

Messages from individuals about UWM (for public officials and the general public)

UW-Milwaukee (UWM) needs investment to be a successful research university and a growing economic and innovation driver for the state.

Vibrant and thriving major cities around the U.S. all have anchor research universities that drive regional economics, workforce development, and innovation in technology. Top-tier universities also enhance the quality of life through the arts, social investments, and education, making their home cities destinations for corporations, families, and young professionals. Over the past 15 years, UWM has been transforming itself toward a top-tier research university profile, despite waning investments from the State of Wisconsin. UWM continues on a positive trajectory with the completion or near completion of three major building projects. However, challenges continue to mount with the loss of research faculty due to non-competitive salaries and questions about future base funding for UWM. Strong State commitments and investments are needed to continue our success in this area.

Numbers and facts to cite: Economic activity from UWM's operation pays back the state's annual investment 12 times (based on 2012-13 state funding levels). Dollars spent by UWM, as well as its employees, students, and visitors total about \$713 million annually and result in more than 29,000 jobs (not including the university's workforce). UWM needs an estimated investment of about 70 million dollars in base funding to achieve its potential as a top-tier research university and succeed in key research areas as laid out in the strategic plan (see www.uwm.edu/strategicplan).

UWM continues to provide affordable high quality education with diminishing resources; but can this downward trend continue?

UWM is one of two doctoral campuses in Wisconsin—currently educating almost 28,000 students per year—but receives a relatively low level of state funding per student (30% below the peer median) compared to similar institutions across the U.S. UWM students pay almost 80% of the cost of their undergraduate education. That is almost 10 percentage points higher than the UW System average. And our students are arguably much less wealthy than the average UW student, with 80% receiving financial aid. New investments in UWM's base funding are needed to solidify academic programs and continue foundational education. This includes driving research, as well as sharpening student's critical thinking skills.

UWM does not have “surplus” funds, but instead will lose \$8 million in base funding next year.

Last year, the State of Wisconsin cut the UW System biennial budget, which will trigger an \$8 million cut to the UWM campus next year—all because of an alleged “surplus”. The controversy about “surplus” funds at UW System campuses focused on the balances in accounts, however, much of this was like the amount in a check book before bills are paid. Some UW campuses may have reserve funds, but here at UWM, we have less than 0.5% of our annual revenue as true reserves. All businesses need to have funds set aside for emergencies (leaking roofs, storm damage, unexpected loss of income, etc.), and good business practices recommend no less than 15% of the annual operating budget be set aside (compare that to the 0.5% noted above).