April 24, 2020

Honorable Members of the Wisconsin Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of the University of Wisconsin System, our students, faculty, and staff, thank you for your support of higher education through the CARES Act. At a time when we are all dealing with the consequences of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, this support is valuable and appreciated. With that support, we continue to prioritize the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff to ensure academic and student services are provided to all students to support their academic progress.

We would also like to thank our students, faculty and staff who have all responded to the monumental challenges posed by the pandemic with adaptability, resiliency and dedication. They are the people who make the University of Wisconsin System great.

As Congress begins work on another stimulus package to address the COVID-19 pandemic, we would like to provide you with updated information on the unexpected costs, disruption to revenues, and cost savings experienced by our institutions, as well as the impact of the federal aid we expect to receive as a result of the CARES Act.

Working with stakeholders on all our campuses, we identified requests for assistance that expand on the provisions in the CARES Act and address other areas of need not covered by the CARES Act. The requests are summarized in five main areas: Institutional Relief, Student Mental Health, IT Infrastructure and Cybersecurity, Research, and Regulatory Relief (Immigration, Financial Aid and Tax).

Institutional Relief

Recommendation: Provide additional funding to institutions of higher education for direct institutional relief through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund

Each UW System institution faces immediate and long-term costs and will experience revenue losses across campus operations as a result of this crisis. The following table details the expected costs and lost revenues as of April 10, 2020, through the rest of the spring semester. These estimates include items such as, but not limited to, housing and dining refunds for students, costs to move course content online, lost revenues from canceled events, athletics, and other services over the current spring semester.

The UW System also expects to realize cost savings related to canceling travel, utility savings, renegotiating contracts, and through furloughs and layoffs. As of April 23, 2020, our best estimate for cost savings through the end of the fiscal year across the UW System is about $30-$35 million.

The estimates provided are conservative, point-in-time estimates, and we expect they will change. Further, the unknown trajectory of the pandemic makes estimates and planning difficult. However, we hope this information is useful to provide an understanding of the financial situation our institutions are working through.

As a result of the CARES Act, the UW System is grateful to receive approximately $47 million to provide emergency grants to our students and another $47 million to help institutions address some of the costs and lost revenues. In addition, the State of Wisconsin will receive $46.5 million as part of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER), with that funding to be split between institutions of higher education and K-12 schools.

UW Institution	Estimated COVID-19 Revenue Loss and Expenses as of April 10, 2020 through Spring Semester
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire	$ 7,135,995
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay	$ 2,538,067
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse	$ 5,429,974
University of Wisconsin-Madison	$ 100,000,000
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	$ 9,186,036
University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh	$ 7,997,247
University of Wisconsin-Parkside	$ 2,273,774
University of Wisconsin-Platteville	$ 7,292,222
University of Wisconsin-River Falls	$ 6,275,198
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point	$ 5,032,535
University of Wisconsin-Stout	$ 5,814,012
University of Wisconsin-Superior	$ 1,306,478
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater	$ 7,904,032
UW System Total:	**$ 168,185,571**

The federal financial support is welcome and necessary support, and our institutions will take advantage of the savings realized from changes in campus operations. But the reality is the cost savings, $47 million in institutional relief provided through the CARES Act, and the potential funding from GEER will still leave significant financial exposure for the UW System. **We respectfully ask Congress to provide additional funding through the newly established Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund for direct institutional relief. We support the request of our national associations to include an appropriation of $46.6 billion to support students and institutions.**

Student Mental Health

Recommendation: Provide funding to support students' needs in the area of mental health

Our UW institutions identified a significant need to address the emotional and mental health issues of students with additional funding, support, and staff. Students have shared concerns about their mental health and safety, as well as financial stress, increased anxiety and depression, online learning challenges, and increased family responsibilities, such as daycare and teaching for family members, as they grapple with disruptions caused by the pandemic. International students report unique needs, as do our LGBTQ students who may find a lack of support at home. Students with disabilities who rely on services provided by our institutions to successfully pursue their coursework also face challenges. On the technical side, there is a need for more robust and secure tele-counseling software. Products like Zoom, Teams, or Skype do not provide adequate security measures to support tele-counseling that meets HIPAA requirements. Additional staff is needed to keep up with counseling needs via phone.

