



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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News Release

Investments needed to repair, renovate aging UW System buildings

Maintenance now will reduce overall costs; ensure safety; and support teaching, learning, and research

MADISON, Wis. – More than half of the University of Wisconsin System’s buildings were built in the three decades starting in 1950, and many now require significant repair and renovation work to ensure continued safety as well as to support excellence in teaching, learning, and research.

“By investing in repairs and renovation before it is too late, we can reduce the need for new capital projects and manage maintenance costs more effectively,” said University of Wisconsin System President Ray Cross. “When the deferred maintenance backlog grows, the likelihood of failure at our facilities grows and so does the cost.”

The UW System Board of Regents heard a presentation Thursday about repair and renovation needs at the UW System’s 13 institutions. The majority of the System’s \$1.9 billion capital budget request for 2019-21 is for needed repair and renovation.

Budget challenges in recent years have resulted in decreased manpower and financial resources to address what are becoming more significant and more frequent issues in UW System facilities, Alexandria Roe, Associate Vice President for Capital Planning and Budget, told the Regents.

“Increasingly, facilities staff are called upon to take care of emergency problems ... and this diverts their manpower from doing routine preventative maintenance activities,” she said.

- See the [UW System PowerPoint, “Repair and Renovate”](#)

Many of the buildings constructed after World War II were raised quickly and at the lowest cost, Roe said. That means many of them are overdue for HVAC, electrical, and plumbing repairs as well as exterior repairs, renovation, and replacement, she said. Buildings constructed in the latter decades of the 20th century are more sustainable but their maintenance needs are high because their systems are more complex and energy efficient, Roe said.

“One thing we do know is that the longer we wait to address deferred maintenance and other capital renewal needs, the more expensive they are and failure is more likely, which diverts existing resources, such as staff and funding, to resolve those emergencies,” Roe said.

Cross and Roe praised institutional maintenance staff for their work.

“UW institutions work diligently to ensure our facilities are safe, secure, and provide the necessary teaching and research spaces our faculty and student require. Our physical plant staff endeavors to keep us

operational so that the buildings are not negatively affecting the quality of the educational process," Roe said.

Last August, the Board approved support for the UW System's 2019-21 budget request to fund necessary capital renewal activities across the UW System. With more than 1,800 buildings covering more than 62 million square feet, UW System is the largest owner of physical space in state government.

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The University of Wisconsin System serves more than 170,000 students. Awarding 36,000 degrees annually, the UW System is Wisconsin's talent pipeline, putting graduates in position to increase their earning power, contribute to their communities, and make Wisconsin a better place to live. More than 80 percent of UW System graduates stay in Wisconsin five years after earning a degree. The UW System provides a 23:1 return on state investment. UW System institutions also contribute to the richness of Wisconsin's culture and economy with groundbreaking research, new companies and patents, and boundless creative intellectual energy.

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