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February 3, 2003

Ms. Kathleen Smith
Professional Staff Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2181 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ms. Smith:

On behalf of the University of Wisconsin System, we greatly appreciate the opportunity to submit proposals for your consideration as you reauthorize the Higher Education Act. We applaud your efforts to seek broad public input on a variety of important student and postsecondary education issues.

Let me begin by providing you with some background about the University of Wisconsin System (UWS). With 26 campuses and 160,000 students each semester, we are the eighth largest public university system in the nation. Almost 40,000 of our students (approximately 25 percent) are 25 years of age and older. Annually, we enroll nearly one-third of all Wisconsin high school graduates and confer approximately 30,000 degrees.

More than 80,000 UWS students receive some form of financial aid, and more than 80 percent of the financial aid that is provided comes from federal sources. The Pell Grant program, for example, provides a total of \$59 million to nearly 30,000 UWS students annually. The average grant is \$2,200. Encouragingly, the UWS student loan default rate is 2.7 percent, well below the national average of 5.9 percent.

In response to your call to action, the University of Wisconsin System created a 20-member task force, including representatives from the 26 UWS campuses (13 four-year and 13 two-year) and UW-Extension. In addition, we held meetings with James Bergeron, Legislative Director to Subcommittee Chairman Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, and Wisconsin Congressmen Thomas Petri and Ron Kind, members of the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

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We have divided our perspectives and recommendations into six sections (we expand on each section in the attached appendices):

- **Access to Postsecondary Education:** While independent in practically every respect, the 13 two-year colleges of the University of Wisconsin System are headed by a single chancellor and administered by a centralized financial aid operation. As a result, for purposes of the Student Support Services program (but not for other TRIO programs), the Department of Education has ruled that the UW Colleges do not meet the standards set under 34 CFR 646.7 for having “independent” campuses. Because of this interpretation, the entire two-year UW college system is eligible for no more than one grant, which currently provides only \$502,000 for 480 students. This number represents only about 27 percent of those students who are eligible for funding under the program.

Most importantly, TRIO is essential in helping minority, under-served and first-generation students prepare for college. TRIO is crucial to our nation’s future.

Recommendations:

- Increase funding for TRIO programs;
 - Amend section 402A of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to define the terms “Different Campus” and “Different Population.”
- **Student Aid:** Student financial aid programs are effective at increasing access to postsecondary education, particularly for low-income students. Despite substantial gains in overall participation in postsecondary education, individuals from low-income families remain less likely to participate in postsecondary education than other individuals. Further, we are aware of concerns that raising loan limits may be used by some policymakers to reduce federal grant program support. Nevertheless, without an increase in the federal limits, borrowers increasingly seek private loans.

Recommendations:

- It is essential that Congress reduce the financial barriers to higher education for low-income students by providing adequate funding for the Pell Grant program and campus-based programs;
- Congress should raise the Stafford loan limits.

- **Simplification of Financial Aid:** The University of Wisconsin System supports simplifying and streamlining the financial aid process to assist students and parents who find the process difficult and cumbersome. Areas for possible consideration of streamlining include: single disbursements, 30-day rule and pro-rating of loans, and non-germane student eligibility questions on FAFSA.

Recommendation:

- We encourage Congress to make the rules more uniform across programs and to streamline the more complicated rules.
- **Teacher Quality:** Title II, Teacher Quality initiatives, has furthered the effectiveness of initial teacher preparation and improved professional development for PK-12 practitioners. According to the Education Commission of the States report of the goals of the “No Child Left Behind” law, Wisconsin is the only state so far to meet the federal definition of having a “highly qualified teacher in every classroom.” The high level of success experienced in Wisconsin is a direct result of the strong partnerships between our universities and colleges (public, private, and technical) and PK-12 schools. Outcomes that have emerged from these partnerships include mentoring programs for new teachers, innovative professional development opportunities for experienced teachers, and a renewed commitment for accountability in teaching and learning.

