
PROFS Committee Annual Report for 2023-2024

I Charge

PROFS, the Public Representation Organization of the Faculty Senate, is a non-profit organization formed by the Faculty Senate in 1976. The function of PROFS is to represent the UW-Madison faculty's interests – with particular emphasis on compensation and benefits, the university budget, and legislation affecting the university and important regulatory issues – before the state legislature, the governor, Regents, and other state and federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

II Participation

PROFS is a voluntary contribution-funded organization, wholly supported through payroll deductions by faculty. Contributions are one-tenth of one percent of one's salary deducted each pay period.

III Organization

Leadership

The elected members of the University Committee serve as the PROFS Board of Directors. The 2022-23 Board of Directors were:

- Susan Thibeault*, Chair (Surgery)
- Fernando Tejedo-Herrero* (Spanish & Portuguese)
- Barb King (Nursing), fall semester
- Li Chiao-Ping (Dance), spring semester
- Ellen Zweibel (Physics)
- Michael Bernard-Donals* (English and Jewish Studies)
- Annie Jones (Extension)

Much of the work of PROFS is done by the President, Michael Bernard-Donals, and members of the Steering Committee:

- Peter Adamczyk (Mechanical Engineering)
- Jerry Braatz (Extension)
- Tonya Brito (Law)
- Erika Bullock (Curriculum & Instruction)
- Bradley Christian (Medical Physics)
- J. Michael Collins (School of Human Ecology)
- Julie Dawson (Horticulture)
- Dorothy Farrar Edwards (Kinesiology)
- Taylor Odle (Educational Policy Studies)
- Christa Olson (English)
- Lauren Papp (Human Ecology)
- Eric Sandgren (Pathobiological Sciences)
- Steph Tai (Law)
- Terry Warfield (Accounting & Information Systems)
- Claire Wendland (Anthropology)
- Amy Wendt (Electrical & Computer Engineering)

- Kirsten Wolf (German, Nordic & Slavic)
- University Committee members noted with an asterisk (*) above

PROFS Bylaws

The PROFS bylaws, last updated in 2021 specify that the University Committee serves as the Board of Directors. The bylaws also stipulate that the Steering Committee membership includes at least three current University Committee members, at least three prior University Committee members, at least one Faculty Senator, one member of the Budget Committee, and one or more at-large faculty members. Members who do not serve on the University Committee serve three-year renewable terms. Current University Committee members may serve renewable one-year terms while on the committee.

Legislative Representative

Jack O'Meara continues to serve as PROFS Legislative Representative. He meets regularly with the Board of Directors and Steering Committee to update them on legislative proposals affecting the faculty, establish PROFS' positions on legislation, and determine action. Mr. O'Meara also meets with individual legislators and other officials throughout the year to discuss PROFS issues and urge support of the faculty's position. PROFS arranges for members of the Steering Committee and other faculty members to meet with legislators, state officials, Regents, and members of the media, and to testify at legislative hearings.

Administration

Michelle Felber is the administrator and website/social media editor. She communicates regularly with faculty via email and through posts to the PROFS website, Facebook page, and Twitter/X feed; manages PROFS' banking and investment accounts and handles accounts payable; and oversees PROFS membership recruitment. PROFS's bylaws require a financial review every three years, most recently completed by SVA in 2024.

Lobbying

PROFS is required to register with and report to the State of Wisconsin Ethics Commission, filing a lobbying report twice a year. PROFS also reports its interest in bills, topics, and budget items, and its position if taking one. Reports can be found on the Ethics Commission website, ethics.wi.gov.

IV Communication

PROFS communicates regularly with all faculty through email updates and posts to the PROFS website (profs.wisc.edu), Facebook (facebook.com/PROFSUWMadison), Twitter/X ([@PROFSUWMadison](https://twitter.com/PROFSUWMadison)), Threads ([profsuwmadison](https://www.threads.net/@profsuwmadison)) and Bluesky ([@profsuwmadison.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/profsuwmadison.bsky.social)).

V Membership

PROFS reaches out to new faculty members every fall and continues outreach efforts to veteran faculty members. Membership and contributions from members remain steady despite faculty retirements. In cultivating membership, PROFS emphasizes its past achievements including:

- Helping to secure paid parental leave for UW-Madison faculty and staff
- Pay increases in the most recent budget cycles
- Approval of the much-needed Chemistry Building project

- Leading the effort to ensure retirement contributions are taken pre-tax, saving each faculty member almost \$2,000
- Securing the implementation of first-day health insurance coverage

PROFS also emphasizes goals for the future:

- Expanding paid leave to include family leave for faculty and staff
- Acquiring greater management flexibility for UW-Madison, including bonding for building projects
- Improving state funding for the UW budget, including competitive compensation for faculty
- Ensuring the principles of shared governance are observed with regard to executive searches and curricular, budget, and research issues, and ultimately restoring shared governance language to Wisconsin State Statutes
- Increasing funding for research and graduate education and maintaining the university's top ten ranking in federal research expenditures

Faculty may join PROFS by completing membership brochure available on the PROFS website, profs.wisc.edu.

