

# PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH



13 UNIVERSITIES  UNLIMITED OPPORTUNITY

## GREETING FROM SEARCH COMMITTEE CHAIR



There is no greater asset in this state than the Universities of Wisconsin. Our 13 universities educate the talent that powers Wisconsin's workforce, fuel the discoveries that improve lives far beyond our borders, and open doors for students in every corner of the state. To lead this institution is to hold one of the most consequential and rewarding opportunities in American public education – and that is the opportunity we are thrilled to present to you today.

Our work is guided by a principle as old and as vital as the university itself: the Wisconsin Idea. It holds that a great public university belongs to everyone it serves – that its teaching, research, and service should reach into the homes, farms, businesses, and main streets of every community in the state, never confined to a campus. For more than a century, that belief has meant our universities help solve real problems, strengthen local economies, and lift the quality of life for the people of Wisconsin and the world. The next president will carry that tradition forward and write its next chapter.

We are searching for an exceptional leader, someone with the boldness to imagine what these universities can become, the gift for uniting students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the people of Wisconsin around a shared and ambitious future, and a deep, abiding belief in the promise of public higher education. This is a moment of real momentum, and we are excited about where the right leader can take us.

On behalf of the Board of Regents, the Presidential Search Committee, the students, faculty, and staff of the Universities of Wisconsin, and the people of Wisconsin, thank you for your interest. We look forward to hearing from you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ashok Rai'.

Ashok Rai, MD  
Vice President, Universities of Wisconsin Board of Regents  
Chair, Presidential Search Committee



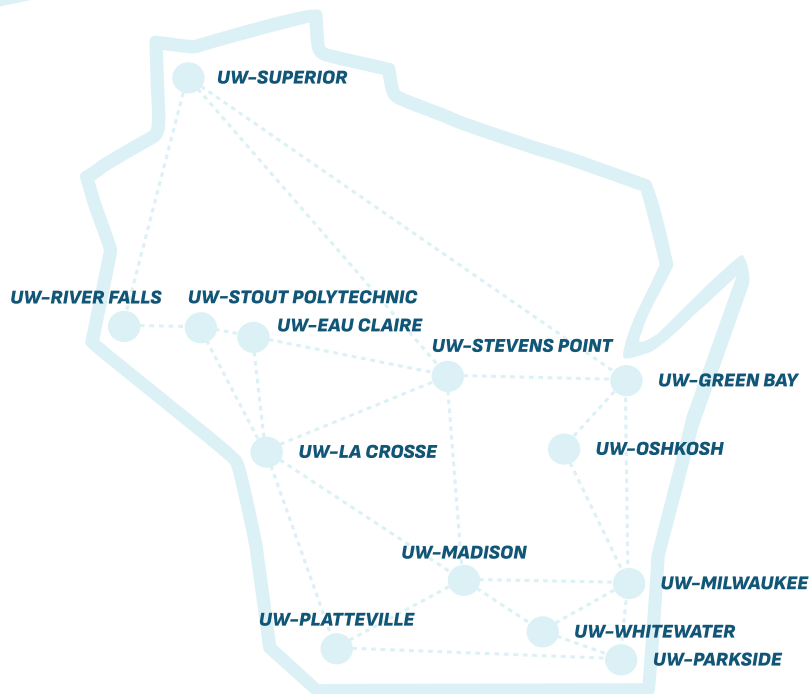


## **UNIVERSITIES OF WISCONSIN PRESIDENT**

*The Board of Regents for the Universities of Wisconsin seeks nominations and applications for the position of Universities of Wisconsin President. The next President should be a strong advocate for academic quality, research and innovation, student success, inclusive excellence, public accountability, and shared governance. We seek an imaginative, energetic, visionary leader with exceptional leadership abilities to champion and amplify the Universities of Wisconsin reputation for world-class education, research, and outreach. The next President will be charged with collectively using the passion and intelligence of the entire Universities of Wisconsin system not only to help solve the challenges of today but also to proactively find solutions to the challenges of the future.*

