



# CAMPUS CLIMATE PROGRESS REPORT

SPRING 2024

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 R.E.E.L. Change enters its final year, we continue to strive to meet 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 making systemic change. Below are some recent examples of the efforts in these areas.

## Response to war in Israel and Gaza

Global events frequently have an impact on UW–Madison’s campus community and that has certainly been the case this fall, particularly after Hamas’s attack on Israel on October 7 and Israel’s current war in Gaza. Campus has prioritized our community’s safety and security, along with efforts to provide support for our students. The university, UWPD and MPD continue to staff campus events, gatherings and protests, while providing increased neighborhood patrols of student areas, particularly along Langdon Street. Chancellor Jennifer L. Mnookin [has called for a climate](#) that ensures and protects the right to free speech, while simultaneously recognizing the importance of empathy and recognizing the humanity of those with whom we disagree, urging our community to engage in speech with these values in mind. UW–Madison leaders have and will continue to condemn antisemitism and Islamophobia, along with all forms of violence, harassment and hate directed at individuals based on their identity. The university is also focused on taking additional action through lectures, symposia, facilitated dialogues and other opportunities for education and the exchange of ideas, alongside continued work toward a culture where all can feel seen, heard and valued.

## Diversity Forum 2023

Nearly 700 people participated in person, with another 1,600 joining virtually for the University of Wisconsin–Madison’s 2023 Diversity Forum in November. Titled [“Bridging the Divide, Realizing Belonging While Engaging Difference,”](#) this annual event is dedicated to discussing, sharing, and learning about contemporary issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging. Keynotes by Harvard professor Danielle Allen and poet José Olivarez added depth, discussing [confident pluralism](#), engagement across difference, and [immigrant experiences](#). A standout session on “Religious Identity and Belonging: A Conversation with Faith Leaders” was led by Chief Diversity Officer Dr. LaVar J. Charleston, along with members of the Jewish, Muslim and Christian faith traditions. The session called for – and modeled – people engaging in respectful dialogue with those holding different religious beliefs.

## Ad-hoc group studying Black experience

Last summer, Chancellor Jennifer L. Mnookin directed an ad-hoc group to study the Black experience at UW–Madison and recommend steps the campus community could take to positively impact that experience. The Ad-Hoc Study Group on the Black Community Experience on the UW–Madison Campus began meeting in August and is composed of UW–Madison students, staff, and faculty, as well as members of the community. The study group continues to meet and is expected to report back to the chancellor in mid-spring.

### **Reimagined student center promotes interfaith dialogue**

The newly renamed [Center for Interfaith Dialogue](#) (formerly the Center for Religion and Global Citizenry) transferred from the College of Letters & Science to Student Affairs in 2023. The move offers broader opportunities for uplifting students' faith as a meaningful part of their identity, increasing religious literacy, and fostering a more inclusive religious climate on campus. The center overflowed with students, faculty, staff, and community members at an open house to celebrate their new space in the Pyle Center in September 2023.

### **Initiative expands accessibility, affordability**

In December, Chancellor Jennifer L. Mnookin announced a major new commitment to Native students from Wisconsin. Beginning in the fall of 2024, UW–Madison will offer financial support to cover the full cost of pursuing an undergraduate degree for Wisconsin residents who are enrolled members of federally recognized Wisconsin Indian tribes. The commitment covers not only tuition and fees but also housing, meals, books, and other educational expenses. Additionally, a 5-year pilot program will cover in-state tuition and fees for students pursuing a J.D. (law) or M.D. (medical) degree who are Wisconsin residents and enrolled members of federally recognized Wisconsin tribes. Together, the two new initiatives will be called the Wisconsin Tribal Educational Promise program. The program does not rely on taxpayer funding; rather, it is supported by other institutional resources, such as private donations. When it begins in fall 2024, the program will cover those already on campus, not just those new to campus, and financial support will be awarded regardless of family income.

### **Centering student belonging through Badger Dialogues**

Student Affairs launched the new [Badger Dialogues](#) series in fall 2023 to provide students and campus administrators an informal opportunity to connect and work together toward a more inclusive campus community. In 14 open meetings with students from a variety of backgrounds, administrators shared updates on initiatives related to belonging and invited students to share their feedback, experiences, and ideas. The series will continue through the spring 2024 semester.

### **Building community for First-Generation Badgers**

In an effort to better support first-generation students and provide them enhanced opportunities to connect, find resources, and build community on campus, Student Affairs launched the [First-Generation Badgers](#) initiative in fall 2023. Programs and services for first-generation students are currently housed within several areas on campus, including the Division of Enrollment Management; the Division of Diversity, Equity and Educational Achievement; the Center for Academic Excellence in the College of Letters & Science; and Student Affairs. The new initiative will enhance coordination and programmatic support among these offices.

### **Student advisory board to reconvene on diversity and inclusion efforts**

Student Affairs and the Division of Diversity, Equity & Educational Achievement issued a call for new members of their [Diversity and Inclusion Student Advisory Board](#) in fall 2023. The group was first established in the 2021–22 academic year to advise Student Affairs and DDEEA administrative leaders on the impact of UW–Madison initiatives, efforts, and programs relevant to the experience of students from diverse backgrounds.

### **Banners honor Ho-Chunk Nation**

As part of its 175th anniversary celebration, the university commissioned banners for Bascom Hall, unveiling them at a ceremony during the campus Native November celebration. The artists – doctoral student Molli Pauliot and faculty members Marianne Fairbanks and Stephen Hilyard – chose to honor the Ho-Chunk Nation, on whose ancestral land UW–Madison now occupies. The piece, titled “Seed by Seed,” incorporates traditional Ho-Chunk designs, imagery, and colors. The banners are now part of a regular rotation of themed banners that adorn Bascom Hall.