

Selected Testimony of Members of the UWM Community before the Joint Finance Committee, Alverno College, Milwaukee, March 20 2015

Mark Schwartz, Professor of Geography

I'm Mark D. Schwartz, a climatologist, professor of Geography, and Faculty Senate Executive Committee Chair at UW-Milwaukee.

How would you regard an organization that has enhanced the quality of its products over 35 years, but not increased its costs, when adjusted for output level and inflation? Well, I expect most people would be favorably impressed.

Regardless, and perhaps surprisingly, that is an accurate financial description of the UW-System, and UW-Milwaukee, rendered in the simplest economic terms. Your first reaction might be—that can't be true—I know that tuition has risen dramatically over that same time period. Indeed, tuition has risen dramatically, but at the same time State support for the UW-System and UW-Milwaukee has also dropped dramatically. Pointedly, these trends are near mirror images. So when you sum these two together, which are the major sources of revenue for the University, and adjust them for the number of students and inflation, that total has basically risen at the same rate as the Consumer Price Index, over the 1980-2014 period.

Now, this simple truth has been lost in accusations about the cause of the dramatic rise in tuition at public universities. Almost everything else has been blamed: faculty/staff salaries, administrative bloat, tenure, shared governance; yet this simple economic truth negates all those arguments. It bears repeating, the cause of the dramatic rise in tuition at public universities like UW-Milwaukee and its sister campuses in the UW-System is due to systematic disinvestment by State government, NOT rises in university costs.

Education is the spirit and soul of society, and how it propagates itself from one generation to the next. Public higher education has been the path to better lives for many in our nation (including myself), and their gains have enhanced our overall prosperity. So, as you contemplate the UW-System budget, I ask you to remember that simple economic truth regarding our costs. Further, please ask yourselves if cutting UW-System funding is either a wise choice now, or a responsible choice in regard to the future of the great state of Wisconsin. Thank you for listening.

Testimony to the Legislative Joint Finance Committee

David H. Petering

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee University Distinguished Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry

I hope we all agree on the mission of the University of Wisconsin-System as stated in its current Mission Statement:

“The mission of the 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 technological 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 system is the search for truth.”

I, for one, agree with adding the Governor’s language to the Mission Statement about “workforce development” so long as it is understood as applying to the rigorous preparation of students for the opened ended future and opportunities of the knowledge-based world and economy of the 21st century and not to the much narrower responsibility of technical colleges to the current economy.

In this context, the proposed \$300 M in budget cuts and continuing tuition freeze to the UW-System will seriously undermine and gravely damage the System and UWM, in particular, and their ability to address the Mission Statement at a time of rapidly increasingly global economic challenge.

As reported by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch recently returned from a trade mission to China. During a meeting with members of a Chinese think tank, she was told that “China will be number one; the United States is in decline!”

What were the Chinese talking about? In a word, China is investing in its educational institutions and infrastructure; we are disinvesting. For those of you who think that UWM can absorb its \$40 M cut and tuition freeze without major damage, come walk with me through a campus of worn and worn out buildings and academic units with major structural budget deficits due to previous cuts. UWM is becoming a stellar research university. It is rated as one of the leanest research universities in the country. Yet this same University is essential to the future development of SE Wisconsin, the population and manufacturing center of the state.

The Governor’s budget also proposes that the UW-System leave state government and become a public authority. No careful study has been done to determine if the proposed budget mechanism for the authority will work. With Chapter 36 largely deleted, there is no appropriately considered operational structure for the authority. No family would embark on such a seismic change in its status without knowing what it was getting into, particularly if it were coupled with a major reduction in its revenue base.

A week ago I attended an informational meeting of the Fox Point-Bay Side School District that is seeking \$950,000/y in new funding for the next 4 years through an April referendum because surveys show that parents do not want to sacrifice the district’s superior program because of shortfalls in funding (e.g. 50% due to a reduction in state aid). In the literature about the district, the focus is on exceptional educational outcomes (one of only 6 districts to meet the highest standard for student achievement 2 years running). Eighty six percent of its faculty have masters

degrees; its superintendent got his PhD from UWM. Many of these children will eventually matriculate to UW-System schools. What will they find there?

It is crucial that the legislature recognize that a top-flight university system is one of the keys to future competitiveness for the state in a globalized world. Budget cuts and an unexamined new UW-System structure are not the way to invest in this future.

Jasmine Alinder

Testimony to the Joint Committee on Finance

March 20, 2015

My name is Jasmine Alinder. I am an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, and a Faculty Senator. I am also a parent of two children in Milwaukee Public Schools and am here to voice my strong disapproval of the proposed cut to K-12, the expansion of the voucher program, and the changes to the UW-system. Public education, from pre-kindergarten to post-doctoral studies, is essential for the future of Wisconsin and a strong democracy.

When my husband and I came to Milwaukee over a decade ago, we were honored to join one of the finest public higher education systems in the country, one built by generations of Wisconsinites. It is our moral duty as citizens and taxpayers to maintain this excellent system for generations to come. This budget places that legacy in jeopardy.