# MISSION AND HISTORY

The mission of the University of Wisconsin System – now called the Universities of Wisconsin – is to develop human resources, to discover and disseminate knowledge, to extend knowledge and its application beyond the boundaries of its campuses, and to serve and stimulate society by developing in students heightened intellectual, cultural, and humane sensitivities, scientific, professional and technological expertise, and a sense of purpose. Inherent in this broad mission are methods of instruction, research, extended training, and public service designed to educate people and improve the human condition. Basic to every purpose of the Universities of Wisconsin is the search for truth.



The University of Wisconsin System was created by legislation in 1971 through the merger of two public university systems under a single Board of Regents, but its roots date to the mid-1800s, when both the land-grant university in Madison and nine normal schools were founded around the state. The University of Wisconsin System is known throughout the world for the Wisconsin Idea—a belief that the university should work in partnership with government, local communities, businesses, and others to identify and solve problems to improve the quality of life for citizens of the state and beyond. The Wisconsin Idea is one of the oldest and deepest traditions defining the Universities of Wisconsin.

In October 2023, the University of Wisconsin System announced its rebrand as the Universities of Wisconsin to place the emphasis on the universities and their students, faculty, and staff, not the administrative structure.

The current Universities of Wisconsin consist of two Research I universities (Madison, Milwaukee); 10 comprehensive universities (Eau Claire, Green Bay, La Crosse, Oshkosh, Parkside, Platteville, River Falls, Stevens Point, Superior, and Whitewater); one polytechnic university (Stout Polytechnic); branch campuses; and a statewide extension network with offices in every county.

Today, the Universities of Wisconsin serve more than 164,600 students. Awarding more than 37,000 degrees annually, our 13 public universities are 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 Universities of Wisconsin graduates stay in the state five years after earning a degree. The universities provide a 23:1 return on state investment. The Universities of Wisconsin also contribute to the richness of Wisconsin’s culture and economy with groundbreaking research, new companies and patents, and boundless creative intellectual energy. Learn more about the Universities of Wisconsin mission, history, and structure at [wisconsin.edu](https://www.wisconsin.edu).

# PRESIDENT'S ROLE AND STRATEGIC CHALLENGES

The Universities of Wisconsin sustain one of the richest traditions in American higher education, fulfilling its mission and advancing the Wisconsin Idea by providing world-class education, research, and public service for residents of the state and beyond. The Universities of Wisconsin are a powerful economic asset – returning \$23 for every \$1 invested by the state – while opening their doors to students from all backgrounds and income levels. The Universities of Wisconsin play a central role in improving the human condition for Wisconsin's citizens through civic engagement and leadership, partnerships with business and industry, and lifelong learning opportunities.

The President has full executive responsibility for the operation and management of the Universities of Wisconsin. Reporting to the 18-member Board of Regents and bearing responsibility for the maintenance of a respectful, cordial, and transparent relationship with the governing body, the President carries out the duties prescribed in Wisconsin Statutes for this office and other such duties as may be assigned by the Board or in policy actions of the Board. The Vice Presidents and Chancellors report to the President, who oversees appropriate staffing and coordination of administrative offices.

## SUMMARY OF DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Strategic Leadership** – Develops and implements the system's strategic plan, ensuring alignment with the Board's mission to advance education, research, and public service.
- **Budget and Resource Management** – Oversees the preparation, review, and approval of the Universities of Wisconsin budget, ensuring fiscal responsibility and sound resource allocation.
- **Inter-University Coordination** – Works with Chancellors and Vice Presidents to ensure consistency in academic standards, student services, and administrative practices across the Universities of Wisconsin.
- **Representation** – Serves as the primary spokesperson for the Universities of Wisconsin to the Board of Regents, state government, and the public.
- **Board Duties** – In addition to leading the Universities of Wisconsin, the President performs additional duties assigned by the Board of Regents, such as chairing committees, signing diplomas and contracts, and representing the Board to lawmakers.