Recommendations:

- Continued funding for partnership grants is critical;
- Propose a change in the language to require, rather than recommend, broad-based partnerships among institutions of higher education, state education agencies, local education agencies, community colleges, and other community entities in order to effectively increase teacher quality.
- **Distance Education:** The reauthorization of the Higher Education Act offers Congress an opportunity to create funding incentives to encourage broader use of distance learning to promote expanded access for non-traditional adult learners, enhanced quality through collaborative, online degree programs supported by revised public policy, and provide accountability via adoption of technical standards and reusable learning content.

We would add that since consideration of legislation on distance learning in the 107th Congress, the Council on Higher Education Accreditation and the American Council on Education have taken steps to encourage reforms in the process. We encourage the Congress to carefully review these recommendations before making legislative changes in accreditation of distance education courses and

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programs. While recognizing the emerging importance of distance education as part of the higher education curricula, we prefer accreditation occur through the traditional processes, if possible.

Recommendations:

- Extend and expand the Distance Education Demonstration Project authorized in Sec. 486 to ensure access for learners at a distance;
 - Establish a demonstration project aimed at overcoming state and local policy barriers to providing education to distance learners;
 - Direct the Department of Education to partner with the Department of Defense and the Academic Advanced Distributed Learning Co-Laboratory to promote and evaluate standards, such as Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM), for e-learning applications in higher education and to support research and assessment of sharing of content developed according to SCORM standards.
- **Standards and Accountability:** The University of Wisconsin System was one of the first public higher education systems in the country to adopt accountability reporting. We are proud of our accountability record, and we give careful consideration to the choice of benchmarks that are utilized to assess performance, including measures to: ensure access to UWS institutions; increase levels at which students continue in higher education and complete their degrees; improve learning competencies; promote learning environments that foster students' ability to function in a dynamic world community; enhance learning environments outside the classroom; and demonstrate our efficient and effective stewardship of resources.

Recommendation:

- Congress should take into account existing models of accountability reporting and draw upon these experiences. Additional funding for performance improvement could be tied to institutional accountability using a continuous improvement model.

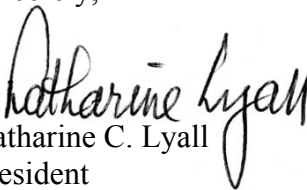
Toward that end, we would like to propose that the Committee on Education and the Workforce hold a field hearing in Wisconsin focused on the issue of accountability. Since the first systemwide accountability report more than a decade ago, the UWS accountability measures have become more comprehensive, combining traditional accountability measures (i.e., retention and graduation rates, credits-to-degree, faculty workload, extramural research expenditures and administrative costs) with new measures that focus on the ways in which campus environments can foster learning and boost student achievement. Our commitment to self-assessment and

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self-improvement has enabled us to address accountability issues of both local and national interest. We are confident that the University of Wisconsin System can serve as a national model for achieving educational goals while remaining responsive and accountable to a variety of stakeholders of this university system.

Once again, thank you for this opportunity to comment. We look forward to working with you as the Higher Education Act is reauthorized.

Sincerely,


Katharine C. Lyall
President

Attachment

cc: Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System
Chancellors, University of Wisconsin System
Federal Relations Council

Access to Postsecondary Education

History: In 1992, Congress added legislative language to the TRIO Program subpart in the Higher Education Act that prohibits the U.S. Department of Education from limiting the number of applications submitted by an institution of higher education or agency “if the additional applications describe programs serving different populations or campuses.” The overall purpose for adding this language was to give institutions of higher education the ability to serve more eligible students who needed TRIO services, particularly if the institutions were trying to serve larger numbers of low-income students enrolled at various campuses or if the institutions wanted to sponsor one project for low-income, first generation students and another for disabled students.

Subsequently, the Department chose to define “Different Campus” and “Different Population of Participants” in the TRIO Student Support Services Program regulations only (34 CFR Part 646.7 (c)), and used regulatory language that is so narrowly crafted that it still prohibits many geographically separate institutions from applying for TRIO funding.

