How is residency for tuition purposes established or determined?

Wisconsin Statutes, Section 36.27(2), govern resident status for tuition purposes. If you do not qualify as a Wisconsin resident, you must pay full nonresident tuition. In determining resident status for tuition purposes, different standards are used than those which may be used for voting, paying taxes, etc. Individuals who come to Wisconsin primarily for educational purposes do not automatically qualify as Wisconsin residents for tuition purposes even after living in Wisconsin a year or more. In general, you must be a bona fide resident of Wisconsin for at least 12 months prior to enrollment to be eligible for in-state tuition, but there are some exceptions:

1. If you graduated from a Wisconsin high school and your parents have lived continuously in Wisconsin during the 12 months prior to your enrollment, you may qualify as a Wisconsin resident.
2. If one of your parents lives in Wisconsin and you are a tax dependent of one of your parents, you may be able to pay fees and tuition at the resident rate.
3. If you are a refugee who came to Wisconsin immediately upon entering the United States, you may be able to pay fees and tuition at the resident rate. You may also qualify to pay at the resident rate if you are a member of the Armed Forces stationed in Wisconsin, a migrant worker who has worked in Wisconsin annually or the spouse or child of a person in one of these categories.
4. If you, your spouse, or someone who claims you as a federal tax dependent moved to Wisconsin within the last 12 months to begin full-time employment in Wisconsin, or plans to do so before the beginning of the term for which you are applying, you may be eligible to pay resident fees. The full-time employment must be accepted before an application for admission is submitted.

Contact the UW-L Admissions Office at (608) 785-8939 for further explanation/clarification of these exceptions.

How can I prove Wisconsin residency?

In determining your bona fide residence at the beginning of a semester and for the preceding 12 months, your intent to establish and maintain a permanent home in Wisconsin is determinative.

You may demonstrate or disprove intent through factors such as the timely filing of Wisconsin income tax returns of a type that only full-year Wisconsin residents may file, voter registration in Wisconsin, motor vehicle registration in Wisconsin, possession of a Wisconsin driver's license, place of employment, self-support, involvement in community activities in Wisconsin, and your physical presence in Wisconsin for at least the 12 months immediately prior to beginning university classes.

If I believe my classification as a nonresident is incorrect, what can I do?

You may contact the UW-L Admissions Office, (608) 785-8939, for interpretation and further information about residency determination. If you wish to then appeal your residency determination, you may contact the Office of Student Life, 147 Graff Main Hall, (608) 785-8062.

If I enroll at UW-L as a nonresident, can I be considered a resident after one year in school?

If you entered Wisconsin from out of state and remain in the state principally to obtain an education, it is presumed that you continue to reside outside the state and you will continue to be classified as a nonresident. If you believe you qualify for Wisconsin residency, you can complete an appeal form available through the Office of Student Life, 147 Graff Main Hall, to request that your residency classification be changed. In essence, you must prove with clear and convincing evidence that you have made Wisconsin your permanent home, that Wisconsin has been your permanent home for at least the 12-month period prior to your enrollment, and that you are not in Wisconsin primarily for educational purposes.

How can I learn more about the laws governing Wisconsin residency?

You may review a complete overview regarding the determination of residency for University of Wisconsin System campuses at http://www.wisconsin.edu/acss/residency/