

The Advance-Titan

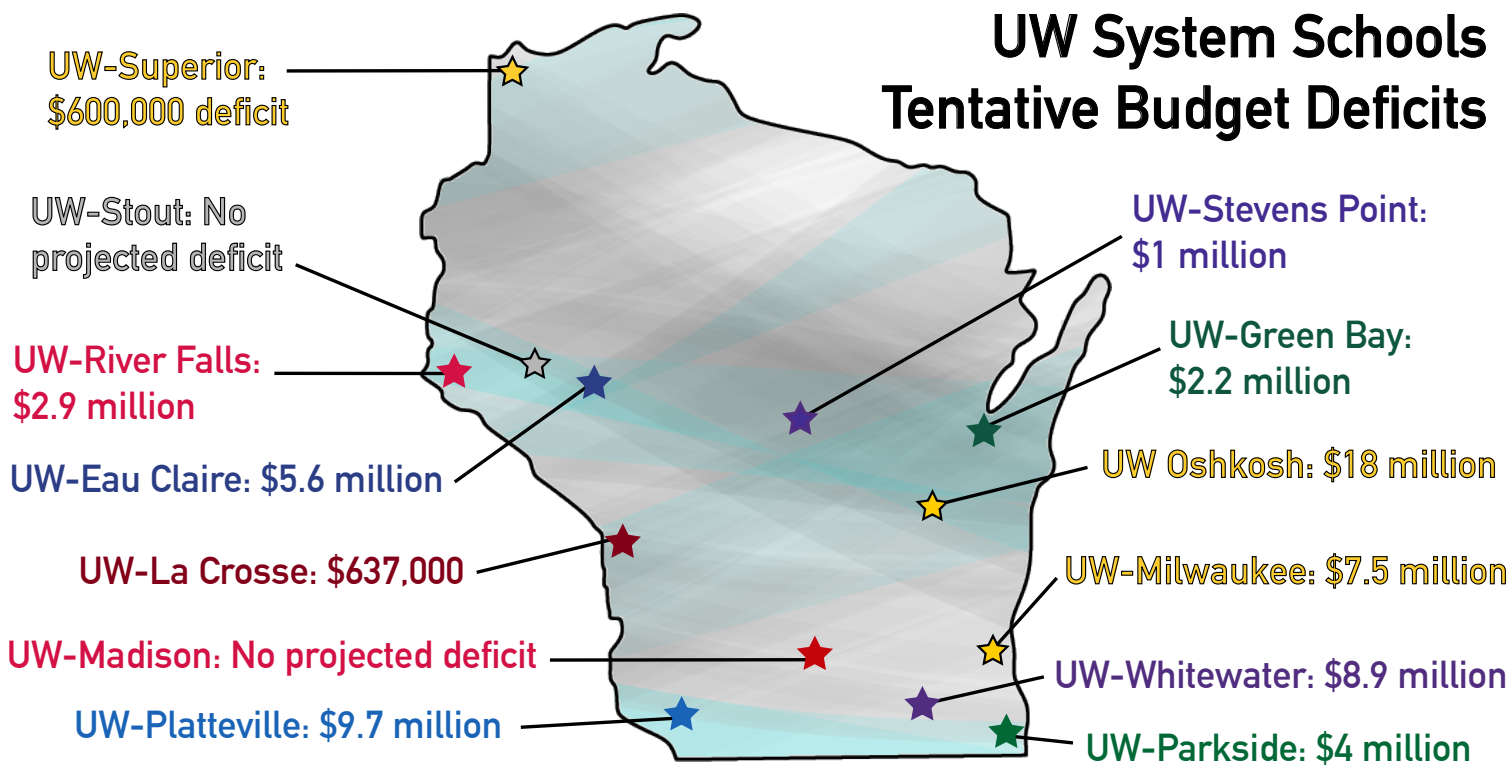
INDEPENDENT STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OSHKOSH CAMPUSES

Vol. 134, No. 3

SEPT. 21, 2023

ADVANCETITAN.COM

UW System Schools Tentative Budget Deficits



Source: University websites or Board of Regents August 2023 Meeting Book | Katie Pulvermacher / Advance-Titan

Faculty Senate calls for action

By Kelly Hueckman
hueckk24@uwosh.edu

The UW Oshkosh Faculty Senate voted to endorse a document of expectations for Chancellor Andrew Leavitt and Provost Edwin Martini that is circulating campus.

The vote was not on the meeting agenda, but the Faculty Senate passed a motion to elevate it to an action item at their late Tuesday afternoon meeting.

