



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 30, 2008

UW System Regents to focus on accountability

MADISON – When the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents meets in Stevens Point this week, the spotlight will be on accountability.

In November 2007, the UW System announced that all 13 of its four-year campuses would participate in a national initiative to publish standardized performance data. Through new web-based College Portraits, UW campuses and other participants in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) are working to provide consistent, comparable, and transparent information. This data will be useful for students and families, as well as legislators and other stakeholders.

At the Board meeting, UW officials will demonstrate how the new reporting tools are being adopted in Wisconsin. The 13 published College Portraits for UW System campuses are available online at <http://collegeportraits.org>.

The College Portraits provide information on the characteristics of each institution and its students, cost of attendance, student engagement with the learning process, and survey data on core educational outcomes. Additional data will be added to these portraits as the national initiative progresses.

The VSA is a partnership between the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, funded by a grant from the Lumina Foundation. Nearly 200 colleges and universities, enrolling a total of about 3 million undergraduates, have posted their new College Portraits.

“At a glance, prospective students can see not only how many students are enrolled at a campus, but how many succeed in completing their degree at that institution, and how many choose to finish their education at another campus,” said Mark Bradley, President of the UW System Board of Regents. “Best of all, the standardized format makes it easy for our customers to make better, more informed decisions about their educational options, based on an apples-to-apples comparison.”

“We’re especially pleased with the focus on learning experiences and measurable outcomes,” said Kevin P. Reilly, President of the UW System. “College students know what they need to succeed in the knowledge economy, and they trust the opinions of their peers when assessing student satisfaction. By publishing standardized results from

student surveys, the new College Portraits reinforce that UW campuses offer a high-quality educational experience.”

Participants in the VSA measure student involvement using one of four national surveys. The UW-Stevens Point portrait shows, for example, that seniors there value many aspects of their educational experience:

- 98% believe the campus supports student success
- 92% rated their entire educational experience as good or excellent and 88% said they would attend the campus again
- 96% worked with classmates on assignments outside of class
- 96% say that UW-Stevens Point faculty members provided prompt feedback on academic performance

In addition to learning more about the UW System’s VSA participation, the Board of Regents will also learn about efforts to enhance the university’s annual Accountability Report. That document, scheduled for publication in May 2009, will be reorganized to align with seven core strategies in UW System’s strategic plan. It will also include some new performance indicators.

The 2008 UW System Accountability Report showed that graduation rates at UW System campuses reached an average of 64.8 percent. That is nearly four percentage points higher than the current national average, and eight points higher than the UW System’s average from 10 years ago.

Data in this year’s report showed how the typical UW System undergraduate student now takes fewer course credits on her or his path toward a bachelor’s degree. Last year’s average stands at 134 credits, down from 145 in 1994.

For more information, see www.wisconsin.edu.

#

Media Contact:

David F. Giroux
UW System
dgiroux@uwsa.edu
(608) 262-4464