

Department of English Statement on Proposed Changes to Chapter 36, the UW Mission, and the Wisconsin Idea

1. The Department of English strongly endorses the full text and values of the UW System Mission Statement:

The mission of the University of Wisconsin System is to develop human resources, to discover and disseminate knowledge, to extend knowledge and its application beyond the boundaries of its campuses, and to serve and stimulate society by developing in students heightened intellectual, cultural, and humane sensitivities, scientific, professional and technical expertise, and a sense of purpose. Inherent in this broad mission are methods of instruction, research, extended training, and public service designed to educate people and improve the human condition. Basic to every purpose of the UW System is the search for truth.

2. The Department of English likewise strongly endorses the Wisconsin Idea which connects university teaching and research to public service and welfare. “The boundaries of the university are the boundaries of the state” for all fields of inquiry—the humanities, arts, sciences, social sciences—as well as the professions. The state’s and the UW System’s commitment to public good and the search for truth are longstanding and have deep roots.
3. The Department of English holds that Chapter 36 implements the core goals and values of the UW Mission and the Wisconsin Idea. The proposed restructuring of the UW system as a public authority is unnecessary. Its ostensible benefits (financial flexibility, control of tuition levels) can be achieved by other means within the current structure, and there are no demonstrable savings achieved by eliminating the provisions of Chapter 36. In any event, all of the provisions and language of Chapter 36 should be retained without change.
4. Therefore, the Department of English strongly opposes both the elimination of Chapter 36 and the recreation of the UW system as a public authority whose composition, structure, and powers are unknown and will likely jeopardize the durability and goals of the UW mission and the Wisconsin Idea as well as disconnect the institution from the citizens it was intended to serve.