# QUALIFICATIONS AND LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

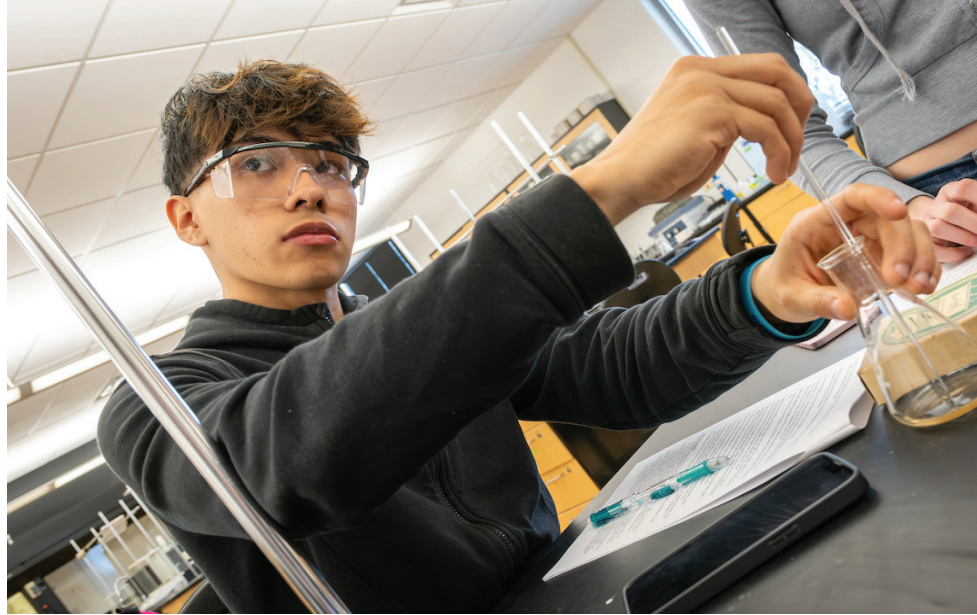
The next President will lead with vision, integrity, and humility at a defining moment for public higher education, articulating a compelling vision that inspires faculty, staff, students, alumni, policymakers, and the people of Wisconsin.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS

- A demonstrated record of senior executive leadership in a large, complex organization, including sound stewardship of human, fiscal, and capital resources.
- Deep understanding of and appreciation for the academic mission of higher education, ideally from leadership experience within a college, university, or university system; candidates from other sectors will be strongest when paired with relevant academic-enterprise experience.
- Proven ability to advocate and build relationships with government, business, and community leaders, with the political acuity to work across the political spectrum.
- Experience leading strategic, inclusive planning, and guiding meaningful change by empowering capable leaders to carry it forward, in addition to having experience working with a governing or public board.
- Strong understanding of and genuine respect for shared governance, with a track record of working effectively with diverse constituencies.
- A sustained commitment to student success and access across the full range of students the Universities of Wisconsin enroll.
- An advanced degree is required, with a terminal degree preferred.

## LEADERSHIP STYLE AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- A collaborative and consultative leader who listens deeply, builds consensus, and leads alongside others – while remaining decisive when needed.
- An authentic, approachable, and visible presence who spends meaningful time on university campuses and in communities, engaging directly with students, faculty, and staff.
- An exceptional communicator and confident public voice for the Universities of Wisconsin.
- A leader with integrity, empathy, curiosity, and humility, who recognizes and elevates the contributions of others.
- The courage and steadiness to stand up for the Universities of Wisconsin and its people, and to make and clearly explain difficult decisions.
- The capacity to remain a calm, credible public voice amid political division, building common ground while keeping the focus on the UWs' mission.
- A genuine belief in the value of public higher education and a commitment to the Wisconsin Idea.



