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To: The Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities
From: Sen. Dan Feyen
Re: Assembly Bill 984

Hello, Chairman Murphy and committee members. Thank you for taking the time today to hear testimony on Assembly Bill 984.

The University of Wisconsin System is one of the largest public higher-education systems in the country. Students come from all over the world to attend Wisconsin's prestigious public universities.

We need to ensure that the UW System's admissions criteria is objective and transparent. It can be difficult to find a clear answer on the specifics of what admissions officers consider when making an admissions decision. Assembly Bill 984 would remedy this by requiring each University of Wisconsin System institution to publish its admissions criteria on its respective website so prospective students could easily find that information.

Assembly Bill 984 also requires the UW System to use objective admissions criteria when considering prospective students. With this change, UW institutions would still be able to utilize a holistic admissions process, using more data points than just grades and test scores. The intent of this bill is to ensure students are not being denied admission for subjective reasons like an admissions officer disagreeing with the content of an essay response. Admissions decisions would still be able to be made based on the quality of a student's essay response. We want to make sure that students aren't being denied admission to our state's world class institutions because of differing viewpoints.

The UW-System needs to be making unbiased, transparent admissions decisions when considering prospective students and Assembly Bill 984 will help ensure that happens.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions the committee has.



Office of Government Relations

Van Hise Hall
1220 Linden Drive
Madison, WI 53706
www.wisconsin.edu

DATE: February 22, 2022

TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities

FROM: DeeJ Lundgren, UW System Interim Associate Vice President for Government Relations

RE: Testimony on Assembly Bill 984

Thank you, Chair Murphy and committee members, for providing the UW System (UWS) an opportunity to provide testimony on Assembly Bill 984 (AB 984).

Currently, admission rates are strong across our 13 universities, reflecting our commitment to opening the doors of our public institutions to those who are interested in a university education. In fact, admission rates this fall are in the 90-plus percent range at 10 of our 13 universities. Each one of our universities offers different opportunities to meet the needs of individuals who want a university experience.

As written, this legislation would only serve to limit access to our public universities for many deserving and qualified applicants. Regulating objective admissions cut-offs, will result in more students being denied admission. Limiting access to enrollment to our schools will lead to declines in workforce needs of Wisconsin and allow out-of-state universities to enroll our students, at a time when we need to bolster both.

As our admission officials note, admissions review is both an art and a science. Objective measures are important when reviewing an application but cannot tell the holistic story of a student. These non-objective measures, including a student essay, can inform admission officials to other factors that may influence a student's academic success in college. Concerns regarding ideological discrimination in reviewing these subjective materials are already prohibited under 36.11 (3) (a), which bans partisan tests in admissions.

Setting an objective measure of a GPA minimum would not allow for more subjective considerations, such as reviewing academic success in core subject areas, rigor of these courses, or progression of a student's success over their high school career—all of which many of our universities use in reviewing an application. These objectives become even more important when reviewing applications of non-traditional students or trying to quantify a veteran's experience to objective measures. Ultimately, for all our universities, subjective admission materials provide the opportunity to admit many more students than these materials deny.

(Cont.)

The implementation of this bill would severely hurt overall enrollment across the UWS. This would have a detrimental impact not only on our campuses but would negatively impact our future workforce, and individuals who desire the opportunity to access the high-quality education our public universities provide.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.



WISCONSIN

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Assembly Committee on Colleges & Universities 2021 Assembly Bill 984

Admission requirements at University of Wisconsin System institutions

February 22, 2022

Chairman Murphy and members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges & Universities:

The University of Wisconsin–Madison thanks the committee for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to Assembly Bill 984, related to admission requirements at University of Wisconsin System institutions. UW-Madison shares the goal of the authors in increased communication and transparency to applicants and their families, but we are concerned with Assembly Bill 984 as written for a number of reasons.

UW-Madison employs a holistic admissions process with three major enrollment goals in mind: first, the campus meets the Board of Regents requirement to enroll 5,200 first-year and transfer students from Wisconsin and Minnesota, second, to enroll a class that includes students from all 72 counties in Wisconsin, and third, to enroll approximately 1,000 transfer students.

In the language of Assembly Bill 984, the term “objective admissions criteria” is not defined anywhere in the legislation. This is problematic in terms of campus compliance with provisions of the bill. UW-Madison employs a holistic admissions process that takes into consideration a number of criteria when reviewing applications. Every application is individually and thoroughly reviewed multiple times by members of our Admissions team. First and foremost, admissions counselors are looking for academic excellence reflected through coursework and grades. Beyond academics, the Admissions team looks for qualities such as leadership, concern for others and the community, achievement in the arts and athletics, and potential for contribution to the UW-Madison community.

