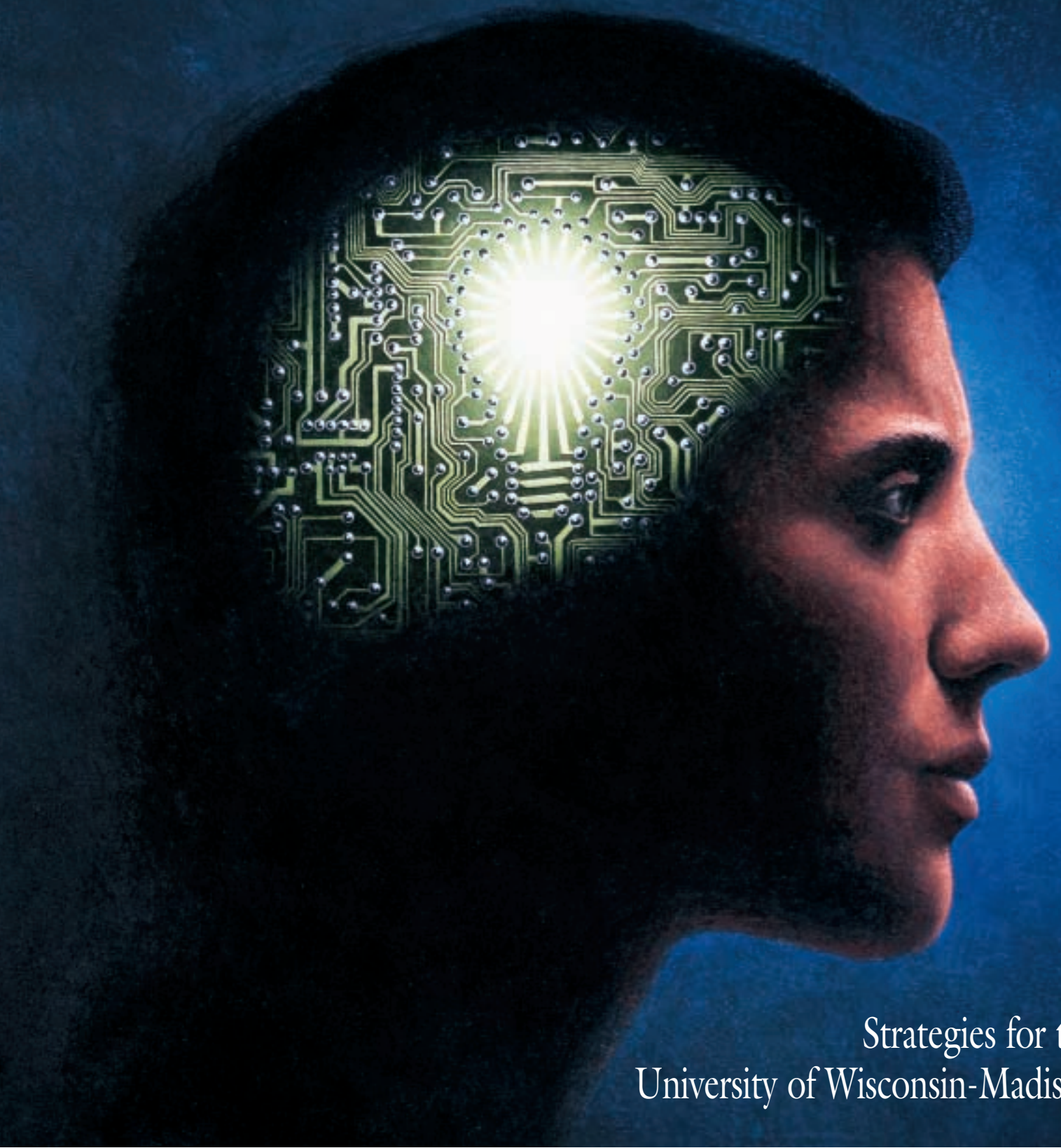


# Connecting Ideas



Strategies for the  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

CONNECTING IDEAS  
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University of Wisconsin–Madison

