

Tech Council board urges approval of UW engineering building project

Posted on Monday, Jul 17, 2023

The Wisconsin Technology Council's board of directors is calling on state lawmakers to "fully authorize" a UW-Madison College of Engineering construction project.

In a memo delivered last week to all members of the state Legislature, the board members are urging action by this fall on the \$347 million project. They wrote the effort is "vital to the entire state, especially its business and research communities, for many competitive reasons."

Plus, they say up to \$150 million in private funding pledges could be at risk if the project isn't approved.

In early June, university leaders expressed frustration after the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee didn't approve construction of the new engineering building for the second time in the biennial capital budget. UW-Madison Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin called it "a real tragedy" for the state, arguing the university will "continue to fall further behind" competitors in other states.

In last week's memo, the Tech Council board echoed that concern.

"Academic competitors such as Purdue, Ohio State, Michigan and Illinois will continue to build whatever facilities are needed in the 21st century economy to accommodate talent from close to home and beyond," board members wrote. "Companies large and small that are looking to relocate or expand will [be] tempted to scratch Wisconsin off their search lists."

The board argues the new facility would support more undergraduate admissions to the engineering program, reinforce the state's competitiveness in manufacturing through ongoing research, foster more innovations in human health through biomedical engineering, help address environmental challenges and more.

Plus, the memo emphasizes the importance of engineering programs for the state's entrepreneurial ecosystem, noting about 60 technology-based startups have come

out of the College of Engineering in the past 25 years.

“That many and more can be expected to add jobs and value to the economy in the years to come,” the board wrote.

See the memo:

<https://www.wisbusiness.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Wisconsin-Legislature-resolution-on-UW-Madison-College-of-Engineering-7-13-23.pdf>

See the university’s reaction to the JFC budget decision:

<https://news.wisc.edu/legislature-withholds-approval-for-new-uw-madison-engineering-building/>

-By Alex Moe