
Wisconsin Legislative Council

STUDY COMMITTEE MEMO



Memo No. 2

TO: MEMBERS OF THE STUDY COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

FROM: Scott Grosz and Katie Bender-Olson, Principal Attorneys, and Emily Hicks, Staff Attorney

RE: Proposals of the Study Committee

DATE: October 18, 2024

This memo summarizes the proposals raised by members during the first four meetings of the Study Committee on the Future of the University of Wisconsin (UW) System or submitted by members directly to Chair Nedweski or Legislative Council staff. This memo is intended to guide committee discussion during the October 24, 2024 meeting and help the committee determine recommendations it would like to make to the Joint Legislative Council.

Proposed Recommendation #1: Separate UW-Madison From UW System

Raised by: Several Committee Members

Several committee members propose to separate governance and funding of UW-Madison from the governance and funding of the other 12 UW campuses. The proposals envision creating a new Board of Regents to oversee UW-Madison and maintaining a separate Board of Regents to oversee the other comprehensive universities. The proposals also envision creating a new state appropriation to provide general purpose revenue (GPR) funding specific to UW-Madison, and maintaining or increasing a separate GPR appropriation for the other comprehensive universities in the UW System.

Individual members propose varying details relating to the separation, such as creation of UW-Madison as an authority rather than a state agency, a requirement that UW System headquarters be located outside of Madison, and a guaranteed GPR funding percentage increase for both UW-Madison and the separated UW System each biennium.

Proposed Recommendation #2: Create a Higher Education Coordinating Council

Raised by: Member Langdon

Mr. Langdon proposes creation of a Wisconsin Higher Education Coordinating Council, appointed by the Governor and subject to Senate confirmation, to advise both the UW System and the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS). The council must establish statewide higher education goals, make recommendations in furtherance of those goals, track and report data, study areas for potential collaboration, and provide required preapproval before closure of any campus.

Proposed Recommendation #3: Revise Board of Regents Membership

Raised by: Chair Nedweski and Members Langdon, Beightol, and Venable

Chair Nedweski proposes the following membership for the Board of Regents: (1) the State Superintendent of Public Instruction; (2) the WTCS President or other WTCS Board member designated by the president; (3) a state representative appointed by the Speaker of the State Assembly, or the representative's designee; (4) a state representative appointed by the Minority Leader of the State Assembly, or the representative's designee; (5) a state senator appointed by the Majority Leader of the State Senate, or the senator's designee; (6) a state senator appointed by the Minority Leader of the State Senate, or the senator's designee; (7) a faculty member, selected by the faculty, to serve for a two-year term and not from the same institution for two consecutive terms; (8) a student, selected by the students, to serve for a two-year term and not from the same institution for two consecutive terms; (9) a graduate of a UW System institution, selected by the Governor from nominations made by an alumni association affiliated with a UW System institution; (10) a member of the U.S. Congress selected by a vote of the Wisconsin congressional delegation, or that member's designee; (11) the Secretary of the Department of Workforce Development, or designee; (12) the Secretary of the Department of Safety and Professional Services, or designee; and (13) nine citizen members appointed for staggered seven-year terms, at least one of whom lives in each of the state's congressional districts.

Mr. Langdon proposes adding legislative and executive branch representation to the Board of Regents¹ through appointment of four legislators and a cabinet secretary. Specifically, he proposes that the board include: (1) the Assembly Speaker, or designee; (2) the Assembly Minority Leader, or designee; (3) the Senate President, or designee; (4) the Senate Minority Leader, or designee, and (5) the Secretary of the Department of Administration (DOA), or designee.

Mr. Beightol proposes adding a legislator who serves on the Joint Committee on Finance (JCF), appointed by the Assembly Speaker, to the Board of Regents membership. Mr. Venable proposes reforming the Board of Regents membership to include political leaders, University donors, students, and business leaders.

Proposed Recommendation #4: Provide UW System or UW-Madison Only With Limited Bonding Authority

Raised by: Several Committee Members

Several members propose granting bonding authority to either UW-Madison alone, or to the UW System as a whole. This would allow UW-Madison or the UW System to issue debt and manage its own construction projects, rather than using the Wisconsin Building Commission/DOA project management process currently applicable to the UW System and other state agencies.

Individual members propose varying details relating to bonding authority, including limiting bonding authority to projects costing less than \$200 million and requiring financial projections and a demonstrated need for the project.

¹ The proposals to reform Board of Regents membership incorporate the recommendation to separate UW-Madison from the other comprehensive campuses and have each governed by a separate Board of Regents. The proposals seem to assume that any change in Board membership would apply to both Boards of Regents.

