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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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News Release

UW System leaders discuss solutions for advancing Wisconsin teachers and education leaders

MADISON, Wis.—The University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents today discussed two potential solutions for meeting Wisconsin's workforce demand for teachers and school leaders: paid stipends and expanding student loan forgiveness.

These two solutions were included in UW System President Tommy Thompson's 2021-23 biennial budget recommendations, which the Board approved last fall.

"Employers across Wisconsin need talent, and our schools are no different – especially in rural areas and in special education, bilingual education, and science, math and technology fields," said Regent President Andrew S. Petersen. "These two steps could make a real difference."

This unmet demand for highly qualified teachers and school leaders has emerged as UW System Schools and Colleges of Education have experienced a significant decrease in student enrollment in teacher education programs over the past decade.

"My budget proposal aims to recruit more teachers and school leaders," Thompson said. "I believe the legislature can use our resources to solve some of the challenges facing this state – and this is definitely one of them."

The first solution the Regents discussed was issuing paid stipends for students who are required to teach as part of their teacher education programs at UW System Schools and Colleges of Education. A \$500 per teacher stipend would serve as a direct incentive while helping offset the cost of tuition; if offered to 2,000 teachers, it would cost \$1 million annually.

The second solution discussed was an expansion of existing student loan forgiveness programs through the Wisconsin Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB). HEAB currently administers two loan programs, the Teacher Loan Program and the Minority Teacher Loan Program, which provide up to \$10,000 in state loan forgiveness annually for a maximum of \$30,000.

The Board discussed altering these programs to include more teaching fields, allow both teachers and school leaders to qualify, target high-need school districts and subject matter fields, and require teachers and school leaders to remain in Wisconsin to qualify for loan forgiveness. It is anticipated the expansion would provide approximately \$500,000 in loan forgiveness annually.

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The University of Wisconsin System serves approximately 165,000 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. Nearly 90

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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