Universities of Wisconsin Board of Regents – Business & Finance Committee
Minutes of the August 20, 2026 Meeting

Overture Room, Gordon Dining & Event Center
770 W. Dayton Street, Madison, Wisconsin
& via Zoom Videoconference

The meeting of the Business and Finance Committee was called to order at 10:30 a.m. by the Chair, Regent Tom Palzewicz.

A. Calling of the Roll

Present: Regent Tom Palzewicz (Chair), Regent Amy Bogost, Regent Jim Kreuser, Regent Timothy Nixon, and Regent Karen Walsh.
Absent: Regent Angela Adams (Vice Chair) and Regent Noah Fritz

B. Declaration of Conflicts

The chair asked committee members to identify any conflicts of interest regarding items on the agenda. No conflicts were declared.

C. Approval of the Minutes of the July 16, 2026, Meeting of the Business & Finance Committee

Regent Palzewicz noted that the minutes of the July 16, 2026 meeting had been provided, and asked committee members to identify any corrections. Hearing none, the minutes were approved as distributed.

D. Regent Policy Document Review: RPD 13-1, "General Contract Approval, Signature Authority, and Reporting" (Second Reading and Approval)

General Counsel Quinn Williams presented a second reading of proposed revisions to Regent Policy Document 13-1. He noted that the proposal is the result of additional consideration and feedback from Regents and university personnel provided since the first reading in June. The revisions serve to clarify the distinction between contract signature authority and procurement authority; expressly delegate the Board's Chapter 36 procurement authority to the President; modernize and clarify Board approval thresholds and approval triggers; establish more explicit delegation, governance, and reporting requirements; and codify existing operational practices regarding amendments, extensions, and administrative execution of contracts. The proposal provides clear authority lines, more consistent governance standards, and greater guidance for institutions and UW Administration, while preserving appropriate Board oversight of significant contractual commitments.

Questions/Comments: Regent Nixon emphasized that, in advance of the meeting, he and Regent Goitom worked with the Office of General Counsel in the development of the revisions as proposed.

Motion to adopt Resolution D made by: Regent Nixon
Motion seconded by: Regent Walsh
Motion carried unanimously (voice vote)

E. Approval of an Amendment to the Connected Systems Institute (CSI) Membership Agreement between UW-Milwaukee and Rockwell Automation, Inc.

UW-Milwaukee Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administrative Affairs Robin Van Harpen, joined by Connected Systems Institute (CSI) Executive Director Joe Hamann, presented a proposed amendment to the CSI membership agreement between UW-Milwaukee and Rockwell Automation**.** The amendment, under which Rockwell will contribute an additional $1 million to this center of excellence over five years, provides for technical updates and revises membership obligations and advantages in a manner that reflects CSI's evolving structure.

Questions/Comments: No comments or questions were raised by committee members.

Motion to adopt Resolution E made by: Regent Bogost
Motion seconded by: Regent Nixon
Motion carried unanimously (voice vote)

F. Approval of a UW-Stout Polytechnic Contractual Agreement with Veritas Education

UW Stout Polytechnic Vice Chancellor of Business, Finance, and Administrative Services Erik Guenard presented a proposed agreement with Veritas Education, an international student recruiting firm that specializes in aligning international students with a shared interest in a polytechnic education and specific educational pathways in the university's programs. The Participating Institution Form presented to the Board of Regents falls under the terms of a UW Master Service Agreement.

Questions/Comments: Regent Walsh asked which other UW universities are participating in this work, to which VC Guenard replied that while the agreement being presented to the committee is only for UW-Stout Polytechnic, all UW universities have the ability to enter into similar arrangements.

Regent Nixon commented that he found the agreement interesting, and commended the university for its experimentation in taking this approach.

Regent Walsh asked UW-Stout Polytechnic Chancellor Katherine Frank to comment on the current challenges with international student recruitment and retention. Chancellor Frank replied that these are challenges facing all of higher education, and that UW-Stout Polytechnic seeks to be strategic and proactive in ensuring the widest possible pipeline of international students into the institution.

