

March 2, 2007

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
WISCONSIN IDEA PROJECT
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

Overview

The Wisconsin Idea Project is an organized, systemic effort to demonstrate and enhance the University of Wisconsin-Madison's relevance to the citizens of Wisconsin, and to strengthen our commitment to serving the needs of the citizens of the state.

Need

- Over the past decade, UW-Madison has seen a dramatic increase in the number of applicants who appreciate the University's educational quality and relatively low price. As a result, the campus is turning away qualified applicants who just a few years ago would have been offered admission. In part, this is due to the University's successful efforts to improve undergraduate education. However, this has led many Wisconsin taxpayers to believe that "their children" will not have an opportunity to attend UW-Madison – that the University is no longer accessible. And, for many, the price is a significant obstacle.
- Approximately 4 percent of Wisconsin residents have a college degree from UW-Madison. Only a small percentage of the voting population in the state has personal and educational experience with a major research university. As a result, most of the voters in the state do not understand what a major research university is and how UW-Madison benefits undergraduate students and works on issues important to state citizens. It is the University's responsibility to make explicit relationships and partnerships with the state and their impacts.
- As the demographics of the University's faculty and staff change, the campus must do a better job of making the Wisconsin Idea more meaningful to its employees and leveraging this core value as a competitive career advantage.

Outcomes

As a result of the Wisconsin Idea Project, Wisconsin citizens will become more aware of how UW-Madison impacts and benefits their lives; particularly related to health care, economic development, education (especially K12) and quality of life. This awareness will result in increased support for UW-Madison from state community and business leaders, alumni, students, parents, media, legislative leaders and ultimately all taxpayers. Additionally, UW-Madison will be better prepared to realign resources to manage and create more systematic and sustainable ways for faculty, staff and students to work on significant state issues.

Components

The Wisconsin Idea Project is not a public relations plan, a legislative relations plan or communications strategy, although it does include those kinds of components. In addition, many campus leaders believe the Wisconsin Idea Project has the potential to promote a

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“transformative” cultural shift on campus. Planned components of the project include, but are not limited to:

- Identify ways to better promote access and financial aid for those seeking a UW-Madison degree through the UW Connections and guaranteed transfer programs.
- Increase availability of need-based financial aid for Wisconsin resident students.
- Conduct community visits via *UW for You*, *Badger Days* and *Founder’s Days*, and conduct proactive listening by top administrators and faculty with state citizens to better understand important state issues and how UW-Madison is or could be more relevant. Key issues will be shared with faculty, staff and students to help shape future campus direction.
- Inventory and communicate the tangible benefits of our extensive public interest work in education, research, clinical and outreach engagement activities.
- Better manage these activities to create more systemic and sustainable ways for all faculty, staff and students to have a broader impact on issues of great significance to the state.
- Task faculty, staff and students with recommending how UW-Madison can strengthen and reinvigorate the core value and culture of the Wisconsin Idea.
- Improve relationships with state policy makers by engaging more administrators, faculty, staff and students to cultivate two-way discussions and experiences with legislators.
- Actively participate in the M2 (Madison/Milwaukee) collaboration between Wisconsin’s largest cities.
- Develop shared consistent messaging across campus that reiterates our commitment to the citizens of the state.
- Where appropriate, actively partner with other UW System campuses and UW Extension.

Operations

The Wisconsin Idea Project is being co-led by staff from the Chancellor and Provost offices. The steering team also includes staff from community relations, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, Division of Continuing Studies, the Wisconsin Alumni Association and University Communications. The team is tasked with working with campus partners to achieve the components described above, identify other priorities and make specific goals and evaluation outcomes. A campus Advisory Council, made up of key representatives from all schools and colleges and other significant campus units, also provides overview and policy recommendations.

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