Proposed Recommendation #5: Increase Tuition

Raised by: Member Seshadri

Mr. Seshadri proposes raising tuition to address economic difficulties faced by the UW System. Currently, the Board of Regents determines tuition rates, and these rates are different for each of the campuses.

Proposed Recommendation #6: Non-Completing Student Exit Interviews

Raised by: Senator Larson

Senator Larson proposes a formalized process for gathering information about why students do not complete their degrees within the UW System institutions either because they dropped out of college or because they transferred to another institution outside of the System. Senator Larson suggests collecting information from those students by completing exit interviews. The committee could pursue this either by recommending that the Board of Regents implement such a process or by recommending the Legislature require the Board of Regents to do so by law.

Proposed Recommendation #7: Enhanced UW System Financial and Program Reporting to the Legislature

Raised by: Chair Nedweski and Member Langdon

Chair Nedweski proposes requiring the UW System to provide JCF with more detailed information on the UW System's actual expenses when JCF is considering the UW System's budget during the biennial budget process. Chair Nedweski also proposes requiring the UW System to provide an annual report to the Legislature identifying all current employment positions and salaries.

Chair Nedweski also proposes clarifying within state law that the UW System must maintain certain records and provide them to the Legislature upon request.

Mr. Langdon proposes requiring UW System to report the following information to the Legislature for each campus: (1) student full-time equivalent (FTE) by undergraduate major at each university; (2) faculty FTE by undergraduate major; and (3) academic staff FTE by undergraduate major. He also proposes requiring the UW System to report employee FTE in the areas of governance, finance, facilities management, human resources, and information technology for each campus and for the UW System administration. Finally, Mr. Langdon proposes that if the UW System does not satisfy this reporting requirement by a set deadline, the Joint Legislative Audit Committee should authorize an evaluation by the Legislative Audit Bureau of the UW System's administration and academic programming.

Proposed Recommendation #8: Review of Program Offerings

Raised by: Several Committee Members

Several committee members propose that the Board of Regents should review and evaluate program offerings within the UW System on a regular basis to identify inefficiencies and unnecessary duplication.

Proposed Recommendation #9: Active Role in Shared Governance for Faculty, Staff, and Students

Raised by: Representative Joers

Representative Joers submitted [LRB-0462/1](#), a bill draft relating to shared governance, for committee consideration. Shared governance refers to the ways in which the faculty, academic staff, and students of each institution play a role in the governance of the UW System.

The bill draft restores statutory language repealed by [2015 Act 55](#).² Prior law referred to faculty providing immediate governance of institutions and to academic staff and students being active participants in governance and policy. Specifically, prior to Act 55, the statutes provided the following:

- That faculty “shall be vested with responsibility for the immediate governance of such institution and shall actively participate in institutional policy development.”
- That academic staff “shall be active participants in the immediate governance of and policy development for the institution.”
- That students “shall be active participants in the immediate governance of and policy development for such institutions.”

Act 55 repealed these provisions and provided instead that faculty, academic staff, and students be responsible for “advising the chancellor” on faculty, academic staff, and student matters, respectively.

Alternatively, Representative Joers proposes creation of a committee, task force, or commission to discuss and deliberate the topic of shared governance, how well it is working, and whether it could be improved.

Proposed Recommendation #10: Publication and Review of UW System’s GPR Allocation Formula

Raised by: Several Committee Members

Several committee members propose requiring the Board of Regents to publish the formula or methodology it utilizes to allocate state GPR to each of the UW campuses. Members also propose requiring the Board of Regents to review this formula or methodology on a regular basis, such as every two to five years. Alternatively, or in addition, members propose that JCF must approve the specific GPR allocations made to each campus.

Proposed Recommendation #11: Blue Ribbon Commission on Higher Education in Wisconsin

Raised by: Representative Joers and Senator Larson

Representative Joers and Senator Larson propose creation of a Blue Ribbon Commission on Public Higher Education in Wisconsin. Representative Joers and Senator Larson identified the following as possible objectives for the Blue Ribbon Commission:

- Defining the goals of higher education for this state.
- Identifying strengths and weaknesses in Wisconsin institutions of higher education.

² See SECTIONS 1140m, 1141m, and 1142m.

- Identifying demographic trends affecting higher education in Wisconsin.
- Identifying strategies to enhance Wisconsin attainment rates.
- Encouraging and developing innovations among institutions of higher education.
- Encouraging and developing partnerships between the UW System and WTCS.
- Exploring strategies to strengthen access and equity in higher education for students and potential students.
- Exploring strategies to reduce barriers to enrollment and degree completion.
- Exploring sustainable funding sources and examining state funding challenges.
- Identifying new ways to administer financial aid.

