

Dear xxx College/University Alumni/ae,

(xxx College/University) is a member of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU). The Presidents are WAICU’s Board of Directors and have decided to significantly increase our private, nonprofit higher education advocacy base to create powerful calls-to-action to elected officials at pivotal points in the legislative process. Calls-to-action will include requests to support and increase student financial aid for low-income students in the form of Wisconsin Grants at the state level and Pell grants at the federal level. Key points in the legislative process would be at the start of the legislative session, just prior to votes in committee or votes by a house of the state Legislature or U.S. Congress.

WAICU will be sharing milestones and progress reports throughout 2022 and is asking everyone to engage! Financial aid programs are strategic investments in our future workforce. Increasing financial aid means more students, especially low-income students, can afford going to college. This is crucially important for our workforce given the shortage of employees in nearly every occupation. Additionally, recent changes made by the FAFSA Simplification Act enacted by Congress will soon be implemented and will affect federal and state student aid formulas, making our vocal support for low-income and underrepresented students more important than ever!

The share of college costs covered by federal and state financial aid has decreased significantly and the purchasing power of the grants declined. Nearly 20 years ago, the sum total of maximum Pell Grant and Wisconsin Grant could cover 45 percent of the median tuition and fee at Wisconsin private colleges. However, in 2020-21, the maximum Pell Grant and Wisconsin Grant together only cover approximately one-third (31 percent) of those costs. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on student access to college are tremendous and long lasting. Students, especially low-income students, have faced numerous financial, academic, and mental challenges as they pursue their college degree.

Our goal with this campaign is to dramatically increase the number of individuals signed up for our calls to action to 2,022 individuals who are willing to engage in advocacy by the end of 2022. Anyone who supports educational opportunity for students can sign up for this advocacy work and your voice, understanding firsthand the struggles of students is critically important.

I ask that you take action today by signing up for our advocacy list [here](https://www.congressweb.com/signup/?id=6F8015BA-5056-86B6-5F7A9AC4F609C51A) to share your support for students and for student opportunity! I also ask that you share this opportunity with at least 2 other individuals and encourage them to sign up as well.

Thank you for your consideration and for your support of this campaign!

WAICU-Member Alumni/ae Director