

UW-Madison: Record-setting freshman class maintains UW-Madison's commitment to Wisconsin Families

Posted on Tuesday, Sep 28, 2021

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

MADISON — This year's freshman class at the University of Wisconsin–Madison is the largest in the institution's history and includes the most Wisconsin residents of any freshman class in the last 20 years.

The incoming class maintains UW–Madison's strong commitment to Wisconsin families — hundreds of these new freshmen from Wisconsin will get free tuition through Bucky's Tuition Promise. The total number of undergraduates from Wisconsin now receiving free tuition through Bucky's Tuition Promise and other similar initiatives for in-state students is at a record high of 3,448.

The university enrolled 8,465 freshmen this year, up from 7,306 last year. These students were selected from a record 53,829 applicants, up 17 percent over last year.

“It is gratifying that even in these turbulent times, a UW–Madison education remains more popular than ever in Wisconsin and around the country and the world,” says Provost Karl Scholz. “This class of exceptional freshmen reflects both the high quality of our applicants and the high priority UW–Madison places on access and affordability for our Wisconsin resident students.”

Wisconsin focus

- A Board of Regents enrollment policy measures UW-Madison's commitment to the

state by considering three groups of students: Wisconsin students; Minnesota reciprocity students, from whom the university receives in-state tuition amounts; and transfer students from both states. Under this Board of Regents policy, UW-Madison must enroll a combined minimum of 5,200 new undergraduate students from these groups each calendar year, based on a three-year rolling average. For calendar year 2021, UW-Madison exceeds this number by hundreds, enrolling 5,614 students.

- In 2015, UW-Madison pledged to include at least 3,600 Wisconsin residents in each upcoming freshman class. This year's freshman class includes 3,859 Wisconsin resident students. This number is especially significant given stagnant growth in the overall number of high school students in the state. These incoming students from Wisconsin comprise 45.6 percent of the new freshman class and come from every corner of the state — 71 of Wisconsin's 72 counties.
- Wisconsin students and Minnesota reciprocity students together make up 55 percent of new freshmen this year.

Affordability

- Nearly 800 freshmen from low- to moderate-income Wisconsin families will receive free tuition through Bucky's Tuition Promise, now in its fourth year. The pledge guarantees tuition and mandatory segregated fees for up to four years for any Wisconsin resident student whose household adjusted gross income is \$60,000 or less.
- The class includes 1,250 new freshmen who are eligible to receive need-based financial assistance through the Federal Pell Grant program — the highest number in a freshman class to date. Pell Grants play a critical role in expanding college opportunity for historically underserved populations. This growth reflects UW-Madison's ongoing commitment to be a driver of upward economic mobility.

Diversity

- The freshman class is the most racially and ethnically diverse in the university's history.
- There are 1,251 underrepresented students of color, up from 989 last year. These students comprise 14.8 percent of the freshman class, up from 13.5 percent last

year.

- There are 2,133 new freshmen in the broader category of all students of color, up from 1,692 last year. These students comprise 25.2 percent of the freshman class, up from 23.2 percent last year.
- Compared to fall 2020, this new freshman class includes 7 percent more African American students, 22 percent more Asian students, 34 percent more Hispanic students, and 34 percent more non-Hispanic students who identify with two or more races.

Class attributes

- The new freshman class maintains UW–Madison’s high standards for quality. For the fifth year in a row, the number of enrolled National Merit Scholarship finalists in the incoming freshman class increased. From fall 2016 to fall 2021, the number of National Merit finalists in each freshman class increased from 48 to 132 (175 percent increase). Of particular note is the increase in Wisconsin resident National Merit finalists during that same period, from 39 to 88 (126 percent increase).
- Like many other Big Ten universities and peer institutions, UW–Madison is welcoming a freshman class that is larger than anticipated. “As with so many things, COVID-19 introduced an unprecedented level of uncertainty during this admissions cycle,” says Derek Kindle, vice provost for enrollment management. “Although the pandemic continues to affect our students and families on multiple fronts, the demand for a UW–Madison education is stronger than ever as evidenced by this freshman class.”
- UW–Madison has handled this unanticipated growth by expanding advising capacity, reconfiguring spaces in residence halls to accommodate incoming students, and supporting instructors through the new Center for Teaching, Learning and Mentoring. The university’s schools and colleges are coordinating efforts to ensure students continue to have a superior experience and advance in their progress toward degrees.
- International students represent 45 countries and comprise just under 10 percent of the new freshman class.
- The campus welcomed a strong cohort of 1,136 new transfer students this fall, up

from 1,010 last fall.

Total enrollment for fall 2021 at UW-Madison is 47,936, up from 45,540 last year.

Sixty-two percent of all undergraduates are Wisconsin residents or enrollees through the Minnesota reciprocity program,

The enrollment numbers come from the university's official census, taken each semester on the 10th day of classes.