A university system that extends far beyond campus boundaries—that's the promise and opportunity of the University of Wisconsin System. Our guiding principle, the Wisconsin Idea, envisions teaching, learning, and research that benefit the citizens of Wisconsin and the world.

Wisconsin has faced great challenges throughout the pandemic. When the call came for assistance, UW System campuses answered. In partnership with state and federal leaders, our universities quickly began offering testing, timely health communication, and, finally, vaccination sites to benefit all citizens. Faculty and staff quickly pivoted to remote learning methods so that students could maintain progress toward their degrees.

Now we ask, "What's next?" We seek a leader to help guide us there—the eighth President of the University of Wisconsin System. A visionary champion of opportunity for all will be the ideal person to lead our system with its long tradition of innovation and creative approaches to solving complex problems.

On behalf of the Board of Regents, the search committee and the faculty, staff, and students of the UW System, thank you for your interest.

Karen Walsh, Vice President
UW System Board of Regents
The University of Wisconsin (UW) System Board of Regents seeks nominations and applications for the position of UW System President. The next President should be a strong advocate for academic quality, research and innovation, student success, inclusive excellence, public accountability, and shared governance. We seek an imaginative, energetic, visionary leader with exceptional leadership abilities to champion and amplify the UW System’s reputation for world-class education, research, and outreach. Challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic present an opportunity to broadly evaluate public higher education for the future, and the next President will be charged with creating a new strategic vision for the UW System.
The mission of the University of Wisconsin System is to discover and disseminate knowledge; to extend knowledge and its application beyond the boundaries of its campuses; and to serve and stimulate society by developing human potential. The UW System fosters in students heightened intellectual, cultural, and humane sensitivities; scientific, professional, and technological expertise; and a sense of purpose. Inherent in this broad mission are methods of instruction, research, extended training, and public service designed to educate people and improve the human condition. Central to the UW System is the search for truth.

The University of Wisconsin System was created by legislation in 1971 through the merger of two public university systems under a single Board of Regents, but its roots date to the mid-1800s, when both the land-grant university in Madison and nine normal schools were founded around the state. The UW System is known throughout the world for the Wisconsin Idea—a belief that the university should work in partnership with government, local communities, businesses, and others to identify and solve problems to improve the quality of life for citizens of the state and beyond. The Wisconsin Idea is one of the oldest and deepest traditions defining the University of Wisconsin.

Today, the University of Wisconsin System is one of the world’s premier public university systems and among the largest systems of public higher education in the country. The UW System educates approximately 165,000 students at 13 universities across 26 campuses, serves more than one million citizens through statewide outreach programs, and employs more than 39,000 faculty and staff statewide. The UW System’s annual budget is $6 billion, including about $1 billion in state funding and $1.9 billion in gifts, grants, and contracts. The UW System’s total estimated annual economic impact exceeds $24 billion.

The UW System consists of two nationally recognized Research I universities (Madison, Milwaukee); 11 comprehensive universities (Eau Claire, Green Bay, La Crosse, Oshkosh, Parkside, Platteville, River Falls, Stevens Point, Stout, Superior, and Whitewater); 13 additional campuses affiliated with seven of the universities following a 2018 realignment; and a statewide extension network with offices in every county. The University of Wisconsin System touches every corner of the state, offering unique opportunities and life-changing interactions. The recent All In Wisconsin campaign highlights the inspiring and vital work at our universities.
The University of Wisconsin System sustains one of the richest traditions in American higher education, fulfilling its mission and advancing the Wisconsin Idea by providing world-class education, research, and public service for residents of the state and beyond. The UW System contributes to the strength of Wisconsin’s economy by opening its doors to students from families across Wisconsin, regardless of background or income level, helping state residents earn college degrees and also attracting talented students from outside the state. The UW System is a powerful asset to Wisconsin’s economy, returning $24 for every $1 invested by the state. The UW System plays a central role in improving the human condition for our state’s citizens by encouraging the pursuit of civic engagement and leadership that benefits communities, partnering with business and industry to generate entrepreneurial know-how and economic prosperity, and creating opportunities for lifelong learning that improves lives.

