

**2020FWD Remarks by President Ray Cross
to the UW System Board of Regents**

August 18, 2016

Good afternoon.

Members of the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents, it is my privilege to share with you the UW System's new strategic framework, "2020FWD: Moving Wisconsin and the World Forward." It is a dynamic framework that reflects the voices of thousands of Wisconsinites, individuals who have shared their concerns, their ideas, and their dreams with us. It is a visionary document that is focused on the future. And it is a practical roadmap to help the UW System and Wisconsin navigate a changing and often unpredictable future, and together move forward.

It has been almost a decade since the University of Wisconsin System last engaged in a strategic planning process. A lot has changed since then, and it is important and prudent that our vision and plans for the UW System evolve to address what lies ahead, both for the university and for the State of Wisconsin. Accordingly, at the Board of Regents meeting last August, I called for the launch of a new strategic planning process.

The first step in such a process is to better understand our environment, the challenges we face, and the things that matter most to our primary stakeholders, the people of Wisconsin. We especially need to understand this because, in the end, the University and the state are so tightly interconnected that one could easily say the future of the University will mirror the future of Wisconsin, and vice versa. Respecting this connection, we have placed a high priority on being responsive, impactful, and accountable.

We also knew we had to listen and not lecture – and we did our best to do just that. Beginning last September, we initiated an extensive and intensive process of listening, gathering information, and analyzing feedback. I am going to spend a few minutes today talking about that process because it's important to recognize what a vital part the people's input and ideas played in developing our framework.

We formally visited nine locations and hosted 13 public sessions throughout the state to listen to residents, elected officials, and leaders of industries, organizations, and communities, people who count on the UW System to play a significant role in shaping the future success of our state.

Many of our early listening sessions were open to the general public, while others involved some of the state's leading experts on targeted issues including the economy, education, global issues, and health and wellness. We also held additional listening sessions and engagement exercises at our UW institutions to gather input from students, faculty and staff.

We have been describing this strategic planning effort as a funnel, a process designed to capture and then to narrow down and refine a vast array of ideas from a large and diverse group of stakeholders into these essential themes and priorities that ultimately became the 2020FWD framework.

The participants were open and frank in sharing their thoughts. While they expressed some general concerns, it was clear they were all very proud of the University of Wisconsin and they cared deeply about our institutions. “We are an excellent University of Wisconsin System,” said one participant at the UW-Green Bay session. “We need to tell the world about it.”

We then conducted two online surveys to collect input from a broader section of the population and to corroborate the findings gleaned from the listening sessions. Both surveys had the same content, and differed only in the population that was surveyed. One survey was open to everyone in order to maximize participation. More than 3,000 people responded. The second survey, conducted by a professional survey firm, engaged 576 participants from a stratified group of 18- to 65-year-old Wisconsin residents to help us capture and better understand the perspectives of different demographic groups.

Even then we were just getting started.

We held seven stakeholder group meetings, engaging with a variety of business, community, and multicultural leaders to filter the data coming in and to help identify priorities within that data. This included meetings with statewide and local chambers, such as the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce, and Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce. We held meetings in Kenosha, Madison, and Milwaukee with multicultural leaders from across the state, including an event hosted by Regent Eve Hall with the African-American Chamber of Commerce of Wisconsin. We also had sessions with many members of UW shared governance groups.

In addition, we convened six expert groups, who met three times over a two-week span. In lengthy sessions, the 51 experts were tasked with sifting through the data and crafting some initial initiatives. These expert groups included leaders in business, the community, the UW faculty, and elected officials. You may recognize some of the faces on the screen behind me. They are busy people but they willingly invested an impressive amount of time to participate in this endeavor.

Finally, all this input was advanced to the UW System’s Strategic Planning Steering Committee – which included Regent President Millner, several chancellors, provosts, CBOs, System Administration staff, and other institutional leaders – who formulated the initial recommendations.

The result of all this painstaking and passionate collective involvement is the 2020FWD framework you now have before you. As we hope you will agree, it is a visionary framework that will guide and propel us into the future.

Now, let us go through the framework. Let’s start by taking a look at some of the key findings and feedback that emerged from our listening campaign. Those challenges tend to fall into four broad areas.

Challenge number one: Wisconsin's demographics. Put simply, while Wisconsin's population overall is growing, our workforce is actually shrinking. In other words, we have pressure at both ends of the demographic continuum. The number of people age 65 and older in Wisconsin is expected to double in the next 25 years. At the same time, lower birth rates mean fewer high school graduates, and fewer young people entering the workforce. What's more, our workforce challenges are further exacerbated by an outflow of recent college graduates to other states. This adds up to a worker shortage that will only get worse in the next decade.

Whether or not people at our listening sessions were fully aware of the state's demographic projections, they clearly recognized we are facing a problem and they said things like this:

- "The pipeline of talent is shrinking."

