



# UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

Wisconsin State Agency 101

A SERIES PREPARED BY



INSTITUTE FOR REFORMING GOVERNMENT

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## STATE AGENCY FAST FACTS

**35,000+ EMPLOYEES**

The University of Wisconsin System's current biennial budget of **\$12.9 billion** has increased by more than \$750 million since 2017. The majority of the System's funding comes from students, who bring state, federal, and scholarship aid.

Statewide, the system employs **35,671 employees**, which is 332 more than in 2017 - to serve **162,980 students**. If it were a city, these faculty and staff would make it the 26th biggest in Wisconsin, similar in size to Manitowoc and West Bend.

### DID YOU KNOW?

While most states have both public **four-year universities and two-year colleges**, Wisconsin is unique in that it has both the **Wisconsin Technical College System** and the UW System's two-year schools.

Nationwide, over 40% of all associate degrees were in liberal arts, general studies, and humanities. More than 80% of these associate degree students said they planned to complete a 4-year degree too. However, after 6 years, only 9% of community college students had done so. Graduates of 2-year general studies programs earn far less than their peers who earn other types of 2-year degrees.

**Wisconsin, along with other states must consider the value of its degrees and whether it is wise to continue to push two-year degrees in the liberal arts.**

### AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

The UW System oversees **13 four-year campuses** and **13 two-year campuses**, this is in addition to the **16 two-year technical colleges** in the Wisconsin Technical College System.

**#DYK THE TOTAL NUMBER OF UW FACULTY & STAFF ARE EQUIVALENT TO THE POPULATION OF MANITOWOC?!**

**\$12.9 BILLION BUDGET**

### TAXPAYER ALERT!

In-state tuition has been frozen at the UW System schools since 2013-14. Lawmakers lifted the freeze this year, however, the system maintained it for an additional year. IRG has urged caution in this area and families will be nervously watching what the Board of Regents do moving forward.

Future increases will hit parents and students hard as they are having to cut back elsewhere in their family budgets.

**26 CAMPUSES AROUND THE STATE**

**13 4-YEAR CAMPUSES**

**13 2-YEAR CAMPUSES**

# WISCONSIN STATE AGENCY 101

## UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

### REFORM HISTORY

Major reforms of the UW System have been rare since it was first created in 1971. Since then, it has grown by leaps and bounds, **both in terms of budget and physical footprint**. A plan by Governor Walker to spin UW-Madison out of the system would have given it more autonomy to grow and innovate while placing less burden on state taxpayers. **That plan did not move forward** due to opposition by other campuses and many of their elected representatives.

UW System, led by its flagship campus in Madison, has long been a leader in innovation, research, and has frequently ranked at the top of lists of the best programs nationwide in a variety of academic disciplines. While many of these schools are still well-regarded, some rankings have slipped. For example, **UW-Madison ranked 3rd** in research and development expenditures nationwide as recently as 2012, but now has **dropped to 8th**. Other universities have **innovated** by better embracing the development of basic research into real-world applications. Other universities such as **Purdue** and **Arizona State** have actually acquired other universities to help them fill offerings they lack and better serve students.

### KEEP AN EYE ON...

As with K-12 schools, the nation's colleges and universities have seen recent **windfalls from Covid-related stimulus** and, just recently, forgiveness of **hundreds of billions** in student debt. These one-time funds must be spent soon and, if they are not spent wisely, the system and its **campuses will face shortfalls at a time when enrollment is shrinking** with the future uncertain.

### UW SYSTEM LEADERSHIP

**Jay O. Rothman**  
*President of the UW System*



Jay Rothman took over leadership of the UW System at the beginning of 2022. He graduated with a bachelor's degree from Marquette University and a law degree from Harvard Law School.

### CLOSE CALL...

In Governor Evers' 2021-23 budget, he proposed giving the University of Wisconsin new authority to borrow without legislative approval at a time when it is receiving **record levels of federal stimulus funds** and facing record levels of uncertainty. This authority would have given UW a **no-limit credit card** if it had been approved by the legislature.

### IRG WANTS TO KNOW...

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO??

If you were in charge for a day, what reforms would you make to the UW? Email Alex Ignatowski, IRG's Director of State Budget and Government Reform, at **AI@reforminggovernment.org**.

### ABOUT IRG



INSTITUTE FOR  
REFORMING GOVERNMENT

The Institute for Reforming Government (IRG) is a 501 (c) 3 and Wisconsin-based think tank established to help remove the onerous barriers and red tape separating the individual from an efficient and functioning government.

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