UW institutions are preparing to provide additional support for students through telemedicine, including behavioral health. The projected cost to contract for these services over the next several months is $4 million. **We encourage Congress to consider these student needs and to give funding to institutions to provide necessary staffing and telehealth services that are critical to helping our students navigate safely through this crisis.**

IT Infrastructure and Cybersecurity

Recommendation: Invest in IT infrastructure and cybersecurity to support expanded technology needs of students and institutions

While the UW System's networking infrastructure is extremely good (high speed, robust, and improving), the COVID-19 situation highlights the challenges of the nation's collective network capacity. Each of our UW institutions is working to find temporary solutions to address the immediate demands of switching courses to alternative delivery methods and requiring employees to work from home. However, many of these solutions will not be effective or offer the expected quality if there are longer-term needs as a result of the pandemic.

Students and institutions have identified widespread unmet technology and IT infrastructure gaps. This includes a lack of internet access, laptops, Microsoft Office products, microphones, cameras, data for cell phone service, and hardware and software to support online learning. In addition, some students are struggling with the online format, so online coaches are needed to work with students one-on-one. Many campus libraries lack resources, such as streaming videos and e-books. Additionally, resources are needed to offer services and programming to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

We respectfully ask Congress, as a matter of policy, to invest the billions required to underwrite the construction of the "last mile" to make sure all citizens have broadband access in their homes and, further, that additional investment is made to ensure the effective transition of courses to alternative delivery methods. Please see **Appendix A, Explanatory Statement**, for specific recommendations based on feedback from stakeholders at our institutions based on level of priority: Critical, High, Medium.

Research

Recommendation: Invest in and support the research infrastructure of our universities

We support the broader research-related requests submitted to Congressional leadership on April 7, 2020, by our national higher education associations: American Council on Education, Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities, the Association of American Universities, and the Association of American Medical Colleges. Key requests include a supplemental appropriation of $26 billion for major research agencies to continue research and cover COVID-19 related costs, as well as asking federal research agencies to take advantage of the administrative flexibilities provided in the March 19, 2020, Office of Management & Budget memorandum to the Federal agencies.

It is critical that the highly skilled and professional staff working on research in this country – including students, postdocs, scientists or faculty – continue their research, both for the intrinsic value of the research itself as well as the benefits accrued to those doing the work. If the research disruptions from COVID-19 cause delays in graduations, difficulty in obtaining employment, and uncertainty about the feasibility of research careers, the loss of those scientists will create challenges for the future of science and engineering in this country. These individuals must be supported through this period until research and research universities begin to return to normal operations.

As noted in the [Congressional Research Service report, "Effects of COVID-19 on the Federal Research and Development Enterprise" (dated April 10)](), there are specific challenges for the shared university research infrastructure. That includes maintaining core facilities – specialized laboratories with unique instruments and capabilities that provide services to an institution's researchers – as well as animal care facilities and clinical trial infrastructure. These facilities are partially supported by user fees, often originating from federal research grants that support a user's research. Those facilities and resources provide a foundation for federal research across most disciplines, but the loss of revenue for this infrastructure, because of the slowdown in research through this COVID-19 pandemic, is substantial.

While the UW System has two R1 institutions that conduct a majority of the UW's federally sponsored research (UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee), our 11 comprehensive institutions also conduct significant research to advance the UW System's mission. We have identified three major research areas – faculty research, student research, and research agreements with community partners – that our campus communities identified as being impacted by COVID-19. Please see **Appendix B, Explanatory Statement,** for detailed impacts.

We cannot underscore enough the importance of the requests made by our national associations. We strongly urge Congress to provide a supplemental appropriation of $26 billion for major research agencies to continue research and cover COVID-19 related costs.

<u>**Regulatory Relief**</u>

Recommendation: Provide regulatory relief in the areas of immigration and financial aid, and expand paid leave tax credits to public institutions of higher education

Immigration/DACA: International students and DACA students are important members of our campus communities, and due to the global nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, they have unique needs not shared by our resident or other non-resident students.

We ask for greater flexibility to ensure that international students and researchers can acquire visas in a timely manner for Fall 2020, and that we can renew existing student and scholar visas for programs interrupted by the pandemic this spring. Providing flexibilities and adequate funding to the State Department and United States Citizenship & Immigration Services staff will help to clear anticipated visa backlogs. In particular, we request regulatory exceptions to allow digital signatures on visa documents (I-94) and a waiver of in-person interviews for students and scholars with no security impediments.

