

WISCONSIN'S ECONOMY AND THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

One-day meetings provide a forum for the Board of Regents to assess important policy issues that they may not otherwise have an opportunity to address at length during regular business meetings. These sessions customarily focus on one or two issues, allowing the Board of Regents an opportunity to explore selected topics in order to determine the most appropriate strategies, directions, and actions that might be pursued later.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of “Wisconsin’s Economy and the Role of the UW System” is broken into four parts on the day’s agenda:

- A broad overview of the state’s economy
- A panel discussion on what Wisconsin employers need from the UW System to help them be more competitive
- A panel discussion on how the University is anticipating the state’s future needs to become more competitive
- A Regent conversation to identify the key takeaways from the day and consider next steps

1. Overview of State Economy

Regents will hear a presentation by the state’s chief economist, Dennis Winters of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, and have an opportunity to discuss with him ideas for how the University might respond to the state’s economic trends and needs.

Mr. Winters will provide information on the current status of Wisconsin’s economy, identifying areas of weakness and strength, as well as projecting sectors and occupations with high potential for job growth and those likely to experience little job growth. In each case, he will assess the education and skills needed to support those sectors and occupations. Finally, Mr. Winters will discuss with Regents characteristics of the “new” broader economy in which Wisconsin must compete. He will touch on some implications of falling behind other states and countries, as well as successfully competing with them. There will be time to explore the impact that the University, and higher education in general, might have on the state’s economy going forward.

2. Panel Discussion: What Wisconsin Employers Need from the UW System to help them be More Competitive

The panel will react to Mr. Winters’ presentation and his conversation with Regents, shed light on what they believe employers in Wisconsin need to be competitive, and discuss what role

University of Wisconsin institutions might play in assisting them with those needs. Panelists may propose recommendations for the Board's reaction. Some key questions that they will explore include:

1. How do business leaders use the resources within UW System institutions?
2. What are business leaders' biggest competitive challenges right now? How do UW System institutions help meet those challenges? Are there things the institutions might be doing that they are not?
3. Who do business leaders hire from UW System institutions? What skills and experience are needed? What kind of employees will be needed in the future?
4. What concerns/issues exist regarding the employee talent available in Wisconsin? How can UW System institutions help?

Panel members:

- Dr. Jeff Cernohous, founder of Interfacial Solutions in River Falls. Information about Interfacial Solutions, including its recent recognition as a recipient of the Wisconsin Business Innovation Award, is available at:
 - <http://interfacialsolutions.com/>
- Tom Watson, Vice President, Design Analysis & Systems Engineering, Engineering & Product Development, Johnson Controls Power Solutions. Information about Power Solutions is available at:
 - http://www.johnsoncontrols.com/content/us/en/products/power_solutions.html
- Rebecca Blank, Chancellor of UW-Madison and past Acting Secretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The panel discussion will be facilitated by Regent Drew Petersen.

3. Panel Discussion: How is the University Anticipating the State's Future Needs to become more Competitive?

The panel will illustrate how UW Institutions anticipate the state's needs and grow tomorrow's innovators and leaders. Panel members will identify issues that impede the UW from doing more in this regard and those that help it achieve these goals. Panelists may propose recommendations for the Board's reaction. Some key questions that they will explore include:

1. What specific activities do UW institutions undertake that keep academic programs and initiatives relevant to employers, the community, and students?
 - a. What educational activities address business and economic development? What educational activities address public service?
 - b. How are, or how can, curricula be structured to best meet the needs of communities and the state?
2. In what business development activities are UW institutions currently involved? What activities are generally most successful?

3. How can UW institutions best prepare students? How do students perceive their level of preparation for employment or starting a business in Wisconsin? What gaps in preparation do students see?
4. To what extent should UW institutions consider reprioritizing or reallocating resources to expand certain academic programs or scale down others?

Panel members:

- Mike Lovell, Chancellor, UW-Milwaukee
- Bev Kopper, Provost, UW-Whitewater
- Aaron Brower, Interim Chancellor, UW Colleges and UW-Extension
- Mark Lange, Executive Director, Entrepreneurship and Economic Development division, UW-Extension
- Ryan Hickey, student, UW-Milwaukee
- Mitchell Fiene, student, UW-Whitewater

The panel discussion will be facilitated by Regent Tim Higgins.

4. Regent Conversation: Identify the Key Takeaways from the Day and Consider Next Steps

While one-day meetings are not designed to lead to direct or immediate action by the Board of Regents, the Regents may want to identify key issues, data, concepts, recommendations, and next steps to consider at future meetings.

REQUESTED ACTION

For discussion.

RELATED REGENT POLICIES

None.