February 27, 2015

Mark Mone, Chancellor
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Dear Chancellor Mone:

As members of the Faculty of Color Mosaic Council, representing more than 260 faculty of color at UW-Milwaukee, we write to share with you our collective concerns about provisions in Assembly Bill 21, 2015-16 Legislature (LRB-144/1), especially the following language highlighted in the paragraph below:

The bill eliminates requirements that apply to the UW System and Board of Regents under current law, including requirements regarding the following: faculty tenure and probationary appointments; academic staff appointments; accumulation of sick leave; specified educational programs and studies; graduate student financial aid; recruiting programs for minority and disadvantaged students; public broadcasting; application and parking fees; student fee statements; gifts, grants, and bequests to the UW System; transportation planning; orientation information on sexual assault and harassment; student identification numbers; Downer Woods preservation; criteria for use of animal in research; information technology; support for medical practices in underserved areas; a rural physician residency assistance program; loan assistance program for physicians, dentists, and other health care providers; and various legislative reports.

As the campus begins the difficult task of addressing the massive cuts to state funding, it is imperative that campus leadership continues to insure that, in all actions taken, UWM and UW System do not abandon its commitment to diversity, inclusion and access. In short, we ask that both UWM and UW System proactively retain policies and practices that assure the recruitment, retention, and graduation of minority and disadvantaged students. Specifically, the following subsections of Chapter 36 need to be maintained in their entirety in any proposed legislation:

36.25 (14) Graduate Student Financial Aid
36.25 (14m) Minority and Disadvantaged Programs
36.25 (21m) Great Lakes Indian Law Program
36.25 (39) Institute for Excellence in Urban Education
36.25 (49) Academic Increase Grants
36.34 Minority Student Programs
36.43 Accommodation of religious beliefs
The $300 million cut represents a gross mismanagement of Wisconsin tax payer resources. The cut will harm current and future students and Wisconsin families by making all UW System institutions less affordable and jeopardizing the quality and reputation of a University of Wisconsin degree. The cuts will also lead to the elimination of many programs for students, and will negatively impact what is recognized as one of the best state university systems in the country. Rather than the proposed budget reduction, the Legislature should invest in the UW System which is recognized as an economic engine for the state. Further, examples of other state universities that have moved toward privatization models, such as institutions endowed with public authority powers, demonstrate that an inevitable result will be significant tuition increases and fewer minority and disadvantaged students once the tuition freeze expires.

Supporting the UW System can spur economic growth that will benefit all Wisconsinites, especially working class and ethnic/minorities. The UW System can function as a way out of poverty, if funded adequately, so that students do not have to take on extraordinary and exorbitant student debt. Students saddled with more debt are unable to contribute to the state economy and improve their quality of life, particularly when they have to pay off their loans upon graduation.

As the urban campus in UW System, we are challenged in today’s budget climate with working to build a diverse and inclusive institution. In fall 2014, UWM enrolled the largest number (5994) and highest percentage (21.4%) of underrepresented racial/ethnic students, as compared to other UW System institutions. With the anticipated tuition increases in 2017-19, students of color will be disproportionately impacted as they already cannot afford the rising costs of a college education. To aggressively recruit and retain these students, we request that the campus budget hold harmless all of the Fund 402 allocations, as well as allocations for the Lawton and AOP financial aid programs. The Lawton Program is an example of setting a high bar for the 1,014 student recipients in spring 2014, who participated in High Impact Practices and MAP-Works that are designed for persistence and retention. Further, UWM should step up fund development efforts so as to increase the number and amount of need-based scholarships.

Similar to issues affecting the recruitment and retention of students of color, we are seriously concerned that the impending budget reduction will have a negative effect on the retention of all faculty and staff across campus and a disproportionate impact on faculty of color. As the campus develops a budget response, we urge campus leadership to be vigilant and attentive to outcomes that are detrimental to the recruitment, retention, and promotion of faculty and staff of color. We also need to be vigilant in protecting the policies that govern appointments, shared governance, compensation and benefits, and diversity in Chapter 36. Without them, we fear that faculty of color will be even more disproportionately impacted as their voices in faculty governance are silenced.

As members of the Faculty of Color Mosaic Council, we request that UWM makes explicit its commitment to policies and practices that provide for a diverse and inclusive campus. In addition to holding Fund 402, Lawton and AOP harmless, we request that the cultural/ethnic studies programs remain unharmed in our current budget process so we may take this opportunity to create better alignments with the campus priority on diversity and inclusion.
While these programs provide a tremendous service to the university with their curricular offerings, it is important to point out that any reduction will affect not only the recruitment and enrollment of undergraduate students of color, but also graduate students of color. Additionally, there will be a decrease in the number of diversity requirement course offerings and opportunities for UWM students to engage in diversity dialog and learning. Diversity requirements are an essential component of the GER and the importance of these course offerings must not be minimized in this budget process.

Among the items to be eliminated in the proposed budget is the orientation information on sexual assault and harassment. We would like clarification on how the elimination of this item will affect the current ongoing Title IX training sessions that are mandated by the Federal Government. In our perspective, they are conflicting requirements.

In sum, we feel the proposed cuts, transition to a public authority, and subsequent increases in tuition will compromise the vision of rendering UWM a relevant and integral partner in the development of a competent and diverse workforce for Southeastern Wisconsin and in turn, for the entire State of Wisconsin and neighboring states. When the means are not there to make a “commitment to excellence, powerful ideas, community and global engagement and collaborative partnerships,” it will be impossible for us to serve as a “top-tier research university that is the best place to learn and work for students, faculty and staff, and that is a leading driver for sustainable prosperity.”

We would, therefore, like to respectively request that you inform us of your position on maintaining the following items within 10 working days after the receipt of this letter:

- Multicultural and disadvantaged funding (Fund 402), financial aid programs (Lawton and AOP), and the various cultural/ethnic studies offerings on campus;
- Recruitment, retention, and graduation programs for minority and disadvantaged students so these students are not adversely affected by the budget cuts; and
- Current mandate for Title IX trainings regardless of the proposed elimination of orientation information on sexual assault and harassment.

Additionally, as our Chancellor, we would like to request that you support the abovementioned programs and concerns of the Faculty of Color at UWM by:

- Presenting our issues and concerns, including the attached resolution, to the Board of Regents;
- Sharing our issues and concerns, including the attached resolution, with the various communities in Milwaukee and Southeastern Wisconsin, particularly those organizations that serve underrepresented racial/ethnic populations; and
- Appointing a diverse faculty or administrator to the Budget Planning Task Force, such as Swarnjit Arora, Professor of Economics. (If we are mistaken and diversity is already represented on the task force, please let us know to whom we should direct our interests and inquiries.)
We also would like to volunteer our collective experience, research, and expertise, should you find it useful, to provide additional data on any of these issues. Further, many of us are integrally affiliated with diverse community organizations and would be happy to reach out to them with the resolution on behalf of UWM. We look forward to your leadership and advice as to how we could proceed in energizing and utilizing community support to address this budget crisis.

Sincerely,

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Attachment (Resolution)