## **STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES**

The next President of the Universities of Wisconsin will have the opportunity to lead one of the nation's most respected public university systems. Key strategic opportunities include:

### **CHAMPION THE STRENGTH AND DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE UNIVERSITIES OF WISCONSIN**

- Celebrate and advance the full breadth of the Universities of Wisconsin – two R1 research universities, a network of 10 regional comprehensive universities and one polytechnic university – each serving distinct missions, regions, and student populations, and each contributing in unique ways.
- Work collaboratively with universities and their leadership to reduce duplication of academic programs and expand opportunity for students, building on models like the multi-campus nursing programs and co-listed courses.
- Balance system-wide coherence with campus flexibility, centralizing where it adds clear value (for example, information technology, legal counsel, and cybersecurity), while empowering universities to build upon regional strengths.
- Offer clear direction on the future of the 13 universities and branch campuses, and maintain a visible presence across all UW universities and communities statewide.

### **SERVE AS A VISIBLE AND PASSIONATE ADVOCATE FOR WISCONSIN HIGHER EDUCATION**

- Serve as a compelling public voice for the economic, civic, and personal value of the Universities of Wisconsin.
- Build strong relationships with state leaders across the political spectrum and engage with the citizens of Wisconsin to position the Universities of Wisconsin for success through evolving political and budget cycles.
- Tell the Universities of Wisconsin's story with clarity and pride.

## STEWARD RESOURCES WISELY AND SUSTAINABLY

- Navigate demographic shifts and resource constraints with a clear, multi-year strategy.
- Review resource allocation to reflect current realities, advance student success, and address aging facilities and deferred maintenance.
- Direct resources toward priorities closest to students.

## PLACE STUDENT SUCCESS AND WELL-BEING AT THE HEART OF THE MISSION

- Champion access and affordability – addressing both tuition and cost of living – and strengthen financial aid.
- Support student mental health and holistic well-being across all universities.
- Design the student experience around today's learners, many of whom are first-generation, dually enrolled, or balancing work and family.
- Strengthen K-12 outreach and early engagement to broaden access statewide.

## PROVIDE THOUGHTFUL LEADERSHIP ON AI AND OTHER EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

- Offer systemwide guidance on artificial intelligence that respects academic freedom and educators' judgment, drawing on existing faculty, staff, librarian, and technologist expertise.
- Uphold academic integrity while preserving critical thinking and humanistic learning.
- Consider the environmental and community implications of emerging technology, and deepen industry partnerships for experiential learning.

## SUSTAIN AND STRENGTHEN SHARED GOVERNANCE AND A VALUED WORKFORCE

- Embrace Wisconsin's tradition of shared governance as a source of institutional strength and talent retention, engaging faculty, academic staff, and university staff alike.
- Foster transparent decision-making so constituents understand reasoning and feel heard.
- Support the recruitment, retention, professional development, and overall well-being of faculty and staff.

## ADVANCE ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND THE WISCONSIN IDEA

- Champion the Wisconsin Idea as the Universities of Wisconsin's guiding principle, connecting teaching, research, and public service to communities statewide.
- Affirm the full academic mission – liberal arts and humanities, civic education, professional programs, and discovery – aligned with Wisconsin's evolving workforce needs.
- Uphold academic freedom and open inquiry while fostering a welcoming environment.
- Position the Universities of Wisconsin to lead on future challenges, including sustainability.



# UNIVERSITIES OF WISCONSIN ORGANIZATION, GOVERNANCE, AND ROLES

## THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITIES OF WISCONSIN

The Board of Regents consists of 18 members, 16 of whom are appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the Senate. Of these 16 members, 14 serve staggered, seven-year terms. Two Universities of Wisconsin students, one of whom is a non-traditional student, are appointed for two-year terms. Additionally, two ex officio members are the state superintendent of public instruction and the president (or a designee) of the Wisconsin Technical College System Board. Members serve without pay.

