

# Morgridge Institute: CEO Brad Schwartz announces retirement

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MADISON — Morgridge Institute for Research CEO Brad Schwartz, who is leading efforts to build Wisconsin's Morgridge Institute for Research into a thriving hub for curiosity-driven biomedical research, has announced plans to retire from that role.

The Morgridge Institute is a private, nonprofit institute dedicated to interdisciplinary research and public engagement in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Over more than 13 years as Morgridge CEO, Schwartz has substantially grown the institute's basic research footprint and established high-impact initiatives with campus partners.

"Brad's leadership fostered an environment for curiosity-driven science that allowed us to imagine what's possible in biomedical research, always guided by his commitment to better health for all," says Jacquelyn Fredrick, chair of the Morgridge Board of Trustees. "Through deep partnerships with UW-Madison and the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF), and embraced by our excellent scientists, he championed collaboration and a shared destiny that will endure well beyond his tenure."

Fredrick says that Schwartz will continue as CEO as the board conducts a national search for the next leader. Schwartz also will continue as a professor of Medicine and Biomolecular Chemistry at UW-Madison and continue his clinical work at UW Hospital as a hematologist.

In an era of declining support for basic scientific research nationally, Schwartz implemented a vision for the Morgridge Institute as a beacon for curiosity-driven research, under the umbrella theme of "[Fearless Science](#)." This vision recognizes that while it may require courage to break new ground, curiosity-driven research

delivers the greatest benefits to society.

“Brad’s dedication to science in the public interest, and his service to both UW–Madison and the people of Wisconsin, grow from his steadfast belief in the power of curiosity-driven research, and a sustained commitment to ensuring that the discoveries made here improve lives far beyond the boundaries of our campus,” says UW–Madison Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin.

A major theme of Schwartz’s leadership has been building mutually beneficial collaborations with UW–Madison in emerging areas of research. Some of those efforts include:

### **The Metabolism Initiative**

Beginning in 2014, Morgridge scientists met with biomedical faculty across campus to identify areas ripe for research growth, and metabolism emerged as a clearly important theme. More than 400 UW–Madison scientists have a strong connection to metabolism science, and the effort helped build [community and launch new campuswide efforts](#) to advance aging and diabetes research.

### **Cryo-EM**

[Cryo-electron microscopy](#) — a scientific tool that allows scientists to see the structural basis of biological function with atomic precision — is an expensive but essential technology for modern biology. Recognizing that Wisconsin risked falling behind, Morgridge partnered with the Department of Biochemistry and others to build a center that supports a broad range of research on campus and is now a national hub for training and research development.

### **Research Computing**

Almost all biomedical research relies heavily on high-end computing to manage and utilize massive datasets. Morgridge has made substantial investments in a partnership with the College of Letters and Science to advance the [Center for High Throughput Computing](#), which has helped faculty programs across campus access [high-capacity computing expertise](#).

In growing the institute, Schwartz has been able to [recruit and retain exceptional talent](#) from across the country, primarily by creating an environment built around our society’s expectations for scientific research. A central component of this

environment was providing researchers with the time and resources to pursue important questions and avoid short term metrics. When he began in 2013, the institute had four investigators; today it has 21 highly collaborative scientists whose expertise span numerous fields of biomedical research.

“Our philosophy in hiring investigators was not simply to focus on expertise, but to find outstanding scientists who share our values about the importance of combining curiosity-driven research and service to society,” Schwartz says. “We want scientists who take the social compact with the public seriously, and who recognize that there are no shortcuts on the road to discovery. Our talented team of scientists is without question our biggest success story.”

In addition, Schwartz has been a national voice advocating for productive change in American research. He has had many commentaries in *Scientific American*, *The Hill* and others warning against institutions defining themselves by [how many grant dollars they accumulate](#), or for putting fame and notoriety above the [commitment to getting things right](#).

“Brad articulated this vision of curiosity-driven science and brought in other scientists to reinforce the concept of the unique and vital place basic research plays in society,” say Morgridge Institute founders Tashia and John Morgridge. “Because of his leadership, Morgridge has become a collaborative, cooperative, emboldening, welcoming place to work.”

Schwartz served as a UW–Madison faculty member in the departments of Medicine and Biomolecular Chemistry from 1983 to 1999 and was subsequently recruited to the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Urbana-Champaign, where he served as dean until 2011. He then returned to the faculty of UW–Madison and was chosen to lead the Morgridge Institute in 2013.

In 2024, Schwartz was named a fellow of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) for his distinguished contributions to the field of hematology and for outstanding leadership and administrative service.

WARF, also one of the core founders of the institute, has been a partner in the institute’s success, as both have a “shared destiny” to make Wisconsin one of the world’s great places to advance research.

“Brad is a gentleman, a scholar, and a visionary leader,” says Deborah Keller, chair

of the WARF Board of Trustees. “His 13 years of leadership have been defined by vision, partnership, and a deep belief in the power of research to improve lives.”

Adds Eric Wilcots, Dean of L&S who in May will become interim UW–Madison Chancellor: “Brad has led Morgridge with grace and vision. He has been a wonderful colleague and friend, and I deeply appreciate his partnership to bring an outstanding research team to campus.”