claire        | \$1.0         | 6.50         | \$0.8              | 1.00         |
| UW-Green Bay         | 0.8           | 1.50         | -                  |              |
| UW-La Crosse         | 11.2          | 5.00         | 0.8                |              |
| UW-Madison           | 24.5          | 23.00        | 5.0                | 24.00        |
| UW-Milwaukee         | 2.1           | 17.00        | 5.0                | 13.00        |
| UW-Oshkosh           | 0.9           | 6.00         | -                  |              |
| UW-Parkside          | 0.3           | 2.00         | -                  |              |
| UW-Platteville       | 0.7           | 3.00         | -                  |              |
| UW-River Falls       | 0.5           | 4.00         | 0.8                | 4.00         |
| UW-Stevens Point     | 0.9           | 9.00         | -                  |              |
| UW-Stout Polytechnic | 0.7           | 3.00         | -                  |              |
| UW-Superior          | 0.2           | 1.50         | -                  |              |
| UW-Whitewater        | 1.2           | 1.0          | -                  |              |
| UW Administration    | -             | -            | -                  |              |
| <b>Totals</b>        | <b>\$45.0</b> | <b>82.50</b> | <b>\$12.5</b>      | <b>42.00</b> |

## Standard Budget Adjustments

Standard Budget Adjustments are changes in funding related to the current biennium which allow for continued base level services into the upcoming biennium and are determined by the Department of Administration (DOA).

### **Fringe Benefits and Lease Rental Payments**

**Est. \$65.0M Ongoing**

The figures for calculating the fringe benefits and lease rental payments are not currently available; therefore, the UW System Board of Regents is asked to delegate the authority to approve these requests and any others that may arise to the Universities of Wisconsin President.

## Statutory Language Requests

The Universities of Wisconsin request two statutory language changes that will provide more stable funding to universities, improve incentives, and increase efficiency.

### **Changing the Funding Allocation Model from Enrollment Decline to Course Credits Awarded**

The Universities of Wisconsin request a change to statutory language in s. 36.11(13)(a), Wis. Stats., that would allocate the \$15.25 million initially allocated in the 2025-27 Biennial Budget on the basis of declining enrollment to the basis of course credits awarded consistent with the methodology used in s. 36.11(13)(b), Wis. Stats. This funding has proven extremely useful to the universities, but implementation of the statutory language has identified several challenges.

First, fluctuating enrollments are leading to volatility in the universities' annual eligibility for these funds. For example, UW-Superior was eligible for funding in FY26 due to a 10-year enrollment decrease of 13 students and became ineligible in FY27 due to a 10-year enrollment increase of 33 students. UW-La Crosse became ineligible in FY27 due to a 10-year enrollment increase of 52 students, representing 0.5% of its fall 2025 enrollment. Various enrollment projection scenarios through 2030 indicate that several universities may change between being eligible and ineligible from year to year based on similarly minor enrollment changes.

Second, while universities are committed to growing enrollments consistent with their missions, providing funding to universities based on declining enrollment provides a disincentive for universities to innovate in new ways to grow their enrollments. For example, the 10-year increase of 52 students at UW-La Crosse results in a loss of more than \$1.7 million.

Third, changing the way in which these funds are allocated would provide a more stable basis for universities to develop annual budgets and plans. Universities are cautious about using these funds in their base budgets for ongoing expenditures out of concern this could create a budget gap if funds are unavailable in future years. This limits the ability of universities to invest strategically in areas such as faculty salaries, student services, and enrollment growth initiatives.

### **Transferring Funding for Faculty in High-Demand Fields of Study to General Program Operations Appropriation**

The Universities of Wisconsin requests that funding currently provided under s. 20.285(1)(fa), Wis. Stats., related to faculty in high-demand fields of study be transferred to its General Program

Operations appropriation under s. 20.285(1)(a), Wis. Stats. This change would improve operational efficiency for the universities without sacrificing accountability.

In FY27, the majority of this funding is being used to increase the base salaries of faculty. Once so allocated, future allocations from this appropriation will be minimal and only occur if and when a faculty member leaves employment. Further, any such reallocation of these funds to another faculty member in a high demand field will be in accordance with the JCOER-approved plan. Finally, these amounts will continue to be tracked and monitored by university HR staff regardless of whether they are in a separate appropriation. By transferring this funding to the General Program Operations appropriation, university staff, particularly in academic departments, that would no longer be required to separately include salary and fringe benefits costs from this additional funding source in budget, accounting, and payroll systems, reducing an unnecessary administrative burden.

## **Wisconsin Grant-UW**

The Wisconsin Grant-UW program is the state's largest need-based financial aid program for students attending the Universities of Wisconsin. The program is administered by the State's Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB). In even-numbered years, a budget request for the Wisconsin Grant-UW is approved by the Board of Regents and then forwarded to HEAB for inclusion in that agency's biennial budget submission to the Department of Administration (DOA).

### **Increase to the Wisconsin Grant-UW**

**\$10.5M Ongoing**

The Universities of Wisconsin seek this funding to raise the maximum award amount and further the goal of covering half of the average tuition and fee costs at the comprehensive universities, which will help students access and complete a quality higher education program, producing a more highly skilled and educated workforce. Additional resources for the Wisconsin Grant program will also help address student debt and affordability, two areas of growing concern to the citizens of Wisconsin.

## **Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (WVDL)**

The Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Lab is governed by its own board but is administratively attached to UW-Madison, therefore its biennial budget request must be approved and submitted by the Board of Regents.