Not only do we need more people in the workforce, we need a more educated workforce. We also know that is key to a growing economy.

In a study by The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce it is projected that by 2020, 62 percent of jobs in Wisconsin will demand some post-secondary education.

Challenge number two: Creating a more dynamic learning experience. Everywhere we went, business leaders told us that it's not just the number of graduates that is important to them, but what kind of graduates we are producing. If future economic success requires more innovation, we need to find more ways to teach creativity, not only in classrooms but in our communities. If the future workplace values collaborative endeavors, we need to provide a learning experience that helps students better understand how to live and work with others of different backgrounds, values, and ideas. If employers and our society overall are looking for problem-solvers, we must ensure that what we teach and how students learn helps them to search for and find relevant solutions. In our listening sessions, themes like the following frequently came up:

- "We need more development in entrepreneurship and innovation that links the research engine of the UW with our communities."

The valuable role of higher education to Wisconsin's economy is a central theme of a report issued last May by the Wisconsin Technology Council. (A copy of that report is in your folders.) Innovation and knowledge are the twin drivers of 21st-century economic success, according to the report, and I quote, "Increasingly, our state leaders look to our universities as a key to our economic future."

Challenge number three: Improving our connections with businesses and communities. A recurring refrain at our listening sessions was that people want the UW to be more engaged and more involved with businesses and communities. Working together, we can better leverage our talent, our ideas, and our resources to more effectively tackle the issues and concerns we all share. One participant summed it up like this:

- "Encourage more partnering between UW and community groups. These things are being done already – but kick it up a couple of notches."

Wisconsin businesses, organizations, and local and state governments tell us over and over that they need more creative solutions to address the challenges they face every day. Empowering the connections between the UW and these entities not only will boost jobs and the talent pool, but it will enhance the state's economic climate and quality of life, making Wisconsin a more attractive place to live and work.

Jim Morgan, former president of the Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce Foundation, told the Future Wisconsin Economic Summit last December, and I quote, "If we don't find ways to attract people to work in this state, nothing else matters."

Challenge number four: Limited resources. For more than a decade, the UW System has faced the growing need to educate more and more Wisconsin residents – but with declining state resources. As reported in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel this past May, state support for the UW System, when adjusted for inflation, is the lowest in UW System history. This comes at a time when our current enrollment is just under 180,000 students – or about 26,000 more than two decades ago.

People at our listening sessions recognized that the UW is being asked to do more with less, but they, like everyone else, still want and expect us to provide a quality education. They also expect us to be good stewards of our resources. They said things like this:

- "The State of Wisconsin is underinvesting in education and infrastructure."

The Wisconsin Technology Council doesn't mince words about the need for investment. In a recent report, it stated, (quote), "Further cuts in public support for higher education in Wisconsin will harm the state's economy, which relies on colleges and universities for talent, technology transfer, and business development in the communities those institutions serve."

These challenges are our call to action. Something must be done. I am here to assert that we – the people, ideas, and resources that compose the UW System – are uniquely qualified to help find and implement the needed solutions. And we believe that the vision and initiatives provided in the 2020FWD framework can and will help us do just that.

Looking at the big picture, the recommendations presented in our 2020FWD strategic framework generally coalesce around four major focal points.

- How do we improve the educational pipeline?
- How do we improve the university experience?
- How do we become better connected with businesses and with communities in Wisconsin?
- How do we achieve greater efficiency in our operations while still providing excellence?

How we answer these four questions will require action at both the System and institutional level. Please be aware that today we are talking about System-level priorities. As you review this document, it is important to remember that it is the campuses who will actually implement the programs that bring these priorities to life. UW System's role is to ensure the program goals are achieved.

So now, let us go through each of these four focal areas, one by one, and discuss the System-level priorities...

First, the educational pipeline. The focus of our efforts going forward will be on getting more people into and through the educational pipeline and connecting them to a business or career right here in Wisconsin.

Our focus on the educational pipeline is not just about the four years a college student spends on campus. To achieve the educated workforce that businesses and communities say is necessary, the pipeline needs to reflect the full educational journey of all Wisconsinites, and that will require significant partnerships with other educational entities and local communities.

According to the latest data from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, only 27 out of 100 ninth-graders in Wisconsin will graduate from college.

We need to start as early as pre-school, working with our partners to build strong educational foundations. We know this is critical to future success. We must also work with middle and high school students to ensure they are realistically prepared for college. It means providing these students with opportunities to start their college careers even before they arrive on campus.

An effective educational pipeline also requires working with our current college students to make sure they get adequate advising in all areas – including academic, financial, career planning, and personal issues. We want them to be taking the right classes, and have the support they need to succeed and graduate.

