



the graduate worker union
of uw–madison since 1969

A Platform for a Safe Restart for Fall 2020

We, the Teaching Assistants' Association, cannot stand by as the university endangers the lives of students, faculty, staff, and the entire Madison community. COVID-19 is still spreading in Wisconsin; we demand that UW–Madison keep campus closed until it is truly safe to re-open. Not one member of our Madison community is disposable.

If students and workers return to campus en masse, people will die.

The “Smart Restart” plan will lead to a greater local public health crisis, placing its most precarious students and workers, Black and marginalized people, disabled/immunocompromised people, houseless and undocumented people, and poor people in life-threatening danger. UW–Madison is currently reopening campus to keep more tuition revenue, caring more about the university's budget than people's lives. This is unacceptable.

COVID-19 has been shown to leave lasting damage to the brains, kidneys, hearts, and mental health of patients. Until UW–Madison can demonstrate that they can *effectively prevent contagion* for all members of the Madison community, their policies signal that some peoples' health and lives are disposable. Our platform is structured around the interrelation of racial justice, disability justice, community health, and workers' rights. We categorically reject austerity while demanding that the university join us in pressuring the state and federal government to meaningfully address the global pandemic and economic crisis. We call on UW–Madison to conduct this semester in a manner that defends the safety and dignity of all students, workers, families, and community members—one that puts people over profit.

We demand a Safe Restart for Fall 2020. UW–Madison must:

Protect our community

- **Only offer online instruction** until Public Health Madison & Dane County reports zero (0) cases for fourteen (14) consecutive days, with an exception only for independent study credits necessary for international students to maintain their visa status. After that point and until the end of the pandemic, use online instruction as the default modality, allowing departments to offer courses in-person only when pedagogically necessary. Design our instructional program around offering the highest-quality education at the lowest risk for students, workers, and community members.
- **Not allow students to return to on-campus dorms/housing until there are zero new cases in Dane County for fourteen days**, granting exceptions for those facing housing insecurity and those who would otherwise be unable to access online courses. For students arriving in Madison from beyond Dane County, develop and implement a protocol for testing and quarantine of students and families upon arrival. Refunds must be provided in all cases where students must leave campus or secure special accommodations while quarantining.
- **Provide testing and contact tracing for all of Madison.** The testing measures currently being prepared must be provided for free to the whole community during online instruction and reduced on-campus residency.
- **Not force anyone to work on campus or to waive their right to sue for negligence;** where on campus work is necessary, follow all guidance from PHMDC, CDC, and ASHRAE without asking workers to personally provide safety resources.
- Continue to **lobby the federal government to maintain exceptions granted for international students** under the Service and Exchange Visitors Program (SEVP).
- Re-commit to being a sanctuary campus by **banning voluntary compliance with ICE and CBP**, and additionally organizing and fundraising for students facing threats from those organizations.
- **Actively engage in anti-racist practices** by empowering BIPOC communities on campus and independent civil rights organizations to share decision making within the university.
- **Make sustained reparations to both Black and Indigenous communities.**
- Make accessibility the default for educational delivery, **providing equitable access to education for students with disabilities and/or chronically illness through universal accessible design** that does not require medical documentation or an extensive application process.

Redistribute the University budget

- **Negotiate a moratorium on debt servicing payments to its creditors who continue to receive millions of dollars in debt service payments** while our community experiences financial difficulty sparked by the pandemic.
- **Negotiate greater institutional support** from the **\$3.5 billion fund balance** of the University of Wisconsin Foundation, the **\$2.2 billion fund balance** of the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation and the **\$355 million fund balance** of the Morgridge Institute Foundation, Inc.
- **Reallocate funding away from those making over \$150,000** to those who make less and shift funding away from paused sports toward instruction.
- **Abolish and/or defund the UW–Madison Police Department and redistribute its budget** and reinvest in initiatives to support access to housing, health care, education, and transportation within and beyond the campus community.
- **Lobby state and federal legislators to increase funding** and shift resources from capital to operating budgets.

Support a Badger Experience that meets the moment

- **Lower the cost of tuition for the duration of the pandemic** in accordance with lower operating costs while students are not on campus.
- **Abolish mandatory fees for students**, including segregated fees, the international student fee, and the SEVIS fee. Fund student services and organizations without making students pay more.
- **Return to offering in-state tuition and in-state scholarships to undocumented/DACAmented Wisconsin residents.**
- **Honor scholarship commitments to student athletes** even if their seasons are cancelled; **pause any time-constrained scholarship commitments to students who elect to take a semester off** from instruction.
- **Offer paid family leave for all workers and create a policy for caregiving leave and accommodation options** for individuals and families with a variety of access needs.
- **Offer comprehensive mental wellness resources for all students on campus free of charge.**
- **Make more space for BIPOC within our community by investing in building space** for the different multicultural graduate groups on campus.

UW–Madison must recreate its plans for the upcoming semesters in collaboration with all university workers and community members. Rather than relying on work groups that meet behind closed doors, these conversations must be transparent and open. Faculty, staff, undergraduate students, graduate students, and other campus workers must all be represented in a bargaining process. These conversations must include diverse groups of community members and follow equitable guidelines for decisions. These decisions must be grounded in building consensus and a shared sense of trust rather than letting administrators make all final decisions.

- **Provide direct funding for equity and diversity committees, BIPOC students, workers, and other campus organizations** (e.g. the Multicultural Graduate Student Network and the Black Graduate and Professional Student Association, the Gender and Sexuality Campus Center).
- **Fund workers involved in diversity and inclusion efforts** by providing course releases from teaching duties, paying for this work, and financially supporting research projects.
- **Design community-building initiatives where online participation is the default.** Students and community members will not be able to participate in traditional sporting events and in-person activities. We must create a New Badger Experience that connects people across the country and globe.
- **Hire people otherwise employed in service work on campus to support community-building experiences for Badgers who cannot access campus events and resources.**
- **Provide employment and payment continuity for all workers during the pandemic.** If this is impossible, only top-paid employees may be furloughed; no more workers may be fired or laid off.

Support learning during COVID-19

- **Provide tools and training necessary to make online instruction accessible to all**, regardless of students' status with the McBurney Disability Resource Center. Instructors should be trained in the use of accessible technologies, such as alt-text and screen-reader-friendly PDFs. Furthermore, cover the cost of captioning and transcript services, screen-reading technologies, internet connections, computers, and other necessary expenses for accessible remote learning.
- Support the expansion of currently-offered disability access services provided by the McBurney Disability Resource Center, including **media captioning/transcription, CART live captioning, note-taking assistance, and learning support programs, to match the increased need** for these accommodations during the pandemic.
- **Support time-to-degree** by offering online options for all classes necessary for seniors to graduate and providing free summer tuition and/or 5th-year scholarships for undergraduates.
- **Offer flexible attendance and assignment policies and asynchronous learning in all courses.** The university must also provide the satisfactory disruption (SD)/unsatisfactory disruption (UD) COVID-19 option used in Spring 2020 term.