



# United Council

of University of Wisconsin Students, Inc.

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## **UW Flunks Affordability More Financial Aid Needed**

The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education has published their biannual report, *Measuring Up 2008: The State Report Card on Higher Education*. Among other scores, the University of Wisconsin System received an F in Affordability.

Affordability was graded by weighing the ability for students and families to pay for higher education, factoring in strategies for affordability, and reliance on loans.

While there have been increases in financial aid allocations within the State Biennial Budget, these amounts have not kept pace with federal investments. For every dollar the federal government spends on financial aid, Wisconsin invests only 62 cents.

“The State Budget needs to prioritize need-based scholarships like the Wisconsin Higher Education Grant, Lawton Undergraduate Minority Retention Grant, and the Advanced Opportunity Program. Increasing financial aid programs directly increases access to the UW System,” states Cristina Treviño-Murphy, United Council of UW Students Board Member.

Tuition costs continue to rise while students struggle to find the money to afford school. According to the study, students are incurring an average yearly debt of \$4,807 in loans. Mitigating the negative effects of student loan debt will require policy changes on several levels, from increasing state and federal grants to lowering interest rates.

It is crucial to Wisconsin’s economy to enable students to be active, contributing citizens who can invest in this state, rather than directing our paychecks to student lenders.

“As a working-class student from rural Rock County, WI, my financial aid package consists of two subsidized federal loans. To make up for the difference, I work about 70 hours per week in the summer and about 40 hours per week during the academic year just to pay my tuition each year,” says Chynna Haas, UW-Madison student and President of the Working Class Student Union.

The study also revealed that even after financial aid, many poor and working class families dedicate 44% of their income to paying for school.

Haas contends, “Given the economic recession, 44% of the average poor and working-class family's income should *not* be spent paying for higher education because it is not feasible. Higher education is the way out for poor and working-class individuals, but the economic recession, steadily increasing unemployment rates, and even faster rising tuition increases take this option off the table for us.”

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*The United Council of UW Students is one of the nation's oldest, largest and most effective state student associations, representing over 110,000 students on 19 UW campuses. Founded in 1960, United Council is a non-partisan, non-profit, student-directed organization committed to enhancing the quality of student life and protecting access to higher education in Wisconsin.*