We also request flexibilities for the rapid approval of economic hardship employment authorization and the waiver of hardship authorization fees for international students who may be experiencing devaluation of home currency, bank closures, and unemployment in their home countries.

Lastly, the Department of Education recently issued guidance to institutions on how to distribute the federal funding for emergency grants. In this guidance, the Department said the grants can only go to students who are eligible for Title IV federal aid, which inherently excludes DACA students. However, the CARES Act does not specify that students must be eligible for federal financial aid. In Phase IV, we request Congress to clarify the language in the CARES Act to make it explicitly clear that students do not have to necessarily be eligible for financial aid to receive an emergency grant. This will allow our institutions the ability to provide assistance to all our students, including DACA students.

Tax Credit for Paid Leave: We want to voice our support for the letter dated April 9, 2020 from the higher education community detailing tax proposals that will support students and institutions of higher education. In particular, we urge you to consider the recommendation to expand the paid sick leave and

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) tax credit to cover public institutions of higher education. The "Families First Coronavirus Response Act" creates two forms of paid leave for workers impacted by the outbreak: 1) paid emergency FMLA leave; and 2) paid sick leave. The Act created a refundable tax credit to help employers pay for these leave provisions. Our institutions employ approximately 39,000 faculty and staff across the state who are eligible for this leave, yet our institutions are not eligible for the tax credit that is offered to other employers.

Financial Aid: Given the uncertain and changing economic conditions, we request the Department of Education (ED) modify the current FAFSA to add the fields necessary to collect self-reported monthly income data for 2020 up front, rather than using 2018 data which may no longer reflect a family's changed financial condition due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This will help students and families filling out the FAFSA for Fall semester.

Currently, all financial aid offices have the ability, using their professional judgment authority, to amend the data used to calculate the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) when there are significant changes to family circumstances. These decisions are done on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Given the many millions of people who have applied for unemployment in the last 30 days, institutions across the country expect to be inundated with requests from families to use updated income data when calculating their EFC for 2020-21. Modifying the FAFSA form would streamline the process and mitigate possible roadblocks to receiving vital financial aid.

We encourage Congress to provide these and other important regulatory relief measures to help our institutions respond more quickly and effectively in response to the national emergency.

In closing

The magnitude and scope of COVID-19's impact on UW System's students, faculty, staff, institutions, and campus communities are broad and deep. We hope this overview is useful to understand how additional federal support will help the UW System – and our fellow institutions of higher education – to continue our important missions of education, outreach, and research.

Thank you again for your leadership and concern for our students, faculty, staff, and institutions. The UW System is a ready and willing partner to help our communities and nation get through this pandemic. If you have questions, please contact UW System's Associate Vice President for Federal and Corporate Relations, Kris Andrews, at 608-770-3362 or kandrews@uwsa.edu.
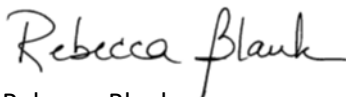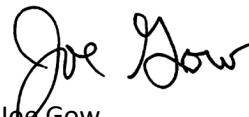
Sincerely,

Ray Cross
President, UW System

James Schmidt
Chancellor, UW-Eau Claire

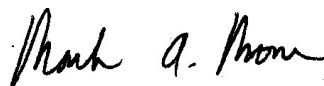Sheryl Van Gruensven
Interim Chancellor, UW-Green Bay

Joe Gow
Chancellor, UW-La Crosse

Rebecca Blank
Chancellor, UW-Madison

Mark Mone
Chancellor, UW-Milwaukee

Andrew Leavitt
Chancellor, UW-Oshkosh

Deborah Ford
Chancellor, UW-Parkside

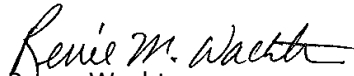Dennis Shields
Chancellor, UW-Platteville

Dean Van Galen
Chancellor, UW-River Falls

Bernie Patterson
Chancellor, UW-Stevens Point

Katherine Frank
Chancellor, UW-Stout

Renee Wachter
Chancellor, UW-Superior

Dwight Watson
Chancellor, UW-Whitewater

APPENDIX A: EXPLANATORY STATEMENT (Infrastructure and Cybersecurity)

Critical Priorities

These items were identified by almost every institution, and they cut to the heart of being able to deliver remote instruction and employment.

