

UW-Madison: WARF announces its annual gift, largest in foundation's history

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MADISON — The Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation today announced a total of \$216.8 million in support for the University of Wisconsin–Madison research enterprise during the 2021-22 academic year.

The figure is WARF's largest annual investment in UW–Madison-based research and education in the foundation's history.

“For the past 19 months, the UW–Madison community has risen to the challenge of a global pandemic without ever giving ground in its mission to teach and discover,” says WARF's CEO Erik Iverson. “We also know our greatest challenges and opportunities lie ahead. WARF is pleased to be part of the solution through our annual grant, additional facility and pandemic support, and our everyday work advancing Badger inventions to market.”

In addition to its traditional base grant, which this year amounts to \$63.6 million, WARF announced several other areas of supplement grants, most notably \$55 million to support new research buildings and \$40 million for pandemic support. The topline number of \$216.8 million also includes \$11.4 million in grants to the Morgridge Institute for Research and \$35 million in the form of operational and functional support provided by WARF to the university.

“WARF was founded over nine decades ago by Professor (Harry) Steenbock to protect and commercialize inventions from UW–Madison,” says James Berbee, chair of the WARF Board of Trustees. “With WARF's largest grant in history this year, we see the importance of his legacy to the university itself.”

The \$63.6 million base grant includes \$13 million for faculty recruitment and retention, \$2.5 million for faculty fellowships and \$11.5 million for graduate student support.

“Recruiting and retaining top faculty to teach the next generation of Wisconsin leaders and innovators is a top priority. We are fortunate to have a strong and generous partner in WARF to help us in that goal,” Chancellor Rebecca Blank says. “The support we receive from WARF allows UW–Madison to advance our research enterprise, provide support to promising graduate students, and maintain a margin of excellence that keeps our institution in the top tier of American universities.”

The time-honored Fall Research Competition will also see a \$10.9 million dedication. The annual competition draws hundreds of research proposals from as many as 120 academic departments each year.

In addition, \$10.5 million has been allocated to strategic initiatives such as Research Forward, which provides funding to advance transformative research on campus, and another \$5.5 million provides grant matches for instrumentation, facilities, doctoral training and research programs. And \$1.5 million covers leadership, personnel, policy and implementation support.

“WARF’s gift is essential to continued research success on campus and has been especially instrumental in research support during the COVID-19 pandemic,” says Steve Ackerman, UW–Madison vice chancellor for research and graduate education. “With WARF’s increased investment this year, we are even better able to support our world-class faculty with fellowships and seed funding of new research, as well as more competitively recruit new faculty, including those who are rising stars in emerging fields.”

And, Ackerman adds: “The focus on new funding for research buildings support enhances our research productivity, and these facilities also are training grounds for the scientists and engineers of tomorrow.”

The gift also commits \$8.2 million to the university’s cluster hire program, or the Endowment for Excellence, and a number of other targeted research programs and initiatives. Among them are Discovery to Product (D2P) and the campus Law/Business Entrepreneurship Clinics.

WARF’s support for the Morgridge Institute for Research continues, with an

investment of \$11.4 million. The private, nonprofit institute works to improve human health through interdisciplinary biomedical research in collaboration with UW-Madison.

“WARF’s support of the Morgridge Institute helps us stay true to our mission of serving as a catalyst for bold new initiatives in the UW-Madison biomedical community,” says Morgridge Institute CEO Brad Schwartz. “It allows us to partner with the university in promising-but-unproven frontiers in science and take advisable risks that may lead to big advances in scientific knowledge.”

Since 1925, WARF has provided mission-driven operational and functional support for UW-Madison in the form of technology commercialization and asset management. These wide-ranging services are a unique model in higher education as most universities must bear the cost of such expenses on their own.

Throughout the years, WARF’s ongoing support and annual grants have been supplemented by additional investments in buildings, major equipment and campus infrastructure, including development of the new Computer, Data and Information Sciences facility announced earlier this fall.