



**Office of the President**

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April 9, 2025

The Honorable Ron Johnson  
U.S. Senate  
328 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
U.S. Senate  
141 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bryan Steil  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1526 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Scott Fitzgerald  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2444 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mark Pocan  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1026 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Glenn Grothman  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1211 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Derrick Van Orden  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1513 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Tiffany  
U.S. House of Representatives  
451 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gwen Moore  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2252 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tony Wied  
U.S. House of Representatives  
424 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of the Wisconsin Congressional Delegation:

As Congress continues to work to advance the budget reconciliation process, I write today to share my concerns on any legislative effort that would negatively impact student access. While I appreciate the efforts to address the nation's debt and deficit, I cannot support efforts that look to do so to the detriment of the students we are privileged to serve.

As a premier system of public higher education, the Universities of Wisconsin serve more than 164,000 students each year. Awarding nearly 37,000 degrees annually, the universities are Wisconsin's talent pipeline, putting graduates in a position to increase their earning power, contribute to their communities, and make Wisconsin a better place to live. Nearly 90% of resident graduates are still in Wisconsin five years after earning a degree. Our universities also contribute to the richness of Wisconsin's culture and economy with cutting-edge research, support of new companies and patents, and boundless creative intellectual energy. Through a constellation of 13

universities statewide, the Universities of Wisconsin are a tremendous academic, cultural, and economic resource for Wisconsin, the nation, and the world.

Importantly, our data shows that the UWs remain among the most affordable institutions of higher education in the upper Midwest. Average student loan debt of bachelor’s degree recipients at our universities has declined over the last 10 years on both an actual and inflation-adjusted basis, and there is a smaller percentage of students carrying debt: 57% in 2023-24 compared to 68% just five years earlier. Moreover, the average time to degree has declined and now averages 8.4 semesters systemwide. Taken together, these metrics underscore that the Universities of Wisconsin are not only careful stewards of taxpayer resources but demonstrate the accountability that Congress has demanded from institutions of higher education.

However, the importance of financial aid to making this possible cannot be understated. In 2023-24, the most recent year for which data is available, almost three-fifths (59 percent) of Universities of Wisconsin undergraduates, or 91,000 students, received some form of financial aid. During this time frame, undergraduate and graduate students received nearly \$1.5 billion in financial aid, including \$634 million in grants, \$666 million in loans, and \$13 million in work-study funding.

Notably, the Pell Grant program provided \$130 million to 26,000 Wisconsin resident undergraduates (23 percent of resident undergraduates), with an average grant of \$5,000. These students come from each of Wisconsin’s 72 counties. In fact, if you look across the state, you see the importance of this program to students throughout our universities when you examine the number of resident undergraduates who received the Pell Grant in the 2023-24 aid year.

**Universities of Wisconsin  
2023-24 WI Resident Pell Grant Recipients**

<b>UW</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>%</b>
UW-Eau Claire	1,515	23.2%
UW-Green Bay	2,213	20.7%
UW-La Crosse	1,253	15.7%
UW-Madison	4,202	20.4%
UW-Milwaukee	5,952	32.1%
UW-Oshkosh	2,034	15.1%
UW-Parkside	1,095	32.8%
UW-Platteville	1,079	20.9%
UW-River Falls	581	20.2%
UW-Stevens Point	2,133	29.1%
UW-Stout	1,190	28.2%
UW-Superior	483	33.4%
UW-Whitewater	2,330	25.4%
<b>UW Total</b>	<b>26,060</b>	<b>23.4%</b>

Source: Office of Policy Analysis and Research


Ensuring that students from all economic backgrounds can attend our universities remains central to our mission and our support for the programs that allow this to be possible will not waiver.

To win the war for talent, we need thriving public universities that deliver the education that parents expect, and students deserve. To do so, we must continue to invest in our universities. Programs like the Pell Grant and other federal financial aid are critical to ensuring continued access and success for students who choose to pursue higher education. Indiscriminate cuts whether to research, financial aid, or programs that provide student support are ultimately shortsighted and will negatively impact the next generation of Wisconsin's workforce.

We appreciate your past support for these programs, especially given the fiscal restraints facing Congress. As you continue to consider budget options and proposals, I simply ask that you keep our students who help enrich communities across Wisconsin and contribute to the economic vibrancy of our state front of mind.

Thank you for your continued service to Wisconsin and your attention to this issue. If you or your team have any questions, concerns, or would like to discuss this issue further, please do not hesitate to be in touch.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Rothman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "J" and "R".

Jay Rothman  
President, Universities of Wisconsin