



Board of Regents

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UW System is the state's best return on investment

By Regina M. Millner, President, UW System Board of Regents
and John Robert Behling, Vice President, UW System Board of Regents

As Regents, we have a strong responsibility to keep the University of Wisconsin System affordable and accessible for Wisconsin families. We feel just as strongly about protecting the quality and excellence for which the UW System is known the world over. The reasons for ensuring this are compelling.

Wisconsin benefits when UW graduates choose to live, work, and raise families right here in Wisconsin. These graduates contribute to thriving communities, a robust workforce, and globally competitive businesses. That is one reason, among many, why the UW System is the State of Wisconsin's best return on investment. Every dollar of taxpayer support provides at least a \$10 return to the Wisconsin economy.* Clearly, this is an excellent return on our investment.

After careful consideration, the Board of Regents approved a budget request for state investment in the UW System. This reasonable request is tied to the UW System's strategic framework, "2020FWD: Moving Wisconsin and the World Forward," which sets out priorities developed over the past year with input of nearly 5,000 citizens, stakeholders, and community leaders from across the state.

Components of the 2020FWD strategic framework related to the budget request focus on:

- Developing additional collaborations with our Pre-K-12 partners to ensure more students are better prepared for college;
- Expanding college-credit options for high school students to provide the opportunity to shorten time-to-degree;
- Adding or expanding academic programs in areas most critically needed in Wisconsin's current and future workforce;
- Boosting flexible learning options for working adults so they can learn while they earn;
- Increasing internships and work opportunities to connect employers with UW students so they are more likely to make Wisconsin their home after graduation;
- Reducing time-to-graduation to help keep college costs down for students and families; and
- Enhancing operational and academic excellence to demonstrate UW accountability to Wisconsin taxpayers.

Wisconsin families, businesses, and communities are depending on the UW System to do what it has always done so well – meet the challenges of today and help prepare all of us for the challenges of tomorrow. To help reinvigorate our economy, the UW System seeks to do even more. All of our UW System campuses are in an ideal position to drive a stronger Wisconsin economy – something we all want for students, for families, and for Wisconsin.

The UW System budget request for 2017-19 now goes to the Governor for consideration in statewide budget deliberations. This biennial budget request – which supports 2020FWD strategic priorities – keeps a UW System education affordable, high quality, and relevant for Wisconsin graduates and employers. We believe it deserves all of our support. Again, the UW System gives Wisconsin its best return on taxpayers' investment. We should all agree: now is the time to invest in our University of Wisconsin System.

* Northstar Consulting

Regina M. Millner of Madison is president of the UW System Board of Regents. John Robert Behling of Eau Claire is vice president of the UW System Board of Regents. They joined the board in May 2012.