



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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May, 2021

Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #644

### **UW-Madison UniverCity Alliance Program (UW-System)**

[LFB 2021-23 Budget Summary: Page 610, #16]

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#### **CURRENT LAW**

The UniverCity Alliance program at UW Madison was created by the UW in 2015 to connect Wisconsin cities with education, service, and research activities across UW-Madison. The primary program UniverCity Year, involves a three-year partnership between UW-Madison faculty and students and Wisconsin communities to address community challenges.

#### **DISCUSSION POINTS**

1. The Governor's proposal would provide \$300,000 each year in a new, annual appropriation for the UniverCity Alliance program. For fiscal year 2020-21, the Alliance's budget totaled approximately \$319,500 and was funded primarily by partner community contributions, gift funds (\$110,000), grants from the UW-Madison Baldwin Wisconsin Idea Endowment (\$40,700) as well as in-kind staff support from UW-Madison faculty (\$36,300 for 0.5 position from the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies and 0.5 position from the College of Letters and Sciences). According to the UniverCity Alliance Director, current funding levels allow for 60 community projects annually; with UniverCity Year completing 68 projects across seven communities this year, including 50 projects from 2017 through 2020 in Green County. The additional funding provided under the proposal would allow the program to expand to approximately 100 projects across Wisconsin.

2. The UniverCity Year program, the Alliance's primary program, focuses on connecting UW-Madison faculty and staff around critical issues affecting Wisconsin cities (and other units of local government). Communities apply to partner with UniverCity Year for a three-year period. During the first year, the community partner identifies issues that could benefit from UW-Madison expertise. UniverCity Year staff then match those issues to UW-Madison faculty, staff, and graduate

students. The second year involves UW-Madison faculty, staff, and students conducting research through courses, independent projects, and internships. These faculty, staff, and students then provide big picture ideas and feasible recommendations to address the issues. In the third year, UniverCity Year staff support the community with resources to implement the projects. Local governments are required to make a contribution to the UniverCity Year program, generally consisting of \$20,000 to \$30,000 per issue area, with the program generally undertaking a minimum of five to seven projects per issue area. The UniverCity Alliance Director indicates this figure is negotiable and depends on the community's ability to pay. According to the Director, this is one area the proposed funding would assist with, allowing more communities to participate in the program even if they are more limited by budget constraints.

3. In the past, community partners have identified issues related to sustainability, economic development, education, health, housing, and social services, among others. For example, during 2018-2021, UW-Madison partnered with Pepin County to research key issues facing the county and its cities, towns, and villages. According to the Pepin County summary, local government leaders in Pepin County identified three overarching issues including economic development, education, and environmental sustainability, and 25 individual projects that could benefit from UW-Madison expertise. UW-Madison faculty and staff incorporated these projects into their courses and research programs and UniverCity Year staff provided administrative support for the partnership. The attachment shows the 25 projects and the associated department and course or independent project as applicable. For example, under the "economic development" issue umbrella, students in a UW-Madison computer science course developed a mobile phone application (app) for tourists to plan their visit to the Village of Pepin. Through the application, users can learn more about the businesses' history, building, hours, and contact information, and add places of interest to a custom walking map. Unless otherwise noted, courses were UW-Madison courses.

4. One could argue the UniverCity Alliance program, by utilizing (primarily) UW-Madison expertise to partner with Wisconsin communities to develop and implement solutions to community problems, is an example of the Wisconsin Idea, and beneficial to state as a whole. Providing additional funding for the program would allow more communities to partner with the program, potentially at a lower cost to these communities. If the Committee wishes to support the program, but at a lower cost, \$150,000 annually could be provided, which would provide funding for an additional 20 projects annually (Alternative 2).

5. Finally, given that the program has been funded since 2015 using other UW-Madison grant funds, gifts and local contributions, it will likely continue on some basis without the recommended GPR funding. Therefore, the Committee could decide to take no action on this item.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Provide \$300,000 a year in a new, annual appropriation for the UniverCity Alliance program.

<b>ALT 1</b>	<b>Change to Base</b>
GPR	\$600,000

2. Provide \$150,000 annually in a new annual appropriation for the UniverCity Alliance program.

<b>ALT 2</b>	<b>Change to Base</b>
GPR	\$300,000

3. Take no action.

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Attachment



## ATTACHMENT

### Pepin County UniverCity Year Projects 2018-2021

#### Project Name

##### **Economic Development**

Community Branding for Durand  
Economic Analysis and Business Development Strategies for Pepin County  
Downtown Revitalization and Redevelopment Plan for Durand  
Economic Development Guidebook for Pepin County  
Historic Walking App for the Village of Pepin  
Industrial Park designs for Durand  
Tourism Marketing Plans for Pepin County  
Economic Benchmarking Analysis of Pepin County Assets  
Updating Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Pepin

##### **Education**

Best Practices for Analyzing School Data  
Economic Impact of the Durand-Arkansaw School District  
Durand-Arkansaw School District Focus Group Results  
Statistical Analysis of Wisconsin Forward Exam English and  
Language Arts Scores  
Statistical Analysis of Wisconsin Forward Exam Math Scores

##### **Environmental Sustainability**

Behavior Change Communication Campaign to Improve Water Quality  
  
Best Practices for Managing GIS Data  
  
Conservation Management Plan for Fall Creek Watershed  
Feasibility Study of Composting Manure  
Feasibility Study of Composting Yard Waste  
Groundwater Quality Protection in Pepin County  
Health Impact Assessment of Multi-hazards

#### Department: Course Name

UW Extension: Independent Research Project  
UW Extension: Independent Research Project  
Urban and Regional Planning: Planning Workshop  
Urban and Regional Planning: Planning Workshop  
Computer Science: Foundations of Mobile Systems and Applications  
Civil and Environmental Engineering: Senior Capstone Design  
Journalism: Creative Campaign Messages  
UW Eau Claire Economics: Independent research project  
UW River Falls Environmental Science and Management: Planning for  
Sustainable Communities

Education: Independent Research Project  
UW Extension: Independent Research Project  
UW Extension: Independent Research Project

Statistics: Statistical Consulting  
Statistics: Statistical Consulting

Life Sciences Communication and UW Extension: Independent research  
project  
Nelson Institute and State Cartographer's Office: Independent research  
project  
Environmental Studies: Conservation Planning  
Civil Engineering: Environmental Sustainability Engineering  
Civil Engineering: Environmental Sustainability Engineering  
Environmental Studies: Environmental Monitoring Seminar  
Environmental Studies: Health Impact Assessment of Global  
Environmental Change

Project Name

**Environmental Sustainability (continued)**

Increasing Visitors to Holden Park in Pepin County

Stormwater Mitigation Plan for Village of Stockholm

Wastewater Treatment System Design for Village of Stockholm

Water Quality Data, Privacy, and Communication Strategies

Department: Course Name

Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture: Independent  
graduate student research project

Civil and Environmental Engineering: Senior Capstone

Civil and Environmental Engineering: Senior Capstone

Environmental Studies: Environmental Studies Capstone