



## Statement of the UW Oshkosh Faculty Senate Approved February 15, 2011

Today we express our stark opposition and grave concern for what the Governor has proposed as a budget repair bill. This is not a true budget repair bill aimed at responsibly closing a relatively manageable gap of \$173 million (or about \$32 per citizen) between Wisconsin's payments and its revenues over the coming four months. The governor's radical proposal is designed to significantly decrease employee compensation forever by an average amount of close to 10% and it needlessly guts reasonable protections for Wisconsin's employees. As such we stand against the proposal and request that you and your fellow legislators find an alternative, more responsible solution to the budget shortfall.

This special session of the legislature was supposed to be about job creation. We fail to see how reducing the salaries of state employees and gutting the collective bargaining process will add jobs here. On the contrary, this will substantially degrade the state's ability to offer quality higher education that will prepare Wisconsinites for jobs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We educate Wisconsin's workforce. We provide a substantial share of its nurses, teachers, accountants, information technology professionals, scientists, public servants etc. Our ability to do this is contingent on the skill, knowledge, and dedication of our faculty. The severe cuts proposed by the governor will cause us to have more difficulty filling positions than we already have, will force us to rely more on temporary staff who as a whole are not as well qualified as permanent faculty, and we will find it much harder to retain quality teachers.

Faculty salaries here are already substantially lower than those of University teachers in neighboring states. According to the Competitive University Workforce Commission's Final Report, released in June 2010 ([http://www.mbo.wisc.edu/biennial/bienn1113/CUWC\\_Final\\_report.pdf](http://www.mbo.wisc.edu/biennial/bienn1113/CUWC_Final_report.pdf)), UW Oshkosh faculty salaries (page 15) are from 10.6% to 20% below those at comparable universities across the country. Even when factoring in benefits, state workers are less well compensated than those with comparable skills in the private sector. Saying that state employees are "haves" while everyone else are "have nots," as the Governor did a few weeks ago seems disingenuous at best. We hope that you have a different view and see us as your essential partners in moving the state toward a brighter, more prosperous future. We hope you recognize that in the long run the money invested in the UW system and its employees generates value for the state rather than being a drain on it.

Contrary to the advertisements being run against us, we have been part of the solution of closing previous budget gaps. A 2% pay increase passed nearly four years ago was postponed and then permanently rescinded. We have, for the last two years, been operating with furloughs which have decreased our salaries by more than 3% each year. In more prosperous times, raises did not meet the level of inflation; in the bad times there have been significant cuts. We have sacrificed.

We should also add that because University faculty is not unionized, we have suffered greater cuts over the years than most unionized state workers. For a UW Oshkosh faculty member with a salary of \$45,000 and family health care coverage, the changes to pension contributions will cost over \$2500 per year. The increased health care contribution will cost nearly as much, for a total annual loss of over \$5000 per year. These are not minor contributions. We are willing to do our fair share in the budget repair process, painful though it is as we try to make ends meet, pay our bills, and put our kids through school. But the governor chose a different path, a callous and unilateral one with severe financial repercussions for us.

Good legislation can stand the light of day. A budget shortfall of \$32 per citizen is not an emergency so profound that the state legislature needs to pass the governor's radical proposal by Thursday. Surely such a far-reaching and potentially damaging proposal should be afforded at least a few weeks of public discussion and scrutiny before passage. Give yourselves and the people of this state time to see what the Walker proposal actually does and to offer reasonable alternatives.

A century ago Wisconsin was known as a leader among states, both in the Midwest and nationwide. States copied the progressive legislation of a Republican governor because it promised to improve the quality of life for all citizens. The state of Wisconsin is currently at a crossroads—one where it can choose to preserve its progressive heritage or choose to lead the Midwest in a race to the bottom in the provision of quality higher education. We ask your support in preventing the latter from occurring by substantially altering this bill, preserving the rights of Wisconsin's state employees and limiting its punitive long-term cuts to our compensation. We are counting on you to preserve the Wisconsin we know and love and are happy to serve.