Because the two-year colleges of the UW System, although independent in almost every respect, have a single chancellor for the thirteen campuses and a centralized financial aid operation, the Department of Education has ruled that, for purposes of the SSS program only (but not for other TRIO programs), the UW Colleges do not meet the standards set under 34 CFR 646.7 for having “independent” campuses.

Impact to Wisconsin: Because of this interpretation, the entire UW two-year college system is only eligible for one grant. This administrative ruling has left Wisconsin woefully underserved by the Student Support Services program. Today, the University of Wisconsin’s two-year college system is only eligible for one TRIO grant, which currently provides only \$502,000 for 480 students. This group of students is only 27 percent of those eligible for funding under this program. (See subsequent document for number of students served and number of students eligible but not served by campus.)

Legislative Activity: Last year, Congress considered the FED UP Higher Education Technical Amendments Act of 2002. This bill, among other changes, clarified within the Federal TRIO programs that institutions with more than one campus may apply for separate grants to serve different populations at different campuses. The legislation, brought up under suspension of the rules, was defeated in the House of Representatives.

Recommendation: The University of Wisconsin System encourages Congress to amend section 402A of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to define the terms “Different Campus” and “Different Population” so that more institutions of higher education, particularly those that have larger numbers of low-income students enrolled at various campuses, will have the ability to apply for TRIO grants and serve more eligible students who need TRIO services.

**University of Wisconsin Colleges
Student Support Services Program (TRIO)**

I. Number of Students Served: Academic Year 2001-2002

UW-Baraboo/Sauk County	60
UW-Marathon County	63
Oxford Federal Correctional Institution	87
UW-Rock County	123
UW-Waukesha	<u>147</u>
Total	480

Estimated Number of Students To Be Served: Academic Year 2002-2003

UW-Baraboo/Sauk County	55
UW-Marathon County	75
Oxford Federal Correctional Institution	85
UW-Rock County	120
UW-Waukesha	<u>145</u>
Total	480

II. Estimated Number of Students Eligible But Not Served

<u>Campus</u>	<u># of New Freshmen</u>	<u>Percentage of New Freshmen</u>
UW-Baraboo/Sauk County	64	23%
UW-Barron County	84	33%
UW-Fond du Lac	81	31%
UW-Fox Valley	180	29%
UW-Manitowoc	87	30%
UW-Marathon County	179	33%
UW-Marinette	53	29%
UW-Marshfield/Wood County	79	29%
UW-Richland	43	20%
UW-Rock County	120	34%
UW-Sheboygan	96	33%
UW-Washington County	91	23%
UW-Waukesha	<u>115</u>	14%
Total	1272	

Student Aid Programs

Student financial aid programs are effective at increasing access to postsecondary education, particularly for low-income students. Despite substantial gains in overall participation in postsecondary education, individuals from low-income families remain less likely to participate in postsecondary education than other individuals. In fall 2001, only 12 percent of UW System freshmen came from families with incomes less than \$30,000, whereas UW System served middle-income families particularly well and does not have a disproportionate share of individuals from higher income families. The following recommendations are essential to maintaining access to higher education.

Pell Grant

Increase the Pell Grant by a significant amount. The Pell Grant program is the major source of federal aid for low-income college students. These increases will improve access to higher education among lower income families.

FFEL and Direct Loans

After increasing Pell Grants, the next highest priority is to increase the annual and cumulative loan limits to provide students an alternative to higher interest rates of private loans and credit cards. For example, increase both subsidized and unsubsidized Stafford loans to at least \$4,000 annual limits. Current loan limits are no longer adequate at even low-cost public colleges.

Create parity in the regulations for the Direct Loan Program and FFEL Programs by making terms, conditions, and borrower benefits the same for both programs. All borrowers should have the same terms, conditions, and benefits regardless of program.

