



March 26, 2026

Regent President Amy Bogost
c/o Office of the Board of Regents
Universities of Wisconsin
1860 Van Hise Hall
1220 Linden Dr.
Madison, WI 53706

Via email: amy.bogost@wisconsin.edu

Dear Regent President Bogost:

My thanks to you and Regent Vice President Kyle Weatherly for taking the time to meet with me this past Saturday afternoon, which meeting was scheduled at your request. I have always considered it to be a privilege to serve as the President of the Universities of Wisconsin. I believe in the mission of the UWs and recognize the importance of our universities to the economic and social vibrancy of the state I have called home my entire life. Education changes the trajectory of the lives of our students and is the great equalizer in our society. To play a small role in the educational journeys of our students as President of the Universities of Wisconsin is both an immense honor and privilege.

I write today to state my intentions around my future, in a respectful manner, while making clear the accomplishments of UW Administration and our universities in the face of great challenges – accomplishments that span greater strategic direction, financial stewardship, student success, support for our people, and so much more. I have given my heart and soul to the mission of the Universities of Wisconsin since (and several months before) June 1, 2022, my first official day as President. I think we have accomplished a great deal over the last three plus years to better position the Universities of Wisconsin for continued success. I was, therefore, surprised that, during our conversation on Saturday, you indicated for the first time and without any prior discussion or notice that an unidentified majority of the Board of Regents had lost confidence in my leadership despite all that my team and I along with our universities have accomplished to move the Universities of Wisconsin forward. When I asked you to articulate reasons for the Board's conclusion and apparent lack of confidence in me, you merely noted that each Regent has his or her own perspective on the matter. You did not provide any tangible reasons for the Board's determination. It also appears that whatever conclusions were reached, the concerns were vetted without the benefit of any recent in-person or even virtual meeting of the entire Board. From a Board governance and leadership perspective, I find that to be extraordinarily difficult for the Board to defend; as a person who reports directly to the Board, I am profoundly disappointed.

You presented to me three options to effect my departure from the Universities of Wisconsin. As the Board's preferred path, you offered me the option of announcing my resignation/retirement in the near future with an effective date at the end of this calendar year. You also acknowledged that I have the right to resign at any time on my own accord so long as I provide 120 days' advance notice as specified in my employment agreement. Finally, you made clear that if I did not resign, the Board was prepared to terminate my employment despite all that has been accomplished, although I appreciate that is the Board's right.

We also discussed the challenges facing higher education generally and the Universities of Wisconsin in particular. Higher education is facing enormous headwinds, which require that change be implemented in a sober but urgent fashion. What is abundantly clear, as I have repeatedly noted to the Board during my entire tenure, is that the status quo is not sustainable. During my time in office and informed by my more than three decades in the private sector, I have tried to drive the change I believe the UWs need to embrace, and I am proud of what my team at UW Administration, working alongside our universities, has accomplished. The Board-approved strategic plan, which was adopted in December 2022, has been guiding this change.

I have set forth below some of the significant milestones we (i.e., my team at UW Administration and our valued colleagues at the 13 universities) have achieved because I believe they are worthy of note. I also want to acknowledge the strong support of the Universities of Wisconsin from each of Governor Evers, legislators on both sides of the aisle, and external stakeholders, including alumni and the business community. I am proud of these accomplishments and know they would not have been possible without the efforts of so many dedicated people, to whom I will be eternally indebted and grateful.

Defining the Strategic Direction

- **Developed a Board-approved 2023-2028 strategic plan** and focused efforts to achieve plan metrics. The plan has been **our North Star relative to effecting bold and transformative change** at the Universities of Wisconsin.

Financial Resources, Stewardship and Accountability

- **Secured the largest operating budget increase for the Universities of Wisconsin in over two decades** in the last state budget.
- **Obtained over \$2.5 billion in state capital investments** in the Universities of Wisconsin in the last two biennia, including enumeration of new projects **such as the Levy Engineering Center at UW-Madison, Prairie Springs Science Center at UW-La Crosse, Heritage Hall at UW-Stout, Health Sciences at UW-Milwaukee, and Science and Health Sciences at UW-Eau Claire.**
- Engaged third-party advisors to evaluate and assist the universities in addressing financial headwinds and improving operational efficiencies.

