

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

Thursday, February 4, 2021
12:45 p.m.

By WebEx Videoconference

-President Petersen presiding-

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The recording of this meeting's open session is available at: [February 4, 2021 Webcast](#)

CALLING OF THE ROLL

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

PRESENT: Regents Robert Atwell, Scott Beightol, Amy Bogost, Héctor Colón, Michael Grebe, Eve Hall, Mike Jones, Tracey Klein, Becky Lezvow, Edmund Manydeeds, Andrew Petersen, Corey Saffold, Carolyn Stanford Taylor, Karen Walsh, Kyle Weatherly, and Olivia Woodmansee.

Regent Cris Peterson joined the meeting at 12:50 p.m. following the calling of the roll.

UNABLE TO ATTEND: None.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS

[\[Recording: 00:01:58\]](#)

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

[\[Recording: 00:02:10\]](#)

President Petersen remarked on the unexpected passing of Regent José Delgado on January 24, 2021:

“Regent Delgado’s charm, his grace, and his commitment to his role as Regent were extraordinary. His passion, exuberance and experience will be deeply missed by all those who served with him. Regent Delgado was a public servant who always advocated for Wisconsin students and the integrity of public higher education. José never forgot where he came from. He appreciated the opportunities he had experienced in coming to the United States, and he cared deeply about extending similar opportunity to others.”

Indicating that Regent Delgado’s contributions and commitment to the University of Wisconsin System would be formally recognized at the end of the day’s meeting, President Petersen offered condolences on behalf of the Board to the extended family and friends of Regent Delgado.

UW System Interim President Tommy Thompson offered his own reflections on Regent Delgado’s innovative thinking and ability to communicate with all kinds of people: “José Delgado was a strong leader, a fine person, and somebody we will always miss and cherish.”

APPROVAL OF MEETING RECORDS

[\[Recording: 00:06:29\]](#)

Regent Beightol moved for the approval of the record of the December 10, 2020 regular meeting of the Board of Regents and the January 29, 2021 meeting of the Executive Committee. The motion was seconded by Regent Jones and approved on a voice vote.

REPORT OF THE BOARD PRESIDENT

[\[Recording: 00:07:00\]](#)

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 announced that the search committee, chaired by Regent Scott Beightol, approved the position prospectus and officially opened the search for a new UW-River Falls Chancellor in January. The Search & Screen Committee is expected to meet again in late March to select semi-finalist candidates for off-campus interviews.

Research in the Rotunda

President Petersen announced that the 2021 Research in the Rotunda event had been cancelled due to the pandemic. Traditionally one of the UW System's most significant outreach events, Research in the Rotunda brings together outstanding undergraduate student researchers from across the System, together with faculty advisors, to share their research findings on a variety of important topics with legislators, state leaders, UW alumni, and other supporters.

Spotlight on Diversity

President Petersen reiterated the Board's longstanding support for advancing greater diversity throughout the UW System, as evidenced by the recent launch of the new Wisconsin Regent Opportunity Scholarships program, which will provide \$1 million annually to undergraduate students from underrepresented and underserved populations, and by the annual presentation of the Regents Diversity Awards, which was scheduled for the next day.

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE SYSTEM

COVID-19 Update

[\[Recording: 00:09:30\]](#)

President Thompson reported that the UW System will receive an additional 140,000 Binax tests and 20,000 PCR tests from the federal government to continue providing free rapid-results testing for the public into the spring. He noted that data indicates aggressive testing is at least partly responsible for the recent decline in the number of daily COVID-19 cases in Wisconsin. More than 220,000 free public tests have been administered at 22 surge testing sites on UW campuses, with about 18,000 potential positive cases identified.

President Thompson said that with the spring semester underway, UW campuses are also incorporating new advances in testing technologies and expanding the frequency of testing for students, faculty, and staff in order to maximize the safety of campus communities.

President Thompson reported that over 500 students from throughout the UW System have signed up for the UW Student Nursing Initiative, which provides \$500 tuition credits to students who worked in direct patient health care between December through February.

An additional \$500 tuition credit will be extended to students who help administer vaccinations anywhere in Wisconsin once they become available. President Thompson said the UW System is partnering with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and the National Guard to engage nursing and pharmacy students to help staff mobile vaccination teams to serve high-need communities. Students will also help administer vaccines within campus communities through local public health services and health care providers.