The Board sets the policy and rules for the UWs, plans for future collegiate education needs, sets admission standards and policies, reviews and approves budgets, and establishes the regulatory framework for institutional autonomy. The Board appoints the President of the Universities of Wisconsin and the Chancellors of the 13 universities, who serve at its pleasure. The Board also grants tenure appointments to faculty members.



## UNIVERSITIES OF WISCONSIN ADMINISTRATION

The Universities of Wisconsin Administration (UWSA), based in Madison, works with the Board to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate policy, aligning university programs with state and national needs. It supports the President in coordinating strategic planning and policy across budget and finance, capital improvement, external engagement, public advocacy, data analysis, regulatory compliance, information security, talent recruitment, and athletics.

The President serves as Chief Executive Officer, with full executive responsibility for UWSA's operations and management, reporting to the Board, and carrying out duties under Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 36.

Three UWSA Vice Presidents and 13 Chancellors report to the President; the General Counsel and Chief Audit Executive report jointly to the President and the Board.

## CHANCELLORS

The 13 Chancellors report to the President and are also accountable to the Board of Regents. As executive heads of their universities, they lead strategic vision, execution, and administration – including degree requirements, academic standards, grading, faculty appointments and tenure recommendations, auxiliary services, and budgets – and work collaboratively with fellow Chancellors on shared priorities.

## SHARED GOVERNANCE

Faculty, academic staff, university staff, and students share responsibility for governance under state statute and Regent policy, with primary authority over their respective areas (for example, faculty for academic and educational activities), subject to the Board, President, and Chancellors. The UW universities facilitate regular meetings among these groups to enhance communication with the universities and UWSA.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

The Universities of Wisconsin [Accountability Dashboard](#) and annual accountability reports reflect the Universities of Wisconsin's commitment to Wisconsin's citizens, ensuring transparency and identifying operational efficiencies critical to an affordable, valuable educational experience.

The Universities of Wisconsin are an \$8 billion entity. Annual financial statements for the system as a whole and each of the 13 UW universities are available [online](#). Though structural deficits have been reported in the past, none of UW universities has reported deficits for the past two fiscal years.

The next Universities of Wisconsin President will be expected to further demonstrate this accountability through meetings with government officials, media interviews, and public appearances.





## ***PRESIDENT'S RESIDENCE***



### **BRITTINGHAM HOUSE**

Located in the Highlands area on Madison's west side, Brittingham House is the official residence of the Universities of Wisconsin President and serves as the front door to the UWs. It is used frequently for receptions, business meetings, and other public events. As a benefit of employment, Brittingham House is provided as the Universities of Wisconsin President's principal residence.

Thomas E. and Mary Brittingham built the elegant Georgian-style house in 1916 as their residence. In 1955, their children donated the house and its 15-acre grounds to the Universities of Wisconsin. It became the official residence of the Universities of Wisconsin President in 1977.

# APPLICATION AND NOMINATION PROCESS

The Presidential Search and Screen Committee will begin the review of applications immediately and continue work until an appointment is made. Only completed applications received by **Monday, August 31, 2026**, are assured full consideration.

A completed application includes:

- A letter of interest addressing the strategic objectives and qualifications identified in the leadership profile;
- A current curriculum vitae; and
- Contact information for five professional references, who will not be contacted without prior knowledge and approval of the candidate.

The Universities of Wisconsin are being assisted by AGB Search. Application materials should be submitted through the AGB Search portal system here: Universities of Wisconsin President Search (<http://bit.ly/4viRf6H>)

Nominations and expressions of interest will be treated in confidence. Please direct all nominations and expressions of interest, or any questions regarding the application process, to Jennifer Ferrera at [UWPresident@agbsearch.com](mailto:UWPresident@agbsearch.com).

The Universities of Wisconsin will not reveal the identities of applicants who request confidentiality in writing, except the identities of those identified as final candidates. See [Wis. Stat. § 19.36\(7\)](#). Employment requires a criminal background check. It will also require applicants and references to answer questions regarding sexual violence and harassment.

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