Motion to adopt Resolution F made by: Regent Nixon
Motion seconded by: Regent Bogost
Motion carried unanimously (voice vote)

G. Approval of an Amendment to the UW System Report on Strategic Plans for Major Information Technology Projects

UW Administration Senior Associate Vice President/Chief Information Officer Steven Hopper and UW-Madison Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration Rob Cramer presented an addition to the UW Strategic Plan for Major IT Projects, in which UW-Madison will migrate its current research and administrative data center infrastructure to an existing hosting environment in Milwaukee. With the transition scheduled to be completed by December 2027 at a cost of $17 million, the project establishes a stable, long-term solution for the university's research and administrative computing needs while reducing operational risk and positioning UW–Madison for future growth. VC Cramer also noted that the awarding of the contract to Data Holdings followed a request for proposals process.

Questions/Comments: In response to Regent Nixon's request for a plain language description of the project, VC Cramer explained that the project prepares a large room that has the necessary cooling facilities, redundancy for Internet access, and redundancy for security into which UW-Madison will place equipment. Regent Palzewicz asked how long Data Holdings has been operating in Milwaukee. VC Cramer replied that the facility is legally certified and has operated since at least 2013 with no outages. He confirmed Regent Bogost's understanding that the firm is owned by the Forest County Potawatomi.

Motion to adopt Resolution G made by: Regent Walsh
Motion seconded by: Regent Nixon
Motion carried unanimously (voice vote)

H. Approval of the UW System Status Report on Large or High-Risk Information Technology Projects

Senior AVP Hopper presented the UW System Status Report on Large or High-Risk Information Technology Projects. The report, which will be submitted to the legislature's Joint Committee on Information Policy and Technology upon approval by the Board, covers six major IT projects within the system totaling $40.6 million. For projects in progress, the report offers updates on their schedule, scope, and budget. Despite some schedule risks, all projects remain within budget. Senior AVP Hopper noted that the portfolio is performing well and is down 83% since the last report due to the completion of the Administrative Transformation Program. He highlighted the UW-Parkside network refresh project and added that the Act 15-related project is underway and making good progress.

Questions/Comments: Regent Nixon noted that there are costs associated with compliance with the provisions of Act 15.

Motion to adopt Resolution H made by: Regent Walsh
Motion seconded by: Regent Nixon
Motion carried unanimously (voice vote)

I. Approval of the 2027-29 Biennial Operating Budget and Financial Aid Request

UW Administration Vice President for Finance and Administration Julie Gordon, joined by several chancellors and their guests, presented the 2027-29 Biennial Operating Budget and Financial Aid Request, noting that the budget development was a months-long process with heavy involvement of the chancellors and other university leaders. The proposal totals $730 million over the biennium and is centered on three promises whose funding would enable the UWs to deliver solutions to the state's biggest challenges.

Promise 1 is to ensure every Wisconsinite has access to an affordable, high-quality UW education. Provisions in this area include a requested increase in operational state funding to address items including inflationary pressures and enhanced campus safety measures; a commitment to freeze tuition for the following two years, and to limit any increase to no more than inflationary rates for the two subsequent years; a proposal to provide last dollar financial aid for working students from households with income below the state median; and a request that the Higher Educational Aids Board seek full reimbursement of tuition remissions for eligible veterans and dependents. In addition, the request includes funding to develop the UWs' artificial intelligence capabilities and resources, and to provide more competitive compensation for university and academic staff.

UW-Platteville Chancellor Tammy Evetovich stressed the need for additional state investment for veterans tuition remissions, so that the UWs can sustain this commitment while maintaining affordability for all students. She introduced Lindsay Loohauis, a civil engineering student at UW-Platteville serving in the US Army Reserve, who shared her story of how the Wisconsin GI Bill provided the resources necessary to pursue her education.

