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UW System: Regents approve UW System's 2019-21 budget requests

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Biennial operating budget request focuses on student success, workforce development, efficiencies

MADISON – The Board of Regents voted today to approve a biennial budget proposal presented by the University of Wisconsin System that targets affordability, talent development, and return on investment for the people of Wisconsin.

"An investment in the University of Wisconsin System is an excellent investment," said UW System President Ray Cross, in presenting the request. "Our students – and faculty – are in high demand as the innovative thinkers and creative problem-solvers that the 21st century needs and expects. We are the state's largest talent pipeline. Our groundbreaking research, entrepreneurial know-how, and boundless creative energy are changing people's lives for the better in Wisconsin – and beyond."

The UW System is also a major driver of the Wisconsin economy, according to Dr. David J. Ward, CEO of NorthStar Analytics. As detailed in a new economic impact report, the UW System contributes $24 billion to the state's economy each year, Ward said, which reflects a 23-fold return on each dollar Wisconsin invests in the university.

The UW System's operating budget request calls for an investment of $107.5 million

in state funds, including $82.5 million in outcomes-based funding to support university and statutorily required goals related to student success, workforce development, and operational efficiencies, and $25 million to address capacity-building initiatives, primarily for STEM and high-demand fields.

“I think it’s a very good budget,” said Regent Ryan Ring, a senior at UW-Eau Claire. “In coming years, students will feel the impact of it, and it will be very positive.”

Regents also approved UW System’s capital budget recommendations for 2019-21, which largely focus on renovation, repair and replacement of aging or obsolete facilities. More than 60% of the UW System’s 62 million square-foot building inventory was constructed between 1950 and 1979, and much of that inventory has had little renovation or upgrade since its inception.

“If we’re going to push and invest in STEM and student safety, we have to invest in these kinds of facilities,” said Regent Jason Plante, noting that it will serve the next generation of the workforce who are the lifeblood of the economy.

UW System’s 2019-21 capital request seeks project authority in 2019-21 and into 2021-23 for five projects. Within the 2019-21 portion of this request are six academic facilities and five utility/central plant projects that would be funded with $463.9 million in bonding to renovate, expand and replace obsolete facilities. Another 10 projects to be funded with $506.4 million are financed exclusively through UW program revenue, both borrowing and cash. These projects, funded entirely by UW System institutions, include a new residence hall and renovation of existing residential halls, recreational and athletic facilities, and a student union, to replace outdated facilities and accommodate growing student demand.

The request includes $446.5 million in bonding for the five advance enumeration projects, requested now for 2021-23, and focused on science, engineering and priority academic programs.

The UW System’s FY 2019-2021 biennial budget request must be submitted to the state’s Department of Administration in September for consideration as part of the Governor’s executive budget, which is typically released in February.

- View the 2019-2021 biennial budget funding request.
- View the UW System Operating Budget Request PowerPoint.
- View the UW System Capital Budget Request PowerPoint.