

Resolution of the UW-La Crosse Faculty Senate

Adopted by unanimous vote on February 12, 2015

Governor Walker's recent budget proposal, and related documents, contain three main proposals with respect to the University of Wisconsin System: a budget cut of over \$300 million; the elimination of Chapter 36 of the Wisconsin Statutes and the attendant place of shared governance and tenure protections in State law; and the replacement of the UW System with a form of public authority. Each of these changes has the potential to seriously undermine higher education in Wisconsin. As such, the Faculty Senate of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UW-L) strongly opposes them all.

The unprecedented \$300 million budget cut will, inevitably, reduce access to highest-quality public education for Wisconsin families. UW-L is committed to providing our students with the best education possible. Faculty members will continue to do everything we can to honor that commitment. However, the mathematics is simple: if State funding shrinks in the way the current budget envisions, while costs in the wider world continue to rise, it will soon become impossible to provide education at current levels of quality. Like all other schools in the system, UW-L is faced with a stark, but unavoidable choice between providing less to students and their families in return for the money they now spend, or passing along costs that the State will no longer help meet in the form of future tuition increases.

The elimination of Chapter 36 will diminish both the UW System, and the State of Wisconsin. There are many things that Wisconsin does better than other states, and the enshrinement of the rights and responsibilities of faculty in law is one of those things. The UW-L Faculty Senate, and related bodies at other schools, have long been proud to serve as responsible partners, working in good faith as stewards of Wisconsin's resources, alongside our administrators and State legislators. The changes envisioned remove educators from the conversation about how best to deliver quality education, and will make Wisconsin poorer.

Finally, the proposed transformation of the UW System to a form of public authority is unnecessary, and is rife with pitfalls and hidden costs. Early analysis suggests that it may increase administrative costs rather than produce savings. For example, unfunded costs for municipal services and employee fringe benefits may increase the financial impact of proposed cuts by another 20%. Such a complex transformation threatens to diminish a system of which all Wisconsin citizens can currently be proud. Far from being broken, and in need of drastic change, the UW System is a strong one, and provides impressive results in bad times and in good. Radically altering a system that has worked so well for so long is less likely to improve it, and more likely to diminish it.

In short, the UW-L Faculty Senate most certainly disagrees with each of the proposed changes to the University System, and we express our strong opposition to these changes.

We will, of course, always strive to provide the best education in the world to our students and their families. The current budget, however, threatens this mission, by denying Wisconsin citizens access to a properly funded and effective higher education system, run in partnership with engaged and passionate faculty.