Higher education in general faced extraordinary headwinds this last academic year, combating the pandemic while stretched thin on resources. In Wisconsin, the leadership of former Governor and former United States Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson helped the UW System successfully navigate the pandemic while raising the profile of the UW System as a whole. Putting the Wisconsin Idea into practice, the UW System played a key role in COVID-19 community testing at the height of the pandemic and its universities later served as vaccination hubs in 2021. Financial, educational, technological, political, cultural, and mental health impacts resulting from the pandemic are expected to continue to be felt by students, faculty, and staff in Wisconsin and across the country. The UW System fully embraces its leadership role to help Wisconsin solve its toughest problems through local, state, and national partnerships that benefit all Wisconsinites.

The next President of the University of Wisconsin will be expected to:

**ENVISION THE FUTURE AND REALIZE THE PROMISE OF THE UW SYSTEM**

Throughout its history, the UW System and its universities have been leaders in advancing higher education in Wisconsin, the nation, and across the world. The UW System has also played a critical role in building the state’s economy and serves as an invaluable resource to all Wisconsin citizens. The next UW System President will have the opportunity to develop the UW System’s roadmap into the future and lead the System and the state in our next chapter.

A critical responsibility will be balancing the unique characteristics and emphases of each UW university while ensuring the strength of the UW System as a whole.
CHAMPION THE UW SYSTEM AND ITS MISSION

The UW System is proud of its reputation for quality and excellence in teaching and learning, scholarship and research, and public service. The UW System and its universities must actively sustain a competitive edge to make the public case for the resources and regulatory flexibility necessary to carry out their mission. Mirroring higher education nationwide, support for higher education has waned, creating challenges for the UW System's ability to thrive and maintain its position as a global leader.

The President is the public face of the UW System in the state, nationally, and internationally, and speaks for and to the citizens of the state on matters related to higher education. It is fundamentally important for the next UW System President to be a strong advocate for the importance of a liberal arts education and to work with key leaders in state government, local government, and the corporate and civic sectors to personally convey a high level of enthusiasm for and confidence in the UW System and its campuses. The next President will continue to identify areas where the UW System and its campuses can be aligned to support the broader priorities of Wisconsin and its people.

MANAGE REVENUE PRESSURES

The financial pressures confronting higher education are substantial, and the COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated the situation. Demographic trends, declining enrollments, reduced public funding, aging physical facilities, and the cost pressures on education are but a few of the fiscal challenges facing higher education in general as well as the UW System. The next UW System President will be called on to continue to serve as a thoughtful steward of the UW System's resources while continually strategizing how to grow those resources and manage operational costs effectively.
WORK COLLABORATIVELY AND CONSULTATIVELY WITH UW SYSTEM CONSTITUENCIES

The President is the leader of the UW System, providing direct oversight of the UW System Administration while also serving to support the Board of Regents in hiring, supporting, and evaluating the Chancellors. To succeed, the President must have a clear understanding of the nature and role of the UW System as a system and how that System is balanced with the nature and roles of the university campuses as part of a complex academic ecosystem. The next President will need to develop and foster effective, collaborative, and consultative relationships with campus leadership, faculty, staff, students, and community stakeholders.

PROVIDE ESSENTIAL CENTRAL SERVICES TO UW SYSTEM CAMPUSES

One of the important roles of the UW System is to provide operational support to the System campuses. The UW System President manages and leads the identification of systemwide essential services, which includes applications, audits, legal issues, enterprise risk management, cybersecurity, and other functions.