Undergraduate applicants must submit either the Common Application or the UW System application. Applicants must submit their academic record, complete two essays, and submit one letter of recommendation from an academic source. Academic course preparation is a key area that is considered in this process. An applicant’s high school record should demonstrate both rigor and breadth in the types of course work they pursue. A competitive academic record should show some of the most challenging advanced-level work offered at or through an applicant’s school in as many areas as possible, while maintaining a strong GPA. A typical admitted student will have demonstrated four years of English and

math, and 3-4 years of social studies, science, a world language, and two years of fine arts. UW-Madison is test optional until 2025, but SAT and ACT scores can be submitted as supplemental material. As a required part of the holistic review, applicants have the opportunity to tell the Admissions team more about themselves through two essays. All of the aforementioned requirements are currently available on the website for our Office of Admissions & Recruitment. Our admissions requirements, process and timelines are all frequently communicated to schools and school districts as well as community-based organizations that are engaged in the college going process.

UW-Madison Office of Admissions & Recruitment prides itself on establishing relationships with high schools across Wisconsin and beyond. The goal is to account for the wide variety of educational opportunities present across the state and the desire to capture wide representation from all 72 Wisconsin counties. Admissions staff is familiar with the course offerings in school districts in urban, suburban, and rural districts alike. It is these considerations that are taken into account when making admitting a student and by nature, these considerations are subjective.

Consideration is also made for non-traditional, military-connected, or transfer students who may not have had a typical path to get to us, but have the potential to contribute in a meaningful way to our campus community. A “one-size-fits-all” approach to these particular applicants does not take into consideration these unique experiences.

While our testimony has primarily focused at undergraduate admissions, the proposed legislation does not differentiate between undergraduate admissions requirements or graduate. Graduate admissions is dependent on criteria established at the individual school and college level and can include criteria such as specific course prerequisites, GPA requirements, an essay component, letters of recommendation. Even at the undergraduate level, there are certain expectations from the school or college that applicants are accepted into.

The legislation also makes a specific reference to to “sectarian or partisan tests or any tests based upon race, religion, national origin of U.S. citizens or sex”. No such tests are being employed during the admissions process at any UW-Madison school/or college at any level—undergraduate or graduate.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the impact this legislation would have on UW-Madison. If you have any questions, please reach out to UW-Madison Director of State Relations Crystal Potts crystal.potts@wisc.edu or (608) 265-4105.

Office of University Relations

University of Wisconsin-Madison 165 Bascom Hall 500 Lincoln Drive Madison, Wisconsin 53706
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DAVE MURPHY

State Representative • 56th Assembly District

Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities

Public Hearing, February 22, 2022

Assembly Bill 984

Testimony of State Representative Dave Murphy

Members of the committee, thank you for hearing Assembly Bill 984 today.

Imagine for a moment that you have four years to prepare to get into a program that could change the course of your life. You expect to pay enough for this program that you could instead choose to buy a house or start a business. This program is also highly subsidized by taxpayers. You'll do everything you can to get accepted; however, there's a catch: no one is allowed to know exactly how candidates are chosen, not even the State Legislature that created the program.

No, this isn't the Twilight Zone, this is exactly how the University of Wisconsin—Madison operates its admissions system. Behind me is an example of the criteria UW—Madison uses to determine whether an applicant will get in to their institution. When I asked for the criteria, and even offered to sign the same confidentiality agreement their admissions employees sign, this is the response I received.

As chair of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities, I simply cannot do my job to carry out oversight of our public university if this is the amount of detail and cooperation I get. More importantly, the public has no way of determining whether the admissions process is fair. Hidden criteria like this have historically been used to veil racism, favoritism, and political bias. This shroud of secrecy is a slap in the face to the students and families who go deep into debt to pay our universities bills.

Every admissions decision at our public universities is an investment of public funds. Assembly Bill 984 is modeled on the principle that public funds should only be invested in a transparent manner, based on clear and consistent criteria. If enacted, this bill would ensure that only objective criteria could be used in making admissions decisions and that those criteria must be published. Any objective criteria could still be used and UW institutions would still be able to use what they call "holistic admissions." For example, an institution would still be able to put in place a system that allows them to admit students from every county in our state.

What would no longer be allowed are the black bars of mystery that sit behind me. Gaining admission to our public universities should not be an unsolvable code, it must be something that you can clearly build towards with all your talent, determination, and most importantly, hard work.