By John D. Wiley, Chancellor

*To sustain and strengthen  
our position of preeminence in  
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# CONNECTING IDEAS

The University of Wisconsin–Madison recently celebrated its sesquicentennial, welcomed its 27th leader, and received external commendation for being one of the very best public universities in the world. We who have the good fortune to further the works of this great institution see the efforts of its faculty, staff, and students described many times each day in media throughout the world, reflecting advances in knowledge, public policy, and all of the accomplishments, large and small, that make up the rich tapestry of an educated life. We have much to celebrate, and a grand legacy to protect.

As the person privileged to serve as the university's current chancellor, I would like to share with you my sense of where we stand strong, what challenges we face, and how we will continually advance — and improve upon — the many features of this remarkable public trust that is the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

This discussion will feature the strategic planning process that has been used to guide our efforts for more than a decade, helping to identify strengths, weaknesses, and critical needs,

and ways in which to meet these needs. This is a status report regarding an ongoing community process. Additional details regarding the many specific active or planned initiatives that derive from the strategic plan are available on a public Web site — [www.chancellor.wisc.edu/strategicplan/](http://www.chancellor.wisc.edu/strategicplan/) — and will be the subject of extensive dialogue across campus.

As you review this plan, you may ask, “Where am I in all this?” or “How does the plan address my needs and questions?” I invite such questions. This plan is not intended to prescribe any one person's place or function, but instead to challenge each of us to identify ways in which we can contribute to the university's future course that we have all, in our collective judgment, helped to outline.

Strategic planning has allowed us to grow past difficult challenges. The process remains crucial to our future

success. As we turn our attention to the details, however, it is important to begin with a reminder of where we have come from, and where we must always look to find our base.

We are, as observed by our peers in the course of our recent reaccreditation, a “miracle” — one that is built upon fundamental values regarding our relationship with the state, each member of our community, and our educational mission. We are the progenitors of the Wisconsin Idea, which for nearly a century has embodied our service relationship to the needs and interests of the people of Wisconsin. We have gained esteem as a place where people can say what they think, constrained only by the free exercise of personal conviction. This invio-



lable principle was memorialized forever in the Board of Regents' 1894 declaration that "the great state University of Wisconsin should ever encourage that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found."

We are governed by the voices of the many, a shared responsibility of faculty, academic staff, and students, and we are looking for additional creative ways to incorporate the views of classified staff, who perform such crucial support roles for the campus. We have, from relatively modest beginnings, and with judicious

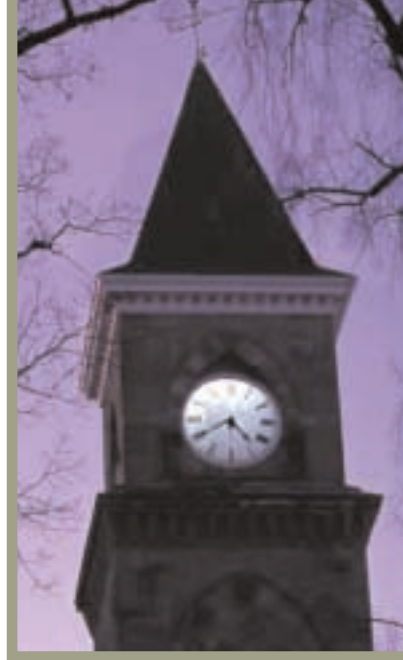
application of limited resources, grown into an educational giant that is considered one of the preeminent research institutions in the world.

For all of these reasons, we truly do represent a miracle — or many miracles — and it is not only the people of the state who celebrate this, but our alumni throughout the world, our public- and private-sector partners, and all those who benefit from what we do here.

Sheer persistence, good fortune, and the great works of countless individuals — qualities that distinguish virtually all successful institutions — have helped us to arrive at this moment in our history.