I know that you care about that legacy and believe in the UW system. Fourteen of you have either attended or have degrees from UW schools. Reps Nygren and Knudson called for a reduction to the cut, and I urge all of you to reduce that cut as much as possible. Their memo did not mention Chapter 36, however, and I would like your assurance today that if the public authority is off the table, Chapter 36, including tenure and shared governance will remain intact.

As faculty, we share concerns about college affordability in terms of tuition and time to degree. Student debt is a national crisis. But you cannot cut the system, freeze tuition, and expect our campuses to be able to maintain high quality

programs and decrease time to degree. I suggest that you charge the UW-system to create a task force on college affordability that includes faculty, academic staff, students, and administrators. One initiative I am working on with the UWM Grad School, that could decrease time to degree and student debt, for example, is to promote integrated bachelor's master's degree programs--an excellent way for high achieving students to earn their degrees more quickly and pay less tuition.

In closing, whether you are a Panther, a Badger, a Buccaneer, a Warhawk, or even an Iowa State Cyclone, let's work together to reduce these cuts, maintain Chapter 36, and make college more affordable.

Kari Smith, Doctoral Student in Urban Studies

Good morning/afternoon,

Thank you kindly for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Kari Smith and I am currently a third year doctoral student and teaching assistant at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee. I am a product of public schools, from elementary school on, and am a first generation college graduate. After graduating from public high school, financial aid in the form of work study employment and grants enabled me to attend a public community college and student loans enabled me to transfer to a public university where I was the first in my family to receive a bachelors degree. After then serving in AmeriCorps for two years and working for a non-profit organization, I was then the first in my family to obtain my Masters degree and am now the first in my family to pursue a PhD, the latter possible through a teaching assistantship at UW Milwaukee.

Having the opportunity to teach undergraduates for the past three years has been extremely rewarding. It is an honor to reinvest my education in others and to encourage my students to fulfill their potential as I myself strive to fulfill my own. In the six semesters worth of students I have had the pleasure of teaching, the vast majority have been born and raised in the state of Wisconsin. While I would love to hear that my students want to explore and travel the world upon graduation,

the truth is that most of them love where they are from and plan to live and work in Wisconsin after college. One specific student from Racine is determined to return to his hometown and serve his city as an elected official or through non-profit work. I have no doubt in my mind that he will do just that and that he will be a genuine asset to his community.

In 2014 alone, 5,609 students graduated from UW Milwaukee. Nearly 74% of UWM's 160,000 alumni remain in Wisconsin today. As many jobs in today's workplace require a minimum of a bachelors degree, UWM, as the most influential public higher education presence in the region, is a critical asset to Southeastern Wisconsin and the state.

The proposed \$300 million budget cut to the UW System is unmanageable and makes a bold and distasteful statement about the changing values and priorities in the state of Wisconsin. Higher education and the opportunities that it provides should not be a luxury in the United States. Quality public education should be non-negotiable and I urge you to prevent the irreparable damage that these cuts will do to UW Milwaukee, the UW System, and the state of Wisconsin. Thank you.

Nicholas Fleisher, Assistant Professor of Linguistics

JFC testimony

[March 20, 2015](#) by [NF](#)

Together with several UWM colleagues, and alongside hundreds of others, I attended today's public hearing of the Joint Finance Committee of the Wisconsin Legislature, which was held at Alverno College in Milwaukee. This was the second of four public hearings held around the state this week and next.

The hearing was an education in the many deplorable proposals contained in Scott Walker's 2015-17 budget. I have been focused primarily on the proposed funding cuts and structural changes to the UW System, and also on the funding cuts to K-12 education and the proposed voucher expansion. During the time that I was able to attend the hearing, I heard impassioned and compelling testimony against Walker's proposed cuts to Family Care and IRIS, among many other things. Walker's budget is a moral catastrophe from front to back.

I could only stay for about four hours, and thus wasn't able to speak at the hearing. My colleagues who arrived much earlier than me finally got their chance to speak after waiting for eight and a half hours. I delivered a written copy of my prepared testimony to a committee page. The testimony is designed to fit within the allotted two-minute time limit, and is correspondingly terse and narrow in focus. It is reproduced below:

Dear Committee Members,

I am an assistant professor of Linguistics at UW-Milwaukee. I'd like to begin by commending you for taking seriously the issue of UW tuition and affordability—as shown, for example, in Reps. Nygren and Knudson's statement issued Wednesday—and also for your healthy skepticism of UW administrative leaders. I'm glad to see that many of you share the concerns that I and my colleagues have expressed about the very sketchy public authority proposal and its potential effects on tuition, and I'm glad to hear that the public authority is now unlikely to become law in this budget.

