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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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News Release

UW System forms Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin

The Freshwater Collaborative is designed to meet the pressing needs of freshwater access and security

MILWAUKEE, Wis. – University of Wisconsin System institutions told the Board of Regents on Thursday that they are developing the nation’s most significant, integrated, multi-campus higher education program to meet the pressing needs of freshwater access and security.

The Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin would include all 13 UW System institutions, cross multiple disciplines, and solidify Wisconsin’s world leadership in freshwater science, technology, entrepreneurship, and economic growth.

It would also fill the global, regional, and local demand for a water-focused workforce through the explicit structuring of curriculum, training, and workplace experience.

“The Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin will attract local, regional, and global talent to Wisconsin, helping make us the ‘Silicon Valley of Water,’” said Ray Cross, president of the University of Wisconsin System. “It is another example of how invaluable the UW System is, and how our campuses are meeting the needs of Wisconsin and the nation.”

Wisconsin borders the greatest river system in North America – the Mississippi – and the greatest freshwater system on the planet – the Great Lakes. From agriculture to energy production to manufacturing to tourism to transportation, Wisconsin’s economy relies on access to water.

Yet, Wisconsin’s competitive advantage in water science is at risk. Meeting the challenges of water access and security is predicted to be a \$23-trillion endeavor over the next 20 years.

“We are delighted to be part of this statewide collaboration to address the water challenges facing not just Wisconsin but also the world,” said UW-Milwaukee Chancellor Mark Mone. “The involvement of all 13 University of Wisconsin institutions demonstrates the strength of this special collaboration. “

Led by UW-Milwaukee, the Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin will address 10 grand water challenges in Wisconsin and the world. Each challenge will be addressed by a consortium of campuses. The Collaborative is designed to unleash the collective assets of the UW System and place them into an elite, one-of-a-kind program of training and research, while launching a talent development program in which students fully engage in a diverse, multidisciplinary course of study across UW campuses.

The Collaborative will keep Wisconsinites here to study and work while attracting out-of-state students and faculty. It will accelerate Wisconsin’s research capacity, attracting both outside research funding and companies to Wisconsin.

Overall, the Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin would require \$27.6 million in ongoing state support phased in over three biennia. Funding for the collaborative is separate from the UW System's \$107.5 million operating budget request for 2019-21.

By 2025, the Collaborative will include 1,000 new undergraduate students studying water science; 400 new graduate research students; 100 new faculty, researchers, and water professionals; and a total of 650 new jobs.

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The University of Wisconsin System serves more than 170,000 students. Awarding nearly 37,000 degrees annually, the UW System is Wisconsin's talent pipeline, putting graduates in position to increase their earning power, contribute to their communities, and make Wisconsin a better place to live. More than 80 percent of in-state UW System graduates stay in Wisconsin five years after earning a degree. The UW System provides a 23:1 return on state investment. UW System institutions also contribute to the richness of Wisconsin's culture and economy with groundbreaking research, new companies and patents, and boundless creative intellectual energy.

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