We must now ask what further actions will enable us to sustain our status at the forefront of higher education and at the leading edge of creating and disseminating new knowledge. In addition to our core values regarding the state, the university, and each other, what other elements are critical to our future? To answer, we must look to another part of our base, one that reflects the emerging context in which we pursue our essential mission of research, teaching, and service.

We must acknowledge our role as a place of intersection for myriad local, regional, national, and international communities, each with dynamic and widely varied perceptions, interests, demands, and contributions. We stand in the midst of an ever-expanding revolution in communication, which influences fundamentally the technology and practice of education and research, the production and dissemination of knowledge, and the accessibility and responsibility of the university as a resource to the world. The fluidity of rapid change surrounds us, and we must continue to navigate carefully through the resulting dynamic context by drawing on what has always made us strong as well as distinctive. UW–Madison is unique in many respects. As we face the emerging challenges of the new millennium, we should find strength, as well as guidance, in the features of our character that have allowed us to remain a strong and distinctive leader in higher education.



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Inevitably, we find that the values forged through our relationship with the state of Wisconsin increasingly intersect with much broader issues, concerns, people, and places. How we manage these intersections will define our future, just as our past efforts have served us so well. This is what we have planned for, each of us, through a comprehensive campus process. I would now like to turn to that topic, to share with you the culmination of our thinking, our ideas, and our plans. These plans exist as a community statement because we have all been invited to participate in their creation. They represent our collective judgment on the future course for this university.

## Strategic Planning: Structure and Process

I am a physicist by training, educated primarily at UW–Madison. Perhaps because I am a physicist, or because I have spent most of my professional life at this institution, I have a deep appreciation for the constancy of change, for the incalculable ways in which the time, energy, and enthusiasm of each member of this special community impels us always toward new frontiers and understandings drawn from lingering uncertainties. And yet, the inevitability of change has not been — and cannot be allowed to become — a matter of chance, of random trajectories transecting in wholly unpredictable ways all that we do here.

We are shielded from that potential chaos, I believe, by two crucial standards: the interconnectedness of our base values — our sense of history and of place — with all facets of our institutional imperative *to create, integrate, transfer, and apply knowledge*; and our care and attention to the practice of strategic planning. Our values constitute an enduring structure through which the constancy of change is filtered, offering stability and continuity without retarding innovation and creativity. Our strategic planning offers a method through which we manage the process and course of change to meet the defined needs of — and demands upon — the university community. Together, our values and our commitment to strategic planning embody community-oriented leadership.

## Pathways to a Strategic Plan

Effective strategic planning is a continuous process, entailing constant reassessment of institutional needs, resources, and operating environment. The primary objective, which is central to the planning process that has evolved during the last decade, is critically succinct:

*To sustain and strengthen our position  
of preeminence in research and higher education.*

Most recently, our assessment of needs, resources, and environment was conducted through the mandatory self-study that led to our 10-year reaccreditation in 1999, a three-year effort involving the coordinated participation of hundreds of faculty, staff, students, and community members. The exhaustive findings of the self-study were later summarized in an executive document, *Targeting Tomorrow*, which identified five strategic priorities for the university for the coming years:

- Promote Research
- Advance Learning
- Accelerate Internationalization
- Amplify the Wisconsin Idea
- Nurture Human Resources

Guided by the community perceptions described in *Targeting Tomorrow*, the university community again was engaged to bring further definition to these priorities. The result is both remarkable and predictable: scores of recommendations for initiatives and programs that can make us better, healthier, more contemporary. These recommendations stand as the guideposts for local action, for the contributions of schools, colleges, departments, programs, and individuals to the continuous advancement of UW–Madison. While additional details will be made available during the coming months and years, it is time to introduce the standards against which our efforts and our growth will be measured.

