



DATE: May 1, 2025

TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Education

FROM: Office of Government Relations, Universities of Wisconsin

RE: Testimony in Favor of Assembly Bill 210

Thank you, Chair Kitchens, Vice-Chair Goeben, and committee members for providing the Universities of Wisconsin (UWs) an opportunity to submit testimony in favor of Assembly Bill 210 (AB 210).

As a student-focused organization, the Universities of Wisconsin's core mission is centered around the success of our over 164,400 students. The regional and economic impact of our 13 universities is felt in all corners of our state. As Wisconsin's largest talent generator and talent magnet, retaining and attracting current and prospective students is critical to the vibrancy of our communities and growth of our state's economy. Currently, the UWs provide a 23:1 return on state investment and deliver tens of thousands of graduates each year. Nearly 90 percent of our Wisconsin resident graduates remain in the state 5 years after graduation, and first- and second-year retention rates have also improved in the last two academic years.

In 2023-24, more than 2,300 academic excellence scholarships were awarded across the Universities of Wisconsin. These scholarships are given to Wisconsin high school seniors who have the highest-grade point average in their respective school, dependent on the number of students enrolled in the school. Through these scholarships, eligible individuals can receive an award amount of up to \$2,250 per year for tuition, where half is funded by the state and half is matched by the university.

Current law states that for high schools with enrollment of less than 80 pupils, only 10 individuals statewide can be nominated for this scholarship. AB 210 would allow the school board or governing body of a high school with an enrollment of at least one pupil but less than 500 pupils to designate one senior to receive an Academic Excellence Higher Education Scholarship with no nomination process or designation from the Wisconsin Higher Educational Aids Board.

This legislation could help encourage more Wisconsin students who attend small or rural schools to pursue higher education in Wisconsin, and it would also complement and work alongside our other admissions-related programs that we offer like Dual Enrollment, the Wisconsin Tuition Promise, and Direct Admit Wisconsin.

AB 210 would increase learning and educational opportunities for more Wisconsin students to grow and thrive, giving our state another tool in the toolbox to keep our best and brightest students here.

Thank you for giving the Universities of Wisconsin the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of AB 210.