PROVIDE SUPPORT TO CAMPUSES TO CREATE EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

Primary responsibility and authority to develop and implement effective educational practices lies with the Chancellors and university leadership. However, the UW System and the President play a vital role in supporting those efforts to develop the best environment possible for students and learning, including the following:

**Supporting Sustainable Strategies to Ensure Student Success**

While the UW System has multiple functions and serves many purposes, the education of students is paramount. The pressures faced by today’s students are increasing, whether related to financial obligations, academic challenges, or mental and behavioral health needs. The next UW System President must recognize these realities and work with campuses to develop and support the best practices to assure student success.
Strengthening the Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion among students and our workforce continues to be a priority for the UW System. The next UW System President should play a significant leadership role in enhancing those efforts and will be responsible for continuing to support both campus and systemwide initiatives to help make progress in this area for both individual and collective benefit.

Providing for Nontraditional Student Populations

The President should leverage statewide relationships to find new solutions to help the UW System and its universities attract, recruit, retain, and graduate the significant pool of nontraditional students in Wisconsin. Nontraditional student populations are defined as those who have either begun their college experience but not completed undergraduate degrees and are not currently enrolled in higher education, or those who have no college credits to date but desire to begin while maintaining their professional endeavors.

Developing Talent for Wisconsin's Economic Success

Tapping into the entrepreneurial energy and expertise of UW faculty and staff while developing the talents of more than 165,000 students across the state is key to both the success of the UW System and Wisconsin at large. It will require engaged, nimble leadership to fully harness the assets and opportunities abundant within the UW System.

Investing in Human Resources

If the UW System is to realize its goals and objectives, its universities must be able to attract and retain top-notch and diverse talent in its faculty and staff. As with peers nationwide, this is a significant challenge in an environment of constrained resources. The next UW System President will need to be effective in advocating for necessary resources and creative in providing support to the universities to help them develop effective strategies for recruitment, retention, compensation, and professional development of their faculty and staff.

Adopting New Learning Technologies

The next UW System President will need to assist in making crucial decisions to incorporate new technological advancements into the distance learning process, including expanding the breadth and availability of online programs, to respond to economic and workforce demands across the state while also providing expanded opportunities to attract new students to the UW System.
THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System consists of 18 members, 16 of whom are appointed by the Governor subject to confirmation by the Senate. Of these 16 members, 14 serve staggered, seven-year terms. Two UW System student members are appointed to staggered two-year terms, one of whom is a nontraditional student. The state superintendent of public instruction and the president or designee of the Wisconsin Technical College System Board also serve as ex officio members of the Board. Members serve without pay.

The Board is responsible for establishing policies and rules for governing the System, planning to meet future state needs for university education, setting admission standards and policies, reviewing and approving university budgets, and establishing the regulatory framework in which individual units operate with the widest degree of autonomy within the controlling limits of systemwide policies and priorities established by the Board. The Regents hold up to eight regular meetings per year.

The Board appoints the President of the UW System and the Chancellors of the 13 universities. All serve at the pleasure of the Board. The Board also grants tenure appointments to qualified faculty members.
UW SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION

With the Board of Regents, the UW System Administration leads and serves the UW System universities. Under the direction of the UW System President, the UW System Administration helps to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate policies enacted by the Board of Regents, aligning university programs with the current and future needs of the state and the nation.

In fulfilling this mission, the UW System Administration is the conduit between the Board of Regents and Chancellors to develop strategic planning and policy for teaching and learning, budget and finance, capital improvement, external stakeholder engagement and partnerships, public advocacy and communications, data gathering and analysis, regulatory compliance, information security and technology, talent recruitment and diversity, and intercollegiate athletics. UW System Administration, based in Madison, assists the President in facilitating coordination among the 13 universities as well as providing guidance and oversight.

The UW System President serves as the chief executive officer. The President has full executive responsibility for the operation and management of the University of Wisconsin System, seeing to the appropriate staffing of System administrative offices and directing and coordinating the activities of these offices as needed to fulfill their responsibilities. The President reports to the 18-member Board of Regents and carries out the duties prescribed in Wisconsin Statutes, Chapter 36, for this office and such other duties as may be assigned by the Board or in policy actions of the Board. Four UW System Vice Presidents and 13 Chancellors report to the President. The General Counsel and the Chief Audit Executive report jointly to the President and the Board of Regents.

