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March 28, 2011

The Honorable Herb Kohl  
United States Senator  
330 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Kohl:

During these extraordinary times, you will be asked to make many difficult decisions regarding federal spending – where to cut federal spending and where to use limited funding dollars more wisely.

There are two areas of the federal budget that have an inordinate impact on our institutions – our faculty, staff and, most importantly, our students – as well as Wisconsin's economy. Those areas are: (1) financial aid and (2) scientific research. We hope that you will convey the impact that these programs have on our students and institutions to House and Senate leadership as final decisions on Fiscal Year 2011 funding are being determined. (Please link to the UW System Federal Outlook for the First Session of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress: <http://www.wisconsin.edu/govrel/federal-priorities/2012/FederalBinderFY2012.pdf>.)

When Congress proposed last month to cut spending for the Pell Grant program, this raised red flags, especially for our students who face financial barriers to higher education. Grants are the most effective means of encouraging students to enroll and persist in postsecondary education – more effective than any other type of aid, such as loans and work. Beyond helping students attain a college degree, enrollment and persistence also create public benefits – not only economic growth and productivity, but also a more just and fair society.

From its creation almost 40 years ago, the Federal Pell Grant has become the foundation of student financial aid. The Pell program is the largest federal need-based grant program for college students. In 2009-10, more than 35,000 University of Wisconsin students received Pell Grants. (Please see page 31 of the Federal Priorities Binder for Fiscal Year 2012.) Especially during this most recent economic downturn, we have seen an increase in the number of students who have turned to Pell Grants as one of the primary means to pay for and achieve their college education. Since 2004-05, when Congress changed Pell Grant eligibility requirements to reduce the number of eligible recipients, the average award has grown, and the number of Wisconsin undergraduate recipients has increased by 28 percent. The Pell Grant program is absolutely necessary for students, their families, and society.

The Federal TRIO programs also serve a very significant role, and federal appropriations for these programs historically have not come close to meeting the needs of the populations they target – first-generation college students, low-income students, and students with disabilities. In 2009-10, the University of Wisconsin System received more than \$13 million in TRIO funding and served about 9,500 students. (For breakdown by UW System campus, please see page 95 of the UW System Federal Priorities Binder for Fiscal Year 2012.) In Wisconsin, and elsewhere in this country, the

traditional audience for higher education is shifting. More of our students will be first generation college-goers of color, older, and from disadvantaged and underserved backgrounds. A larger group of racially and ethnically diverse military veterans is arriving at our campuses with the new G.I. Bill in hand, who also have unique needs for services if they are going to complete their college education. If the United States, the University of Wisconsin System, and the State of Wisconsin are to reach their shared goals of increasing access, retention, and graduation rates of students of color and low-income students, and more graduates in general, then providing financial assistance through the TRIO programs is critical.

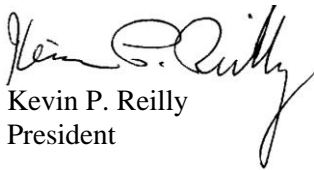
Scientific research is also an important mission for all the campuses of the University of Wisconsin System. If we are to develop new renewable energy technologies to make Wisconsin more energy independent, if we are to develop new medicines and cures for diseases, or biomedical devices, or new therapeutics, if we are to develop new technologies, such as value-added agricultural commodities, digital technologies, or innovative polymers/composites to assist businesses to grow and create jobs, then a sustained and significant federal investment in scientific research is also critical. Key agencies such as the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, and the Department of Agriculture provide needed support to achieve these and other innovations. (Please see pages 17, 63, and 69 of the Federal Priorities Binder for Fiscal Year 2012.)


In Fiscal Year 1999-2000, the University of Wisconsin received more than \$445 million in federal grants and contracts, which increased to more than \$813 million in Fiscal Year 2009-2010. Many of those competitively awarded research dollars foster new discoveries and create well-paying jobs in the state of Wisconsin through small business spin-offs and even entire new industries. In 2009, UW System institutions generated 404 disclosures to the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, the UW-Milwaukee Research Foundation, and the WiSys Technology Foundation. In the same year, 63 new licenses for technologies were executed and 114 U.S. patents were issued. These, and similar research efforts at universities across the country will be key to any recovery and sustained economic growth.

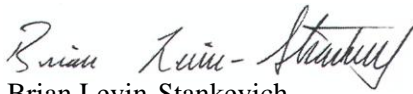
Without a doubt, Wisconsin reaps broad economic benefits and high-paying jobs from scientific research. It leads to start-up companies, retention of highly skilled faculty, better career opportunities for students through internships, and assistance to all sizes of companies to develop next generation products. Wisconsin is seeing a number of start-up companies emerge as a result of University of Wisconsin faculty-led technology start-up companies, which will create jobs and attract extramural funding and private investment. The companies are headquartered across Wisconsin: Oshkosh, La Crosse, Milwaukee, Platteville, Stevens Point, Eau Claire and, Madison. It goes without saying, however, that the federal government plays, and must continue to play, a pivotal role in expanding these opportunities through research funding.

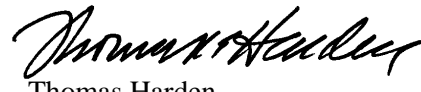
We write in strong support of the Pell Grant Program, the Federal TRIO Programs, and the scientific research agencies. These are sound financial investments for our universities, our state, and our nation, but most of all, our future. As Congress seeks to finalize decisions for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2011, we ask that you prioritize spending to reflect the importance of these programs. Please communicate these priorities to Congressional leadership. We sincerely appreciate your attention to this matter, and thank you for all you do for higher education.


Sincerely,

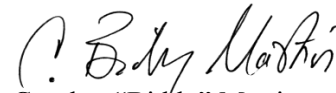
  
Kevin P. Reilly  
President


  
Ray Cross  
Chancellor, UW Colleges/Extension

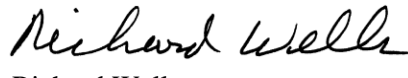
  
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Chancellor, UW-Eau Claire

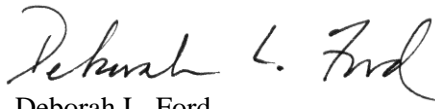
  
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Joe Gow  
Chancellor, UW-La Crosse


  
Carolyn "Biddy" Martin  
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Mike Lovell  
Interim Chancellor, UW-Milwaukee


  
Richard Wells  
Chancellor, UW-Oshkosh

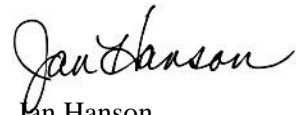
  
Deborah L. Ford  
Chancellor, UW-Parkside

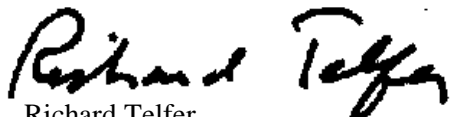
  
Dennis Shields  
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Dean Van Galen  
Chancellor, UW-River Falls

  
Bernie Patterson  
Chancellor, UW-Stevens Point

  
Charles Sorensen  
Chancellor, UW-Stout

  
Jan Hanson  
Interim Chancellor, UW-Superior

  
Richard Telfer  
Chancellor, UW-Whitewater

cc: Regents  
Chancellors  
Cabinet