Campus-Based Programs

Increase funding for the Federal Work Study Program, and maintain the current level of community service requirement. The value of work-study programs to students and institutions cannot be over-stated. Work ethic is reinforced, loan indebtedness is reduced, educational experience for students is provided for, and institutions work with local agencies to meet community needs collaboratively.

In addition, eliminate the requirement that links the awarding of an SEOG grant to Pell grant eligibility to give aid officers the flexibility to award these funds on the basis of need where it would do the most good, such as lowering the indebtedness of some needy students that may not have Pell grant eligibility.

Simplification of Financial Aid

The complexity of the financial aid process presents a barrier to access. Families often find the financial aid forms and procedures intimidating and confusing. Steps needed to obtain financial aid are too complicated, making it hard for students and parents to determine whether they will be able to afford a college education. As a result, many low-income students and their families believe that a college education is not an attainable goal.

Regulations are often necessary to clarify processes required by new or changed legislation. But some regulations, rather than serving to clarify, add to complexity, create confusion, or even (on occasion) appear to contradict legislation. In addition, unnecessary confusion and complexity can be expensive to administer. Possible areas for streamlining and simplifying the financial aid process can be found in the following examples.

Experimental Site Program

The Experimental Site program provides a valid approach for regulatory review and reform. Controlled experiments provide real information on the effectiveness of new regulations. This program should be expanded as a vehicle to measure the cost and effectiveness of many new regulations.

Stafford Loans

Congress should renew two expiring statutory provisions that reduce regulatory burden. Schools with low default rates (for example, less than 10%) should be allowed (1) "single disbursements" for one-term borrowers, and (2) a waiver of the "30-day delay" rule for first time freshmen borrowers. Both of these exceptions for low default schools should be reauthorized. If not, unnecessary financial hardships and delays are imposed on several thousand UW students.

Stafford Loan Proration

Allow institutions the option of pro-rating loans for students whose remaining period of enrollment to complete a degree is less than one year; that is, do not make pro-ration mandatory for all students. Mandatory pro-ration of loans for students whose remaining period of enrollment to complete a degree in less than one academic year deprives students of funds and imposes an unnecessary administrative burden on schools, especially if this is interpreted to mean that the school is required to identify students who could have graduated but have chosen to extend their attendance. SAP standards and aggregate loan limits protect the taxpayer's interest by capping the amount that a student can borrow.

IRS Database Match

A timely and complete database match between DE and IRS would simplify, speed-up, and improve the accuracy of the verification process. IRS data could replace much of the data gathered on the FAFSA, thus simplifying the application process and ensuring data integrity for all.

\$300 Tolerance

The tolerance level for over-awards should be set uniformly at \$300 for all federal student aid programs. Currently, tolerance levels vary for different Title IV programs. This imposes an unnecessary administrative burden on campuses to comply with each program's standards. It does not provide for equitable treatment of student aid recipients.

Return of Title IV Funds

Allow for the exclusion of a de minimus amount of \$100 of unearned federal funds that need not be returned. Federal funds are not the only funds that students receive as financial aid, and it is unreasonable to "return" federal funds at the expense of all other fund sources of aid.

Selective Service/Drug Convictions

Eliminate non-germane student eligibility questions from the FAFSA and the respective regulations. The federal aid system is not the appropriate place to pursue drug crime or "draft dodgers." Such non-germane eligibility requirements should be eliminated. The financial aid process is complicated enough to administer without the added complexity of selective service and drug convictions regulations. Both these questions on the FAFSA and the accompanying regulations are difficult to administer and result in delays of disbursement. A very small number of people whose aid eligibility is affected by these questions illustrates that those questions could be eliminated without significant impact.

GEAR UP

At the institutional level, aid officers must reconcile all the program requirements for each aid type from each aid source. Loan, grant, work, and scholarship programs from Federal, State, Institutional, and private sources must "fit together" in a fair and legal financial aid package. The GEAR UP "last dollar" rule adds complexity and sets a bad precedent and should be dropped.

Federal Methodology Needs Analysis

Eliminate simplified needs tests and automatic zero EFC.