CHANCELLORS

The 13 Chancellors of the universities in the University of Wisconsin System report to the President and are also accountable to the Board of Regents. The President and Chancellors are charged with implementing Wisconsin statutes, Regent policies, and System Administration policies, and with administration of the universities.

As executive heads of their respective faculties and university campuses, the Chancellors are responsible for the administration of their units, including degree requirements; academic standards; grading systems; faculty appointments, evaluation, promotion, and recommendations for tenure; and auxiliary services and budget management. Chancellors have extensive duties for external relations in support of their universities, including fundraising, legislative and external relations, community relations, and engagement with higher education organizations. The Chancellors who head UW System’s universities are dynamic leaders in their university communities, and the UW System has had unprecedented stability in these roles to build a solid foundation for continued success.

SHARED GOVERNANCE

The UW System has a distinctive and significant governance process under which faculty, academic staff, university staff, and students share the responsibility for governance. By state statute and Regent policy, this system of shared governance vests in these groups primary responsibility for policies in their respective areas (for example, faculty for academic and educational activities), subject to the responsibilities and powers of the Board, President, and Chancellors. Under this unique governance structure, the UW System facilitates meetings among shared governance groups to enhance communication and deliberation among the groups, the universities, and the UW System.
INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

Inclusive excellence is the core strategy and current operating philosophy guiding the UW System’s work to achieve equity, diversity, and inclusion. It is designed to help UW System universities establish a comprehensive, well-coordinated set of university actions focused on fostering student success and closing opportunity gaps. Based upon the belief that a public university must serve and lead the way in increasing equity in educational opportunities for all the people of the state, achieving the goals of equity, diversity, and inclusion for all students, faculty, and staff is a top priority for the UW System.

While significant steps have been taken over the years toward inclusive excellence, the University of Wisconsin System faces ongoing challenges. To address the challenges, the UW System hired a new Senior Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Officer, who reports to the System President. The UW System has also designated resources to benefit students directly, such as the new Wisconsin Regents Opportunity Scholarship, which provides scholarships to underrepresented and underserved undergraduates. Developing these resources and incorporating EDI initiatives into a strategic plan will be essential.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The UW System’s Accountability Dashboard and annual accountability reports represent the UW System’s commitment to the citizens of Wisconsin. The public reports align with the mission of the UW System, concentrating on the many ways the UW System seeks to serve its students and the state of Wisconsin.

These accountability reports ensure transparency while also identifying opportunities at the UW System. They were founded to ensure a focus on operational efficiencies critical to delivering the affordable and valuable educational experience students and parents expect.

The next System President will be expected to further demonstrate accountability to the public by meeting with government officials, conducting interviews with the media, and participating in a range of public appearances.
SUMMARY OF UW SYSTEM PRESIDENT

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The UW System President has executive responsibility for the operation and management of the University of Wisconsin System. The President reports to the 18-member Board of Regents and carries out the duties as prescribed in Wis. Stat. Chapter 36 and such other duties as may be assigned by the Board or in policy actions of the Board. The President is responsible for appropriate staffing of the UW System Administration, which shall assist the System President and the Board of Regents in establishing systemwide policies; strategic planning; monitoring, reviewing, and evaluating Board policies; coordinating program development and operation among UW universities; planning the programmatic, financial, and physical development of the UW System; negotiating budgets and policy with state officials; maintaining fiscal control; and compiling and recommending educational programs, operating budgets, and building programs for the Board. The Chancellors of the UW System universities serve under the coordinating direction of the President and are accountable to the President and the Board of Regents in the operation and administration of their respective campuses. UW System universities operate with a strong and proud history of shared governance with faculty, academic staff, university staff, and students.
QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The next President of the UW System will lead with persistence, patience, vigor, decisiveness, and humility as the UW System moves into a new era of higher education. The next President will support and champion the UW System as one of the world’s leading research, teaching, and public service institutions. The breadth and complexity of the UW System will require a President who can craft a vision and share that vision in a compelling and collaborative way to embolden the State of Wisconsin’s leadership and residents to rally around the Wisconsin Idea that has been a standard of excellence for more than 100 years.

