UW System Receives $4 Million in Broadband Funding

Money will help support campus internet-based learning efforts

The UW System will receive $4 million to support health care education delivery through broadband and telecommunications services on all 26 campuses. The UW System applied for the funding, which will be distributed over three years from the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC). UW campuses will use the funding to support the telecommunications systems that deliver web-based and virtual classes, particularly in rural areas.

“We continue to focus on how we can best support our students, including delivering classes in a way that fits into their lifestyle,” said UW System President Ray Cross. “This type of funding provides important support for our online degree programs, where students can take videoconference or web-based classes to earn a degree or certificate at their own pace. Students can access this technology to pursue their college dreams from wherever is most convenient.”

The UW System worked with the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative Information Technology Network (RWHC ITN), which is a consortium of rural not-for-profit healthcare providers, to apply for the funding.

“UW’s educational offerings play a critical role in supplying the healthcare workforce we need now and in the future,” said Tim Size, RWHC’s Executive Director. Louis Wenzlow, who heads the RWHC ITN consortium, added, “The rural hospitals in our network have close relationships with their local colleges, and we’re thrilled to have the UW System participating in the consortium.”

USAC will provide the funding to the UW System through its Healthcare Connect Fund. USAC provides funding to fill the gaps in broadband (internet) services that people across the country need to work, learn, heal, and communicate. USAC is an independent not-for-profit organization designated by the Federal Communications Commission to administer the Universal Service Fund to companies and institutions that make universal service possible.

“Thanks go to Mike Schlicht, UW System’s Director of Strategic Network Initiatives, and Pat Christian, UW-Madison’s Division of Information Technology (DoIT) Wide Area Network Manager, for leading the efforts to secure the funding,” said Cross. “This program will help us provide optimal levels of bandwidth and telecommunications services to our campuses around the state as we continue to focus on delivering education to Wisconsin residents when and where they need it.”

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