## I. PROMOTE RESEARCH

Innovative and prolific scholarly investigation is virtually synonymous with UW–Madison. It should come as no surprise, then, that our commitment to continued research preeminence remains intense and unambiguous. We must be vigilant in upgrading our physical and financial resources, our faculty and staff, and our technical infrastructure; we must invigorate and expand the research and educational opportunities for students; and we must seek to expand the application and benefit of the research that we conduct. To achieve these objectives, we need to be flexible and adaptive to emergent — as well as established — research opportunities, to new strategies for allocating resources, and to the imperative of reintegrating and reinvigorating the arts and humanities as an integral component of a successful research enterprise. We will also need to adjust to the fluctuations in graduate school admissions of the past several years, which can have significant implications for both the educational and research imperatives of our mission.



Strategic  
Priorities

**Upgrading Resources, Faculty and Staff, and Technical Infrastructure.**

Outstanding faculty and staff are pivotal to research success, as are adequate resources and a reliable physical and technical infrastructure. We must continue to recruit and retain the very best people. We must support their efforts through electronic research administration, modernized facilities, and innovative approaches to more collaborative, interdisciplinary forms of inquiry. And, as the essential features of a successful research environment continue to evolve, we must listen and respond.

**Invigorate and Expand Student Educational Opportunities.** Just as the nature and conduct of research changes with time, the needs and expectations of students mature and expand. Today, students require increased research opportunities as a component of their primary education, just as they want — and employers are beginning to require — a broader exposure to the liberal arts. They want service learning. They are interested in new kinds of educational and professional development programs, including graduate-level capstone and certificate programs. We need to explore ways in which to meet all of these interests, including strengthening our relationships with K–12 institutions, promoting increased accessibility through distance learning, and enhancing programmatic and instructional flexibility.

**Expand the Application and Benefit of Our Research.**

UW–Madison is a public university. The research conducted here is for the benefit of society, through the advancement of human knowledge, economic development, health enhancement, and innumerable other avenues. We require the trust and support of the public, and we have an obligation to inform our supporters of our work, just as we have a parallel obligation to respond to societal demands for new areas of inquiry, and for new advances in our understanding of specific societal problems. Our communications strategies should reflect this dual need to know and to listen. We should also strive for more effective linkages with public- and private-sector partners, facilitating technology transfer.



**II. ADVANCE LEARNING**

The practice of learning has three general concentrations at UW–Madison: the undergraduate student experience, the professional and graduate student experience, and, from a far more encompassing perspective, the experience of lifelong learning for everyone, including our faculty and staff. Each has its own unique qualities, some of which are featured here, although

the necessary and desirable overlap that exists should always be appreciated.

One illustration of that overlap, and of the broad scope of the learning we should envision, is provided by our intercollegiate athletics programs. Since becoming chancellor, I have initiated a number of steps that I hope will reintegrate the experience of our student-athletes and the sports events that they make possible into the broader, day-to-day academic life experience of every person on this campus. It may be hard to conceptualize, at first, how learning takes place in a packed Camp Randall Stadium or Kohl Center, or in the bleachers of the Field House or along the sidelines of a grassy field. But if you ask those who are in the crowd, or the alumni who remember the experience of being there, it matters. It lasts.

It is equally important that all student-athletes, their coaches and the staff of the athletic department feel fully integrated into the university and know that they play a key role in an overall educational enterprise. The same imperative applies to all departments, and administrative and support organizations on campus, from housing staff to the Wisconsin Alumni Association, and from the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation to the carpentry shop. We are all in the business of learning and educating, and of making both possible.

**The Undergraduate Student Experience.** Nearly 30,000 undergraduates enroll annually at UW–Madison. Not surprisingly, the areas of recommended emphasis for undergraduate education are focused on the quality of life and study afforded to each member of this vast population. In particular, we must find ways in which to foster a broad sense of community, carrying forward from the advent of residential learning communities and other, smaller-scale initiatives. We must encourage an appreciation of all aspects of diversity, both through its increase on campus and through open discussion of the complex societal and historical facts it embodies. And, within the dynamic contours of a large, diverse population, we must encourage individual creativity and growth, and remind students of their critical role in framing the society of the next generations.

