



CAMPUS CLIMATE PROGRESS REPORT

SPRING 2023

UW–Madison is committed to fostering an inclusive environment where students, faculty and staff feel welcome and supported. Since 2014, this work has been guided by the campus [Diversity Framework](#) and its 10-year implementation plan [R.E.E.L. Change](#). As the university enacts the final year of the plan, the campus reaffirms its commitment to continuing the four priorities reflected in this progress report:

- **Build a culture of organizational learning** deeply committed to the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging for all, alongside a commitment to free expression and civil engagement across differences;
- **Foster a culture of belonging** to enhance the recruitment and retention of students, staff and faculty, especially those from underrepresented and underserved populations;
- **Facilitate an effective model of distributed strategic diversity leadership** for shared visioning and implementation;
- **Utilize and maximize data** to inform equity-minded policies, practices, and decision-making.

Individuals and groups from across campus have embraced this work and devoted significant time and energy to moving the campus forward. Below are just a few recent examples of our activities in this area.

Freshman class sets diversity records

[Last fall's freshman class](#) was the most racially and ethnically diverse in the university's history, with 1,431 underrepresented students of color, up from 1,251 the previous year. These students comprised 16.6% of the freshman class, up from 14.8% the prior year. Both the number and percentage of underrepresented students of color set all-time highs. In another measure of diversity – socio-economic – the freshman class included 1,404 students receiving need-based financial assistance through the Federal Pell Grant program, the highest number in a freshman class to date. Overall, the new freshman class included students from 71 of Wisconsin's 72 counties.

New center will build on Public History Project

UW–Madison announced in January that it will establish a permanent center with a full-time staff to continue and expand on the work of its well-received [Public History Project](#). The new entity, to be called the Rebecca M. Blank Center for Campus History, is expected to be up and running by mid-summer. Its staff will be devoted to educating the campus community about the university's past in ways that will enrich the curriculum, inform administrative decisions, and boost efforts to achieve a more equitable university. In December, the Public History Project's museum exhibition, called "Sifting and Reckoning: UW–Madison's History of Exclusion and Resistance," completed its run at the Chazen Museum of Art. It logged more than 23,000 visits and was viewed by 160 tour groups, making it one of the most popular exhibitions in the museum's main gallery in recent years. The [exhibition's companion website](#) has been viewed more than 12,000 times by people in 47 states and 44 countries.

Elevating classroom discourse

[UW–Madison's Discussion Project](#) is working with instructors to ensure that classrooms campus-wide provide students with robust opportunities to engage in productive discussion on issues and topics across the spectrum. To date, the project has reached more than 700 instructors – from tenured faculty members to first-year teaching assistants (TAs) – across more than 120 academic departments. Modules focus on how to structure small group discussions, craft questions, and facilitate whole class interactions.

Promoting free expression and belonging

UW–Madison strives to be a place where students, staff and faculty can feel a strong sense of belonging, which helps facilitate free expression in the classroom, among speakers hosted on campus, or in exercising rights to peaceful protest and civil dialogue. To further these aims and help educate campus on an important set of issues, the university has launched a new web hub outlining its policies and values at <https://free-expression.wisc.edu/>

Multicultural event showcases cultural diversity, resources

In September, 1,400 students packed Union South’s Varsity Hall for the 40th annual Multicultural Celebration of Organizations and Resources (MCOR). Hosted by the Multicultural Student Center in Student Affairs as part of Wisconsin Welcome programming for new students, MCOR showcased 26 dynamic student organization performances (up from 17 the previous year) and the opportunity to visit with more than 60 student organizations and campus programs tabling at the event.

Odyssey Project launches initiative for veterans

UW–Madison’s Odyssey Project is expanding its reach with a new venture, [Odyssey Beyond Wars](#). The two-semester program will serve all military veterans experiencing challenges transitioning to civilian life who would like to further their education in a community of peers. The program will provide participants with textbooks, supplies, childcare, dinner, transportation, and tutoring help. Graduates will earn six transferable college credits at no cost and without using veteran benefits.

Flag-raising honors Ho–Chunk history

In collaboration with the Ho–Chunk Nation, UW–Madison [flew the flag of the Ho–Chunk Nation](#) at Bascom Hall for more than six weeks during the 2022 fall semester, including Indigenous Peoples Day in October and the entirety of National Native American Heritage Month in November. Also in November, campus volunteers assisted Bill Quackenbush, tribal historic preservation officer for the Ho–Chunk Nation, in [constructing a Ho–Chunk housing structure](#) called a ciiporoke on the lawn of Dejope Residence Hall. In September, Chancellor Jennifer L. Mnookin met with Ho–Chunk Nation leaders, including President Marlon White Eagle, during a trip to northwestern Wisconsin. The campus inhabits land that is the ancestral home of the Ho–Chunk people.

Campus improves access to captioning, sign language interpretation

Disability-related requests from students, staff, faculty, and visitors that are made through the [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#) are now centrally funded for any UW-sponsored activity. The change streamlines the process for securing a sign language interpreter or live professional captioning for campus events, interviews, or meetings, allowing departments to meet accommodation requests more easily.

Task force submits ideas for improving campus climate

A task force charged with analyzing the results of a student survey on campus climate [completed its work](#) and submitted a set of [recommendations](#) last fall. The recommendations are now being reviewed by university leaders to assess possible implementation strategies. The survey, conducted in 2021, found that most students from nearly all backgrounds find UW–Madison to be a safe, welcoming and respectful place where they feel they belong. However, students from historically underrepresented and marginalized groups rated the campus climate less highly than their peers.

Staff, faculty survey results released

Results of the [2022 Staff Climate Survey](#) were shared in November. Seventy-seven percent of UW–Madison staff feel welcomed in their workplace “very often” or “extremely often,” while 72% responded that they feel respected in the workplace and would recommend the university as a good place to work. The survey also identified areas for future focus and improvement. Campus administrators have pledged to collaborate with schools, colleges, units, divisions and shared governance groups to identify strategies for improvement. Results of the latest iteration of the longitudinal “[Study of Faculty Worklife at UW–Madison](#),” conducted by Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute (WISELI), found that a large majority of faculty who responded to the confidential survey indicated they feel respected by their colleagues, students and department leaders and are satisfied with their salaries and benefits, as well as the support they receive to teach and conduct research.