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UW System to Focus on Financial Aid, Regulatory Relief, and Research Funding in Upcoming Federal Congressional Session

At the Board of Regents meeting today, the UW System outlined several areas it will focus on in the upcoming congressional legislative session. The System's key priorities for 2017 include federal financial aid for students, relief from burdensome regulations, and sustained funding for research and development.

"Federal support helps all campuses attract and retain promising students, faculty and staff, and helps them contribute to Wisconsin's economy," said UW System President Ray Cross. "The federal funds that support research on UW campuses drive innovation and growth in Wisconsin businesses."

Financial Aid

Two-thirds of all students enrolled in the UW System receive some form of financial aid. In 2015-16, federal sources provided 72% of that financial aid.

- The Pell Grant program provided a total of \$141 million to almost 37,000 Wisconsin resident undergraduates with an average grant of \$3,817. **The UW System recommends strengthening and sustaining funding for the Pell Grant program.** This includes moving the federal grant appropriation from a discretionary year-to-year stream of funding to mandatory funding to provide certainty about grant availability.
- The Federal Perkins Loan program provides low-interest loans to students based on financial need. In 2015-16, 13,672 UW System students received \$25.4 million in Perkins loans. The program is set to expire on September 30, 2017, with the understanding that forthcoming legislation would consolidate federal grant and loan programs. If the consolidation does not occur by September 30, **the UW System urges Congress to extend the Federal Perkins loan program** until a Higher Education Act reauthorization bill is passed and signed by the president.

Regulatory Reform

While oversight of taxpayer funding must continue, burdensome or excessive over-regulation imposes significant compliance costs on colleges and universities nationwide.

"Leaders in Washington and Madison are working to reduce regulatory burdens on all levels of public education, and it is important that the UW System maintain flexibility to set curriculum, manage our employees, and allocate our resources. This allows us to more nimbly and efficiently respond to the challenges facing our state," said Cross.

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- All UW institutions are subject to statutory, regulatory, and sub-regulatory requirements. Often with good intentions, federal oversight of higher education has evolved and expanded considerably over time. **The UW System strongly urges streamlining and consolidating federal reporting and regulatory requirements.**

For example, the UW System recommends:

- Providing alternative pathways to accreditation for innovative, nontraditional programs at established institutions. At a minimum, regional accreditors should work with such programs to map customized routes to accreditation that better match the programs.
- Reviewing and modifying grant and contracts reporting regulations to eliminate duplication. This includes strengthening the coordination and alignment of federal requirements across federal agencies, and developing risk-based regulations and remove unnecessary rules.

Research and Development

Federal research and development funding helps drive academic quality and economic advantage for Wisconsin.

- In 2016, Reuters ranked the UW System as #13 among its top 100 most innovative universities in the world. Federal research funding supports undergraduate research experiences that enhance the student learning experience, as well as their skill sets for entering the future workforce, benefiting both employers and employees.
- Many university-based research discoveries have commercial application. The UW System encourages disclosure of inventions and other intellectual property and then licensing and/or patenting promising inventions. In 2015, UW System institutions generated 528 disclosures, 88 new licenses for technologies and 174 U.S. patents.
- Federal funding at the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and U.S. Department of Energy are vital to the UW System's research and development efforts. **The UW System recommends their continued financial support.**

The Board of Regents discussed the *Federal Priorities for 2017* draft report at today's meeting. You can find the [draft report online](#) as part of the Board of Regents meeting materials. Following today's Regents' discussion, the report will be finalized and published.

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