Legislative Update

[\[Recording: 00:19:29\]](#)

President Thompson said conversations with Governor Evers's administration and legislative leaders in support of the UW System's budget request are ongoing. Indicating that the response to date has been positive, he expressed confidence that the UW System will see a robust operating and capital budget when Governor Evers announces his budget proposal on February 16.

President Thompson reported that the UW System is closely tracking executive orders issued by President Biden which may have a direct impact on its universities and students, including efforts to preserve DACA, extend the pause of federal student loan payments and collections through September 30, 2021, and provide additional guidance from the Departments of Education and Health & Human Services to higher education institutions related to reopening campuses and in-person instruction.

President Thompson said the UW System is also working with each UW institution to develop plans for using the federal funding that will be received from the latest COVID relief bill passed by Congress.

Finally, President Thompson said Regents and Chancellors will have the opportunity to review the UW System's updated annual federal agenda, which identifies priorities for both the System and its institutions, before it is finalized and presented to Wisconsin's Congressional delegation in March.

Precollege Pipeline

[\[Recording: 00:22:30\]](#)

President Thompson provided some details on the Precollege Pipeline initiative that had been announced the previous day. The initiative will place student coaches and recruiters in a select number of regional high schools to encourage prospective students to apply to

UW universities, building on existing partnerships between the UW System and local high schools, counselors, and community youth organizations.

Five universities – UW-Oshkosh, UW-Parkside, UW-Platteville, UW-Stout, and UW-Whitewater – will each receive \$200,000 to develop and implement precollege activities and programs that best serve the needs of students in their respective areas. President Thompson explained that this effort is part of a series of strategic investments the UW System is making to help more Wisconsin students get into college and earn degrees.

PRESENTATION BY UW-MADISON CHANCELLOR REBECCA BLANK: “MOVING UW FORWARD IN A TIME OF CRISIS”

[\[Recording: 00:26:27\]](#)

Chancellor Rebecca Blank discussed how UW-Madison has responded to recent challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, budget shortfalls, and racial and social justice issues, and how the institution plans to use the lessons of the past year to build better educational opportunities for students and find new ways of conducting business, research, and outreach.

UW-Madison’s Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Chancellor Blank highlighted the efforts of UW-Madison instructors to redesign 8,000 classes for online instruction after students and most employees were sent home in March 2020, including creative new methods for teaching subjects such as music, art, and dance.

She also described various steps taken by UW-Madison to bring students back to campus for the Fall semester, including creating new policies and public health protocols, purchasing PPE and sanitation supplies, testing facility airflow and ventilation, rearranging shared spaces and rescheduling classes to promote social distancing and reduce population density on campus, setting up testing facilities and laboratories as well as spaces for isolation and quarantine, and creating a public dashboard to share data on daily infection numbers.

Chancellor Blank noted that UW-Madison quickly responded to a surge in positive cases shortly after the start of the Fall semester, bringing positivity rates consistently below those of the state and county from late September through the end of the semester.

Chancellor Blank said UW-Madison also worked hard to build a sense of community for all students during the Fall semester, including by bringing back Badger sports. UW-Madison partnered with the Big Ten to implement extensive health protocols, which included daily

testing for all players and staff, postponing games when there were health concerns, and playing in empty stadiums and arenas.

Although research activity has become more challenging with continued restrictions related to international travel, field work, and work that cannot be done remotely, Chancellor Blank reported that grant proposals are currently up 25% from the previous year. She noted that many of these proposals representing \$51 million in funding are for COVID-related research.

Chancellor Blank said the pandemic has demonstrated the value of the Wisconsin Idea, with UW-Madison faculty and staff working hard to advise and assist policymakers, businesses, and communities – for example, by producing PPE supplies, providing quarantine housing for community members, distributing nearly \$7 million in financial aid through the Small Business Development Center, and administering more than 20,000 free COVID tests to the public.

Chancellor Blank said UW-Madison has substantially expanded its COVID testing program for the Spring semester by requiring every undergraduate student located in Madison to be tested twice weekly, and faculty and staff who work on campus to be tested at least once per week, in order to maintain access to campus facilities.

