



## Federal Relations

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### *The Year in Review: Highlights from the UW System Office of Federal Relations*

Before the calendar turns to a new year, here are some highlights from 2005:

**Select Provisions in the House and Senate Bills to Reauthorize the Higher Education Act of 1965:** The current authorization of the HEA actually expired on September 30, 2004. Since that time, Congress has passed several extensions of the Act, and recently approved another three-month extension. The delay in reauthorization is the result of a national agenda dominated by national priorities other than higher education policy; federal surpluses of earlier years that have been replaced by deficits, as evidenced by the disproportionate cuts directed at student loan programs in the recently passed budget reconciliation bill; and a close balance of partisan political power that has impeded progress on not only education, but other federal issues as well.

The Office of Federal Relations will keep a watchful eye in 2006 on two provisions unique to UW System institutions:

- Both the House and Senate bills include a provision that amends the HEA to define the terms “different campus” and “different population.” The amendment is necessary because the U.S. Department of Education has ruled that the UW Colleges do not meet the standards set for having independent campuses because they are organized under an administrative umbrella with one chancellor and one centralized financial-aid operation. The Office of Federal Relations has championed this amendment to allow UW Colleges campuses to apply for more than one Student Support Services Grant. This effort has been supported by U.S. Representatives Petri and Kind and U.S. Senators Feingold and Kohl.
- Working with U.S. Representative Kind, and in collaboration with the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, our attempt to reverse the phase-out of the base guarantee of the campus-based aid program was narrowly turned away during House subcommittee and full committee consideration. At the request of the Office of Federal Relations, U.S. Rep. Kind offered an amendment that would have ensured schools participating in the campus-based aid program would not see a decrease in the amount of funding they currently receive, unlike provisions in the House bill, which would phase-out the base guarantee of the campus-based aid program. Phase-out would mean a loss of an estimated \$7.5 million in federal dollars for students attending UW institutions. The Senate version of the bill maintains current allocation formulas. The Office of Federal Relations will continue to work with our delegation to see that the current allocation formula is preserved.

**Wisconsin Security Research Consortium:** A year ago, there was no mechanism for scientists to compete for grants in classified or sensitive research. Through the efforts of U.S. Senator Herb Kohl and U.S. Congressman Dave Obey, FY06 federal funding is being directed to Wisconsin to establish the Wisconsin Security Research Consortium. The consortium will spearhead efforts to apply for grants to conduct classified and sensitive research in areas such as biodefense, early warning technologies, water and food security, sensors and robotics, to name a few. These are all areas that fit the traditional strengths of the state's research and development expertise, as well as the nation's security priorities at a time when Washington is building defenses to combat terrorism. The Wisconsin Security Research Consortium, advanced by the Office of Federal Relations and the Wisconsin Technology Council, is a public-private partnership that will act as an engine to pursue federal research funds in the homeland security area. More information on the consortium is available at [http://wisconsintechcouncil.com/policy/research\\_consortium/](http://wisconsintechcouncil.com/policy/research_consortium/).

**State of Wisconsin Initiative to Fast-Track Nurse Educators (SWIFT Nurse Educators):** The UW System and several state partners were awarded a \$1.3 million grant to help solve the nation's growing nursing shortage. Under a directive from the UW System Board of Regents to pursue opportunities to increase the capacity of nursing faculty, the Office of Federal Relations coordinated the federal grant proposal to the U.S. Department of Labor. UW System was one of 12 grant recipients from nearly 230 applicants for funding under the President's High Growth Job Training Initiative. More information on SWIFT is available at <http://www.wisconsin.edu/news/2005/r050607.htm>.

**Higher Education Hurricane Relief:** UW System institutions responded immediately to the victims of Hurricane Katrina, a storm that displaced thousands of students and disrupted the higher education system in several states where schools were destroyed or rendered inoperable. The Office of Federal Relations was in continuous contact with our national higher education associations, the U.S. Department of Education, and elected representatives to meet the needs of affected students. An idea introduced by President Reilly will ensure that funds are made available to higher education institutions that incurred unexpected expenses associated with enrolling displaced students. Information on the UW's hurricane relief efforts is available at <http://www.wisconsin.edu/news/2005/r050916.htm>.

**Outlook for 2006:** If the acrimonious negotiations, debate and votes at the end of the first session of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress are any indication, the second session will be tumultuous as well. To quote The Concord Coalition, a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to informing the public about responsible fiscal policy, "The arithmetic is simple: our nation cannot afford to fund military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, increase funding for homeland security, rebuild the Gulf Coast, adequately prepare for the retirement of the baby-boom generation, and meet other national needs while simultaneously cutting taxes and maintaining current spending levels for all other programs." Stay tuned, because the next year and beyond will require difficult choices and tradeoffs – many of which will impact higher education.

All the best to you in 2006. We appreciate your interest and support.