Teacher Quality

Teacher Quality Education and Partnerships

The Title II teacher quality partnership grants are critical to improving the overall quality of teacher education. Both the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the state Department of Public Instruction had such grants. Their continuation is critical in providing the quality teachers Wisconsin needs in high-poverty areas.

Recommendation: Permit the continued development of the 2001-02 partnership grants and increase availability to all institutions of higher education working with at-risk schools.

Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants

Wisconsin has benefited greatly from Title II funding (23 grants totaling \$4 million dollars) to enhance education through technology programs to help K-12 schools. Wisconsin has 32 colleges and universities that offer educator training programs; yet preservice preparation has been significantly left out of the funding loop. Higher education and K-12 schools must truly collaborate to effectively address the issues of closing the achievement gap and increasing teacher quality. We, therefore, support the creation of partnerships between universities and colleges and PK-12 schools to provide support, mentoring, and ongoing professional development to beginning teachers.

Recommendation: Increase collaboration and partnerships among institutions of higher education, state education agencies, local education agencies, community colleges, and other community entities by “requiring,” rather than “recommending,” broad-based partnerships. Secondly, coordinate higher education Title II, ESEA, and IDEA reauthorizations to assist institutions of higher education, state education agencies, and local education agencies to target professional development to schools at risk.

Preparing Tomorrow’s Teachers to Use Technology (PT3)

In Wisconsin, PT3 grants have been highly successful change agents in the use of technology training for preservice teachers. These grants have included Implementation grants and, most recently, Catalyst grants. Unfortunately, there is a concern that these grants may be phased out. Because these grants require multiple partnerships and accountability measures, the PT3 projects have demonstrated encouraging results in improving teacher quality and student achievement.

Recommendation: Continued funding for the PT3 projects is strongly encouraged.

Quality Improvement

States and universities should continue to be required to provide quality improvement data to policymakers, parents, and future students. However, Title II requirements currently force institutions of higher education and state education agencies to report comparisons that are not meaningful.

Recommendation: Eliminate the requirement for state education agencies to separate institutions of higher education into quartiles that provide no meaningful comparisons. Require institutions of higher education and state education agencies to collect and publish meaningful accountability data as determined at the state level.

Teacher Recruitment

The current Title II has provisions for student loan forgiveness for high-quality teachers who teach in high poverty schools. However, the funds currently provide no more than a token response to the critical problem.

Recommendation: Increase the funding to support loan forgiveness for future teachers who will commit to work in high poverty areas OR obtain licenses and teach in critical areas with a high shortage of qualified staff, such as special education, English as a second language/bilingual programs, and so forth.

Teaching American History Grants Program

Four institutions within the University of Wisconsin System recently received awards from the U.S. Department of Education for professional development for teachers of history in the K-12 sector. The ultimate aim of the program is to improve state and national test scores, as well as foster a more significant understanding of American history and civics for students.

Recommendation: Continued funding for the Teaching American History Grants Program is strongly encouraged.

Distance Education

Access and Opportunity for Non-Traditional Adult Learners

The University of Wisconsin is a national leader in distance learning, drawing upon a 110-year tradition of excellence and advancing the *Wisconsin Idea*. Since 1892, the UW has embraced the unique needs of learners at a distance and helped them reach their educational goals.

While distance education can overcome the barriers of time and place so challenging for many working adults, corresponding changes in financial aid are required to fully reach the goal of expanded educational access. The scarcity of funds in proportion to the numbers of eligible individuals is exacerbated by the reliance upon traditional institutional accountability measures, such as loan default rates, in distributing financial aid to non-traditional students. Under the current regulatory and fiscal parameters, this combination of factors too often means that part-time students are eligible for some types of assistance, but are rarely among its recipients. This distinction between access and opportunity may be the difference between obtaining and abandoning educational goals.