In support of these objectives, we begin with the following: using technology more effectively to meet the needs of students, both educationally and socially; improving the first-year experience through more concentrated learning options, such as the freshman seminar, expanded orientation and advising, and increased opportunities for participation in original research and creative works; integrating existing curricula with service-learning activities; encouraging interdisciplinary education; and emphasizing the dynamism and uniqueness of different cultures, and exploring their presence and influence in global politics.

In concert with these initiatives, we need to continually inquire of students what they expect to see present or possible on this campus, or anywhere their courses of study may take them.

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**The Professional and Graduate Student Experience.** A diverse and accomplished graduate and professional student population is integral to our emerging relationships with public- and private-sector partners, and for carrying forward more fully into society the benefits of the teaching, research, and service we perform. We must find ways to better understand the needs of employers, and to identify new and emergent educational interests of potential students, allowing us to remain visible and relevant in all quarters as a source of graduate and professional education.

To begin to meet these objectives, we are committed to the following actions:

- Further develop the capstone and certificate programs, and offer specialized advanced training to students and their employers, either of which may have in mind desirable mid-career educational needs
- Take increased advantage of distance-learning opportunities, particularly as they can enhance the multidisciplinary approach to research and study that is becoming increasingly a requirement of researchers, students, funding agencies, and employers
- Place additional emphasis on advising and mentoring, helping individual graduate and professional students to better understand the course and purpose of their academic programs, even as we try to better define and meet their needs
- As with our commitment to undergraduate education, improve the diversity and quality of our professional and graduate student population through new associations with business, alumni, and a broader spectrum of undergraduate degree-granting institutions, through more aggressive investment in recruitment activities, and through early-post-graduate study programs.



**Lifelong Learning.** Every day, whether through the classroom, the media that announce our advances in knowledge or the constant word-of-mouth of our students, faculty, staff, and alumni — and even our peers and colleagues — we invite people throughout the world to learn with us at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. This common appeal is a direct reflection of our mission, and it is time for us to carry it forward into a new dimension, to foster and support an appreciation of learning that is constant and enduring, that carries through the life of every individual we touch in a manner that enriches and extends his or her experience. We can do this, and we should.

The challenge presents a continuum of opportunities that we have already begun to engage, and which we need to develop further. For pre-college youth, we can expand programs in the sciences, arts, and humanities, and we can improve access to those programs through the development of a K–12 Web portal available to both students and teachers. More generally, through efforts like the PEOPLE program and the introduction of graduate students into K–12 classrooms to share the excitement and attractions of research, we can become more of a presence in the lives of those youth — and their teachers and advisers — who have not typically perceived us as a viable resource because of barriers that we must find ways to reduce.

We can extend our appeal to non-traditional students of all ages through more flexible programming, through an expansion of our outreach offerings and strategic revisions in our professional education opportunities, including capstone certificates. Here, too, we must find ways to reduce existing barriers to access and participation.

Finally, we must remember the simple strength of the vast possibilities that we offer for science education and scientific literacy, for understanding disparate cultures and societies through the arts and humanities — which also offer us enriched modes of grappling with the burgeoning ethical questions driven by science — and for the ability to learn more about anything that interests us as we go through life.

### **III. ACCELERATE INTERNATIONALIZATION**

If we pause even for a moment to look around at the current boundaries of our research, and of the learning that we promote, it is apparent immediately that UW–Madison has a significant and rapidly increasing international stature. We must attend to this growth in a responsible manner, first through continued excellence in area and international studies, and next through strengthened offerings in international education.

We must also take a broader perspective, recognizing that, much like society in general, we face an important juncture at which international partnerships are evolving rapidly and require open and creative exploration of opportunities that will enhance realization of our mission. As we expand the reach of our efforts in technology transfer,



and explore new collaborations with the public and private sectors of the international community, we can exert new influence on issues of global significance, including the environment, poverty, and human rights in the global economy.

