

Charting A New Course For the UW System

Case Statement

Where We've Been

The UW System has a long tradition of strategic planning. Since merger, the following major documents have guided the development of the System and its contributions to the state:

Chapter 36, Wisconsin Statutesⁱ

1972 UW System Merger Documentⁱⁱ

1975 Campus Closing Reportⁱⁱⁱ

1986 Legislative Audit of the UW System^{iv}

1986 Planning the Future^v

1996 The UW System in the 21st Century^{vi}

Where We're Going – Drivers of Change

A new course for the UW System is motivated in 2003 by three key drivers: a changing state fiscal environment; changing and growing market demand; and a rapidly evolving technological environment affecting higher education throughout the country and around the world.

- The financial base of the UW is shifting away from GPR and towards greater reliance on tuition and restricted, external sources.
- Wisconsin high school graduates' demand for UW admission is growing briskly, as is growth from non-traditional adult students.
- Instructional technology costs, benefits, applications and opportunities are becoming clearer, but are not currently funded by the state.

Given these accelerating changes and persisting state deficits, the UW System and the State of Wisconsin need a new strategic plan for public higher education to ensure that unintended consequences of short-term, crisis decisions do not impair the capacity for quality higher education for Wisconsin's future.

The Strategic Planning Process Should:

- Analyze the major forces driving change in higher education.
- Identify the critical factors that will inhibit or enable the UW to continue serving the needs of Wisconsin.
- Identify actions – both short-term and long-term – the UW and others can take to sustain quality opportunities of higher education in Wisconsin.

Key Principles of Charting a New Course For the UW System:

- The Board of Regents is committed to sustaining the capacity to deliver high quality education, research and outreach services to Wisconsin. Where quality and access may conflict, we are committed to maintaining quality first.
- We seek to maximize synergies by streamlining operations across the System and by collaborating with other partners efficiently and effectively.
- We seek to stabilize the financial base of the university in order to manage effectively and make the long-term investments in people, programs and infrastructure necessary for a quality UW System.

The UW System exists to meet the needs of its students and the state; the university is an essential, basic asset for Wisconsin in the knowledge economy. It should provide a nonpartisan forum for honest debate of competing ideas, without fear of its becoming a partisan, political issue.

Study Timetable

This strategic planning study will be the main focus of the Board of Regents and UW System leaders for the 2003-04 academic year. The process will include real consultation with key constituencies across the state throughout the process. A final document is anticipated no later than June of 2004.

i Chapter 36, Wisconsin Statutes: “The legislature finds it in the public interest to provide a system of higher education which enables students of all ages, backgrounds, and levels of income to participate in the search for knowledge and individual development; which stresses undergraduate teaching as its main priority; which offers selected professional graduate and research programs with emphasis on state and national needs; which fosters diversity of educational opportunity; which promotes service to the public; which makes effective and efficient use of human and physical resources; which functions cooperatively with other educational institutions and systems; and which promotes internal coordination and the wisest possible use of resources.

The mission of the System is to develop human resources, to discover and disseminate knowledge, to extend knowledge and its application beyond the boundaries of its campuses, and to serve and stimulate society by developing in students heightened intellectual, cultural, and humane sensitivities, scientific, professional, and technological expertise and a sense of purpose. Inherent in this broad mission are methods of instruction, research, extended training, and public service designed to educate people and improve the human condition. Basic to every purpose of the System is the search for truth.

ii 1972 UW System Merger Document: Set out the specifics of how the University of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin State Universities would be merged into a single UW System.

iii 1974 Campus Closing Report: At Governor Lucey’s request, regents identified costs and benefits of closing each campus in the newly formed System; indicated that if directed by the Governor or legislature, closings would begin with the two-year Centers, proceed to the Comprehensives, and finally to the doctoral campuses. The report concluded that significant cost savings could be achieved only with significant reductions in numbers of faculty, staff and students, and recommended broad public debate before directing closings; no directive was ever given.

iv 1986 Legislative Audit of UW System: Assessed the extent to which merger had been fully achieved. Noted that in several respects, the System is still a “federation” rather than an integrated system; recommended that regents manage enrollments to match resources and ensure quality, expand administration to extend oversight of institutions and complete merger into a fully integrated system.

v 1986 Planning the Future: Followed up on the 1986 LAB audit with 20 specific recommendations for system-wide management, including: freshman admissions policy, institutional missions, program array, program review procedures, undergraduate credit transfer, technical college transfer, assessment of quality and educational outcomes, and mission/status of the UW Centers (now UW Colleges).

Recommendations were also directed to: fiscal effectiveness, enrollment management and tuition, equity in education for minorities, women, and those with disabilities; extending UW resources for economic development, childcare, internal management, information systems and greater management flexibility.

vi 1996 The UW System in the 21st Century: Addressed seven challenges: keeping college affordable, enhancing educational quality, adopting instructional technology, accommodating a rising tide of new freshmen, using state funding more effectively, maintaining research/technology transfer leadership, and partnering with K-12 schools and Technical Colleges. Fifty specific recommendations were adopted, including six management flexibility items (47 recommendations were implemented; three of the management flexibility items were subsequently approved by the legislature).