But I find it difficult to square your stated concern for UW affordability with the proposal to cut state funding to the System, even by an amount smaller than Gov. Walker's proposed \$300 million. The major driver of tuition increases is the state disinvestment that we have seen under both Democratic and Republican administrations. This is true across all sectors in higher education—research universities, comprehensives, and technical and community colleges—and ultimately holding down tuition depends on your commitment to maintaining and eventually increasing funding levels.

I also urge you, in light of the demise of the public authority proposal, to keep Chapter 36 intact in state law in this budget. Some legislative leaders this week have taken issue with the Board of Regents' recent resolutions in support of tenure and shared governance. If you take a look at public university systems in other states—including Michigan, California, Texas, Ohio, and many others—you will find that tenure and shared governance are bedrock principles enshrined in Board of Regents rules and bylaws, much as our Board of Regents resolved at its last meeting. Endangering these principles in Wisconsin would be a major self-inflicted wound to our national and international competitiveness, and would make it impossible for UW to recruit and retain top faculty. Like a number of my colleagues, I came to Wisconsin from a tenure-track job at a university in another state. Had UW not had tenure and shared governance, I would not have so much as applied for the job I now hold.

UW faculty share your concerns about affordability and quality. Please let us continue to work with you to maintain and improve both, for the good of the state we all love and call home.

<http://languagepolitics.org/2015/03/20/jfc-testimony/>

Jenna Loyd, Assistant Professor, Public Health

Testimony to Joint Finance Committee for Wisconsin State Budget, March 20, 2015

The only hearing for taking testimony about the proposed 2015-2017 Wisconsin State budget slated for Milwaukee, the state's largest city, was scheduled for today from 10am to 5 pm. By 6pm, they were hearing people who had signed up to speak at a little after 9am, so although the committee extended the hearing until 8:45, not everyone who signed up to speak would be heard, including myself. I submitted my testimony formally, and here it is for you.

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My name is Jenna Loyd. I'm an assistant professor of public health policy at the Zilber School of Public Health at UWM. I joined the school to advance health justice, or health for all. Researchers know that people's health is profoundly undermined by cuts to basic services, including health care, food, and elder care. People's health is also harmed by economic polarization, by joblessness, by precarious and dangerous working conditions, and by racism. This proposed budget exacerbates these problems, and for this reason I adamantly oppose them.

We also know that education is fundamental to fostering health. I live in Milwaukee, and I'm growing increasingly worried that the joyful little kids I see running around the playground before school will be missing students. They will be missing students from my and my colleagues' classes, not because they don't want to be in school learning about geography, geology, poetry, or art, but because UWM won't seem tangible to them, because tuition costs make college out of reach.

I see tuition as a regressive tax that affects working class students the most. Student loans are *not* a replacement for a publicly and well-funded university; in fact, people with student loans experience poorer mental health. I am deeply opposed to cuts to scholarship and programs that support the dreams of students of color and first generation college students. I want these students in my classes, doing research with me, and developing their own new programs.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. observed to a group of medical doctors: "Of all forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and inhumane." Cuts to K-12, the university, alongside all the other cuts, will increase inequality and injustice in health. More budget cuts, and threats to Chapter 36, not only undercut academic freedom for students and faculty, but they sacrifice futures. The students haven't disappeared; the money has. It is past time to reverse course and fund a healthy public education.

<http://www.jennamloyd.com/blog/2015/3/20/testimony-to-joint-finance-committee-for-wisconsin-state-budget-march-20-2015>

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### **Aims McGuinness, Associate Professor, History**

"My name is Aims McGuinness, and I'm an associate professor of history at UW-Milwaukee. I am also current president of UWM's chapter of our nation's oldest honor society, Phi Beta Kappa.

UWM is one of only 6 campuses in this state, public and private, that has earned the right to offer this signal honor to our outstanding undergraduate students in the liberal arts and sciences. Our chapter is run by volunteers: faculty, staff, and one fiercely devoted alumna. We volunteer because we want our highest performing students to be recognized--for the value that these students will contribute to our economy in the future, but also because we believe that there is value in and of itself in working hard and thinking well.

Although students earn an invitation to join Phi Beta Kappa through the outstanding work they do, there is an induction fee of \$75. To defray that cost, UWM faculty and staff reach into their own pockets to fund small scholarships. Unfortunately, our scholarship fund has fallen to \$120, so tonight and on other Fridays during Lent, I'll be offering guided tours of one of Milwaukee's most historic buildings, Turner Hall, where fish fry has been served for more than a century.

Turner Hall, like the UW System, is a monument to what Wisconsinites can do when we work together, when we raise a glass together. If you can, please stop by on your way out of town. I cannot offer to buy you a beer. But I would love to show you around.

I speak now as a citizen, one who is honored to work as a professor at one of the world's greatest public university systems. I know that I am joined by thousands of my colleagues across the state in saying that I care deeply about our students.

A cut of \$300 million would do permanent damage to the UW System, a legacy that Wisconsinites have built over generations. Please, do whatever you can to stop or at least reduce this proposed cut. Please, do the right thing by our students and our families.

Believe, as I do, in the Wisconsin Idea."

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