VI 2023-24 Lobbying and Legislation

PROFS was very active during the 2023-24 Legislative Session, meeting with key legislative and university leaders, including meetings with the State Representatives Alex Joers, Deb Andraca, and Dave Murphy, chair of the Assembly Colleges and Universities Committee; State Senator Kelda Helen Roys; UW System President Jay Rothman; Regent Angela Adams; members of Governor Evers' staff; and Congressman Mark Pocan. In addition to formal meetings, PROFS participates in informal discussions at the Capitol and communicates with stakeholders via email, telephone, and text.

2023-25 State Budget/Pay Plan

While the state budget wrapped up when Governor Tony Evers issued 51 budget vetoes on July 5, it was months before UW System employees received the first of two pay raises passed in the budget. The university pay raises were withheld by Republican legislative leaders who were angry that Gov. Evers vetoed a provision that would have cut DEI positions throughout the UW System. PROFS sent a letter urging the Joint Committee on Employment Relations to schedule a meeting and approve the raises in July and continued to lobby the throughout the late summer and early fall until the committee met in October. PROFS provided written testimony in favor of the UW raises at the meeting. The committee failed to take up the UW pay raises at that meeting, leading Gov. Evers to file a lawsuit against the Republican leaders for unlawfully obstructing basic government functions.

Ultimately, UW System and Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Burlington) agreed to a deal in December that released funding for the badly-needed Engineering Building project; implemented the already-approved pay plan, including retroactive pay to July 1, 2023; and approved a Wisconsin-Minnesota tuition reciprocity change. UW System agreed to curtail its DEI programs through position caps and reassignments; freeze new administrative positions, eliminate the current UW-Madison Targets of Opportunity faculty recruitment program; and create an endowed professorship of conservative thought at UW-Madison. PROFS President Michael Bernard-Donals

spoke was interviewed by several members of the media and appeared on WISC-TV's public affairs program, For the Record, to discuss the compromise.

Legislation

PROFS actively followed and lobbied on the following bills:

Signed into law:

- AB 921/SB 895, legislation that would provide funding for several UW capital projects, including the UW-Madison Engineering Building and lakeshore dormitories, *registered in favor*. PROFS Board Chair Susan Thibeault and lobbyist Jack O'Meara attended the bill signing with Governor Evers for this bill and AB 920/SB 896 below.
- AB 920/SB 896, legislation altering the Wisconsin-Minnesota reciprocity funding agreement, *registered in favor*
- AB 916/SB 894, legislation that provides \$7.5 million in funding for BioForward, Inc., *registered in favor*
- AB 140/SB 161, legislation that would shift responsibility for negotiating the Wisconsin-Minnesota reciprocity agreement from the Higher Education Aids Board to UW System and require proportional distribution of funds to individual universities, *registered in favor*

Vetoed by Governor Evers:

- AB 1065/SB 988, legislation that would prohibit loyalty pledges, *registered against*
- AB 610/SB 920, legislation relating to vaccine requirements, *registered against*

Bills that remained in committee:

- AB 553/SB 575, legislation that would levy fines if UW or Wisconsin Tech Colleges are found to have violated a person's free speech, *registered against*. This legislation has passed the Assembly but was not taken up by the Senate.
- AB 947/SB857 and AB 949/SB 858, legislation that would restore shared governance and tenure to state statutes.
- LRB-2739/1, legislation that would would ban firearms on UW and tech college campuses, eliminate the concealed carry exemption, and stiffen "trespassing" penalties. *This legislation was drafted but never introduced*. PROFS worked with Rep. Deb Andraca (D-Whitefish Bay) to create this legislation.
- SB 983, Legislation that would allow UW institutions to begin class on September 1, rather than after September 1.

VII Federal Relations Program

PROFS continued to monitor federal issues and stayed in contact with the Wisconsin delegation offices regarding issues important to the faculty.

VIII Campus Outreach and Events

What is the Future of Flagship Universities

PROFS sponsored a campus forum on the future of flagship universities in April. The forum focused on national trends and how UW-Madison compares to its flagship peers. The panel included Education Professor Taylor Odle, also a PROFS Steering Committee member, University of Minnesota Education Professor David Weerts, an alum of the School of Education, and journalist

Elaine Povice, the education reporter for Stateline news service. The forum attracted a broad audience, including State Representative Amanda Nedweski (R-Pleasant Prairie) and members of her staff. Nedweski was later named co-chair of the Legislative Council Study Committee on the Future of UW System.