- ***Connect the Country (Rural Broadband):*** A fundamental requirement for UW institutions to deliver remote education is that students have access to high speed broadband. Similarly, faculty and staff need broadband to teach and continue to support the institution. High quality, low-cost broadband will increase the resiliency of the entire education delivery system.
    - Access to high speed broadband will provide access to large numbers of students in rural parts of Wisconsin who currently don't have broadband and cannot participate in online education.
    - To address access issues, UW institutions are now creating "drive-in Wi-Fi" so students, faculty, and staff can access broadband from campus parking lots. While this can support a handful of students, clearly it is not scalable nor sustainable. As a matter of policy, the federal government should invest the billions required to underwrite the construction of the "last mile" to make sure all U.S. citizens have broadband access in their homes.
- ***Computing Hardware and Peripherals:*** Many students do not own or have access to laptops and other devices to allow them to participate in remote instruction as these students normally rely on campus computer labs. Unfortunately, this disproportionally affects the economically disadvantaged. Similarly, faculty and staff need access to laptops and other devices (hotspots, web cams, headsets, document cameras, etc.) to properly conduct instruction and continue with support activities from home. UW institutions have tried to provide such equipment where possible, but supplies are limited, and budgets will not sustain a full-coverage approach.
    - UW institutions could use financial support from the federal government to establish equipment loaning programs that would ensure all enrolled students in a need-based status have access to all the equipment needed for success in either in-person or remote delivery.
- ***Learning and Working Securely:*** Since students, faculty, and staff are exclusively learning and working from home, our "attack surface" has expanded exponentially, which greatly increases the risks associated with data breaches, phishing attacks, and fraud.
    - While our current approach will work for the short term, it is not a sustainable solution, and the overall security architecture needs to be redesigned and executed to be secure in both on-campus and remote situations. The federal government could help with funding to establish this type of cybersecurity infrastructure.

High Priorities

These high priority areas are fundamental to remote learning and were identified by many institutions. They did not make the critical list because there are alternatives that will work, albeit at a lower quality.

- ***Virtual Computing Labs:*** Many courses rely on special software that is only available to students in campus computer labs. During normal times, this residency requirement can be challenging for many students, and during a pandemic it is not possible.
    - UW institutions are extremely fragmented in addressing virtual computing needs; some have the hardware and software necessary to deliver virtual computing labs while others do not. However, even the institutions with the capability are unable to scale up to the current situation.

- UW System needs an enterprise-scaled solution that would enable all students across all institutions access to these virtual computing labs. Federal funding could provide the resources needed to establish this core infrastructure to benefit all institutions.
- *Instructional Design:* There is a significant difference between a rapid transition to remote instruction (as required by the pandemic) and a properly designed and executed transition to alternative delivery methods. The latter requires explicit redesign of course material to be optimized for remote scenarios, which requires specific skillsets (such as instructional design) and tools (lecture capture, media production, etc.).
  - For sustainability, UW institutions need to explicitly navigate this transition from "remote instruction" to "online education," which will involve hiring of additional instructional designers and experts to help design and execute the transition. Congress could provide funding and grants to support these efforts to make the overall education delivery system more flexible and resilient.

Medium Priorities

These medium-priority items are important for effective operation, but are related to the administrative aspects of teaching, learning, and higher education, rather than directly required for instruction.

