

UW Oshkosh Faculty Senate Resolution

Whereas the UW Oshkosh Faculty Senate is deeply concerned about the future of UW Oshkosh and the entire UW System. UW Oshkosh plays a vital role in the Fox Valley area and Northeastern Wisconsin in its service to students, employees, alumni, businesses, and other community members. As the third largest comprehensive university within what was once one of the best state systems in the country, UW Oshkosh is committed to our mission of teaching, research, service, and affordable access for the students of Wisconsin, and

Whereas we believe that the current proposal to slash the UW-System budget by \$300 million in the next biennium will be catastrophic. It will lead to job losses for hard-working Wisconsinites, cuts in programs that will compromise the education of current students, a dramatic reduction in research productivity, an inability to serve those beyond the borders of campus, and a likely increase in the cost of tuition in the long term, and

Whereas the proposed cuts will reduce GPR dollars allocated to UW Oshkosh by 26%, forcing over \$8.7 million in cuts. This massive decline comes on top of continual reductions in 20 of the past 22 years. The quality, cost, and availability of a college education for students can not possibly be maintained, and

Whereas the legislation also proposes to convert the UW System into a “public authority.” While system President Ray Cross has said that a public authority is the “best model” for our system, we feel that a convincing case has not yet been made. Universities operate on research, reason, and the free exchange of ideas. Such a process is necessary and must include full representation across system faculty, staff, students, and administration. The key tenets of Chapter 36, which enshrine shared governance and academic freedom into state law, must be preserved. Shared governance and tenure are the bedrock of a thriving university system and are non-negotiable, and

Whereas the following list of questions must be addressed during a full vetting of the public authority proposal:

- Would there be any guarantee of true autonomy? The proposal itself contains many provisions that limits the public authority’s power of tuition, general education, salaries, etc. How can we limit such arbitrary interventions in the future?
- What would be the structure of the public authority? Who would ultimately be in charge? How would collective decisions be made? The proposed board of regents for the public authority has no representatives of faculty, staff, or administration. Why aren’t these groups given any role in making decisions?
- What is the logic of repealing Chapter 36 guarantees of shared governance and academic freedom? What are the guarantees that a board of regents would be obligated to protect these tenets? Would system officials or regents be able to change the rules of governance?
- How will the public authority be financed? How will budgets be allocated for each campus in the system? Who will manage operations, salaries, and tuition? How can we ensure that this model provides a solution that does not encumber our current students and our future students with unreasonable debt?
- What does it mean to be a public employee versus a state employee? It appears that access to state health insurance benefits and participation in the Wisconsin pension system would still exist in the short term. Would the same benefits regarding accumulated sick leave or sick leave conversion still exist for public employees as it currently does for state employees?

Be it therefore resolved that we, the UW Oshkosh Faculty Senate, express our strong opposition to the proposed \$300 million dollar cut to the UW-System budget and our deep concern that such a cut will unnecessarily impair our university and our state.

Be it therefore also resolved that we, the UW Oshkosh Faculty Senate, call for an open process to analyze the proposed public authority before such a model is accepted.

*Thanks to UW Milwaukee, UW Madison, and UW-Whitewater Faculty Senates for providing inspiration and some material for this resolution.