An Introduction to the University of Wisconsin–Madison
Our Vision

The University of Wisconsin–Madison will be a model public university in the 21st century, serving as a resource to the public and working to enhance the quality of life in the state, the nation and the world.

The university will remain a preeminent center for discovery, learning and engagement by opening new forms of access to citizens from every background; creating a welcoming, empowered and inclusive community; and preparing current and future generations to live satisfying, useful and ethical lives. In partnership with the state and with colleagues around the world, the university’s faculty, staff and students will identify and address many of the state’s and the world’s most urgent and complex problems.
Our Mission

The University of Wisconsin–Madison is the original University of Wisconsin, created at the same time Wisconsin achieved statehood in 1848. It received Wisconsin’s land grant and became the state’s land-grant university after Congress adopted the Morrill Act in 1862. It continues to be Wisconsin’s comprehensive teaching and research university with a statewide, national and international mission, offering programs at the undergraduate, graduate and professional levels in a wide range of fields, while engaging in extensive scholarly research, continuing adult education and public service.

The primary purpose of UW–Madison is to provide a learning environment in which faculty, staff and students can discover, examine critically, preserve and transmit the knowledge, wisdom and values that will help ensure the survival of this and future generations and improve the quality of life for all. The university seeks to help students to develop an understanding and appreciation for the complex cultural and physical worlds in which they live and to realize their highest potential of intellectual, physical and human development.

It also seeks to attract and serve students from diverse social, economic and ethnic backgrounds, and to be sensitive and responsive to those groups that have been underserved by higher education. To fulfill its mission, the university must:

Offer broad and balanced academic programs that are mutually reinforcing and emphasize high-quality and creative instruction at the undergraduate, graduate, professional and postgraduate levels.

Generate new knowledge through a broad array of scholarly, research and creative endeavors, which provide a foundation for dealing with the immediate and long-range needs of society.

Achieve leadership in each discipline, strengthen interdisciplinary studies and pioneer new fields of learning.

Serve society through coordinated statewide outreach programs that meet continuing educational needs in accordance with the university’s designated land-grant status.

Participate extensively in statewide, national and international programs, and encourage others in the University of Wisconsin System, at other educational institutions, and in state, national and international organizations to seek benefit from the university’s unique educational resources, such as faculty and staff expertise, libraries, archives, museums and research facilities.

Strengthen cultural understanding through opportunities to study languages, cultures, the arts, and the implications of social, political, economic and technological change, and through encouragement of study, research and service off campus and abroad.

Maintain a level of excellence and standards in all programs that will give them statewide, national and international significance.

Embody, through its policies and programs, respect for, and commitment to, the ideals of a pluralistic, multiracial, open and democratic society.

Revised statement, adopted June 10, 1988,
UW System Board of Regents
Five-Year Strategic Framework for UW–Madison

The five-year Strategic Framework created in 2009 features a vision for UW-Madison to be a model public university in the 21st century, serving as a resource to the public and working to enhance the quality of life in the state, the nation and the world. UW-Madison will remain a preeminent center for discovery, learning and engagement by opening new forms of access to citizens from every background; creating a welcoming, empowered and inclusive community; and preparing current and future generations to live satisfying, useful and ethical lives.

The university’s faculty, staff and students are expected to identify and address many of the most urgent and complex problems in the state, nation and world. A collection of laboratories, classrooms, and other instructional and research facilities ranging in age, size, complexity and technology support this educational and research mission.

For more information: Strategic Framework

Our Strategic Priorities

- Provide an exemplary undergraduate education
- Reinvigorate the Wisconsin Idea and renew our commitment to our public mission
- Invest in scholarly domains in which we have existing or potential strength and impact
- Recruit and retain the best faculty and staff, and reward merit. Enhance diversity in order to ensure excellence in education and research
- Be responsible stewards of our resources
History

The state’s founders strongly believed that Wisconsin needed a prominent public university. In 1848, legislators passed a bill that formally created the university, and its first class of 17 students met on Feb. 5, 1849.

In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Act, which established the nation’s land-grant universities and broadened the UW’s academic scope beyond the liberal arts.

In 1894, the board of regents adopted the university’s academic freedom statement:

“Whatever may be the limitations which trammel inquiry elsewhere, we believe that the great State University of Wisconsin shall ever encourage that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth may be found.” Today, the statement continues to guide our academic mission.

The board of regents established the Graduate School in 1904. Three years later, the College of Medicine was established.

For more information: UW–Madison history
Who We Are

UW-Madison is among the largest and most comprehensive universities in the nation, and the largest of the 15 distinct institutions in the University of Wisconsin System. UW-Madison comprises 13 schools and colleges that include 121 academic departments, 251 centers and institutes, and 403 academic degree/major programs.

Our average class size is 29 students, and only 9 percent of our classes have more than 100 students. We offer more than 4,700 courses and 134 undergraduate majors. UW-Madison has more than 21,000 employees, including more than 2,200 faculty, and is committed to a diverse and inclusive environment.