Recommendation: Congress is urged to extend and expand the Distance Education Demonstration Project authorized in Sec. 486, to include more institutions actively engaged in using innovative delivery systems to serve non-traditional students. Expanded financial assistance options for part-time students enrolled half-time and less than half-time, alternatives to loan default rates as success criteria, and waiver of certain time and place restrictions that govern Title IV eligibility are examples of issues that could be addressed in this extended initiative.

Quality through Collaboration

Distance education effectively uses technology to overcome geographic boundaries and provide educational opportunities for students wherever they live and work. Developing high quality online learning experiences and designing comprehensive student support systems for this distributed population is a resource-intensive process.

To expand access and educational opportunity, the pace with which institutions are developing quality online degree programs and student support systems must be accelerated. The magnitude of the need requires a response of a similar scale.

Developing effective models of collaboration among institutions leverages investments and provides efficient and scalable educational opportunities. These collaborations require new higher education policies, focused on serving diverse and distributed communities of learners.

Meeting the education and training needs of non-traditional adult learners is a national problem. Encouraging collaboration among multiple groups of institutions, systems, states, and regions provides a collective solution.

Recommendation: Congress is encouraged to expand the Distance Education Demonstration Project or establish a parallel project to examine postsecondary education policy and implications for collaborative online degree programs, identify barriers, and test solutions.

Standards and Reusable Learning Objects

The military and business/industry sectors recognize the potential of distance learning to provide education and training for employees at remote locations in a timely and cost-effective method. Federal agencies, such as the U.S. Departments of Defense and Labor, are providing leadership to establish uniform, world-class technical standards and promote large scale development projects for these populations.

The Academic Advanced Distributed Learning Co-Lab (a partnership of the U.S. Department of Defense, the University of Wisconsin System, and the Wisconsin Technical College System) is at the forefront of the standards movement, providing leadership in developing and facilitating the adoption of technical standards, such as the Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM). These standards promote the production of world-class, modularized, reusable learning content that enables high-quality education to be delivered anywhere and anytime. As these standards are adopted, they may be used as an accountability measure for providers of online education and training to demonstrate the interoperability and reusability of their content.

The work of the Academic ADL Co-Lab and its partners is critical to the standards development and refinement process. By supporting the ADL Co-Lab's development, application research and study of the effectiveness of SCORM-compliant digital content modules, education in general, and higher education in particular, will benefit.

Recommendation: We strongly encourage Congress to create further funding incentives to support the Academic ADL Co-Lab and its partners in encouraging the adoption of a single standard that allows online content to be shared and used universally. We encourage Congress to direct the Department of Education to partner with the Department of Defense and the Academic Advanced Distributed Learning Co-Lab to promote and evaluate standards, such as Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM), for e-learning applications in higher education and to support research and assessment of sharing of content developed according to SCORM standards.

Standards and Accountability (Accountability Reporting in the UW System)

Overview

In March 1993, then Governor Tommy Thompson appointed a Task Force to suggest an approach for the development of the University of Wisconsin System's first accountability report (*Accountability for Achievement*). The Governor's Task Force recommended 18 performance indicators that were adopted by the Board of Regents as the foundation for the newly established report. That report was issued on an annual basis using the same 18 indicators for three biennia.

In July 1999, six years after the production of the first UW System accountability report, President Katharine Lyall established an Accountability Review Task Force. This Task Force was charged with reviewing the existing report and recommending a revised set of goals and indicators for the assessment of university performance. In June 2000, the Board of Regents accepted the recommendations of the Accountability Review Task Force and authorized the implementation of a new system-wide accountability report entitled *Achieving Excellence*.

When first introduced in 1993, *Accountability for Achievement* was a pioneering effort in demonstrating accountability for a statewide system of higher education. *Achieving Excellence*, first issued in 2000-01, breaks new ground in Wisconsin by focusing on the quality of the learning environment provided for our students while continuing to demonstrate our commitment to the more traditional areas highlighted in our earlier accountability reports. The report is part of our ongoing efforts to be responsive and accountable to the citizens of Wisconsin, their elected representatives, and other stakeholders in this university system.

