



March 14, 2022

The Honorable Tony Evers
Governor of the State of Wisconsin
Room 115 East, State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

Re: Request to Sign AB 775 and Veto SB 409, AB 884, AB 885, AB 962 and AB 984

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL

Dear Governor Evers,

The Academic Staff Professionals Representation Organization (ASPRO) is a UW system-wide, non-profit, professional organization representing academic staff and their interests. ASPRO is the only professional organization that represents the 19,000 academic staff -- and only the academic staff -- of the entire UW System.

Thank you for recently signing into law SB 557, which allows the investment of certain UW System revenues. This new law will allow UW System to generate new revenue streams to fund UW priorities.

As a former UW System Regent, we know you are a long-time advocate for the UW System and public higher education. This legislative session we have seen more bills than ever before introduced that impact the UW System. Some of those bills have positive impacts, such as SB 557, but there are even more bills that would be harmful to the UW System and its employees and students.

We are writing this letter today to urge you to sign one bill and veto five bills.

First, we respectfully request that you sign into law AB 775, which requires the Building Commission to allocate \$1 million from the State Building Trust Fund to conduct planning and design services and prepare a design report for the construction of the new UW-Madison Engineering Building. This legislation is important because it will allow for continued advancement of this vital building project for UW-Madison's top-ranked engineering program.

Next, we respectfully request you to veto the following bills:

SB 409 – This legislation would prohibit anti-racism and anti-sexism student instruction and anti-racism and anti-sexism training for employees at the UW System and Technical College System. We ask that you veto this legislation, like you have vetoed other CRT-related legislation, because SB 409 would limit both academic freedom and first amendment rights of students, academic staff, and faculty. Legislation such as these make it more difficult to attract students as well as staff and faculty to the UW System and the State of Wisconsin as a whole.

AB 884 – This legislation would require UW System institutions include a course in the U.S. Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, as a course that meets the general education requirement for diversity or ethnic studies. We ask that you veto AB 884 because the Legislature should not be dictating what is or what is not taught at UW System institutions nor what classes meet requirements. Diversity education introduces students to ideas and perspectives that many of our students have not encountered prior to college but will certainly encounter in Wisconsin workplaces.

AB 885 – This legislation would eliminate immunity for UW System campus administrators from liability for violations of individual expressive rights under the declaration of rights in the Wisconsin Constitution. We ask that you veto AB 885 because this legislation is completely unnecessary. There are already UW System and campus policies and practices in place to provide protections of and remedies for violations of First Amendment rights. This legislation would also have a negative impact on UW employee retention and recruitment. Qualified immunity is important to the State of Wisconsin, as it limits liability while allowing state and UW employees to use their discretion to address challenging situations without penalty in certain circumstances. Therefore, the removal of that protection for UW administrators would result in the UW bearing the cost of damages and awards under this type of lawsuit, which will lead to increased costs for the State of Wisconsin.

AB 962 – This legislation would require UW System institutions participate in the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) landscape analysis. We ask you to veto AB 962 because the independent review of each of the UW System institutions' education preparation programs is duplicative and unnecessary. Currently, all education preparation programs are evaluated and approved by DPI and the Higher Learning Commission. The requirements of this legislation would take academic staff and faculty away from their important role of educating and preparing our future teachers.

AB 984 – This legislation would require UW System institutions to establish and use only objective admissions criteria in making undergraduate student admissions determines. We ask you to veto AB 984 because this legislation would result in fewer students being admitted to UW institutions and may result in pushing more Wisconsin students to attend a higher education institution outside of Wisconsin. A student cannot nor should not be evaluated by their GPA or test scores alone. UW System's holistic approach takes into consideration student essays and life experiences (extra curriculars, employment, etc.) to help ensure a well-rounded and well-prepared student body.

These five bills that we urge you to veto are meddlesome power-grabs by the State Legislature to diminish the roles of academic staff and faculty governance, the UW System Board of Regents, UW System President, and UW Institution Chancellors and administrators.

If you have questions about any of these issues, please feel free to contact me at 608.286.9599 or kilgore@swandby.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kathi Kilgore
Executive Director