For the 2015-16 academic year, the university received 32,780 freshman applications. Of those, 16,121 were admitted and 6,270 students decided to enroll.

With this incoming class, 29,580 undergraduates are currently enrolled at the university, compared to 29,302 last year. Total university enrollment is 43,389, up from 43,193 last year.

Other key characteristics of the incoming class

Wisconsin counties represented: All 72
States represented: 50

A Global Reputation

- 11th among American public universities
- 24th among world-ranked universities
- 8th best value among public universities
- 4th among U.S. universities in research expenditures with more than $1 billion devoted to scientific research
- 7th in doctorates granted among public universities
- 19 Nobel Prizes and 38 Pulitzer Prizes have been awarded to UW alumni or faculty
- More than 1,050 alumni serve as CEOs
- With 3,145 graduates having served since 1961, UW-Madison is the No. 2 all-time producer of Peace Corps volunteers
Classroom Excellence

It goes without saying that teaching is UW–Madison’s core mission. But it is the “sifting and winnowing” process that was defined by the Board of Regents nearly 120 years ago that continues to fuel our quest for knowledge and drive for academic freedom. Here are some of the recent initiatives on campus to push that spirit forward.

Educational Innovation is a coordinated effort to create a sustained campus environment by improving our capacities and generating new revenue in order to maintain and enhance student learning and preserve research excellence. Educational innovations will take place all across campus, within and across programs, departments, colleges and centers, and will be supported by new and streamlined policies and practices. Educational Innovation empowers faculty and staff to be the agents of change.

The Madison Initiative for Undergraduates allocated $40 million for projects that improve access and enhance undergraduate student learning. Projects ranged from curricular innovations, to the creation of e-learning classrooms, to a transformed system to provide academic advising.

The Teaching and Learning Excellence website is the interactive resource for all educators to share teaching issues and solutions, and explore what others on campus are doing. Educators can read about best practices and best solutions, and connect with others who might be facing the same challenges.

The Wisconsin Experience describes what is unique about getting a degree from UW–Madison. It is based on the idea that, together, we create and apply learning inside and outside the classroom to make the world a better place. UW–Madison produces graduates who, as creative problem-solvers, are able to integrate empirical analysis and passion, seek out and create new knowledge and technologies, adapt to new situations and engage as world citizens.

Go Big Read, the university’s common-reading program invites students, faculty, staff and the entire community to read the same book and join in a vibrant, academically driven experience. Participants engage in classroom discussions and campus events, providing platforms for exploring important issues from a range of perspectives.
Poised for Discovery

UW–Madison ranks as one of the most prolific research universities in the world. Driven by a desire to both explore new worlds and to apply new ideas to real-world problems, research at UW–Madison isn’t conducted only by faculty, staff and graduate students. Undergraduate research opportunities also are fostered, making research a truly campuswide enterprise.

With more than $1 billion in annual research spending, UW-Madison ranks fourth among all U.S. universities in research expenditures and eighth in federally funded research at public universities.

UW-Madison has a $12.4 billion annual impact on the economy, which directly or indirectly supports 128,146 jobs in Wisconsin and contributes $614 million in state tax revenue. Every dollar of state tax investment in the university generates $21.05 in economic activity in the state.

The Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF) is a catalyst for scientific investigation and research at UW-Madison and in the Morgridge Institute for Research. Truly an example of the Wisconsin Idea in action, WARF helps commercialize the technology arising from campus research for the benefit of all humankind. The proceeds of commercialization efforts are invested back into the research enterprise.

Research expenditures (2013 fiscal year)

- Total expenditures: $1.12 billion
- Federally funded expenditures: $533.2 million
- Non-federal expenditures: $590.3 million
- National NSF expenditure rank: 4th
- Big 10 NSF expenditure rank: 2nd

For more information: Research

WARF facts

- Total endowment: $2.6 billion
- U.S. patents obtained: 1,900

For more information: WARF
The Wisconsin Idea

The Wisconsin Idea is the principle that the university should improve people’s lives beyond the classroom. It spans UW-Madison’s teaching, research, outreach and public service.

One of the longest and deepest traditions surrounding the University of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Idea, is often articulated as “the boundaries of the university are the boundaries of the state.” First applied to the relationship between the UW and the people of Wisconsin, it is now generally acknowledged to be national and global in scope.

Synonymous with Wisconsin for more than a century, this “Idea” has become the guiding philosophy of university outreach efforts in Wisconsin and throughout the world.

For more information: The Wisconsin Idea
Leadership and Governance

UW–Madison has a long tradition of shared governance. A statutory framework sets forth the foundation that faculty, staff and students participate in governing the university.

UW–Madison has an organizational structure with well-established shared governance procedures. The University of Wisconsin Board of Regents appoints the president of the UW System, the chancellors of the 13 universities, and the chancellor of UW–Extension and UW Colleges. All appointees serve at the pleasure of the board.

