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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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News Release

UW System initiates incentives for student nurses to assist in health care crisis

MADISON, Wis.—University of Wisconsin System nursing students will have a new opportunity to fight the COVID-19 pandemic while earning valuable experience and a tuition credit, System President Tommy Thompson announced today.

Through the winter break, the System's approximately 4,000 nursing students will be able to earn experience and a \$500 tuition credit for agreeing to work in hospitals and other health care settings and to help administer vaccines, including anticipated vaccines that combat COVID-19.

Many nursing students are already working in health care. But the tuition credit will offer a new incentive at a time when health care workers are in high demand and as vaccine production is anticipated to accelerate, Thompson said.

"The UW System continues to look for ways to help the state during the pandemic, and this proposal is another example of the Wisconsin Idea in action," Thompson said. "We have worked closely with Wisconsin's health care providers and nursing homes to identify this need and are glad we can help."

In addition, Thompson said he is working closely with Gov. Tony Evers and Department of Health Services Secretary Andrea Palm, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, and incoming Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu.

UW System has taken a lead role in expanding COVID-19 testing in the state. Earlier this month the System's 13 universities opened new "surge testing" sites in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which has provided 250,000 Abbott BinaxNOW rapid-results antigen tests. It is the first time a federal surge testing operation is using Abbott BinaxNOW rapid point-of-care tests that provide a result within 15 minutes. Federal surge testing provides additional temporary federal support to areas that have seen a recent spike in coronavirus cases.

The testing sites are free and open to the general public, and so far more than 55,000 tests have been administered across Wisconsin. An additional 10,000 confirmatory PCR tests have been provided by the state Department of Health Services. Community members can register at www.doineedacovid19test.com.

Under its testing program for students launched at the start of the semester, UW System universities have conducted more than 250,000 tests.

"We continue to prioritize the safety of our campuses and our communities, and we'll do everything we can to help Wisconsin aggressively fight this virus," said Board of Regents President Andrew S. Petersen. "We are incredibly grateful for our state and federal partners in combating this serious public health pandemic."

Additional details on the nursing incentive program will be available in the future.

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The University of Wisconsin System serves approximately 165,000 students. Awarding nearly 37,000 degrees annually, the UW System is Wisconsin's talent pipeline, putting graduates in position to increase their earning power, contribute to their communities, and make Wisconsin a better place to live. Nearly 90 percent of in-state UW System graduates stay in Wisconsin five years after earning a degree. The UW System provides a 23:1 return on state investment. UW System institutions also contribute to the richness of Wisconsin's culture and economy with groundbreaking research, new companies and patents, and boundless creative intellectual energy.

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