

A GROWTH AGENDA FOR WISCONSIN

GROWING PEOPLE, JOBS, & COMMUNITIES

Growth Agenda Action Step #5:

Offer UW New Pathways Degrees to Wisconsin's Adult Population

Brief summary: Wisconsin lags in the number of working adults with a four-year degree – ranking 30th in the nation. To expand the percent of Wisconsin residents with undergraduate and advanced degrees, the UW System must seek ways to open more learning opportunities to working adults, many of whom “swirl” into and out of its universities to achieve a credential, update skills, enable a career shift, or pursue learning for the pure pleasure of it.

Progress to date and future plans:

- This work is incorporated into the activities supported by the Making Opportunity Affordable (MOA) grant from the Lumina Foundation. Initial activities completed include:
 - Inventory and evaluation of existing campus programs for adult learners;
 - Focus groups with students, admissions directors, student affairs officers, provosts, registrars, and business officers to identify policy barriers that inhibit college degree attainment;
 - Active partnerships with the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU), and the state’s Department of Public Instruction (DPI); and
 - A strategic planning event with the PK-16 Leadership Council and faculty, staff, and students from all of Wisconsin’s education entities to get input on policies needed to enable more Wisconsin citizens to complete college degrees.
- Based on the initial work, the proposal for four years of MOA funding will address policies to achieve easier student transitions and more graduates, with an emphasis on adults, persons of color, and veterans. Areas under consideration include assessing prior learning, creating a credit repository, and online programs.

Related funding:

- Lumina Foundation/Jobs for the Future (MOA)
- Committee on Baccalaureate Expansion (COBE) grant program. Existing grant initiatives include:
 - Prior learning assessment - UW-Superior/UW Colleges/UW-Extension
 - Adult outreach and support - UW-Whitewater/UW-Extension
 - Transfer collaborations for adult students - UW-Platteville/UW-Stevens Point

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