Within UW–Madison, the administrative leadership structure includes:

- Chancellor, who reports to the president of the UW System
- Provost/vice chancellor for academic affairs, who serves as the chief operating officer and the deputy to the chancellor in the overall academic leadership and administrative management of the university
- Vice chancellor for administration, also reporting to the chancellor, who serves as the chief budget officer and oversees the administrative aspects of the university
- Vice chancellor for university relations, who builds relationships with partners outside of the university and coordinates activities with alumni, donors, community members, legislators, business leaders and visitors
- Dean of the Graduate School, who also serves as the vice chancellor for research
- Dean of the School of Medicine and Public Health, who also serves as the vice chancellor for medical affairs

The Faculty Senate, Academic Staff Assembly and Associated Students of Madison Student Council are elected bodies that provide faculty, academic staff and students with formal processes for participation in the shared governance structure of the institution. A proposal to create a governance structure to represent hourly employees is currently under consideration. The chancellor convenes the Faculty Senate and the provost convenes the Academic Staff Assembly.

The chancellor and/or the provost meet nearly weekly with the University Committee, the executive committee of the Faculty Senate, and with the Academic Staff Executive Committee, the executive committee of the Academic Staff Assembly.

For more information: Leadership and Governance
2014-15 Budget

State appropriations: $496.5 million (17 percent)
Student tuition revenue: $488.9 million (17 percent)
Federal programs: $890.4 million (31 percent)
Gifts, grants and segregated fees: $505.0 million (17 percent)
State laboratory fees: $28.3 million (1 percent)
Auxiliary enterprises: $380 million (13 percent)
Operations receipts: $133.6 million (4 percent)
Total: $2.92 billion

Our Community and Facilities

UW–Madison is located in the center of the city of Madison, a thriving and scenic state capital in south-central Wisconsin with a population of more than 243,000 (approximately 500,000 metro). Madison has consistently been ranked among the best communities to live in the U.S., including making the top-10 lists for most livable cities, best college towns and best green communities. In 2012, the American Institute for Economic Research ranked Madison second among “small cities” for college students, based on academic environment, quality of life and professional opportunities.

The 936-acre main campus is located on the beautiful shores of Lake Mendota, adjacent to downtown, and offers vast state-of-the-art resources to support teaching, research and campus life. The campus’s 420 buildings include approximately 3.6 million square feet of research laboratory space and 1.2 million square feet of instructional space.

UW–Madison also has the 1,262-acre UW Arboretum that features a diversity of nature and wildlife, agricultural research properties throughout the state, and a partnership with University Research Park, a nonprofit research and technology park with more than 1.8 million square feet of office and laboratory space used by a broad range of startup companies in Madison.

For more information: City of Madison
Athletics

The UW Athletic Department includes 23 Division I sports teams and more than 800 student-athletes. In addition to the priority of graduating student-athletes, compliance with NCAA rules is taken very seriously. The Athletics Compliance Office works to identify and reduce areas of risk within the athletic program.

The two main functions of the compliance office are to educate and monitor. The compliance staff meets with and disseminates information to coaches and student-athletes, and monitors functions of the department that are governed by NCAA and Big Ten Conference legislation.

Oversight structures of the department include the Athletic Board, a governance committee that includes representatives from the faculty, academic staff, students, student athletes and alumni.

For more information: Athletic Board and Wisconsin Athletics Annual Report
Alumni

Founded in 1861, the Wisconsin Alumni Association (WAA) is one of the largest and most active alumni organizations in the world. UW–Madison has more than 421,000 living alumni across the country and around the world.

WAA, an independently financed, nonprofit alumni organization, was founded in 1861 to promote the welfare of the University of Wisconsin and serve the interests of its alumni. Today, the association carries out this mission through marketing, communications, services and programs that link alumni back to the university, the university with alumni and alumni with each other. Among other programs, it produces an alumni directory, sponsors alumni tours and encourages lifelong learning through a variety of events.

Alumni chapters are active in more than 100 cities around the world, supporting both the university’s academic mission and its athletic teams.

For more information: Wisconsin Alumni Association

UW Foundation

The University of Wisconsin Foundation is the official fundraising and gift-receiving organization for UW–Madison and other donor-designated units of the UW System.

Thanks to the generosity of alumni and friends, total gifts received by the UW Foundation since 1945 now total more than $2.41 billion.

In fall 2015, the UW Foundation, in partnership with UW–Madison, launched All Ways Forward, the fourth — and largest — comprehensive fundraising campaign in the university’s history. With a goal of bringing in $3.2 billion to fund initiatives and programs to keep UW–Madison the world-class institution that it is today, the campaign is expected to run until 2020.

UW Foundation facts

Total endowment: $2.3 billion
Payments to/for UW–Madison: $246.7 million

For more information: UW Foundation and All Ways Forward

The University of Wisconsin System is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity employer committed to achieving a diverse workforce and to maintaining a community that welcomes and values a climate supporting equal opportunity and difference among its members.

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