

**Profile of the
University of Wisconsin System Higher Education Location Program (UW HELP)
UW-Extension
2017 Regents Academic Staff Excellence Program Award Recipient**

Highlights from nomination materials:

- Created in 1971 as the “front door” to the UW System.
- Currently serves more than 300,000 individuals annually.
- Under the leadership of Director Mary Vilmo, the unit provides personalized assistance and admission information to prospective students, parents/guardians, and high school counselors through one-on-one contact, social media outreach, workshop presentations, and webinars.
- Helps lead the development of the electronic admission application for the UW System, which more than one million students have used to date.
- Created MajorMania, a database of academic programs used by thousands of students, counselors, and organizations to find best-fit programs for students.
- Maintains a robust database of pre-college programs for the UW System.
- This past year, UW HELP’s text messaging effort engaged 20,000 high school students in conversations about financial aid and preparing for college.
- Built the *UW Journey* mobile application, which high school students will be able to use to learn about and compare UW System institutions on a variety of academic and non-academic topics.
- Led the Wisconsin E-Transcript Initiative, which enabled state high schools to submit transcripts electronically.
- Worked with College Goal Wisconsin to support a free event to help students and families with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Staff regularly give high school presentations, including annual workshops for nearly 1,000 school counselors in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois.
- Produces the award-winning *Introduction to the UW System* view book.
- Received national awards from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) and the University Professional and Continuing Education Association.

In the words of colleagues:

- “In many ways, UW HELP is the heart of the UW System, where families and school counselors meet our campuses and get their first impression of the University of Wisconsin System. I couldn’t be more proud of the quality of work and caliber of colleagues found at the UW HELP office.”
—Heather Kretz, *Director of Admissions, UW-Eau Claire*
- “UW HELP is a fantastic resource for the UW System so that students have a neutral resource to explore all the UW [institutions], navigate the different majors, and apply at various campuses at one time. It is a one-stop shop for students and is especially helpful for low-income and first-generation families who may not be aware of all the different options their children have when they are choosing their college.”
—Sharon Hunter, *Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Programs Supervisor, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*
- “UW HELP has successfully crafted communication methods that appeal to contemporary audiences, while keeping their services inviting and personal.”
—David Schejbal, *Dean, UW-Extension*