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Colleagues:

As you know, the Assembly Speaker has, very publicly, held up UW legislative priorities and pay plan increases for Universities of Wisconsin employees, over concerns raised by his caucus and constituents across Wisconsin.

Today's agreement reflects what we believe is in the best interest of our public universities and all Wisconsinites to find a path forward on issues the Speaker has raised in a way that enables our universities to better serve students and the public given the situation.

We thank Governor Evers for his support through these challenges, as well as many legislators on both sides of the aisle. I will recommend this agreement to the Board of Regents this Saturday as a resolution for approval.

There are four central items that the Speaker required as conditions for enabling legislation and projects to move forward:

1. Capping overall non-faculty positions at the UWs for three years, with additional exceptions for student-facing and research positions.
2. Capping and restructuring positions dealing with diversity, equity and inclusion.
3. Guaranteeing admissions for the top 5% of high school graduates at UW-Madison and the top 10% at all other UWs.
4. Addressing specific issues connected to diversity and inclusion issues at the UWs.
 - a. UW-Madison will seek philanthropic support to create an endowed chair, through a national search, on conservative political thought or a similar field
 - b. UW-Madison will not renew its Target of Opportunity Program focused on hiring diverse faculty; instead, it will broaden its recruitment and mentorship efforts
 - c. The UWs will eliminate any diversity statements in its admission applications
 - d. The UWs will develop a module on freedom of expression for entering undergraduate students.

As part of the agreement, the legislature would act on the following:

1. Approval of the pay plan no later than December 31, 2023, for all UWs employees (4% in '23 and 2% in '24)
2. Approval of our \$32 million workforce proposal to add capacity and develop talent in four key, high-demand fields of engineering, nursing/health care, business/finance, and computer/data science.
3. Approve the new engineering hall at UW-Madison.
4. Provide up to \$45.4 million in funding to demolish 20 uninhabitable facilities at the UWs.
5. Approve utility projects for the UWs as set forth in the original budget request.
6. Approve the renovation of Winther/Heide Hall at UW-Whitewater.
7. Approve the renovation of the Kronshage-Jorns-Humphrey Residence Halls at UW-Madison.
8. Approve Assembly Bill 140 by February 2024 that will provide funds through the Minnesota-Wisconsin reciprocity agreement directly to those universities participating.

This agreement is the result of an arduous process. While it funds priorities of the Universities of Wisconsin, we have also made compromises with the legislature. Our commitments in this agreement are conditioned upon legislative action.

We agreed to, primarily, an overall freeze on administrative positions. We are already well underway as we are actively addressing structural deficits throughout the UWs and preserving faculty positions as we make these reductions. Guaranteeing admission to Wisconsin top high school students at our universities is not something we object to, if done correctly.

We have also agreed to restructuring approximately 43 DEI positions while also not increasing the aggregate number of this family of jobs for three years across all of our universities.

As we made clear publicly throughout these discussions, our commitment to DEI remains. Diversity and inclusion are core values, but we are open to changing how some of these positions can more directly benefit student retention and graduation. As part of the agreement, we would be realigning 1/3 of the current staff (approximately 43 positions) in DEI service roles to new roles focused more broadly on student success.

With this agreement, we freed up over \$800 million in projects, initiatives, and inflationary pay adjustments for our employees. This funding is essential if we are going to help build a vibrant future for all Wisconsinites.

The UWs are here for every Wisconsinite. Our mission is developing the talent we all need to prosper economically, as well as to provide students with the education they deserve, and their parents expect. Being a partner with the legislature helps us achieve that mission. We cannot do it alone.

Our universities rank 42nd out of 50 states nationally in public funding; we will continue to advocate that our state must do better. We made compromises on management issues because we can better serve the interests of our state with the projects and initiatives that will be funded under this agreement.

On balance, we believe this agreement, which will come before the Board of Regents for its approval Saturday, provides a path forward for our universities and the state of Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay", written in a cursive style.

Jay Rothman
President, Universities of Wisconsin