Chancellor Blank said UW-Madison also recently began vaccinating high-risk employees in the Phase 1A group, which includes medical, nursing, and pharmacy faculty, staff, and students caring for COVID patients; researchers working with the COVID-19 virus; University Housing employees whose work puts them at greater risk of coming into contact with COVID; and employees 65 and over.

Efforts to Mitigate Financial Losses and Ongoing Budget Needs

Chancellor Blank stated that the events of the past year have resulted in the biggest financial crisis UW-Madison has ever faced. She compared the deep state budget cuts of previous years, which reduced future revenues by \$50-\$70 million, against the nearly \$320 million in combined revenue losses and unforeseen expenses related to the COVID pandemic.

Chancellor Blank explained that 42% of revenue losses were in auxiliary units – including athletics, conferences, unions, parking, and housing – which are designed to be self-sustaining and are expected to quickly recover post-pandemic. Additional losses include more than \$50 million in lapsed state funding, as well as reduced tuition revenues resulting from fewer international and out-of-state students.

Chancellor Blank summarized the efforts UW-Madison has made to mitigate its financial losses, including diverting funds from new programs and applying federal funds towards

pandemic-related expenses. The institution also reduced expenses by freezing salaries and most hiring activities; implementing mandatory furloughs for all employees amounting to pay cuts between 2.5% to 4.6% over one year; and implementing voluntary 15% pay cuts for senior leadership. UW-Madison has also announced base budget cuts of between 4% and 8% for all units to make up an estimated \$35 million gap in each of the next two years.

Chancellor Blank stated that in order to make a full recovery going forward, UW-Madison will need new GPR dollars to return the university to solid financial footing; authority to establish a line of credit to help continue auxiliary operations until the pandemic is over; working capital flexibility that would allow for the medium-term investment of some cash balances; and a successful capital budget to address accumulated deferred maintenance issues and to replace obsolete buildings.

Diversity, Inclusion, Access, and Affordability

Chancellor Blank noted that recent protests have brought new urgency to the work UW-Madison has been doing on a number of fronts to improve diversity and inclusion, including the recruitment of record numbers of students and faculty from underrepresented populations.

Chancellor Blank said UW-Madison continues to make progress on expanding access and affordability with the creation of nearly 5,000 new scholarships for students at all levels in the past five years. Since the creation of the Badger Promise and Bucky's Tuition Promise programs three years ago, 2,800 Wisconsin residents (1 in 5 of in-state freshmen) have been able to attend UW-Madison tuition-free. She noted that 57% of UW-Madison seniors graduated with zero student loan debt in the past year, and default loan rates are far below average among UW-Madison graduates who do have debt.

Chancellor Blank reported that UW-Madison is currently among the top 10 U.S. public universities with its highest ever six-year graduation rate of 88.5%. The gap in graduate rates for white students and targeted minority students has fallen 7 percentage points over the past 10 years. UW-Madison also reported a new record low average time-to-degree of 3.92 years.

Continuing to Improve and Innovate

Noting that applications for next year's freshman class are up 17% over last year, Chancellor Blank said UW-Madison continues to evaluate, change, and improve its programs to ensure the curriculum is preparing students with the skills they need. Recent efforts include creating new programs in supply chain management and global health, launching UW-Madison's first online undergraduate degree program, and establishing the

School of Computer, Data and Information Sciences, which currently enrolls over 2,400 undergraduate majors and nearly 900 undergraduate students.

Chancellor Blank concluded that UW-Madison has learned how to work differently – and sometimes better – as a result of the pandemic, including more telecommuting, less travel, the use of online educational tools that can help improve learning for in-person classes as well. UW-Madison faculty and researchers have also helped reaffirm to the nation the value of scientific research during times of crisis.

Discussion

President Petersen thanked Chancellor Blank for her strong leadership in responding to the challenges of the pandemic and the resulting financial pressures, as well as advancing UW-Madison's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Regent Grebe asked Chancellor Blank to discuss the factors that have led to UW-Madison's success in reducing the overall cost of education and time-to-degree. Chancellor Blank affirmed her belief that reducing the time it takes for students to graduate is more effective than freezing tuition in reducing the cost of college. She said UW-Madison has focused on addressing several areas impacting time-to-degree, including expanding scholarships and accessibility; modernizing curriculum requirements and adding classes for required courses; improving academic and career advising; and requiring students to declare a major before their senior year.