Office of Legal Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

September 17, 2021

Representative David Murphy
Room 318 North
State Capitol
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

Via U.S. Mail

Re: Records Request

Dear Representative Murphy,

Please find attached a redacted version of the documents your office has requested. UW-Madison has understood conversations with your staff regarding the university's admissions process to amount to an informal request for the documentation on which the university relies when evaluating undergraduate admission applications. As such, this request has been handled outside of UW-Madison's formal public records process. Even though the provision of these documents to your office has gone through an informal process, UW-Madison was compelled to remain consistent with the legal provisions of Wisconsin's Public Records Law when determining what information contained within these documents is appropriate to disclose.

The documents the university has provided you represent what would be provided if these documents had been requested and delivered through UW-Madison's formal public records process. Below is a summary of the legal justifications on which UW-Madison relied when making redactions to the documents. If these documents were requested through the formal public records process, these legal arguments would be expanded on and appropriate notices regarding review of UW-Madison's determinations would be provided.

1. **Trade Secrets.** Information contained within these documents constitute trade secrets as defined in Wis. Stat. § 134.90(1)(c). Trade secrets are exempt from public disclosure pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 19.36(5).
2. **Release of Such Information Would Harm the Public's Interest.** UW-Madison has also determined that the release of the redacted information would harm the public's interest. Specifically, doing so would undermine the significant public interest in maintaining the competitive position of UW-Madison – vis-a-vis its peer institutions– when recruiting and evaluating students.

Moreover, release of such information would have a deleterious effect on the public's interest in maintaining a fair and equitable application review process. If this information were publicly

released, it would likely have the effect of harming those applicants who did not or could not access such information, which would place those applicants at a significant disadvantage when applying to UW-Madison. Creating a system in which some applicants are at such a significant advantage, given that they know the exact criteria by which they will be evaluated, will substantially damage the fairness of the applicant review process.

3. Protection of Certain Employees. Information contained in these documents can directly or indirectly identify UW-Madison employees who review admissions applications. Due to the highly competitive nature of college admissions, UW-Madison has redacted any information that may directly or indirectly identify these employees in order to protect them from potential reprisal by applicants who are not granted admission to the university. The public maintains an interest in not only a fair and equitable applicant review process, but also a process that is skillfully administered by highly talented admissions professionals. UW-Madison actively recruits and retains world-class employees to review admissions applications in order to serve this interest. Were UW-Madison unable to protect the identities of these employees from reprisal, they would likely seek employment at an institution better able to do so, completely undermining UW-Madison's efforts to recruit and retain these individuals as well as the overall well-being of the application review process.

Sincerely,



Nancy K. Lynch
Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs

Enclosures



OFFICE OF
Admissions and Recruitment
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Statement on Expectations and Responsibilities

Admission Counselors, Admission Representatives, Readers and all staff who assist with holistic, competitive and selective application reviews are expected to follow the guidelines and procedures laid out in these training documents and abide by the below expectations.

Anyone who engages and/or assists with reviewing applications will be referred to as “Reviewers” for the purpose of this document.

Responsibilities

- Read, review and follow the training documents to the best of your ability
 - Undergraduate Admissions Holistic Review: Principles
 - Undergraduate Admissions Holistic Review: Guidelines
 - Undergraduate Admissions Holistic Review: Applicant Evaluation Page
 - Undergraduate Admissions Holistic Review: Secondary Review

Expectations

- If reviewer should be assigned to read a file of a family member, friend or an acquaintance of any kind they are expected to recuse themselves from the decision and inform their supervisor to have the file re-assigned to another reviewer.
- Should a reviewer or any other staff member ever be offered money, or anything of value, in exchange for an admission decision or other admission service, the staff member is expected to decline and inform their supervisor of the situation at once.
- All staff are expected to review and be familiar with NACAC’s Code of Ethics and Professional Practices (CEPP) and comply as appropriate
 - <https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/advocacy-and-ethics/statement-of-principles-of-good-practice/nacacs-code-of-ethics--professional-practices.pdf>
- The training documents are intended for use of reviewing and evaluating admissions applications only. Any use of the training documents other than to complete the responsibilities of a reviewer is a violation of our statement on ethics and accountability and could be cause for termination.
- All training documents, resources, and student information are subject to confidentiality and should not be discussed with other individuals or via social media platforms.

Signature _____

Date _____

Keep a copy of this page for your records and provide copy of this page with signature to Associate Director of Admission Services & Operations to keep on file.

***Undergraduate Admissions Holistic Review:
Freshman Applicant Evaluation Page
FOR THE 2021-22 ENROLLING CLASS***

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OFFICE OF
Admissions and Recruitment
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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Rating Values

Rating values are used to guide reviewers through the holistic review. They are not a formula and are not to be added up to result in an admission decision. They are independent of context and intended to be standardized across our applicant pool to inform our data and our holistic review process, not to justify a decision. When we get to admission tier recommendations, that is where context comes into play.