VP Gordon continued with Promise 2, to build Wisconsin's workforce and next generation of businesses. Provisions in this area include expansion of educational opportunities for working adult learners to advance in the current job market; support for entrepreneurs and existing firms; efforts to transfer innovative research into new businesses and technologies; and support in key Wisconsin industry sectors like agriculture, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, and freshwater. This promise would add 300,000 career-ready graduates, provide upskilling to 1 million workers, and help create 2,500 new businesses over the next 10 years.

Other provisions would support student academic and career counseling, mental health services, and high-impact practices. Also, the proposal requests that the incoming Governor and legislature expand dual enrollment opportunities through funding to school districts to provide every Wisconsin high school student with access to UW courses.

UW-River Falls Interim Chancellor John Chenoweth offered five examples to demonstrate how additional funding would help expand those and similar activities to address needs across the state. These include the Farm and Industry Short Course, University Business Collaboration Center, and dual enrollment programs.

VP Gordon continued with Promise 3, to advance life-saving discoveries and improve access to health care in the state. Provisions in this area are aimed at increasing the number of Wisconsin health care professionals by 35,000 over the next 10 years. Funding would support the expansion of health programs throughout the UWs, advancing new cures and treatments for illnesses and diseases.

UW-Parkside Chancellor Lynn Akey spoke in support of increased funding to expand health programs and increase the health care workforce. She was joined by Nicholas Galich, Vice President of Human Resources at Froedtert South, who spoke of the partnership with UW-Parkside to identify workforce needs and develop responsive academic programs, highlighting the Medical Laboratory Science program in particular.

VP Gordon concluded by mentioning the final items in the proposal, including standard budget adjustments for costs such as fringe benefits; two statutory language changes that would stabilize university funding and increase administrative efficiency; a request that the Higher Educational Aids Board include, in its own budget request, $10.5 million in funding for the Wisconsin Grant program; and budget requests submitted on behalf of the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Lab and Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene.

Questions/Comments: Regent Walsh asked how inflationary increases were estimated, to which VP Gordon replied that the calculation involved an analysis by each expense type.

Regent Bogost asked if the number of veteran and dependent students will be declining in upcoming years, to which VP Gordon replied that decreasing costs are not projected over the next three years due to legislation expanding eligibility for the benefit. Regent Bogost noted for the committee that students benefitting from tuition remission still have additional uncovered expenses.

Regent Walsh asked Mr. Galich whether Froedtert South has offered tuition forgiveness programs as a means for attracting and retaining workforce, to which he replied that employees are offered partial forgiveness.

Regent Bogost asked if the request provides sufficient support for new faculty in health care fields to meet student demand for those programs. Chancellor Akey replied expanding the educational pathways into healthcare is a core recommendation of the Wisconsin Hospital Association, and the budget request provides resources to expand capacity.

Regent Walsh commented that teacher workforce is another important need. She asked if there are sufficient resources to meet remedial issues. Chancellor Chenoweth replied that dual enrollment expansion is one aspect that can provide basic science classes or provide a specific pathway toward a career in the region. Chancellor Evetovich added that career days on campus provide an opportunity to create interest in the university and explore various health care fields. Chancellor Akey echoed the importance of exposing students to the variety of career options.

Regent Kreuser thanked the guests for sharing their stories and perspectives. He asked Mr.

Galich which health care need is the hardest to fill, to which Mr. Galich replied that it is typically nursing but recently it has been physical therapy.

Regent Palzewicz commented that he appreciated the level of collaboration in the development of the budget request, and thanked the guests for humanizing the proposal.

Regent Kreuser asked how lower tuition universities will be able to access more resources if a tuition freeze prevents them from increasing to the tuition rates of other UWs. VP Gordon acknowledged the effect of a freeze, but added that an increase in state funding as proposed in the budget request would help those universities with their total revenue. Regent Kreuser asked that the Board consider those effects in the development of future biennial budget requests. In response to a question from Regent Kreuser, VP Gordon explained the request to change the allocation for universities with declining enrollment to instead utilize a student credit hour basis.

Motion to adopt Resolution I made by: Regent Walsh
Motion seconded by: Regent Bogost
Motion carried unanimously (voice vote)

The meeting was adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David Volz
Acting Committee Clerk