

# WAICU: Thanks the Legislature and Governor for important financial aid reforms

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**MADISON** – The Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU) is deeply grateful for the Wisconsin legislature’s work to improve state student financial aid in Wisconsin. The bipartisan bill known as the Financial Aid Modernization Act passed unanimously in both Senate and Assembly Committees and in both houses of the legislature. The bill was signed into law December 6, 2023, by Governor Tony Evers.

The legislation was championed by Wisconsin State Senator Joan Ballweg and State Representative Dave Murphy, both long-time supporters of higher education policy. The new legislation makes several improvements to Wisconsin’s financial aid programs to support economically disadvantaged students who enroll in college and pursue higher education. These changes will make Wisconsin’s financial aid programs more user-friendly and align with recent changes in federal law.

This legislation is more than three years in the making. WAICU has been working collaboratively with our partners from the Universities of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Technical College System, and the Tribal Colleges to prepare for the implementation of the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) Simplification Act that will take effect for the 2024-2025 academic year.

The federal changes impact the state’s student financial aid program, known as the Wisconsin Grant, and necessitated changes to align Wisconsin statutes with the new federal law.- In addition to alignment with federal law, the legislature modernized student financial aid programs for Wisconsin students.

Patty Taylor, senior director of Financial Aid and Educational Funding of Lakeland University and Susan Teerink, associate vice provost for Financial Aid & Enrollment Services of Marquette University—both with more than 30 years in the financial aid profession—were critical contributors to this process serving on the collaborative work group. In a joint statement, Taylor and Teerink shared, “For students attending private, nonprofit colleges and universities in particular, the legislation eliminates the outdated formula that has been in Wisconsin statutes since the early 1970s. These important changes provide for a more transparent formula, better recognizing the needs of today’s students.”

WAICU is now working with various stakeholder groups to help students and families navigate the changes to the state and federal student aid application process to support their career aspirations. “Many thanks to our legislative champions for their work on this important legislation and to Governor Tony Evers for his support and for signing the legislation into law,” said Dr. Eric Fulcomer, WAICU president and CEO. “This bill will support students in accessing and pursuing a degree, enabling them to contribute to Wisconsin’s future workforce and economic prosperity.”