High School Record

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Rating Value	Description	Benchmark
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Academic Performance

Rating Value	Description
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

College Ready Writing

Indicators of college ready writing include:

- [REDACTED]

After reading both essays for the applicant, indicate if there are concerns about their readiness to engage college level writing at UW-Madison based on the applicant's essays.

Rating Value	Description
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] d.

Positive Campus Contributions (PCC)

PCC is non-cognitive and should capture the value students will contribute to campus separate from admission requirements. Consider how unique an applicant may be among their peers and how their experiences, perspective, passion, or talents stand out. PCC should consider our priority of building a diverse student body and how applicants may contribute to the learning and development of others.

Rating Value	Description	
1		
1		
1		
1		

[Redacted]

Major Fit [REDACTED]

Major fit is an indicator of an applicant's academic competitiveness, demonstrated interest and likelihood to find success in that area of study. We utilize major fit to determine admission to direct entry programs in the [REDACTED]. We also use major fit to gauge how a student's application materials align with the major they indicated on their application such as in the case of arts and humanities which are institutional priorities on campus.

When rating major fit consider how the applicant's academic record aligns with the area of academic interest they listed. Do they have strengths in the subjects required for that major. Do they have involvement or experience that aligns with this academic interest. What in their application materials demonstrates a commitment to this area of study beyond listing it as a potential major?

Review below benchmarks for reference when rating major fit please note that [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Major Fit

Rating Value	Description	Benchmark
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Major Fit

Rating Value	Description	Indicators
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Major Fit Rating

Rating Value	Description	Benchmark

Guidelines:

- 2 is the standard (most common) and is considered a good rating
- 3's and 4's are reserved for students whose interest and/or preparation for desired major or academic exploration truly stands out
- The ability to support interests through internships, job shadow, extracurricular activities, related coursework or other hands-on experience is valued but not required

Notes:

- A major fit rating of 1 does not mean the student should be denied
- A lack of decisive plans (undecided students) should not result in a negative rating
- Major Fit is an indicator of their readiness to engage that major or school/college at UW-Madison, not necessarily of their admissibility

Decision Recommendations

Admit

Applicants reviewed and considered for admission are academically prepared and often taking strong academic courses at their high schools and/or college and earning good grades, primarily As and Bs. In our applicant pool, there are many more students who are academically admissible and likely to find success than space in our freshman class. To admit the students who are the most desirable in terms of academic competitiveness, strongest fit and mostly likely to make positive campus contributions, we rank our applicants by [REDACTED]. When indicating an admission decision, counselors will recommend A [REDACTED] a ranking system to indicate which applicants are the most desirable within our applicant pool.

Consider the context of where the student has been educated and how they have progressed in their rigor. Consider their overall academic performance and grade trend. Consider the student's likelihood to have a positive impact on campus as demonstrated in their essays, letters of recommendation, fit for their intend major, involvement, and how it compares to other applicants you have reviewed.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Deny

These are applicants who are not academically prepared. We have concerns about their academic preparation, or they fail to meet even the minimum expectations. In the case of freshman applicants, it may be these applicants are far from competitive compared to other students at their same high school. They are lacking in both rigor and performance and it is highly unlikely we would have space for them at a later date.

Reviewer Responsibility

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Quality Analysis

Reviewers charged with quality analysis responsibilities are entrusted with assessing the previous decisions to ensure the best possible decision has been made. Often in our work of holistic application review there are many possible admission decisions due the high quality of our applicants, however, due to academic competitiveness, institutional priorities and overall fit some decisions may be better than others to meet the charge of campus leadership. The Quality Analysis team is charged with making final admission decisions reflective of our holistic, competitive, and selective process based on direction provided by leadership and/or trainers. This analysis is typically the last look before final decisions are made about which tiers of students are to be admitted, deferred, waitlisted, or denied. When conducting quality analysis reviewers should be confident in their decision. If lingering questions or concerns about a decision remain, a reviewer is expected to consult a member of leadership or trainer before completing a decision.

###

***Undergraduate Admissions Holistic Review:
Guidelines***

FOR THE 2021-22 ENROLLING CLASS

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OFFICE OF
Admissions and Recruitment
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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Admission Decisions

The goal of the Office of Admissions and Recruitment is to admit the most desirable students from our applicant pool. We consider the context in which a student has been educated and consider how a student has excelled according to what is offered at their school. These guidelines should serve as a starting point to help you make an informed admission decision. There will be times when a decision is not clear cut or an applicant falls between decision guidelines; in these cases, use your professional expertise or consult a more senior member of the team to make the best decision. Consider your recommendation carefully and always ask for clarification if you are unsure about the best course of action.

**Summer/Fall Freshman Admitted Students:
2018, 2019, 2020**

Middle 50% Range

GPA: 3.8 – 4.0 Class rank: 85-97th percentile

ACT: 28 – 33 SAT: 1340 – 1480 TOEFL: 102-110

*ACT and SAT scores not required between Spring 2021 and Spring 2023

**Spring/Summer/Fall Transfer Admitted
Students: 2018, 2019, 2020**

Middle 50% Range

GPA: 3.4 – 3.9

Freshman Decision Guidelines

Admit

Applicants recommended for admission will be academically competitive based on the context of their education taking challenging advanced level courses based on what rigor has been available to them at their high school. They will be largely earning grades of As and Bs or the equivalent. Admissible students are likely to be highly rated in multiple areas of our holistic review. They will have Academic Rigor and Academic Performance ratings that reflect the most challenging curriculum and grades of what is available to them at their high school.

Admit Wisconsin Residents

We remain committed to the residents of Wisconsin as our first priority. Wisconsin students who have good grades and are taking competitive course work based on what's available to them at their high school are likely to be admissible. Generally, these are students who are earning AB grades or better in [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. Or if rigor isn't available to them, earning straight As in [REDACTED] to [REDACTED]. If class rank is available, our most competitive Wisconsin students are ranked in the top [REDACTED] of their graduating class unless a very small high school or a very competitive high school that doesn't weight rigor. Wisconsin residents who have demonstrated good fit and academic potential, along with having factors that meet institutional priorities should be considered strongly for admission. Applicants we are considering for admission must be academically prepared and demonstrate academic readiness to find success in the classroom at UW-Madison.

Admit Non-Residents

Our out-of-state applicant pool is highly competitive, and applicants are expected to stretch themselves in all areas of our holistic review, generally reflecting the top of the competitive range. Generally, these are students earning AB grades in [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. If rigor isn't available to them, earning straight As in [REDACTED]. If class rank is available or school profile information that shares class placement, competitive applicants will be in the top [REDACTED] of their graduating class in most schools unless a very small high school or a

very competitive high school. [REDACTED], and we are confident that these applicants can find success on our campus.

Defer (Early Action)

Applicants recommended for defer are students who are likely to find success on our campus but are not the most competitive in our pool. They may have overall good grades with declining grades of B- to C grades in most recent semester or year. They may be lacking rigor compared to peers or may not present as strongly in holistic factors compared to peers from same high school or compared to others from similar educational curriculum. There may be compelling reasons to defer students with low ratings on our holistic review but seek consultation from more senior staff in these cases. Space constraints may limit the number of defer students that are eventually admitted. We wait to review mid-year senior grades for freshman applicants who have been deferred. We will make a final decision by the end of March.

Wait list (Regular Decision)

Applicants recommended for wait list are students that show academic potential earning mostly B grades or better but may not present as the strongest applicants in our pool due to more competitive students from the same context earning strong grades and/or taking more rigor. We may not have space for applicants we wait list at this time, or we may want to see additional information from the student, such as updated grades. Generally, wait list students will have mid-level ratings, although a few lower ratings may be seen in non-academic areas if there are other compelling factors.

Wisconsin residents will be offered the opportunity to participate in Connections, in addition to being offered a spot on our wait list. Select Illinois residents may be offered the opportunity to be a part of Road to Wisconsin, in addition to being offered a spot on our wait list.

Deny

Applicants are recommended for denial for a variety of reasons. They may be lacking competitive academics including weak rigor compared to peers or poor academic performance. Sometimes applicants are denied because there is limited space and there are a number of more competitive applicants in the applicant pool.

Transfer Decision Guidelines

Admit

Applicants who have taken strong academic preparation for the program they are pursuing while earning good grades [REDACTED] are prepared for UW-Madison. They will have taken a wide breadth of course work in challenging courses that align with course work offered at UW-Madison. Applicants who have demonstrated good fit and academic potential may be admitted.

Defer

Applicants who have the potential for success but may be borderline in our holistic review, can be deferred for another term of grades. Students who have not completed a full year of college level course work or whose most recent grades indicate a soft spot or two, may be able to demonstrate readiness with another semester of college

course work. These students will be reviewed again, once updated grades are provided. We will make a final decision in January for spring transfer applicants and June for fall transfer applicants.

Deny

Applicants are recommended for denial for a number of reasons. Applicants may have weak academic records raising questions about their preparedness to find success on campus or they may not demonstrate strong fit based on other factors in our review. Sometimes applicants are denied because they are lacking minimum requirements or have a large number of credits that don't align with their program.

###

*Undergraduate Admissions Holistic Review:
Principles
FOR THE 2021-22 ENROLLING CLASS*

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OFFICE OF
Admissions and Recruitment
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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Philosophy

The University of Wisconsin–Madison utilizes a holistic, competitive, and selective admissions review process that aligns with our mission. Our goal is to recruit, admit, and enroll a high quality and diverse incoming class. The academic record always comes first in our review, we also consider written essays, extracurricular activities, leadership involvement, letters of recommendation and standardized test scores when required or provided. Our primary commitment is to the residents of Wisconsin. We seek students who will add unique perspectives to the educational environment at UW–Madison, including members of historically underrepresented ethnic and racial groups, those from rural Wisconsin farm backgrounds, first-generation college students, veterans and those currently serving our country in the armed forces, women interested in STEM (science, technology, engineering, or math) majors, and international students. We are also looking for students with special talent in music, dance, art, design, athletics, or other areas of institutional need, which may vary from year-to-year. The Office of Admissions and Recruitment is charged with admitting and enrolling talented students that will thrive academically in any one of our eight undergraduate schools and colleges.

Transcript Review

Whether reviewing freshman or transfer applications, we are looking for students who demonstrate strong academic ability. We evaluate candidates based on their high school and college (when applicable) records, valuing applicants who demonstrate strong performance in a challenging curriculum. An applicant's academic record should show challenging course work in multiple core subject areas while maintaining a strong GPA.

High School Record

In reviewing the high school record, keep in mind that high schools may use the terms honors, advanced, accelerated, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and/or other labels to identify their most rigorous course offerings. Some high schools do not label their competitive courses but will indicate the level of rigor on their school profile and/or website. A high school profile should provide background information about the high school and range of course offerings, grading scale, and graduation requirements. Depending on the high school, some students may seek other opportunities outside the high school course offerings if they have exhausted the curriculum or are looking for further academic challenges. Students may opt to take advantage of online high school or college course offerings or may choose to enroll in college courses (Dual Enrollment) offered within the high school or at a nearby college.

Competitive applicants are expected to complete four or more years of core academic coursework in English, math, social studies, science, and world (foreign) language. Generally, students who earn 'A's and 'B's in rigorous courses are considered competitive. In addition to grade performance, class rank (if provided) is also considered. In our holistic review, we utilize the weighted or honors GPA and class rank when provided which may give counselors a more accurate picture of where a student places within their graduating class in terms of both rigor and grade performance. When class rank is not provided, school profiles and grade distribution information can often serve as an accurate and reasonable substitute. Recognizing that not all schools are equal, a student's rigor, grade performance, and class rank will all be considered within the context of the high school and the student's educational history.

College Record

Competitive applicants are expected to take both breadth and rigor of course work increasing in difficulty appropriate for continued study at UW-Madison. Students taking course work in the core areas of English, math, science, literature, social science, and world (foreign) language are best preparing themselves for course work on our campus. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Our decisions on transfer applicants will also depend on the overall strength of our applicant pool, our ability to determine their fit within our academic programs, and our confidence in their ability to complete a four-year degree at UW-Madison within a reasonable timeframe.

COVID-19 Impact

Due to COVID-19 many high schools and colleges needed to adapt to a virtual or remote learning mode of instruction and along with it changes in grading polices. Some examples of this could be students being graded on a pass/fail or credit/ no credit scale. Passing grades on a student's record will not be viewed in a negative

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
All applicants will also need to respond to this prompt:
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Standardized Test Scores

DET, IELTS, or TOEFL

Applicants who have been instructed in a language other than English may be required to submit a standardized test score to demonstrate English proficiency. The Duolingo English Test (DET), IELTS and TOEFL measure the ability of non-native English speakers use and understanding of the English language as a student hears, speaks, reads, and writes in the university classroom.

We require freshmen applicants who were educated in non-English speaking countries to submit a DET, IELTS or TOEFL score unless English was the language of instruction for all courses in all years of secondary school. Transfer applicants will have the DET/IELTS/TOEFL requirement waived if they have successfully completed a college level English course at a U.S. College or University. Even if it is not a required part of the application, all scores submitted will be considered as supplemental academic information.

Over the last three years the middle 50% of admitted freshman scored 102-110 on the TOEFL which is roughly equivalent to DET scores of 120-130 (on a 160 scale) and IELTS scores of 7.5– 8 (on a 9.0 scale). Applicants who score in this range or close to the range are considered competitive if the student has demonstrated exceptional areas of strength in our holistic review. Though minimum scores are not published on our website, it is important to be aware minimum scores are in place to ensure that students have a level of English that will allow them to be successful as a student on campus. Minimum DET is 105, IELTS score is 6.5, and TOEFL score is 80.

ACT or SAT

The ACT or SAT as a requirement for freshman applicants has been suspended until Spring 2023 and continues to be optional for transfer applicants. To minimize bias our application review processes, ACT/SAT scores will be suppressed in the initial read of an applicant. First reviewers will not be presented with these scores so they can consider all applicants using similar materials and focusing on the academic record as the primary indicator of a student's readiness and competitiveness for admission to UW-Madison.

ACT and SAT scores will be used in quality analysis, defer reviews, and wait list reviews, if students have indicated they wish scores to be considered as part of their application review. Quality analysis is done once files have been through a first read. The purpose of this processes is to ensure quality of admission decisions and the shaping of the class to incorporate institutional priorities and diversity has been achieved. Quality analysis is conducted by a seasoned team of admission counselors and leaders.

When using ACT or SAT scores in admission decisions, it is important to consider the history of these exams and what they are designed to measure. Both the ACT and SAT were designed to provide a measurement of a

student's likely hood of success in college. Research indicates that ACT/SAT scores are only a valuable predictor of a student's first year in college. For this reason, ACT/SAT scores are one factor in many that are considered during our review when provided.

- The ACT was designed as an *achievement test*, founded in curriculum developed to measure what a student has learned. It covers material that the student should have been exposed to during high school and demonstrates the student's foundation of knowledge to indicate what they are ready to study in college.
- The SAT was adapted from an intelligence test and originally developed as an *aptitude test*. The most recent SAT, first administered in March 2016, was redeveloped to focus more on curriculum taught in the high schools. The focus is on analytic skills and evidence-based reading and writing.

When using ACT and SAT scores, the highest ACT composite score or the highest SAT summative score from one test date is considered. If an applicant submits both an ACT and an SAT score, consider how each compare to our middle fifty percentile for admit freshman from the past three years. Statistics show that the middle fifty percentile of our admitted freshman in 2018, 2019, and 2020 scored 28-33 on the ACT and 1340-1480 on the SAT. We also consider the various sub-scores submitted as supplemental academic information, which can play a part in our deliberation.

Non-cognitive Competencies (NCC)

As we de-emphasize ACT and SAT scores in our holistic review processes, we believe [REDACTED] on non-cognitive predictors of success in college is important to incorporate. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Slightly less than half of students who start college don't finish, so [REDACTED] wanted to figure out why some students stayed in college while others dropped out. Through research, [REDACTED] higher predictors of success in college for non-traditional students than either GPAs or SAT/ACT scores.

While reviewing a student's essays, letters of recommendation, involvement and other application materials look for the presence of these attributes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Letters of Recommendation

One letter of recommendation is required written by someone who can attest to the student's academic ability, such as a teacher, school counselor, advisor, or faculty member. For students that have been away from education for an extended period, we will accept letters of recommendation from someone in a supervisory capacity. Like essays, letters of recommendation can provide valuable insight into how the student will engage campus opportunities. They may create a more complete picture of who the applicant might become as a student at UW–Madison elaborating on the student's academic promise, academic strengths, leadership potential and desire to be engaged in a community. In addition to looking specifically for qualities of academic promise and potential, note other non-cognitive factors like resolve, and determination. Letters of recommendation can provide context of a student's educational or home environment which can be valuable in understanding how students have progressed, thrived, or struggled with aspects of their academic record. Letters can attest to a student's determination and potential for success. Poorly organized or grammatically incorrect letters of recommendation are an indicator of the recommender's attention to detail and not the applicants. Reviewers are reminded not to hold this against an applicant.

Extracurricular Involvement and Leadership

We are looking for students who are involved, whether in their schools, communities, or places of employment. Students, who are engaged in their communities and schools, are more likely to be involved on our campus. There are varying opportunities for involvement depending on where students live and go to school. While some students may have seemingly limitless options at their disposal through their schools (clubs, organizations, sports teams, etc.), some students may have limited offerings from which to choose. Some applicants may be involved, and leadership related to employment, military duty, or family responsibilities.

Extracurricular involvement may look different for transfer applicants who may not share their high school activities and only share most recent involvement since going to college. Transfer applicants are more likely to have an employment record, family responsibilities, or other non-traditional involvement. No matter what the options, we look for students who have been engaged in activities outside the classroom. We value quality and depth of involvement over quantity including demonstrated leadership qualities not limited to leadership titles.

Additional Information and Materials

Students may choose to submit additional information beyond the required materials. This could include an additional essay, writing samples, resume, portfolio, or any other item the student or someone on behalf of the student submits as part of the application. These additional materials are considered within the holistic review process adding further information about the student's talent, interest, or situation beyond what is asked in the application.

The Common Application allows students to indicate if they would like to provide additional information by indicating yes to either or both below questions.