#### **IV. AMPLIFY THE WISCONSIN IDEA**

I have addressed our commitments to research, learning, and internationalization, and with regard to each, have acknowledged the need to expand the boundaries within which each has

been practiced. We are fortunate at UW–Madison to have embodied in a single instrument both the tradition and the will to make this happen. That instrument has been known for many decades as the Wisconsin Idea.

As conceived and practiced through much of the history of this university, the Wisconsin Idea has embodied a coterminous boundary between the state and the university. As important as it remains for the university and the state to retain their historic partnership and to refine it in a manner consistent with contemporary needs, the conception of a shared, limiting boundary is no longer viable. The university and the state are both members of an increasingly interactive global community. The Wisconsin Idea offers a shared medium through which we can help the state achieve its maximum potential as a participant in a world economy that embraces learning and the advancement of knowledge as much as it does material production.

I have offered suggestions for how we might begin this effort. What remains paramount, in my estimation, is the need to remind ourselves openly and aggressively that the effort is required, and that the instrument required for success, the Wisconsin Idea, is already established as an integral part of our character.

*We need to encourage civility and respect. We need to look more closely at the day-to-day behaviors that impact the climate in which we all work and learn...*

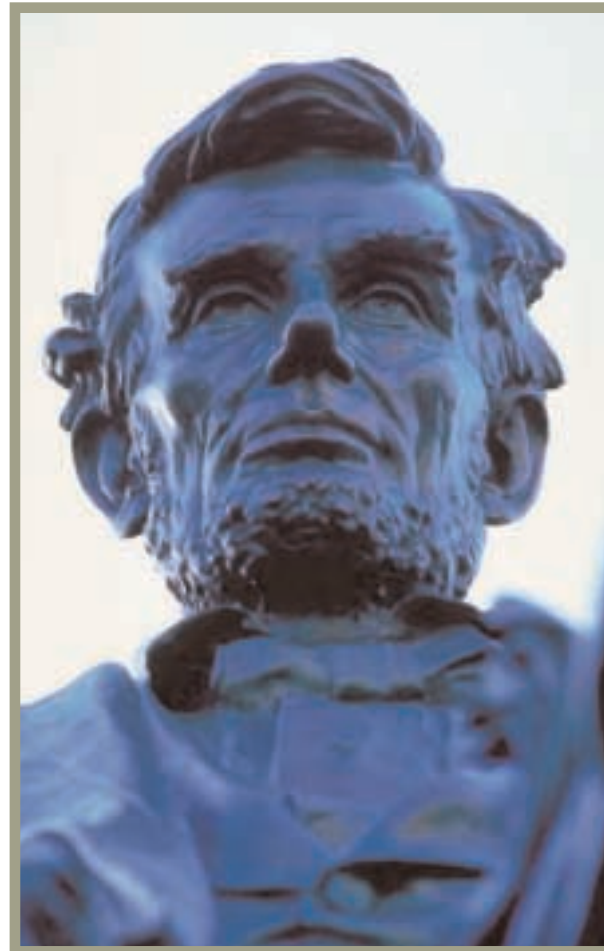
## V. NURTURE HUMAN RESOURCES

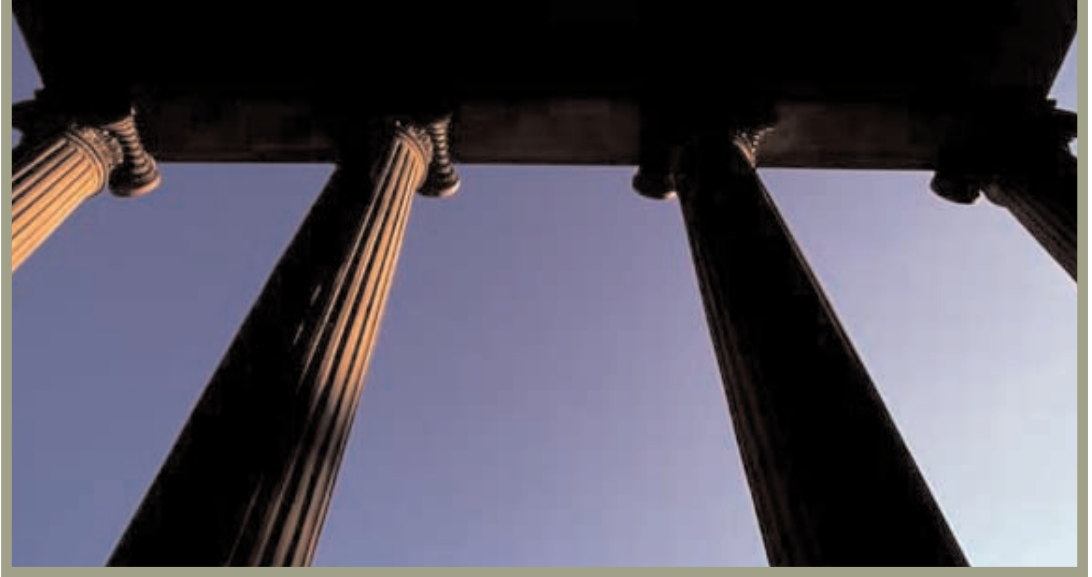
If the Wisconsin Idea represents the signature instrument through which we can accomplish what we must in order to remain great, then it is the individual members of our university community — the students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends — who must make the instrument work effectively. If that is to happen, we must all take responsibility for the environment in which the effort will take place.

We need to encourage civility and respect. We need to look more closely at the day-to-day behaviors that impact the climate in which we all work and learn, not just focus on the larger, more identifiable standards prohibiting harassment and discrimination. We need to be more receptive to difference and become more aware of it as a source of strength and appeal, not an impediment to the maintenance of a status quo. We are becoming global, both in composition and influence, and we need to develop a competence that reflects these facts if we are to continue to advance together. We need to achieve a similar competence with respect to our profound domestic diversity.