A strong pipeline means working with students from other institutions who want to transfer, and ensuring that their transfer is simple and seamless. It also means providing adult or non-traditional students who want to return to school to finish a degree or to improve their careers with practical and convenient learning paths, such as online or competency-based programs, that will help them succeed.

As you will hear later this afternoon, our 2017-19 biennial budget request directly addresses the state's demographic challenges through several system-level priorities. Those priorities include expanding the current Course Options program; strengthening and expanding our current advising practices; facilitating and simplifying the college transfer process; expanding opportunities for adult and non-traditional students; and adding or expanding academic programs in areas most critically needed in Wisconsin's current and future workforce.

The second broad area of focus is the university experience. Business and community leaders repeatedly emphasized that they want and need people in the workforce who are willing and able to collaborate with others from different disciplines, cultures, geographic locations, ways of thinking, and even political philosophies. We need people who can work together in teams with others who are just different!

Our proposed U2 (U-squared) initiative focuses on exposing more students to more high-impact learning practices that have proven to be successful, and that includes internships, undergraduate research,

study abroad, first-year seminars, learning communities, collaborative assignments, service-learning, and capstone projects. We will also develop a model for systemwide cultural fluency education, creating a foundation for civility and mutual respect throughout the university experience. This isn't just our opinion; this is something businesses are demanding. To meet the call for greater entrepreneurialism, we will place a greater emphasis on creativity, innovation, research, and the translation of ideas to the marketplace.

The third area of focus is business and community mobilization. If there was a single message that came through loud and clear during the development of this strategic framework, it was that the UW must be more engaged with the businesses and communities of our state.

We have several System-level priorities that will move this concept forward more broadly. The UniverCity Year program will partner UW faculty and students with a designated community on specific projects for an academic year. Wisconsin Vitality focuses on collaborative efforts to promote health and wellness, as well as helping to direct health professionals to places where they are most needed. Career Connect, which we talked about this morning in the REDI committee, is a new "one-stop shop" website designed to efficiently connect employers with students looking for internships, outside-the-classroom experiences, and jobs. We are also planning to convene Wisconsin Idea Summits, a series of listening and engagement sessions to bring people together to identify their most pressing challenges, to share expertise, and to find solutions.

On a related note, I have previously shared with the Board our intent to ensure that all UW students have at least one experience connecting them with a Wisconsin business or organization before graduation. It's a proactive and progressive approach that benefits learning, career placement, and helps meet needs of the workforce, as well as potentially curtailing the current brain drain of college educated workers from the state.

Moving on to the fourth focus area: operational excellence. The UW System has long been at the forefront of transparency and accountability as part of our commitment to use resources responsibly. As new mechanisms and tools emerge to consolidate, streamline, and improve operations, we will continue to aggressively pursue opportunities to save resources, maximize efficiency, and support excellence.

One of these efforts is our CORE initiative – Commitment to Operational Reform and Excellence – which was initially presented to the Board in June. You should also be familiar with our accountability dashboard, which we will continue to use to openly benchmark and assess our progress.

I want to emphasize that operational excellence goes beyond support operations. It also incorporates effectively managing the academic courses and programs offered at our institutions, including the review of standards and practices related to electives and enrollment. This can have a direct impact on students and their time to degree as well as overall college affordability. Our goal will always be to achieve academic effectiveness with optimal efficiency.

Another key part of operational excellence is people, and let... me... be... clear. The UW System will prioritize resources to increase compensation for our faculty and staff. They are considered among the best in the world.

What's next? If this strategic framework is approved by the Board of Regents, we will begin developing the specific operational plans to put it into practice. Next year at this time, I hope and expect that the Board and the people of Wisconsin will be able to review our annual Strategic Framework Report Card to see and evaluate our progress.

This has been an extraordinary journey. Over the course of the past year, we have been deeply engaged with the people of Wisconsin in a powerful joint venture to develop an ambitious and visionary new strategic framework.

The boldness of 2020FWD is rooted in its simplicity. We have crafted a framework for the future of the University of Wisconsin System that is focused on how the university can most directly and effectively help the state find ways to prepare for the future.

This is the Wisconsin Idea in action. The substance, impact, and reach of the UW System has never been greater... but we can and will do more.

Today, it has been my privilege to present to you this strategic framework. But this is not just my plan. I hope it is now evident and clear that the UW System's 2020FWD strategic framework represents the coming together of thousands of voices from all across the state, a chorus of people who have shared their concerns, ideas, and dreams for the future. Every sentence of the framework holds an echo of those voices.

2020FWD is a collective vision – and it now must become collective action. I sincerely hope that you will join us to step fearlessly forward to address the challenges and seize the opportunities that lie ahead. With your vote of approval, this strategic framework will be launched ... to move Wisconsin and the world forward. I ask for your support.