

UW-Madison: After 15 years leading \$315 million Wisconsin scholarship fund, Gulbrandsen plans to retire

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After 15 years as the executive director of the [Fund For Wisconsin Scholars \(FFWS\)](#), Mary Gulbrandsen is announcing her retirement.

The FFWS is a private, not for profit charitable foundation founded and funded in 2007 by John and Tashia Morgridge. Since its inception, the FFWS has provided over \$110 million of grants and stipends to over 23,000 Wisconsin public high school graduates attending Wisconsin public colleges and universities. Students who meet specific criteria (see www.ffws.org for more information) are randomly selected to receive the FFWS grant. The fund now provides more than \$12 million each year to students at all thirteen UW campuses, who come from every county in the state.

“The opportunity to help build and lead the FFWS for its first 15 years has been absolutely thrilling,” Gulbrandsen said. “The citizens of Wisconsin can feel excited about the young college students of our state. The FFWS grant and stipend recipients are thoughtful, inspiring, and committed to making positive differences in our world. It has been a joy to meet many of them. The UW and WTCS colleges and universities are exceptional on every level and the Financial Aid Officers and staff at each institution help make the FFWS run smoothly. It is a privilege to work with them.”

To date, more than 2,500 students have received bachelor’s degrees and hundreds more have earned certificates or associate degrees.

“We are grateful to Mary Gulbrandsen for the success of the Fund for Wisconsin

Scholars. While we were the funders, Mary did the work,” founders John and Tashia Morgridge said. “With board support, Mary designed the FFWS program, created the structure and monitored the progress. As a result of meticulous documentation, evaluation and research, the Fund for Wisconsin Scholars continues to evolve and thrive.”

A pediatric nurse practitioner and former school district administrator, Gulbrandsen has dedicated her career to benefitting children by combining her interest and expertise in health care, education, and administration. She holds a bachelor’s degree in nursing from St. Olaf College and master’s degrees in pediatric nursing and administrative medicine from UW–Madison. Her husband, Carl, was the longtime managing director of the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF).

“The Fund For Wisconsin Scholars has been a remarkable achievement funded by John and Tasha Morgridge that has improved thousands upon thousands of lives,” said Interim UW System President Tommy Thompson. “The role Mary Gulbrandsen played to promote and grow this investment by the Morgridges has helped us graduate over 2,500 students from low-income households in Wisconsin. Mary’s work to build this program, in addition to all the work that she has done with her husband Carl on promoting the UW, will be missed. Her retirement is well earned.”

The FFWS board has retained Isaacson Miller to conduct the search for a new executive director. Gulbrandsen will continue in her role until a full transition is completed.