Applicants or nominees should have the following professional and personal qualities, experience, and characteristics:

- At least 10 years’ experience in a significant senior executive position;
- An understanding of the unique attributes of higher education and the current opportunities and challenges facing public higher education;
- An appreciation and a commitment to perform the role of President with a student-centered mindset and with the best interests of all students in mind;
- A proven track record of effectively promoting and supporting equity, diversity, and inclusion, and establishing working and learning environments of trust and mutual respect;
- A demonstrated ability to forge partnerships with education sectors across the nation and the globe;
- A demonstrated ability to establish strong, purposeful, and persuasive relationships with local, state, and federal government officials, business and community leaders, and other diverse constituencies as a champion for higher education;
- Demonstrated experience advocating and negotiating on policy and budget issues with public officials in a political environment;
- A demonstrated record of financial acumen and ability to effectively manage human, fiscal, and capital resources;
- A proven track record of strategic and inclusive planning in a large, complex organization;
- A demonstrated capacity for strong collaborative, consultative, and participatory leadership; the proven ability to listen, unify, motivate, and empower others; and the characteristics needed to inspire a wide range of stakeholders to move forward toward a shared vision;
- A demonstrated ability to manage and drive change in a large, complex organization by empowering senior leaders to implement the change;
- A demonstrated understanding of and ability to work effectively with shared governance and diverse constituencies and governance units;
- A proven history of acting as a servant leader who values approachability, transparency, and authenticity;
- A record of integrity and high-quality stewardship that will enhance the reputation of and respect for the UW System and the Office of the President;
- Demonstrated exceptional and effective communication and interpersonal skills;
- Demonstrated intellectual vigor necessary for leadership in a complex, dynamic educational system; and
- A demonstrated entrepreneurial mindset, creative problem-solving skills, and appreciation of emerging educational technology trends.
Located in the Highlands area on Madison’s west side, Brittingham House is the official residence of the University of Wisconsin System President and serves as the front door to the UW System. It is used frequently for receptions, business meetings, and other public events. As a benefit of employment, Brittingham House is provided as the UW System President’s principal residence.

Thomas E. and Mary Brittingham built the elegant Georgian-style house in 1916 as their residence. In 1955, their children donated the house and its 15-acre grounds to the University of Wisconsin. It became the official residence of the UW System President in 1977.

For further information about Brittingham House, the official residence of the UW System President, visit the UW System President's Residence webpage.
The position will remain open until filled. However, only complete applications received by October 15, 2021, are assured full consideration.

Nominations and expressions of interest will be treated in confidence; references will not be contacted without prior approval of the candidate. The UW System will not reveal the identities of applicants who request confidentiality in writing, except the identities of those identified as final candidates. See Wis. Stat. § 19.36(7). Employment requires a criminal background check. It will also require applicants and references to answer questions regarding sexual violence and harassment.

The search for the next UW System President is being assisted by WittKieffer, a global executive search firm. Applications should consist of a substantive cover letter addressing the criteria listed above and a curriculum vitae or résumé. Applications and nominations should be submitted via WittKieffer’s candidate portal.

Confidential inquiries, nominations, and questions concerning this search may be sent by email to WittKieffer consultants John Thornburgh and Christine Pendleton at UWisconsinPresident@wittkieffer.com.

The University of Wisconsin System is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity employer and actively seeks and encourages applications from women, minorities, and persons with disabilities. It is our policy to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities who are employees or applicants for employment.