Regent Klein asked Chancellor Blank about how UW-Madison plans to close the gap created by recent revenue losses. Chancellor Blank clarified that the \$320 million gap is not a long-term budget shortfall but rather a short-term cash flow problem. She indicated that, along with the cost reduction measures UW-Madison has already taken, much of the issue should be resolved if normal operations resume next year and there are no state budget cuts.

In response to another question from Regent Klein about the steps UW-Madison and UW System are taking to pursue bonding authority, Chancellor Blank said she has spoken with almost all members of the Joint Finance Committee and the heads of both the Senate and Assembly educational committees. President Thompson said he is hopeful the UW System will be able to secure bonding authority by convincing the Governor and legislators of how important it is for the university to have the same flexibility as other higher education institutions in Wisconsin and across the nation.

Regent Beightol remarked on the need for additional investments in laboratories, instructional space, and research and development efforts, as was highlighted in that morning's presentation to the Business & Finance Committee on recommendations developed by UW-Madison's Revenue Innovations Study Group. Chancellor Blank noted

that the Board has already helped UW-Madison in this area by approving adjustments to nonresident tuition and the numbers of resident and nonresident students.

Regent Hall thanked Chancellor Blank for her consistent leadership on inclusion efforts.

ANNUAL NCAA DIVISION I ATHLETICS REPORT FOR UW-MADISON

[\[Recording: 01:18:59\]](#)

Athletic Director Barry Alvarez and Deputy Athletic Director Chris McIntosh delivered UW-Madison's annual NCAA Division I Athletics Report. The report provided an overview of academic compliance matters, student athletes' success and well-being, and the athletic program's financial viability and contribution to UW-Madison's academic mission.

Director Alvarez highlighted challenges resulting from the pandemic, including the need to develop testing, quarantine, and other safety protocols for student athletes and staff; the decision to postpone or halt practices and competitions when necessary; and the significant financial impact – a net loss of approximately \$47 million – despite staff furloughs and compensation reductions.

Noting that the UW-Madison Athletics Department is committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment for all people, Director Alvarez said the department has established a new strategic plan for improving diversity and inclusion. Among other initiatives, this plan includes the formation of an Equity and Diversity Council consisting of former Badger athletes.

Addressing upcoming issues in collegiate athletics, Director Alvarez indicated that student athletes may soon be able to profit from their own name, image, and likeness. He said the Athletics Department will review guidelines on this issue with a focus on preserving the collegiate education experience: "At the end of the day I want to make sure that the welfare and experience of our student athletes remain central to our decision-making, whether it be their health, academic endeavors, or competitive experience."

President Petersen noted that the Athletics Department has always been a huge contributor to the overall success of UW-Madison.

President Thompson said he would ask Director Alvarez and Deputy Director McIntosh to join him in speaking to legislators about the importance of bonding authority for maintaining UW-Madison's operations.

Regent Walsh asked whether Director Alvarez had any concerns about non-revenue generating sports at this time. Director Alvarez said there were no plans to discontinue any

sports, explaining that the UW-Madison Athletics Department has historically done a good job of managing finances and is therefore in a better fiscal position than some of its Big 10 peers.

Regent Beightol asked Director Alvarez to describe a day in the life of a student athlete under the new COVID testing and isolation protocols. Director Alvarez noted the challenges of building teamwork through virtual meetings and socially distanced meals and locker rooms.

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION FOR REGENT JOSÉ DELGADO

[\[Recording: 01:43:20\]](#)

President Petersen introduced a video of the late Regent José Delgado speaking at a past meeting on the importance of free speech on campuses, including reflections on his childhood in Cuba amid increasing restrictions by the government on the free exchange of ideas.

Following the video, President Petersen called upon Regents Bob Atwell and Héctor Colón to jointly present the Board's resolution of appreciation for the late Regent José Delgado's service to the University of Wisconsin System, which was adopted by unanimous consent.

