



Rep. Melissa Sargent: Step up to protect our UW family

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I grew up in a family with three generations of proud UW graduates. My great-great-aunt received two degrees at UW and went on to teach here in Wisconsin for 44 years. Both of my grandpas, upon returning from World War II, decided to go back to school and were proud graduates of UW. My parents graduated from UW in the 1960s and my dad has been a local, small business owner for over 30 years.

UW is something that runs in my blood, and I ever since I was younger, I wanted to be part of the pride of our state and the UW tradition of excellence.

The thing about my story is that it isn't unique. My story is the story of so many of us here in Wisconsin — UW runs in our blood.

Whether you're a UW alumnus who takes great pride in the success of our alma mater, you have kids or grandkids who are going to UW to follow their dreams, you're watching your community prosper because of the university's presence, you're a business owner looking to hire the best and the brightest, or you simply love watching Badger football games, we are all part of the UW family.

UW is like a mother to our state. UW nurtures our communities, fosters the growth of our economy, and supports the people of Wisconsin in caring for our families. Our universities are a role model for our values and they push us to be greater, dream bigger, and to be leaders in innovation.

We lean on our UW family when we struggle. They welcome our sons and daughters home from wars; they guide us through economic hardships — the times when our families need jobs and our communities need stability. They see us through the trials of political turbulence, the growing pains of our burgeoning state, and the triumphs and tribulations of living up to the Wisconsin Idea.

The \$300 million for UW that Gov. Scott Walker proposed in his state budget would be crippling to UW and our state. And really, this isn't about partisanship, politics, your side or mine; it is about pride. The gutting of our UW campuses has nothing to do with either party; it has everything to do with protecting a pillar of Wisconsin.

If we can imagine what our state would look like without our UW family, I think we'd see a Wisconsin far from what we have today. We'd see our footprint of innovation to be long forgotten. We'd see more families struggling to make ends meet, and an economy reduced to ruins. And we'd see our kids and grandkids leaving Wisconsin to pursue their dreams in another state.

When we imagine what our state would look like without our universities, we should be afraid of the fact that the governor's budget would give us a taste of what that would look like. When we imagine our vibrant, bustling communities across our state without them, we should be concerned that some might not be able to survive. And when we imagine

our kids and our grandkids without them, I hope that we can look those kids in the eyes when we tell them their dreams of becoming part of our state's greatest legacy might not be a reality for very much longer.

If you can't imagine losing part of our Wisconsin family and history, then I'm asking you to fight for and defend our universities. If you're worried about our families and our communities, then I'm asking you to reach out and encourage your neighbors to join our fight. And if you're worried about our kids and our grandkids being able to live the Wisconsin dream, then I'm asking you to stand up for them by calling your state legislators to share your story and to beg them to reject Walker's huge cuts.

Our UW family has seen us through the best and the worst of times. It's time we return the favor.

Melissa Sargent, D-Madison, represents District 48 in the state Assembly.

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