

RECORD OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM BOARD OF REGENTS

Thursday, April 8, 2021
12:45 p.m.

Pyle Center Alumni Lounge
702 Langdon Street
Madison, Wisconsin

-President Petersen presiding-

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The recording of this meeting's open session is available at: [April 8, 2021 Webcast](#)

CALLING OF THE ROLL

[\[Recording: 00:00:01\]](#)

PRESENT: Regents Robert Atwell, Scott Beightol, Amy Bogost, Michael Grebe, Eve Hall, Mike Jones, Edmund Manydeeds, John Miller, Andrew Petersen, Cris Peterson (by videoconference), Corey Saffold, Carolyn Stanford Taylor (by videoconference), Karen Walsh, Kyle Weatherly, and Olivia Woodmansee.

Regent Tracey Klein joined the meeting at 12:50 p.m.

Regent Becky Levezow joined the meeting at 12:59 p.m.

UNABLE TO ATTEND: Regent Héctor Colón.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS

[\[Recording: 00:01:02\]](#)

Before considering any items on the open session agenda, President Petersen asked if any Board members wished to declare any conflicts of interest as per Regent Policy Document 2-4, "Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policy for the UW System Board of Regents." No conflicts were declared.

UPDATES AND INTRODUCTIONS

[\[Recording: 00:01:12\]](#)

President Petersen said it was very nice to see Regents in person for the first time in several months: “Now that we’re here – tested, vaccinated, masked, and socially distanced – at the Pyle Center, we’re ready to conduct our business. It may not be business as usual yet, but it’s a whole lot closer.”

APPROVAL OF MEETING RECORDS

[\[Recording: 00:02:09\]](#)

Regent Walsh moved for the approval of the record of the March 4, 2021 meeting of the Board of Regents and the March 26, 2021 meeting of the Executive Committee. The motion was seconded by Regent Jones and approved on a voice vote.

REPORT OF THE BOARD PRESIDENT

[\[Recording: 00:02:29\]](#)

Report of the Wisconsin Technical College System Board

The report of the Wisconsin Technical College System Board had been provided. There were no comments or questions.

Update on the UW-River Falls Chancellor Search Process

President Petersen reported that the Search & Screen Committee chaired by Regent Scott Beightol conducted semi-finalist interviews the previous week. He indicated that finalists are expected to be announced later in April, with onsite visits on the UW-River Falls campus to follow shortly thereafter.

Financial Impact of COVID-19

President Petersen provided updated figures on the financial impact of COVID-19 on the UW System:

- Through the end of the Spring 2021 semester, UW institutions incurred \$640 million in COVID-related costs and lost revenue, including state budget cuts of almost \$95 million over FY20 and FY21.
- Of the total federal funding provided, about 45% – or \$232 million – is being passed directly to students for emergency grants, with the remaining \$290 million going for institutional aid.

President Petersen indicated that the UW System received federal funding from several sources, including:

- \$54 million in CARES funding through the State of Wisconsin’s Department of Administration (DOA) to support our Fall testing and COVID-related costs;
- an estimated \$35 million from the federal government for community surge testing; and
- nearly \$22 million in expected funding through DOA to support spring semester testing.

Noting that these federal funds are one-time dollars and that no one knows how long COVID will impact the UW System’s operations, President Petersen concluded that the System will be left with an estimated net loss of almost \$170 million through the spring semester. He shared some of the steps taken to address the shortfall, including employee furloughs, travel restrictions, hiring freezes and some layoffs: “This has been difficult, but also necessary if we are to continue to protect the quality educational experience we deliver.”

Despite the challenges ahead, President Petersen said he is convinced the UW System can play a significant role in helping the state rebound from COVID. On behalf of the Board, he extended appreciation and gratitude to the System and campus leadership, faculty, staff, and students who have helped the university continue moving forward during these challenging times.

Discover Wisconsin

President Petersen called attention to a series of short videos showcasing the role and impact of the UW System, which will air in “Discover Wisconsin” episodes that are broadcast in eight states across the upper Midwest, and will also be distributed to local news affiliates around the state. Each video features one of the campuses and highlights how the UW System is helping to address issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic; cybersecurity for small businesses; the Freshwater Collaborative; and the Dairy Innovation Hub.

President Petersen said the UW System also hopes to resume its “All in Wisconsin” campaign’s statewide tour this fall, meeting with local businesses and community leaders

about how the UW institutions can work better to meet the needs of the people of Wisconsin.

Spring Commencements

President Petersen announced that UW institutions are anticipated to confer 22,000 degrees in the spring semester, for a total of more than 36,000 degrees awarded in the 2020-21 academic year – the ninth consecutive year that the UW System has conferred over 36,000 degrees to graduating students.

Noting that this year’s commencements will be a mix of in-person ceremonies, both with and without guests, virtual ceremonies, and hybrid ceremonies, President Petersen stated that in any form these are important celebrations. He offered the Class of 2021 early congratulations and best wishes for the future.

