

Wisconsin Technical College System: Lumina Foundation awards Challenge Grant to Wisconsin

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"60 Forward" aimed at boosting the proportion of residents with a postsecondary credential

MADISON, WI - The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), the University of Wisconsin (UW) System and the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU) announced they have been jointly selected to receive a \$99,900 attainment challenge grant from Lumina Foundation of Indianapolis. The grant will support the three postsecondary partners' efforts to increase the percentage of working-age state residents - those aged 25 to 64 - who earn a

credential beyond high school, such as a certificate, diploma or degree, or complete a registered apprenticeship. Higher attainment rates are tied to higher earnings and labor force participation.

According to the 2017 issue of *A Stronger Nation*, Lumina's annual report on postsecondary attainment, Wisconsin's 2015 attainment rate was 47.2 percent, the most recent year for which data are available. While Wisconsin's rate is above the national rate of 45.8 percent, it is short of labor economists' estimates that 60 percent of all jobs will require a high-quality postsecondary credential by the end of this decade.

The partners have agreed on the goal to increase the state's postsecondary attainment rate to 60 percent by 2027. Under the Lumina grant, the partners will convene state leaders and nationally-recognized experts, who will share their experiences with attainment goal efforts in other states and higher education systems. Additional grant work will include development of a communications framework for outreach to key audiences to convey the relevance and value of achieving Wisconsin's attainment goal.

"This 60 Forward goal is yet another example of Wisconsin's higher education systems working together," said WTCS President Dr. Morna K. Foy. "To achieve the goal will require an expanded collaboration that includes employers, policymakers and many other partners," Foy said.

Dr. Rolf Wegenke, president of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU), emphasized that citizens will hold 12 to 15 jobs over their working lives. "The need for education never ends," he said; "increasing attainment is critical to meeting Wisconsin's future workforce needs, and expanding educational opportunity to all Wisconsin citizens is the way to get there."

"Wisconsin is at a critical turning point: we have an aging state population with a shrinking workforce – and a decline in the state's birth rate. That means we are facing a workforce shortage in years to come, and we are working to address those concerns now," said UW System President Ray Cross. "One of the smartest things we can do is reach out to working adults and other non-traditional students to help maximize their success. We want to help address the educational needs for our citizens, which is also important to the state's economic welfare."

The Lumina grant will support efforts to increase attainment among adults with some college but no credential. Underrepresented populations, including non-traditional students of color, low-income and first generation students, will also be supported. In Wisconsin, 19.3 percent of Hispanic adults and 22.7 percent of African-American adults hold a two- or four-year degree, compared to 44.1 percent of Wisconsin residents overall.

“We applaud the Wisconsin partnership for its commitment to increasing education attainment beyond high school,” said Jamie Merisotis, Lumina’s president and CEO. “Today’s workplace demands a greater breadth and depth of talent and Wisconsin is wise to pursue a strategy focused on ensuring its residents possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in our rapidly changing labor market.” Lumina launched its Attainment Challenge Grant program last fall and committed to support states with up to \$100,000 for developing and implementing evidence-based policies to improve student success, close equity gaps, and help their states reach a robust postsecondary attainment goal.

The grant partners intend to convene education leaders, policymakers and business partners in the fall to provide an update on the goal and its importance to the state’s economy, to highlight areas of progress and to outline opportunities for engagement going forward.

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ABOUT WTCS: The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) offers more than 400 programs awarding two-year associate degrees, one- and two-year technical diplomas and short-term technical diplomas and certificates. In addition, the System is a major provider of customized training and technical assistance to Wisconsin employers. Over 320,000 individuals access the technical colleges each year.

ABOUT WAICU: The Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU) is the official organization of the 24 independent (or private) institutions of higher learning in Wisconsin. Membership is limited to accredited, nonprofit institutions, headquartered in Wisconsin. The presidents of these institutions lead WAICU as its board of directors. WAICU’s mission: “Working together for educational opportunity.”

ABOUT UW SYSTEM: The University of Wisconsin (UW) System is one of the largest systems of public higher education in the country, serving approximately 180,000 students each year and employing more than 39,000 faculty and staff statewide. The System is made up of 13 four-year universities, 13 freshman-sophomore UW Colleges campuses, and statewide UW-Extension. Together, these institutions are a tremendous academic, cultural, and economic resource for Wisconsin, the nation, and the world.

ABOUT LUMINA FOUNDATION: Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation in Indianapolis that is committed to making opportunities for learning beyond high school available to all. Lumina envisions a system that is easy to navigate, delivers fair results, and meets the nation’s need for talent through a broad range of credentials. The Foundation’s goal is to prepare people for informed citizenship and for success in a global economy.