For students, we are improving the educational experience, enhancing diversity and governance, promoting new modes of learning through service and technology, and augmenting social opportunities that break free of a historic association with alcohol consumption. For faculty and staff, we are making efforts to increase governance participation across all categories of employment, promoting diversity through strategic and interdisciplinary hires, facilitating ongoing discussions about the work and learning environment, and improving work-life balance opportunities along with leadership development training.

In effect, on a purely local level, we are attempting to integrate a model of diverse and respectful lifelong learning into the lives of those we will be asking to promote it. As might be said, good practice begins at home. This is a beginning, and it is up to all of us to take it forward from here.





## Next Steps

As a community, through the exhaustive efforts of our most recent reaccreditation and the years of strategic planning that preceded it, we have charted a course that reflects our history and our high expectations for continued excellence.

Much remains to be done. The ideas introduced here represent a beginning, but one that is built upon a solid foundation of reflection, action, and momentum. We now move into a next generation, first through careful analysis of the initiatives identified in support of the five strategic priorities, and then through an assessment of new options, old options, resources, and competencies. We need to cease doing what has not worked and be willing to shift strengths and try new approaches, and to meet new needs and demands with innovation.

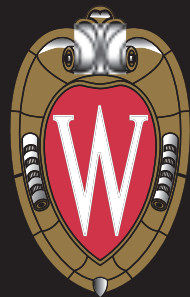
The course suggested here began as a community referendum and will go forward in the same vein. Through a Web site and public discussions, we hope to elicit continual feedback on what we are doing and what we might do differently. We welcome any views that people care to share.

This is your university, and the legacy of greatness that we must carry forward belongs to our future generations.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe D. Wilf". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joe" being the most prominent.

Chancellor



THE UNIVERSITY  
*of*  
**WISCONSIN**  
MADISON