

# UW-Richland: Students to deliver petition to save their campus

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**RICHLAND CENTER, WISCONSIN:** UW-Richland students will deliver a petition to save their campus on Thursday, December 8th at 1pm, at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Regents in Madison. They will travel from Richland Center to deliver approximately 1,400 signatures to UW System President Jay Rothman.

The petition asks Governor Evers, State Senator Marklein, Assemblyman Kurtz, and President Rothman to meet with the community to share ideas about how the UW-Richland campus can be saved.

On November 22nd, President Rothman issued a letter directing UW-Platteville staff to develop a plan to cease in-person instruction at UW-Richland. Since that announcement was made, a petition has been circulating to save the campus.

“We have a small but mighty student body at UW-Richland. We’re eager to meet with President Rothman, let him know how upset the community is, and collaborate to invest in a solution that better serves faculty and students, both present and future,” said Jake Steele, a sophomore on campus.

Student enrollment has plummeted since the UW-Richland campus underwent deep budget cuts by the State of Wisconsin. 373 full-time equivalent students attended in 2012; that number is now estimated to be 60.

“The campus budget has been cut 55% since 2012, and that doesn’t include inflation,” said Linda Gentes, a County Board Supervisor and former faculty member of UW-Richland. “We’ve lost our dean, most professors, our international coordinator, our continuing education program, and certainly most damaging, our recruiter.”

Many testimonies will be delivered to President Rothman about how the community's view of the UW system has been strained by its relationship with UW-Platteville, UW-Richland's parent campus since 2018.

"We never heard a pitch for UW-Richland in my time at Highland High School," said Brody Smith, a UW-Richland freshman. Highland is located only 30 minutes away from Richland Center. "There was a recruiter for UW-Platteville, but they didn't mention UW-Richland. If my peers had known about this small-town campus, I know I wouldn't have been the only Highland student here."

The community has wished to see the campus revived for many years. Students will leave a proposal for President Rothman, suggesting he consider shifting oversight of UW-Richland from UW-Platteville to UW-Madison. Burgeoning enrollment at Wisconsin's flagship campus presents an opportunity to educate rural and international students who can complete their first two years at UW-Richland, and then transfer to a larger campus like UW-Madison.

"This is about providing affordable higher education for working families," said Shaun Murphy-Lopez, who is Vice Chair of the Richland County Board of Supervisors. "Richland Center has had a post-secondary school since 1903. The petition illustrates that the people of our county don't want to go back to the 1800's. They want to move forward."

Copies of the petition, testimonies, and the proposal will be distributed to the entire 17-member Board of Regents, who oversee UW President Rothman. An online version of the petition can be found at <https://chnng.it/6jtQjD5r>.