### **Forensic Veterinary Necropsy Services**

**\$82.3K Ongoing**

This funding will support forensic veterinary necropsy and diagnostic services for Wisconsin law enforcement agencies, animal control officials, veterinarians, and animal owners. It would offset WVDL's current service costs, which are covered by fee-for-services testing, and ensure continued statewide access to critical forensic diagnostic services.

### **Replacement of Critical Biosafety Autoclaves**

**\$220.0K One-Time**

WVDL requests one-time funding to replace three critical autoclaves that support daily laboratory operations and biosafety requirements. These autoclaves were installed during the original construction of the Madison facility in 2006 and are now over 20 years old. The typical service life of laboratory autoclaves is about 10 years; however, WVDL has extended their useful life through meticulous maintenance and preventive service programs. Despite these efforts, the equipment has reached the end of its operational lifespan, and replacement is now necessary.

## **Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH)**

The Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene is governed by its own board but is administratively attached to UW-Madison, therefore its biennial budget request must be approved and submitted by the Board of Regents.

### **Operating While Intoxicated WI Forensic Toxicology Testing**

**\$2.0M Ongoing**

The Forensic Toxicology Section provides essential services to Wisconsin's law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices, and coroner/medical examiner (C/ME) facilities, delivering legally defensible data for Operating While Intoxicated (OWI) and death investigations. The cost of operating these programs has risen to \$3.6 million annually, and the \$1.6 million allocation from the Driver Improvement Surcharge Fund has remained the same since 2010. This funding gap has resulted in a degradation of service delivery: alcohol testing turnaround times have increased from 3 days to 50 days, and drug testing turnaround times have increased from 48 days to 270 days. This request for \$2 million in ongoing annual funding is necessary to address the current shortfall, replace depleted reserves, and restore testing efficiency to sustainable levels.

### **Blood Lead Testing Program**

**\$450.0K Ongoing**

The Department of Health Services (DHS) is statutorily required to provide statewide laboratory testing for biological lead specimens. The WSLH fulfills this statutory mandate on behalf of the state; however, no dedicated state appropriation exists to support the laboratory requirements of this service. This program is a vital public health function that primarily serves children and under-resourced populations who are at high risk for lead exposure. Because current fee-for-service revenue recovers only a small fraction of annual operating costs, the WSLH maintains this mandated service at a significant loss. This request for \$450,000 annually will ensure the sustainability of the program and preserve statewide testing capacity for Wisconsin's most vulnerable residents.

### **Cervical Cancer Screening**

**\$221.5K Ongoing**

The upcoming redirection of grant funds by the Division of Public Health from WSLH to reproductive health and family planning (RHFP) clinics for cytology testing services will create a critical funding gap for the Cytology section. This section provides essential cervical cancer screenings, including Pap tests and HPV testing, for clinics across the state, the prison system, and University Health Services. Beyond its clinical role, the section serves as a vital satellite training site for cytotechnology students at Albany College, helping to mitigate the severe shortage of cytotechnologists in Wisconsin hospitals.

To ensure long-term self-sufficiency, the section is currently developing an HPV self-collect test designed to improve screening access and generate new revenue. This bridge funding is required to retain specialized, credentialed staff during this transition and to maintain the lab's unique role in professional workforce development.

### **Genomic Testing for Disease Surveillance**

**\$450.0K Ongoing**

Next-Generation Sequencing (NGS) and the associated bioinformatics analysis represent the most critical growth area in public health infectious disease surveillance. Since 2019, the WSLH Communicable Disease Division (CDD) has expanded from a single bioinformatician to a team of 6 FTEs to meet the state's needs. This team performs essential strain surveillance and outbreak response for over a dozen pathogens, including SARS-CoV-2, RSV, Tuberculosis, *Candida auris*, *Legionella*, *Cyclospora*, and PulseNet organisms such as *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, and *Listeria*.

This expansion has been supported by federal ELC supplemental funding, which is scheduled to conclude in July 2027. Without a state appropriation to bridge this gap, the laboratory will lose the capacity for 2 NGS FTEs and 3 Bioinformatics FTEs. These positions are essential for identifying enteric outbreaks, investigating antibiotic-resistant pathogens, and tracking vaccine-preventable diseases to protect the health of all Wisconsinites.

### **New Autoclave for High Consequence Testing Lab**

**\$500.0K One-Time**

The Biosafety Level 3 (BSL3) suite is the state's high-containment facility for testing high-consequence pathogens, including Anthrax, Ebola, and Tuberculosis (processing 6,000 specimens annually). A functional pass-through autoclave is a mandatory safety requirement for the sterilization and disposal of biohazard waste generated in this environment.

The current unit is over 10 years old and recently suffered a catastrophic 1.5-year period of non-functionality—an unacceptably long downtime for such critical infrastructure. This failure created significant operational risk and necessitated expensive workarounds. Replacing this unit is essential to ensure the safety of laboratory personnel and the continued readiness of the BSL3 space for public health emergencies.

### **Drinking Water Testing**

**\$220.0K One-Time**

Wisconsin is transitioning to more stringent drinking water safety standards to align with federal Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI) and updated Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 809. These regulations lower the lead action threshold from 15 parts per billion (ppb) to 10 ppb by 2027.

To accurately detect lead and other metals at these lower concentrations, the Inorganic Chemistry Unit requires Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometry (ICP-MS). This high-sensitivity instrumentation is the only reliable method to capture data below the strict 10 ppb limit. This request is for a one-time capital purchase to ensure the WSLH remains the gold standard for drinking water compliance and public health protection.