- Worked with chancellors to **eliminate structural deficits at all 13 universities** (two years ahead of schedule); 10 of 13 universities were running a structural deficit when I assumed office in June 2022.
- **Successfully implemented Workday**, the UWs' financial reporting and HR system, **on time and on budget**.
- **Expanded shared services offerings**, including in the information technology and cybersecurity space.
- Implemented policies to address under-enrolled programs across the Universities of Wisconsin to ensure better leveraging of available resources.
- **Secured \$45.4 million in state funding to demolish buildings no longer in use** on our campuses to reduce overall operating costs.
- Worked with chancellors to **make the difficult decision to close/co-locate a total of eight branch campuses** by the end of the current fiscal year due to low enrollments and lack of financial viability.
- Implemented **performance metrics/targets for my role (approved by Board leadership) and for the chancellors**.
- Created a **chancellor-led group to identify collaborative efforts** to help leverage assets, reduce duplication, and drive efficiencies.
- **Enacted zero-based budgeting principles and other initiatives at UW Administration**, which resulted in **\$6.8 million in budget reductions** in the current fiscal year.

Supporting Student Success and Enrollment

- **Maintained affordability** of the Universities of Wisconsin making **the UWs the most affordable public university system in the Midwest and beyond** for students.
- **Dedicated UW Administration funds to provide a tuition promise** for the student cohort that started in the fall of 2023.
- **Secured private funding to support a tuition promise** for the cohort that started in the fall of 2025.
- **Secured funding to continue mental tele-health resources** for students.
- **Secured \$32 million in state funding to expand engineering, nursing/healthcare, computer/data science, and business/finance programs** projected to generate 9,350 additional graduates over five years.
- **Provided financial incentives to encourage continued chancellor focus on first-to-second year student retention**.
- **Implemented policies to facilitate transfer of core general education credits** across the Universities of Wisconsin simplifying the process for students.
- Established and empowered a task force to **address credit transferability challenges more generally**.

- **Implemented Direct Admit Wisconsin** (with 514 high schools now participating) to allow eligible high school students at the end of their junior year to be automatically admitted to participating UWs.
- **Expanded dual enrollment offerings** creating more access for students and providing a faster path to graduation.
- **Increased enrollment of degree-seeking students for the past three consecutive years** following a 12-year period of declining enrollments on an FTE basis.
- **Developed the Wisconsin Online Portal** that provides one-stop shopping across the Universities of Wisconsin for those seeking online degree programs.
- Implemented steps to **increase the number of learners engaged in continuing education programs** to over 222,000.
- **Established initiatives to promote civil dialogue and First Amendment education** for students, including completion of a student survey on free speech.
- Led the UWs' **first tribal consultation meeting with Wisconsin's tribal leaders**, which has subsequently resulted in a tribal workplan, improved tribal relations, accelerated work in NAGPRA compliance, and **helped make the 13 universities a more welcoming environment for Native Nations students**.
- Secured Board **approval of a policy change to allow for reduced credit degree programs** to be considered and implemented.
- Developed a **framework for strategically addressing the challenges and opportunities offered by generative AI and guidelines for AI in the teaching and learning environment**.
- **Enhanced the oversight of the ten charter schools** authorized by UW Administration's Office of Educational Opportunity.

Supporting our People

- Secured **pay plan increases aggregating over 11%** over two biennia.
- Obtained **increased compensation for faculty in high demand fields over-and-above** pay plan adjustments.
- Provided **professional development grant dollars to support faculty and instructional staff**.

Digital Presence and Marketing

- **Totally overhauled wisconsin.edu to provide a student friendly interface** and drive enrollment.
- **Re-branded from the UW System to the Universities of Wisconsin** to strategically place the focus on our universities.
- Implemented a **strategic marketing campaign (including co-branding with the universities) to drive enrollment**.

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If the foregoing list is not sufficient evidence of my leadership in driving bold and transformative change, I really do not know what is. Since to date you have not provided any substantive reason or reasons for the Board's finding of no confidence in my leadership, I am not prepared, as a matter of principle, to submit my resignation. In light of the current circumstances, I do not believe my resignation at this time is in the best interests of either the Universities of Wisconsin or the state of Wisconsin. I note, among so many other things, the need to fill the chancellor role at our flagship, UW-Madison, select the new chancellor at UW-Eau Claire, establish priorities for the proposed budget and our advocacy efforts for the next biennium, as well as drive the level of collaboration among the Universities of Wisconsin that I believe is essential to their long-term sustainability and success. I understand that, as you indicated on Saturday, the Board may act to terminate my employment, which the Board is empowered to do. If, however, the full Board would like to discuss this matter with me in either an open or closed session, I would welcome the opportunity to participate in such a meeting.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jay Rothman', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jay Rothman

President, Universities of Wisconsin