Representative Joers and Senator Larson propose that the membership on this Blue Ribbon Commission include all of the following:

- UW System students, faculty, and staff.
- Representation from UW System leadership.
- Representation from WTCS leadership.
- An equal number of legislators from both political parties.
- The Governor.
- Experts in the field of workforce development.
- Experts in the field of higher education.

Proposed Recommendation #12: Student Loan Ombudsman and Borrower's Bill of Rights

Raised by: Representative Joers

Representative Joers submitted [LRB-0463/1](#), a bill draft relating to student loans and borrowing protections, for the committee's consideration. The bill draft creates an Office of the Student Loan Ombudsman in the Department of Financial Institutions and requires the office to license student loan servicers. The bill draft enumerates various responsibilities of the Office of the Student Loan Ombudsman, including assisting student loan borrowers, processing complaints related to student loans, disseminating information about student loans and the work of the office, and annually reporting to the Legislature.

The bill draft authorizes the Office of the Student Loan Ombudsman to conduct certain investigations and examinations and to take administrative action. Finally, the bill draft creates a private right of action for students when student loan services violate the requirements or prohibitions provided in the bill draft.

Proposed Recommendation #13: Regional Governance

Raised by: Member Froelich

Ms. Froelich proposes creating a regional governance model for UW System, which could increase operational efficiency and be responsive to local educational and workforce needs.

Proposed Recommendation #14: Proportional Distribution of GPR Funding

Raised by: Member Froelich

Ms. Froelich proposes amending current law to require the UW System to distribute its main GPR appropriation equally to each campus on a per-capita or per-FTE basis.

Proposed Recommendation #15: Results-Oriented Incentives

Raised by: Member Venable

Mr. Venable proposes directing university leadership to develop additional results-oriented metrics related to educational outcomes and campus success that are measurable and transparent; and to provide incentives for improved outcomes according to these metrics, including additional financial flexibility. Mr. Venable also proposes connecting the results-oriented incentives to other proposals related to financial flexibility for UW-Madison.

Proposed Recommendation #16: Limitation on UW System Administration Funding and Employment

Raised by: Members Langdon and Beightol

Mr. Langdon proposes converting UW System Administration from GPR funding to a program revenue operation funded by assessments paid by the individual campuses for services received. Alternatively, Mr. Beightol proposes limiting the UW System Administration budget and FTE employment.

Proposed Recommendation #17: Create a College of Applied Arts and Science to Grant Streamlined Degrees

Raised by: Chair Nedweski

Chair Nedweski proposes creating an accredited College of Applied Arts and Science that streamlines the bachelor's degree into a three-year program with a focus on academics. This college would limit non-academic amenities to allow the institution to operate at minimal cost, employ only faculty, and receive administrative support from existing institution or system administrators. The college would not charge for any non-instructional services.

Chair Nedweski proposes creating a Wisconsin College of Applied Arts and Science Commission to design and recommend necessary statutory language for the creation, regional accreditation, and operation of this college by a UW System institution.

Proposed Recommendation #18: Centralize UW-Madison and UW System Administration

Raised by: Chair Nedweski

Chair Nedweski proposes merging UW-Madison administration and the UW System Administration offices. A single hybrid president/chancellor position would lead the combined administration to provide consistency and reduce duplication of financial services, legal services, public relations, information technology services, and facilities management.

Proposed Recommendation #19: Dedicated Board of Regents Staff

Raised by: Chair Nedweski

Chair Nedweski proposes creating a pool of non-partisan staff employed by the Board of Regents to provide research and other support to individual regents at their direction.

Proposed Recommendation #20: UW and WTCS Credit Transfer

Raised by: Chair Nedweski

Chair Nedweski proposes requiring the UW System and WTCS to have universal course numbering and to ensure total credit transfer between and within both systems. Additionally, Chair Nedweski proposes creating universal pipeline and early college credit programs for the UW System, WTCS, and secondary schools. Finally, she proposes requiring each UW System institution to accept WTCS liberal arts graduates and waive all bachelor's degree general education requirements.

Proposed Recommendation #21: Limit UW Position Authority

Raised by: Chair Nedweski

Chair Nedweski proposes restricting the UW System's ability to create limited appointment positions and other non-academic positions if the compensation for such positions exceeds 200 percent of the Wisconsin median income. She also proposes requiring JCF approval of each position description and salary prior to posting.

SG:KBO:EH:jal