- *Exam Proctoring Software:* A critical component of many courses is the ability for the student to take exams to demonstrate their mastery of the material. In a remote situation, instructors need ways to assure the identity of the students and the absence of cheating. This is true for general courses, but also for specific degrees, like nursing, that have external licensure requirements.
  - UW institutions are quickly trying to establish contracts with private companies to provide these types of services and ensure the integrity of their courses. The federal government could help defray theses significant costs through additional aid or grants to ensure these extra costs are not pushed back to the students.
- *Software Licensing:* Many private vendors across the country have been extremely generous during this unprecedented disruption to provide complimentary access to their tools. Many higher education institutions around the country are leveraging this software in the short-term to mitigate further disruption.
  - At some point, however, the complimentary IT tools will expire, and institutions will be forced to either drop the service or incur these unanticipated costs. The federal government could assist by temporarily helping to fund these tools until the ongoing costs can be incorporated into base budgets.
- *Secure Document Submission and eSignatures:* Many UW institutions still rely on paper-based processes for several key administrative activities, such as financial aid applications and document submission. Institutions have electronic workflows for normal processes, but generally lack the capability to securely transmit documents that are subject to FERPA and other laws.
  - UW institutions will need to purchase and implement new web-based applications to securely authenticate, transmit, and electronically sign confidential documents. The UW institutions will need to purchase and implement new web-based applications to securely authenticate, transmit, and electronically sign confidential documents. The federal government could assist with funding to help institutions absorb the software and implementation costs.

APPENDIX B: EXPLANATORY STATEMENT (Research)

- ***Faculty Research*:** As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the research activities of faculty at every one of our universities has been forestalled. Thus, funding requests to offset costs in this category are extensive. Specific examples include:
    - o   Funding for researchers to complete research disrupted by the pandemic
    - o   Maintenance of laboratory research, instrumentation, and supplies
    - o   Loss of animal subjects
    - o   Loss of destroyed materials and research samples
    - o   Supplemental funding for lab shutdown and start-up, once researchers can return to work
    - o   Supplemental funding for existing grant awards to re-establish research supplies that are no longer available
    - o   No-cost extensions on grant awards, as well as longer no-cost extensions
    - o   Minimal in-directs to campuses
    - o   Supplemental funding to help cover on-going experiments
    - o   Funding to support conference attendance, to re-build publication opportunities in support of employment review requirements
    - o   Diminished ability of faculty to write and apply for grants, due to COVID-19 related delays in grant administration.

- ***Student Research:*** Across the UW System, our universities utilize research to advance the development of students, especially in STEM fields, such as biology, chemistry, physics, engineering, statistics, data analytics, information security, and information technology. This way, students develop the necessary skills for employment as well as admission to graduate school. The COVID-19 pandemic has derailed the ability of faculty members to lead students in many research activities. It represents not only a monetary loss, but also a loss in our collective ability to develop workforce-ready graduates. Federal funding support will help our universities ameliorate the impact of this loss, in both the short-term development of students in specific courses, as well as long-term development toward achieving a degree in a specific discipline. As a result, campus requests focus on student development and assisting students to complete their degrees. Specific examples include:
    - o   Funding to support training on how to effectively teach lab and research science courses online
    - o   Funding to advance undergraduate research opportunities
    - o   Loss of funding for student research internships with potential employers
    - o   Restrictions on access to labs and research sites, severely diminishes learning opportunities and skill development for students
    - o   Waiver of requirements for students who have not filed to verify COVID-19 disruption
    - o   Funding to address the loss of research projects for students. Many of these projects are required for licensure upon graduation. Many of these projects would have resulted in publication opportunities for students, expanding their employment opportunities, and enhancing their likelihood of admission to graduate schools for advanced degrees
    - o   Funding to address the loss of opportunity for students to attend professional conferences, where students not only present their research, but also expand their professional networks, advancing employment opportunities and likelihood of admission to graduate schools for advanced degrees

- o Loss of trained graduate students and post-doctoral employees to advance the projects conducted in research labs. Once research labs re-open, this loss will require the training of new staff without the usual transition process.

- **Research Agreements with Community Partners**: Our institutions engage in a critical form of public service through their research agreements with community partners. At this moment, for example, UW researchers are partnering with community businesses to develop a vaccine for COVID-19 as well as effective testing devices for the virus. Without these partnerships, our communities will lose the support they need from our universities in key areas such as public health, farming, manufacturing, information technology, engineering, product design, and human resource management. Specific requests include:
  - o Renegotiating research contracts, to ensure continuation of service post COVID-19
  - o Redefining projects and scope, in response to COVID-19 disruptions
  - o Updating sub-awards of grants, due to COVID-19 disruptions
  - o Loss of opportunities to bring together researchers, students, and community partners to identify areas of need, and to engage in research development
  - o Loss of opportunities to develop and deliver on new research contracts
  - o Diminished funding from existing community partners under existing contracts
  - o Lost funding due to the cancellation of existing contracts.