

UW-Madison: Introduces pathway to debt-free education for Pell-eligible state students

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MADISON — The University of Wisconsin–Madison has long been committed to ensuring that an education at the state’s flagship public institution is affordable and accessible for Wisconsin residents. Today, Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin announces a significant strengthening of that commitment with Bucky’s Pell Pathway.

Under this program, UW-Madison pledges to meet the full financial need for four years for new first-year Wisconsin resident students who qualify for Pell Grants, the federal program that plays a critical role in expanding college access for students in low-income households. Transfer students from Wisconsin meeting the same criteria will receive two years of full-need funding.

UW-Madison expects over 800 incoming students will be eligible in the upcoming year.

“If we are going to live our values of creating real access and opportunity, we need to do more for our students from Wisconsin’s lowest-income households — our Pell Grant recipients,” Mnookin says. “Today, we are committing to comprehensive support for these students, who come from all parts of the state. Bucky’s Pell Pathway will, in most instances, allow recipients to complete a four-year degree without taking on debt to cover their educational expenses.”

Bucky’s Pell Pathway will guarantee grants, scholarships and work-study opportunities sufficient to cover a Pell-eligible student’s full financial need (defined as cost of attendance minus any expected family contribution). The guarantee covers not just tuition and fees, but also housing, meals, books and most other

educational expenses.

Bucky's Pell Pathway also will include funds to ensure that eligible students can be more fully involved and engaged in the many life-changing experiences the university offers, such as study abroad opportunities and summer term courses.

"Bucky's Pell Pathway is an important additional step in creating access and affordability at UW-Madison," Mnookin says. "It will help ensure that the amazing resources of our university and the transformative opportunities offered here are available to students across our state, regardless of their means."

Bucky's Pell Pathway expands on the groundbreaking Bucky's Tuition Promise, now in its fifth year. Bucky's Tuition Promise guarantees scholarships and grants to pay for tuition and segregated fees for Wisconsin residents whose household adjusted gross income is roughly at or below the state median income. Nearly 5,000 students have now benefitted from it. Today, UW-Madison is announcing that the eligibility threshold for household income for Bucky's Tuition Promise will be raised from \$60,000 to \$65,000, meaning even more Wisconsin students will qualify.

Bucky's Pell Pathway goes beyond Bucky's Tuition Promise by guaranteeing full-need funding for a student's education at UW-Madison. The university expects that a majority of Bucky's Tuition Promise recipients will also qualify for Bucky's Pell Pathway and receive full-need funding.

Both initiatives are structured as last-dollar awards, meaning UW-Madison first takes into account other funding sources, such as federal and state aid, work-study opportunities, and outside grants and scholarships. After these sources are totaled, the university fills in the funding gap. The additional money contributed by the university comes from private donors and other institutional resources, not taxpayer funds.

"The bottom line is, if you are eligible for one of these programs, we've got you covered," says Derek Kindle, vice provost for enrollment management. "We want to continue to message to our talented and competitive Wisconsin residents that we will help remove any financial barriers to becoming a Badger."

As with Bucky's Tuition Promise and Badger Promise, eligibility for Bucky's Pell Pathway is straightforward. It will be awarded automatically to students based on information they provide through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid

(FAFSA). No separate application is necessary.

Jeff Eide, executive director of the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance, praised Bucky's Pell Pathway, saying it will open opportunities for students across the state.

"It's another great example of how higher education institutions are working to support Wisconsin Pell Grant recipients," Eide says.

To help support the initiative, visit supportuw.org/giveto/greatpeople.