

# UW System: President Thompson seeks investment to renew the Wisconsin Idea through 10 key initiatives

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MADISON, Wis.—University of Wisconsin System President Tommy Thompson today announced he would seek a 3.5 percent operating budget increase for the 2021-23 biennial budget, an investment that would renew the Wisconsin idea through 10 key initiatives.

Thompson will present the budget request to the Board of Regents on Thursday. If approved, the request will be forwarded to the state Department of Administration for consideration by Gov. Tony Evers.

“Our mission is to meet the needs of Wisconsin. It is my goal with this budget to renew the Wisconsin Idea for the 21<sup>st</sup> century by making the University of Wisconsin System more relevant and relatable,” Thompson said. “We are facing unprecedented challenges, and we are ready to meet them.”

Thompson noted that the proposed budget increase of 3.5 percent would be a \$95.7 million increase over the biennial budget.

The 10 budget initiatives would:

- Launch the Wisconsin Tuition Promise, which would extend UW-Madison’s Bucky’s Tuition Promise to all UW System universities. It would provide “last dollar” tuition and fees for four years for Wisconsin resident freshmen and two years for transfer students who come from households with adjusted incomes

of \$60,000 or less.

- Expand and enhance online educational opportunities by shortening program development, partnering with businesses, and aggressively building up existing programs.
- Advance Wisconsin's teachers and school leaders through student loan forgiveness, working with community and university education dean partners, and providing stipends for student teachers.
- Facilitate use of assets, including residence halls, dining facilities, and land, to generate new revenue.
- Modernize administrative and financial processes, including securing new borrowing authority.
- Increase regulatory flexibility by reducing reporting requirements by one-third.
- Support the Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin.
- Expand support for students' mental and behavioral health.
- Support Wisconsin agriculture by adding 20 county-based agriculture positions in the Division of Extension at UW-Madison.
- Expand educational opportunity in Wisconsin's prisons.

"When we asked Tommy Thompson to be UW System president we expected him to be bold," said Regent President Andrew S. Petersen. "This budget reflects his clear-eyed assessment of what we need to do now, and we look forward to helping him renew the Wisconsin Idea."

UW System will separately seek \$1.2 billion in capital budget authority to renovate 2.9 million of the System's more than 67 million square feet, or 4 percent.