

# Universities of Wisconsin: Richland campus to close, two others end in-person instruction, under directive from President Rothman

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MADISON, Wis. – Universities of Wisconsin President Jay Rothman announced today his decision to end in-person instruction at two additional branch campuses and to close one branch campus. Rothman also directed chancellors overseeing the remaining two-year campuses to work with local officials to determine the best uses for facilities to meet student and community needs.

The two campuses at which in-person instruction will end are UW-Milwaukee at Washington County and UW Oshkosh, Fond du Lac campus; the goal date is June 2024. UW-Platteville Richland will be closed. The decision follows Rothman's earlier directive to chancellors to explore the long-term viability of the branch campuses.

"It's time for us to realign our branch campuses to current market realities and prepare for the future. The status quo is not sustainable," Rothman said. "This decision is a response to an evolving student marketplace. Offering students an educational experience they deserve while working with local leaders to ensure it meets their expectations is key to our long-term success."

Rothman recently informed chancellors of his decision.

The actions would leave 10 remaining branch campuses located in Barron County, Baraboo, Manitowoc, Marinette, Marshfield, Menasha (Fox Cities), Rock County, Sheboygan, Waukesha, and Wausau.

Rothman charged the chancellors overseeing the 10 campuses to discuss future options with local county governments that own the buildings in which classes are offered.

“We want to work with the counties to determine the best way for our universities to serve their communities,” Rothman said. “This reassessment is designed to ensure facilities are used in ways that meet community needs and provide long-term stability.”

He said those conversations will involve utilizing the existing campuses or other possible locations in a range of ways, including offering four-year and graduate degree options, upskilling and reskilling opportunities for the existing workforce, expanding dual enrollment, or opening ‘navigation centers’ for high school and nontraditional students seeking guidance on their university journey. Rothman said retaining the remaining branch campuses is an option that will be determined by community needs and the ability of the Universities of Wisconsin to meet those needs.

Choices made by the vast majority of traditional and nontraditional students are driving the decision, Rothman said, not cost savings.

“We are seeing freshman enrollment rising at most of our four-year campuses while enrollment at the two-year campuses has been falling at a rapid rate for years,” Rothman said. “Moreover, online enrollment has been trending up as well. The market is telling us that increasingly students are pursuing a degree at our four-year campuses or online.”

Rothman added that the student experience is waning on some branch campuses because of the decline in enrollment. Existing students attending the campuses where in-person learning will be no longer available will be offered enrollment options at other universities.

Rothman told chancellors to embark on the negotiations promptly with the goal of cementing a clear pathway by early spring 2024.