Accountability for Achievement (1993-1998)

Six reports were published on the UW System's progress on 18 core accountability measures. The 18 accountability indicators grew out of the work of the Governor's Task Force on Accountability (task force recommendations June, 1993). In December 1993, the UW Board of Regents adopted the recommended indicators and also approved goals for each indicator. The *Accountability for Achievement* provided information on seven key areas: access, quality, effectiveness, efficiency, diversity, stewardship of assets, and contribution to compelling state needs. Data for the 18 recommended UW System core indicators were reported each year along with an evaluation of progress in meeting established goals. Three client satisfaction surveys (student, alumni and business) were included. In addition, each UW institution reported annually on institution-specific indicators, reflecting the distinctive mission of each UW institution.

Achieving Excellence (2001-present)

Achieving Excellence represents the UW System's continuing effort and commitment to providing the citizens of Wisconsin with broad-based accountability of its largest public higher education system. *Achieving Excellence* is designed with the mission of the UW System in mind, concentrating on the many ways in which the University of Wisconsin

seeks to serve its students and the State of Wisconsin. While it is not feasible to report on every possible area of university activity in a single report, *Achieving Excellence* presents a balanced approach to accountability reporting, reflecting a broad diversity of stakeholder interests. Each new edition of *Achieving Excellence* includes updated information on university performance that addresses current accountability issues in higher education, both locally and on the national level.

The form and format of *Achieving Excellence* evolved from the earlier publication, *Accountability for Achievement*. In 1999, President Katharine Lyall appointed a UW System Accountability Review Task Force and charged it with four specific responsibilities:

(1) evaluate the existing report, (2) identify areas for developing new/revised measures, (3) provide guidance and direction for staff work in developing new/revised measures, and

(4) develop an outline for a new accountability report. *Achieving Excellence* focuses on two distinct approaches to the measurement of university performance. First, it presents the UW System's progress toward its goals for specific student and institutional outcomes. Secondly, it examines the ways in which the University of Wisconsin provides positive campus environments that promote learning and student achievement. In order to address both of these accountability concerns, it is necessary to augment regularly reported systemwide data with findings from a variety of surveys that offer broader insights into the experiences of students and staff at the University of Wisconsin. Each of these surveys provides national benchmarks, affording the opportunity to make comparisons of UW System performance with that of other higher education institutions. --***+The basic structure of *Achieving Excellence* and all of the accountability goals remain constant from year to year. This consistency enables us to provide a coherent and reliable resource for learning about the progress of the UW System toward the achievement of excellence.

Achieving Excellence (see subsequent document) is divided into three sections:

Section I--Context and Capacity: The capacity of the UW System to accomplish its core functions depends upon its resources and the competitive environment for faculty, staff, and students. This section provides background for the remainder of the report and offers insight into the context in which the UW institutions function. The data provided in this section are not associated with specific targets or benchmarks.

Section II--Goals and Indicators: In this section, specific outcome measures are presented as indicators of systemwide performance. There are six goals in this section, each with two to five indicators:

- Ensure widespread access to UW institutions and increase the pool of eligible traditional and non-traditional applicants;
- Increase the levels at which students persist in higher education and complete degrees;

- Improve learning competencies and provide learning experiences that foster the development of critical thinking skills;
- Provide a learning environment that fosters the ability to function in a dynamic world community;
- Enhance the learning environment by providing opportunities for guided research, mentorship, and access to student services and resources that foster learning and citizenship; and
- Assure the efficient use of resources.

Certain indicators may only be reported in two-year or three-year cycles depending on data collection, assessment methods, and benchmarks. Each indicator is viewed in relation to a target or benchmark for the purposes of assessment and comparison. For example, some indicators are compared with data from previous years, while others are compared with national norms.

Section III--Compendium of Other UW System Reports: The UW System also produces many specialized reports on various aspects of its operations. This section provides an annotated listing of reports produced by the UW System. These reports measure excellence in many different areas and go beyond those reported in Section II.