



*Representing UW-Madison Faculty.
Strengthening Wisconsin.*

PROFS Statement on the Recommendations of the Legislative Council Study Committee on the Future of the University of Wisconsin System

The [Legislative Council Study Committee on the Future of the University of Wisconsin System](#), led by Representative Amanda Nedweski (R-Pleasant Prairie), has been working since July to consider how and whether to rethink how four-year public higher education works in the state of Wisconsin. PROFS was disappointed that its recommendations for membership on the committee were not accepted, but was pleased that two members – UW-Madison Professors Ananth Seshadri (Economics) and Cecilia Klingele (Law) – were appointed.

The committee [met](#) last month to vote on [19 recommendations](#) that had been suggested over the course of their meetings. Now that the committee has released the [results](#) of its deliberations, the real work begins. PROFS is particularly pleased that the study group rejected several proposals that would micro-manage the UW Board of Regents – the appointment of legislators to the Board, the creation of even more labor-intensive required reports, legislative reach-in on the review of the universities' programs, and limitations of UW position authority.

But we are deeply disappointed that the committee failed to recommend the [restoration of statutory language on shared governance](#). We thank Rep. Alex Joers (D-Waunakee) and Senator Chris Larson (D-Milwaukee), the committee members who worked with PROFS on the shared governance proposal and brought it up in committee. We also thank the other committee members who voted for it.

Among the recommendations adopted by the study committee, the most significant is the provision for a separate governing board for UW-Madison, along with separate state appropriations for the Madison campus and the rest of the UW colleges and universities.

PROFS intends to study the implications of these recommendations over the next several months, with the intention of sponsoring at least one forum to explore the possible effects of such a change, and to engage with faculty members to understand their thoughts and concerns about UW-Madison's independence from the System of which it has been a part for over fifty years.

We would be particularly concerned if such a separation made UW-Madison an 'easier target' for legislators' ideological animus toward the flagship campus, or was used as a pretext to diminish funding for Madison separate from the other System universities. We are similarly concerned that a 'reform' of how UW-Madison board members were selected amounted to an even greater politicization of that body by political leaders in the state.

On a positive note, PROFS is enthusiastic about the committee's recommendations to grant bonding authority to UW-Madison, which would enable it to initiate and complete construction projects in a much more efficient way that is currently allowed; give greater flexibility to programs to charge differential tuition; and to create a coordinating board that would more clearly articulate the missions and transfer agreements between and among the two- and four-year public colleges and universities in the state.

We encourage faculty members to [be in touch](#) with PROFS, which is your voice in the Legislature, with your thoughts about the study committee's recommendations, so that we can work closely with its members to ensure that any changes to the Universities of Wisconsin allow UW-Madison to remain among the best universities in the world and a principal asset to the people of Wisconsin.

November 4, 2024