Resolution of Appreciation for Regent José Delgado's Service to the University of Wisconsin System

Resolution 11575 WHEREAS, José Delgado dedicated nearly seven years of exemplary service as a Regent of the University of Wisconsin System from May 2014 until his death in January 2021; and

WHEREAS, José was a steadfast proponent of maintaining high-quality, affordable public higher education for UW students, serving on the Business and Finance Committee for seven years, including two years on the Subcommittee on Investments, and vice chairing the Capital Planning and Budget Committee for more than four years; and

WHEREAS, José also served on the Audit Committee, the Research, Economic Development, and Innovation (REDI) Committee, and the Personnel Matters Review Committee, and served as a Regent member of the Higher Educational Aids Board and the Educational Communications Board; and

WHEREAS, José worked to publicly honor the outstanding commitment of UW educators as a member of two awards committees – for Teaching Excellence and Academic Staff Excellence; and

WHEREAS, José helped select top UW leaders, serving as a member of the special chancellor search committee for UW-Milwaukee in 2014 and UW-Stevens Point in 2020; and

WHEREAS, José was a proud and civic-minded alumnus of the UW System, having earned a master’s degree in business administration from UW-Milwaukee and serving as a member of the UW-Milwaukee Chancellor’s Council of Corporate Sponsors and the School of Business Advisory Council; and

WHEREAS, José, who came to the United States from Cuba when he was 14 years old, was a staunch supporter of free speech and rational discourse, and championed higher education as a means to improve lives and communities in Wisconsin;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System hereby offers thanks and commendation to José Delgado for his many life achievements and his exceptional service to the citizens of Wisconsin.

After reading the resolution, Regent Atwell and Regent Colón each shared personal remembrances of Regent Delgado’s friendship and leadership, his passion for education, and his dedication to his Catholic faith.

Regent Atwell stated, “The word magnanimous translates literally as ‘large-souled’, and this describes the José who over 50 years met with thousands of people to help them sharpen their minds and expand their hearts, using his knowledge, his time, and his winsome charm to help us live happier, more fruitfully, and more generously.”

Recounting several instances where Regent Delgado offered advice to him “with a loving heart” as both a mentor and friend, Regent Colón expressed appreciation for the great example Regent Delgado provided to him and many others across the world.

CLOSED SESSION

[\[Recording: 02:02:10\]](#)

President Petersen called upon Vice President Grebe to read the motion to move into closed session. The motion was seconded by Regent Woodmansee and adopted on a roll-call vote, with Regents Atwell, Beightol, Bogost, Colón, Grebe, Hall, Jones, Levzow, Manydeeds, 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 11576 That the Board of Regents move into closed session to: (a) consider a UW-Madison request for a faculty salary adjustment, as permitted by s. 19.85(1)(c), Wis. Stats.; (b) consider a UW-Parkside honorary degree nomination, as permitted by s.19.85(1)(f), Wis. Stats.; (c) consider UW-Milwaukee honorary degree nominations, as permitted by s.19.85(1)(f), Wis. Stats.; (d) consider a student request for review of a UW-Madison disciplinary decision, as permitted by s. 19.85(1)(a), (f), and (g), Wis. Stats.; (e) consider a student request for review of a UW-River Falls disciplinary decision, as permitted by s. 19.85(1)(a), (f), and (g), Wis. Stats.; (f) consider strategies for crime detection and prevention as permitted under s. 19.85(1)(d), Wis. Stats.; (g) consider personnel evaluations of chancellors, as permitted by s. 19.85(1)(c), Wis. Stats.; and (h) confer with legal counsel regarding potential litigation as permitted by s. 19.85(1)(g), 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 11577 was moved by Regent Woodmansee, seconded by Regent Bogost, and approved on a voice vote.

Salary Approval for UW-Madison Faculty Member

Resolution 11577 That, upon the recommendation of the President of the UW System and the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Board of Regents approves an annual salary of \$417,523 for Paul Ahlquist,

Professor, Departments of Plant Pathology and Oncology, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, effective February 1, 2021.

Adoption of Resolution 11578 was moved by Regent Woodmansee, seconded by Regent Peterson, and approved on a voice vote. (Regent Bogost abstained from voting.)

Student Request for Review of a UW-Madison Disciplinary Decision

Resolution 11578 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-Madison disciplinary decision.

Adoption of Resolution 11579 was moved by Regent Woodmansee, seconded by Regent Hall, and approved on a voice vote.

Student Request for Review of a UW-River Falls Disciplinary Decision

Resolution 11579 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-River Falls disciplinary decision.

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The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

Submitted by:

/s/ Jess Lathrop

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