System President Thompson added his congratulations to the Class of 2021: “With all the years of hard work you’ve put in, and now a UW diploma, you can be confident that you’re prepared to go boldly out into the world – of course, we hope you stay right here in Wisconsin, where a bright future awaits you!”

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE SYSTEM

[\[Recording: 00:13:20\]](#)

Update on COVID-19 Response

President Thompson reported that to date, about 115,000 shots have been administered at vaccination clinics operated by eight UW campuses, with more on the way. With vaccine eligibility now open to all Wisconsin residents age 16 or older, he encouraged all members of the university community to take the initiative and sign up to get vaccinated at the earliest opportunity before going home for the summer.

Although the UW System will not be mandating vaccinations, President Thompson announced that beginning this summer, vaccinated students and staff will not be subject to testing protocols at UW institutions in order to save time and money while keeping universities safe.

President Thompson shared the news that more than 1,000 UW nursing and healthcare students will receive a \$500 tuition reimbursement as part of the UW System’s initiative to assist with the state’s testing and vaccination operations. This initiative will be extended through the summer months.

Noting that the UW System has administered more than 1 million free tests to campus communities and the general public, President Thompson reported that positivity rates across the campuses are currently below 0.5%, and have remained below 1% all semester.

President Thompson announced new initiatives to address the academic, financial, and emotional challenges experienced by many students as a result of the pandemic. The UW System will invest \$1.3 million to expand Summer Bridge programs, helping an additional 1,400 high school students make the transition to college. The UW institutions are also developing guidelines on testing protocols for on-campus summer activities with minors.

Procure-to-Pay Project: ShopUW+

President Thompson announced the upcoming launch of the UW System's procure-to-pay project, ShopUW+, which will replace the purchasing functionality of the current Shared Financial System, Shop@UW, and various other campus purchasing applications and improve processing workflows, eliminate paper transactions, and make accounts payable processes more efficient and transparent across the System.

Capital Budget Request

Highlighting recent news stories about a portion of the façade at Van Hise Hall falling to the ground on the UW-Madison campus, President Thompson noted that many other buildings throughout the UW System have exterior envelopes that are similarly aging and in disrepair. More than 83% of the UW System's capital budget request is for repair and replacement projects.

Government Relations Update

President Thompson provided an overview of his recent "State of the UW System" report to the Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges at a hearing in Green Bay, as well as several upcoming Joint Finance Committee listening sessions, including two scheduled to be hosted by UW-Whitewater and UW-Stout.

President Thompson also summarized recent legislative matters, including:

- SB 79 (Act 11), which recognizes and reports on the hours Agriculture Extension agents spend teaching in the field;
- AB 77, which would match the UW System's budget proposal for 20 additional county-based agriculture positions within the Division of Extension at UW-Madison; and
- New legislation which would remove the statutory requirement that the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) seek permission from the UW System Board of Regents before creating associate degree programs.

Regarding the latter, President Thompson said the UW System is “very concerned” about the potential expensive and duplicative programming that could result, and reiterated his position that the state should instead consider how both WTCS and UW System institutions can be better aligned.

Discussion

President Petersen recognized Regent Atwell, who requested more data on the number of hospitalizations and deaths of students due to COVID-19, in addition to the already available information regarding testing numbers and positivity rates. Regent Atwell also encouraged the UW System to allow individuals to make their own decisions related to the relative risks of COVID-19, the vaccines, and the social, economic, and psychological effects of continued social distancing measures.

President Petersen indicated that UW System staff would be able to provide the requested information about COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths on the UW campuses, which he noted have fortunately been few and far between. President Petersen added that he was proud of UW students for rising to the occasion and behaving with personal responsibility for keeping their campuses and surrounding communities safe over the past year.

President Thompson reiterated the UW System’s goal of returning to pre-pandemic levels of in-person classes during the Fall 2021 semester.

PRESENTATION BY UW-STOUT CHANCELLOR KATHERINE FRANK: “UW-STOUT: PLANNING THROUGH THE LENS OF COVID”

[\[Recording: 00:43:30\]](#)

Noting that UW-Stout originally planned to host the Board’s April meeting prior to the pandemic, President Petersen invited Chancellor Katherine Frank and her team to present to the Board about the exciting things happening at the Polytechnic university.

Chancellor Frank noted that she began her position at UW-Stout just seven days before the university pivoted to alternative methods of instructional delivery in response to COVID-19. She credited UW-Stout’s success in navigating this challenging and complex period to the dedication, hard work, and innovation of faculty, students, and staff, as well as the university’s partners and supporters in the local community and beyond.

Chancellor Frank provided an overview of UW-Stout’s mission and designation as a Polytechnic university with the educational tenets of offering a career focus, applied learning, and collaboration. She stated that despite the operational and financial

challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, UW-Stout was well-positioned to transition to virtual and hybrid models of instruction with more than 20 years of experience as a leader in online education.

Chancellor Frank discussed upcoming plans related to UW-Stout's new 10-year strategic plan, "Focus 2030," which will include goals in five broad areas: identity, student success, employee success, institutional sustainability, and equity, diversity, and inclusion.

To position UW-Stout for success in a post-pandemic landscape, Chancellor Frank said the university is currently undergoing a comprehensive brand audit to better understand its market position and assess its strengths and opportunities for outreach to clients and partners.

Chancellor Frank said UW-Stout invests in students from their point of entry into the institution through well beyond graduation, resulting in a 97% placement rate for all UW-Stout students. Noting that 100% of UW-Stout students graduate with at least one experiential learning opportunity, Chancellor Frank said the university is focused on producing "triple threat" graduates who possess a university degree, have had an academic experiential learning opportunity, and carry an industry-recognized professional credential.

Chancellor Frank stated that having a strong core of faculty and staff with some industry and business experience is critical to helping UW-Stout achieve student success, develop partnerships and programs that support the university's mission as Wisconsin's Polytechnic. She introduced two UW-Stout alumni: Pat Meuers, who shared her experience working with Stout faculty and staff to develop a digital marketing degree program that met the needs of Thompson Reuters and other local employers; and Abby Fawcett, who graduated from the digital marketing program in May 2019 and is currently employed at Thompson Reuters.

Chancellor Frank explained that UW-Stout will approach institutional sustainability through a focus on intentional programming meant to support both student recruitment and retention efforts, and through the ongoing cultivation of an engaged alumni base.

Chancellor Frank also provided an overview of equity, diversity, and inclusivity efforts at UW-Stout, including the expansion of summer bridge programs as well as participation in the UW System's URM Pipeline Project, which aims to create seamless and supportive pathways for traditionally underrepresented student populations and first generation students. Indicating that UW-Stout is contributing its expertise in career preparation and placement and is learning from the efforts of other campuses, Chancellor Frank stated, "It is really the distinctiveness of each of our institutions and our unique knowledge of place and community that helps us leverage our combined expertise in order to meet the goals of this System initiative and others like it."

Chancellor Frank concluded by stating that UW-Stout is committed to supporting students and strengthening equity, diversity, and inclusivity on campus by eradicating barriers to student success, making pedagogical and curricular improvements, investing in meaningful professional development for faculty and staff, improving hiring and retention efforts, supporting infrastructure upgrades that promote quality instructional delivery and focus on efficient and flexible spaces, and by serving as a leader and partner in community and regional efforts to improve equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Discussion

In response to questions from the Regents, Chancellor Frank and Interim Provost Glendali Rodriguez explained how UW-Stout was able to successfully pivot to virtual delivery of its annual career fair and experiential learning components of the university's curriculum; provided details about UW-Stout's laptop program and other electronic resources provided to students; and discussed potential changes in enrollment trends due to workforce transitions as a result of the pandemic.

CLOSED SESSION

[\[Recording: 01:31:36\]](#)

President Petersen called upon Vice President Grebe to read the motion to move into closed session. The motion was seconded by Regent Walsh and adopted on a roll-call vote, with Regents Atwell, Beightol, Bogost, Grebe, Hall, Jones, Klein, Levzow, Manydeeds, Miller, Petersen, Peterson, Saffold, Stanford Taylor, Walsh, Weatherly, and Woodmansee voting in the affirmative. There were no dissenting votes and no abstentions.

Closed Session Resolution

Resolution 11602 That the Board of Regents move into closed session to: (a) consider a student request for review of a UW-Milwaukee decision, as permitted by s. 19.85(1)(a), (f), and (g), Wis. Stats.; (b) consider personnel evaluations of chancellors, as permitted by s. 19.85(1)(c), Wis. Stats.; (c) confer with legal counsel regarding potential litigation in which it is likely to become involved regarding a contract, as permitted by s. 19.85(1)(g), Wis. Stats.; and (d) consider a request from UW-Madison to approve a salary range, as permitted by s. 19.85(1)(c) and (e), Wis. Stats.

Before considering any items on the closed session agenda, President Petersen asked if any Board members wished to declare any conflicts of interest as per Regent Policy Document 2-4, "Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policy for the UW System Board of Regents."

During the closed session, adoption of Resolution 11603 was moved by Regent Beightol, seconded by Regent Klein, and approved on a voice vote.

Authorization to Recruit and Approval of a Salary Range for the Athletic Director, UW-Madison

Resolution 11603 That, upon the recommendation of the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the President of the University of Wisconsin System, the Board of Regents authorizes the Chancellor of UW-Madison to recruit for the Athletic Director position with a salary up to the current Athletic Director's salary.

Adoption of Resolution 11604 was moved by Regent Woodmansee, seconded by Regent Jones, and approved on a voice vote.

Student Request for Review of a UW-Milwaukee Decision

Resolution 11604 That the Board of Regents adopts the attached Proposed Decision and Order as the Board's Final Decision and Order in the matter of a student request for review of a UW-Milwaukee decision.

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The meeting was adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

Submitted by:

/s/ Jess Lathrop

Jess Lathrop
Executive Director & Corporate Secretary
Office of the Board of Regents
University of Wisconsin System