

UW system: President Jay Rothman announces Wisconsin Tuition Promise with UW-Eau Claire, UW-River Falls, UW-Stout and UW-Superior

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Program starting in fall 2023 will help underserved students obtain a degree tuition free

MADISON, Wis. – University of Wisconsin System President Jay Rothman today announced the creation of the Wisconsin Tuition Promise, a new initiative starting in fall 2023 to ensure underserved Wisconsin students can attend any UW System university without paying tuition or fees.

The goal of the program is to increase the number of state residents who graduate with a bachelor's degree – especially first-generation students and those from low-to moderate-income families throughout Wisconsin – thereby improving individual lives and communities and helping meet the state's workforce needs.

“The benefits of a college education are unassailable,” Rothman said. “A college degree needs to be within reach for every Wisconsin citizen as a path to a better life, and the Wisconsin Tuition Promise will provide these opportunities. It is also how we can close the skills gap that now limits Wisconsin's potential to thrive in a global economy.”

Rothman said an estimated 8,000 students will be supported through the program once it is fully implemented over four years. Eligible students will be awarded an

average of \$4,500 over four years. The UW System intends to fund the first year of the program in academic year 2023-24 at \$13.8 million and seek state investment for subsequent years. President Rothman is announcing the Tuition Promise with chancellors this week across the UW System.

“College is a long-term investment in human capacity – the ability to do work that is financially, socially and emotionally rewarding,” said UW-Eau Claire Chancellor Jim Schmidt. “The Wisconsin Tuition Promise provides students the financial support they need to earn a college degree, which improves their lives and improves the communities in which they live.”

“This is an exciting program for UW-Superior,” said UW-Superior Chancellor Renée Wachter. “Nearly half of UW-Superior students are the first in their families to attend college, and more than a third of our students are eligible for high-need programs like Pell Grants. The Wisconsin Tuition Promise will help these students bridge the financial gap and bring them one step closer to earning their degree.”

“Even with an unmatched 98.4% employment rate for UW-Stout graduates, our industry and business partners tell us they need more skilled graduates who are ready to help them serve our state and compete globally,” said UW-Stout Chancellor Katherine Frank. “The new Tuition Promise will allow us to provide access to more students seeking the distinct, career-focused, applied learning experience that UW-Stout, Wisconsin’s Polytechnic University, offers.”

“Opportunity and affordability go hand in hand,” said UW-River Falls Chancellor Maria Gallo. “We’re investing in every facet of student success, from access to academic excellence to advising, tutoring and mental health support. The Wisconsin Tuition Promise reflects the breadth of our mission and our commitment to students.”

Modeled on Bucky’s Tuition Promise at UW-Madison, the Wisconsin Tuition Promise would provide up to four years of tuition and fee funding for students coming from families earning less than \$62,000 annually and enrolling at any of the other 12 public universities within the UW System. The program would be structured to provide “last dollar” financial support after federal and state grant aid is accounted for; as a result, Tuition Promise awards will vary.

Eligible students will be Wisconsin residents, first-time enrollees or transfers and attending full time. They will need to make sufficient academic progress each year

and attest that they were employed at some point during the previous year.

Rothman said the affordability review he sought shows a UW System education is the most affordable in the Midwest and is very affordable nationally compared to peers. However, fewer low- to moderate-income and first-generation students are attending UW System universities, suggesting that despite a tuition freeze in place since 2013, a state college education is increasingly out of reach for some, he said.

“Education unlocks success in Wisconsin,” Rothman said. “By ensuring that every Wisconsin student is given the full opportunity to get a higher education, we will improve those lives directly while building the economic engine and community prosperity that benefit all Wisconsinites.”

Students will be automatically considered for the Wisconsin Tuition Promise when they apply for federal financial aid. A full publicity campaign led by the universities will begin later this fall. Current information can be found at [wisconsin.edu/tuition-promise](https://www.wisconsin.edu/tuition-promise).