The document outlines requests from faculty in the hope of “rebuilding a basic level of trust between the Administration and UW Oshkosh and its Faculty & Staff,” including transparency about faculty working conditions and clear budgetary information.

The document also calls for upper administration to prioritize cuts to administrative positions and salaries over instructional positions.

These requests followed Leavitt’s 2023 convocation speech, which addressed the university’s plan to deal with the \$18 million budget deficit and predicted layoffs.

Some senators said they have been frustrated with the university’s inability to provide a desired work environment. They support the document’s request for more shared governance among the university.

“A lot of people feel the university is becoming unrecognizable compared to the university they agreed to work at. A lot of us don’t feel as invested or as included in shaping the future of the institution as we hoped to,” said Stewart Cole, an assistant English professor.

Turn to *Senate* / Page 2

How did we get here?

Professors talk about UWO’s financial situation

By Josh Lehner
lehnerjo70@uwosh.edu

Many professors and departments at UW Oshkosh are adjusting to furloughs and an increased teaching load in the wake of the university’s \$18 million structural deficit.

One such instructor is Michael Ford, a public administration professor at UWO, who wrote an article in the Oshkosh Herald reacting to the university’s financial situation. Ford, who has been furloughed like many of his colleagues, said that this semester has been one of the most difficult in the 10 years he’s been at UWO.

“Personally, [the furloughs are] a bit of a hit to morale,” he said. “Really, a furlough is a pay cut, and it’s not attached to your performance; that’s just a tough pill to swallow.”

But the furloughs also have an effect on students, as faculty are not allowed to engage in any uni-

versity-related business, including responding to emails and messages, Ford said.

“I worry about the way we serve our students; that’s our stakeholders,” he said. “When a student needs something, oftentimes they need it right away. So, if they get you on a furlough day, that doesn’t really put the customer first.”

Additionally, many faculty like Ford communicate with external entities like businesses, governments and other universities. The inability to conduct their business on furlough days affects these relationships too, he said.

“I do work with policymakers and local governments,” he said. “And it was not fun to wake up the day after my furlough, check and see four or five different people who I really need a relationship with, who are an asset to the university, who are getting an auto reply saying that I’m not allowed to work today, sorry.”

But Alphonso Simpson, who is

the director of the African American Studies program, said that the furloughs have affected him minimally because he has more freedom to choose his schedule. Simpson is the only professor teaching on-campus within the program.

“I don’t like being told I can’t be here and check my email,” he said. “But I’ve come to embrace it as a much needed break. I got a chance to do something for myself. There are so many other worse things that could happen outside of a furlough.”

But how did the university get here? Ford said that a reliance on tuition played a large role in the financial situation, adding that an increase in options for prospective college students is partially to blame.

“There’s fewer high school students, more competition for these students both in-state and out of state and more opportunities in a strong labor market for students

who graduate high school and go directly into the workforce or who go to a tech school,” he said.

Until earlier this year, the UW system tuition rates were frozen, meaning that UWO could not raise its tuition to offset costs. Ford said that, when combined with a reliance on tuition brought on by Wisconsin policymakers, these factors culminated into a financial deficit.

“Imagine a business where you’re reliant on a certain set of customers, but you’re not allowed to charge them what you think your product’s worth,” he said. “That’s kind of the situation that higher ed has been in in Wisconsin. You put all of these things together, and it’s inevitable that you’ll hit a breaking point like this.”

Despite the university’s efforts to reduce spending via furloughs and staff cuts, Ford said that the environment in the classroom is still strong.

Turn to *Finances* / Page 2

OSA proposes replacing Assembly with town halls

By Elijah Plonsky
plonse72@uwosh.edu

The Oshkosh Student Association (OSA) Executive Board drafted a new constitution over the summer that renames the organization the Oshkosh Student Government (OSG), updates its executive positions, expands the Senate and replaces the assembly with town halls.

OSA President Ben Blaser and Vice President Jakob Rucinski said they wanted to clarify the role of student government and rebrand OSA to have government in its name to help students understand what the organization is about.

“Making our name clear that we’re the Oshkosh Student Gov-

ernment is going to get people who are interested in government to come and let people with concerns know who to reach out to,” Blaser said.

Blaser and Rucinski said recognized student organizations (RSOs) will be represented at town halls if the assembly is dissolved under the new OSG constitution.

“We want to emulate how other universities work,” Rucinski said. “Many people weren’t showing up to Assembly [meetings]; out of the 130 RSOs represented, at most we had 10 to 12 show up last semester.”

Rucinski and Blaser said assembly attendance rates have slipped considerably in the last decade,

Turn to *OSA* / