

May 4, 2009

## LETTER TO LEGISLATORS ON DOMESTIC PARTNER HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS FROM CHANCELLOR BIDDY MARTIN

As budget deliberations continue, I want to take this opportunity to reaffirm UW-Madison's strong support for the domestic-partner health insurance benefits proposal in the state budget. I am very grateful for the hard work you have already devoted to this issue and am hopeful that this is the year this important benefit can finally become a reality for all state employees.

While you work with your colleagues on the Joint Committee on Finance, I hope you will keep some of these important thoughts in mind:

— Not being able to offer this benefit puts UW-Madison at a competitive disadvantage with our peer institutions. UW-Madison is the only Big Ten university and one out of only two universities within our statutorily set of peer research institutions to not offer this benefit. Our inability to compete with our peers has a direct effect on our ability to recruit and retain quality faculty and staff members.

— When the university loses these talented individuals, they take with them the time and often significant resources the university has invested into their development. Lost is the accumulated knowledge they pass along to students and use to foster their research, and all of the private and federal grant dollars that go with them.

— The departure of these individuals also impacts the Wisconsin economy in that collaborative partnerships are severed.

— Providing this benefit makes economic sense. The estimated GPR cost for this benefit UW System-wide is \$550,000 and for UW-Madison is \$112,000. Last year, in just one faculty departure, the university lost nearly \$3.4 million in private and federal gifts and grants due to our lack of domestic-partner benefits. By any definition, a small GPR investment could yield significant financial benefits.

— Providing domestic-partner health insurance benefits make sense in the private sector. More than 100 private companies statewide offer domestic-partner health insurance benefits as a way to recruit and retain employees. These companies, located in 98 of 99 legislative districts, represent a wide range of businesses that believe this benefit is essential to compete in their markets and it is the right thing to do for their employees. The same is true for UW-Madison.

— In an environment of limited state resources and increased competition for our faculty and staff, we should do everything in our power to address the specific reasons people leave the university. We know for certain that this issue has been and continues to be a major factor for those faculty and staff who are being recruited to other universities. Being able to offer this benefit will allow us to continue to strategically address the recruitment and retention problem. It is crucial we stem this tide.

I understand the budget challenges the state faces, and in light of that difficulty we must find ways to recognize the valuable contributions faculty, staff and all state employees make. Providing this benefit is an important piece of that effort. I appreciate your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

Carolyn "Biddy" Martin  
Chancellor