

MINUTES
JOINT MEETING OF THE EDUCATION AND
THE BUSINESS, FINANCE, and AUDIT COMMITTEES, BOARD OF REGENTS
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
Whitewater, Wisconsin
September 10, 2009

I.2.b. – The University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health: The Wisconsin Partnership Fund for a Healthy Future – Acceptance of the Fifth Annual Report

Regent Crain convened the joint meeting of the Education and Business, Finance, and Audit Committees at 1:46 p.m. Regents Bradley, Connolly-Keesler, Crain, Davis, Evers, Falbo, Smith, Vasquez, and Wingad were present.

In introducing Dr. Robert Golden, Dean of the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, Regent Crain reminded her Regent colleagues that the Board had last heard from Dean Golden in December, 2008, when he had presented the second five-year plan for the Wisconsin Partnership Program. The Five-Year Plan had required and received Regent approval; the Annual Report, she said, was presented to the Regents for information purposes only.

Dean Golden provided an overview of the 2008 Annual Report. The Report, developed annually by the UW-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health in collaboration with the Wisconsin Partnership Program's Oversight and Advisory Committee (OAC), describes the activities leading to the awarding of grants by both the OAC and by the Medical Education and Research Committee (MERC) for projects that advance population health in Wisconsin.

Dean Golden reviewed highlights from the last year, including both positive developments and challenges to the Program. The positive developments included: the new Five-Year Plan approved by the Board in December 2008; strong evaluation practices of Wisconsin Partnership programs already in place, which revealed important outcomes being met; and the hiring of Dr. Pat Remington as the inaugural Associate Dean for Public Health.

Dean Golden described the greatest challenge to the Wisconsin Partnership Program as the significant decline in the Program's endowment, by about \$100 million in the last couple of years. The endowment reached a low point in December 2008 at \$260.8 million. Since that time, the endowment had begun to recover, along with the stock market, and was now valued at \$285 million. While difficult financial choices had to be made, and the impact of the loss in the endowment had been felt, the Program's two funding arms, the Oversight and Advisory Committee and the Medical Education and Research Committee, did manage to fund significant work in some critically needy public health arenas. Dean Golden reported that in the Program's first five years, it had awarded nearly \$70 million through 180 initiatives to faculty, non-profit organizations, and government agencies.

Dr. Golden recounted some of the innovative work funded by MERC, the Medical Education Research Committee, to reduce health disparities. MERC awards were made prior to the endowment's decline. Totaling \$7,381,345, they represented both targeted and competitive

programs covering a broad spectrum of activities from basic science, to clinical research, to community interventions. These projects are collaborative and often receive additional external funding, e.g., from the National Institutes of Health, used to leverage MERC resources.

Examples included:

- The development of a minority recruitment model in Milwaukee for studies of preclinical Alzheimer's Disease in middle-aged African Americans;
- A clinical trial on Smoking Cessation in the Menominee Indian Tribe; and
- The development of a community-wide intervention to promote breast and cervical cancer screening among Latinas.

Dean Golden then addressed the work of the Oversight and Advisory Committee or OAC. The timing of that Committee's grant-making resulted in the approval, but withheld funding of six grant projects. The Program hoped to release the funds for these projects soon, following re-assessment of the Wisconsin Partnership Program's financial projections.

Dean Golden profiled the Program's largest project, the Healthy Birth Outcomes Initiative, which works to reduce infant deaths and birth-outcome disparities for African American women in high-need areas throughout Wisconsin. Launched in 2008, ten million dollars had been committed to this program over the next five years. OAC had begun working with community partners in Beloit, Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Racine, and funding would be made available to some of those partners in coming months through an RFP process. Dean Golden introduced Lorraine Lathen, Senior Program Advisor to the Healthy Birth Outcomes project, and a member of the Healthy Birth Outcomes Steering Committee. The Steering Committee was working to provide leadership and advice to OAC in its administration of the program, and to develop collaborative relationships with other state agencies and targeted communities in order to leverage resources and extend the program's impact. The Dean expressed optimism that the initiative would see significant reductions in preventable infant deaths within five to ten years.

Dean Golden directed the Regents' attention to the Grant Outcomes Report that had been included as an appendix to the Annual Report. This report highlights the outcomes of Wisconsin Partnership Program awards that have concluded their work, according to a set of key indicators. Dean Golden reported on two of these award programs: the Co-op Care program, which created health care purchasing cooperatives to improve health insurance access and affordability for Wisconsin's agricultural producers, rural families, and small businesses; and a New Investigator Award resulting in data showing an epidemic of antibiotic resistant bacteria in Wisconsin nursing homes.

Dean Golden briefly addressed the Legislative Audit Bureau's Financial Audit of the Wisconsin Partnership Program, noting that financial and programmatic audits are required every five years per the Order of the Insurance Commissioner that originally established the program. The Program received an unqualified opinion with no recommendations. The LAB's program audit should be completed by the end of 2009.

Committee discussion focused on the timetable for funding the postponed grants awarded by OAC and the Program's decision not to use endowment principal to fund grant programs. In

response to a question from Regent Davis on the Healthy Birth Outcomes Initiative, Dean Golden and Ms. Lathen elaborated on the project's collaborations with community groups in Beloit, Kenosha, Milwaukee and Racine. In response to a question from Regent Vasquez, Dean Golden described the relationship between the UW School of Medicine and Public Health and the Medical College of Wisconsin, the other recipient of the endowment money originally given by Blue Cross-Blue Shield to fund the Partnership Program.

In closing, Dean Golden called the Program an incredible gift and the 21st-century realization of the Wisconsin Idea. Members of the Education and Business, Finance, and Audit Committees agreed. They commended Dean Golden and the Wisconsin Partnership Program's impressive commitment to fiscal stewardship and to addressing the state's most pressing public health needs.

The joint meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.