

**UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM
STRATEGIES FOR COST CONTAINMENT AND
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Within the last three years, there have been two national calls made to higher education systems and institutions. The first was a call to increase the country's educational attainment by returning the United States to its previously held position as the world leader in the percentage of adults with a college degree by the year 2020. The University of Wisconsin System stepped up to this challenge in creating the *Growth Agenda for Wisconsin*, and one of its stated goals is to increase the number of degrees conferred each year by nearly one-third, resulting in a cumulative gain of 80,000 more graduates by 2025. Attaining this goal means increasing access to—and success in—higher education for people who have not traditionally entered and completed post-secondary education.

The second call is one to control the rising cost of a college education. This call was made clear in President Obama's recent State of the Union Address, but has been growing louder for several years, exacerbated by the country's economic recession, dramatic increases in the numbers of students attending college, and the concomitant accumulation of debt by those students. Collectively, these two national calls ask higher education in the United States to conduct some changes in the way it does business, toward the goals of improved educational access, attainment, and affordability for students.

The UW System has always strived to control the costs of attending UW institutions, and the stewardship of resources inherent in the second call is a stated part of the mission statement for the University of Wisconsin System Administration:

With the Board of Regents, the UW System Administration leads and serves the UW System institutions, as a champion of higher education and a responsible steward of resources.

The mission statement goes on to say that, in fulfillment of the mission and under the direction of the UW System President, UW System Administration *aligns university programs with the current and future needs of the state and the nation, acquires and manages the human, physical, and financial resources needed to advance public higher education in Wisconsin, and ensures the effective and efficient use of resources.* (The full statement may be found at: <http://www.wisconsin.edu/about/mission.htm>.)

At the February 2012 meeting, the Board of Regents will discuss ways the System and its institutions are working to meet the goals of increasing educational attainment, while at the same time controlling the total cost of education. A presentation will include a retrospective on funding in the UW System over the last 30 years, and the return on that investment in terms of

educational attainment, as well as institutional examples of strategies being taken to contain costs.

REQUESTED ACTION

For information only; no action is required.

RELATED REGENT POLICIES

Some of the Regent Policy Documents (RPDs) most relevant to educational attainment include those on “Admissions Policies” (Section 7 of the RPDs), and “Equal Opportunity Policies” (Section 17 of the RPDs); some of those most relevant to cost containment include those on “Fiscal Policies and Procedures” (Section 21 of the RPDs), and “Tuition/Fees” (Section 32 of the RPDs).