Community disruptions such as COVID-19 and natural disasters can have deep and long-lasting impacts. If you need it, this space is yours to describe those impacts. Colleges care about the effects on your health and well-being, safety, family circumstances, future plans, and education, including access to reliable technology and quiet study spaces. For more information, check out our [COVID-19 FAQ](#). Do you wish to share anything on this topic?

Do you wish to provide details of circumstances or qualifications not reflected in the application?

Responses to these questions will appear below the two required essays on the application. Students utilizing the UW-System application may provide this information as a separate email or as part of their required essay. This information should be used responsibly and as it was intended, which is to add context to struggles students might have faced impacting their academic performance, course selection, extracurricular activities, or other situations.

Positive Campus Contributions

The Wisconsin Idea is the notion that education should extend beyond the walls of the classroom and impact people's lives for the better. We seek students who will be leaders in carrying the Wisconsin Idea forward by engaging in high impact practices, our history of activism, and service to others. Passionate students who demonstrate eagerness to explore and embody these principles are valued in our process for their potential to enrich our campus community. When assessing the likelihood of an applicant to contribute to campus positively, consider how a student's interests, goals, talents, and perspective align with our campus's priorities, values, and aspirations.

Diversity

Diversity is proven to enhance learning outcomes for all. Our goal at the University of Wisconsin–Madison is to enroll a student body that is both talented and diverse. Diversity is broadly defined at UW–Madison and in our admission process. We desire to enroll more students from a variety of cultures from across the U.S. and around the world. We also seek to enroll students who identify with race and ethnicities who are underrepresented in the population of the State of Wisconsin. This includes African-American, Hispanic/Latinx, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Southeast Asian (Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese), and other ethnicities. The inclusion of underrepresented students strengthens and stimulates the learning environment for all, adds to the vibrancy of campus, and is an important part of UW-Madison's mission. We also consider the geographic location, unique cultural traditions, and international living and learning experiences of our applicants. Our hope is to enroll students from every county in the state of Wisconsin, all 50 states, and a range of countries worldwide. We consider students who have interests in areas of need to our campus community such as talent in dance, design, music, and art; and women interested in STEM. We remain dedicated to students who come from rural farm backgrounds, who are differently abled, who are serving or have served in the armed forces, as well as adults returning to higher education.

Disclosure of Learning, Personal, or Medical Circumstances

Applicants may choose to disclose a learning, personal, or medical circumstance. Students typically disclose by writing about their story and/or diagnoses in their essays, or they may choose to submit medical documentation. The University of Wisconsin–Madison offers support for students with learning, personal, or medical circumstances through the McBurney Disability Resource Center, UW Health Services, and other additional campus resources.

An applicant's disclosure of a learning, personal, or medical circumstance should be considered in conjunction with a student's academic competitiveness. Consider this information as you do other stories of perseverance and determination as shared in essays, additional materials, or letters of recommendation. This information provides context and should inform our decision but not be the determining factor. Students who have a diagnosis or who are currently utilizing services at their educational institution may benefit from support services provided by McBurney Disability Resource Center. Students who are competitive and have demonstrated academic excellence resulting in admission may be referred to McBurney or other services on campus but are not required to take advantage of these services.

It is illegal to discriminate against a student based on disability. It is important to note that if a parent, teacher, or guidance/school counselor discloses information about a candidate, we cannot refer the student to the McBurney Disability Resource Center unless the applicant also makes the disclosure. Students we offer admission to who we believe will be eligible for and benefit from services may be referred to McBurney for follow-up. Students who are admitted and need interpretative services or physical accommodation should be referred to McBurney so they may begin setting up these services for the student in anticipation of their arrival on campus.

Executive Order 54

As UW–Madison employees, we are mandated to report child abuse or neglect. Staff training on Executive Order 54 Mandatory Reporting occurs annually and is available online at <https://media.wcupds.wisc.edu/mandatedreporter/>. Admissions counselors will most likely become aware of these situations through the written essays provided as part of the student's application or a conversation with a student. If you become aware of a case of child abuse or neglect, you must report it to UW–Madison Campus Police as outlined in training. If you have questions about when and how to report a case, consult with the EO 54 liaison or a member of leadership. Reporting in a timely manner is required.

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***Undergraduate Admissions Holistic Review:
Additional Training
FOR THE 2021-22 ENROLLING CLASS***

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY



OFFICE OF
Admissions and Recruitment
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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Other Notes

Common Attributes
Scholarship Nominations
General Education Requirements

Core Course Work
Dual Enrollment
Decision Note Comments

Notes for Transfer:

Decision Recommendation: Admit [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

What is a [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

TRF - [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] indicate readiness and competitiveness for admission to the University
[REDACTED] indicates readiness and competitiveness for that major at our University

Return to Conversation with [REDACTED]:
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

###

[REDACTED]