

UW System: Leaders testify in support of substance abuse recovery school bill

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Today, UW System President Ray Cross and Director of the Office of Educational Opportunity Gary Bennett testified before the Assembly Committee on Education in support of Special Session Assembly Bill 6 <http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2017/related/proposals/jr7_ab6.pdf>. The bill would authorize a pilot recovery school that would serve up to 15 students diagnosed with drug abuse and addiction.

“Faculty and staff across the UW System helped shape this bill and will continue to help when it is enacted into law,” President Cross said. “UW System is happy to be a proactive partner in addressing our state’s drug crisis, and proud to be a part of Wisconsin’s continued investment in the fight against addiction and opioid abuse.”

Under the bill, the UW System would collaborate with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and local school districts to leverage the expertise of education leaders across the state to create opportunities for this underserved group of students. The pilot recovery school would be created in direct coordination with local partners, such as school districts and county health departments.

“The Office of Educational Opportunity exists to promote new, unique ways to serve students,” Gary Bennett added. “Those who are struggling with addiction need different educational options that are not currently available. A recovery school allows students to receive the care they need without missing a semester or year of high school.”

The Assembly bill has bipartisan support and proposes a four-year pilot project. A student would have to meet the following requirements in order to attend the recovery school:

- Has begun treatment in a substance use disorder or dependency program;
- Maintained sobriety for at least 30 days prior to attending; and
- Agrees to submit to a drug screening assessment, and, if appropriate, a drug test prior to being admitted.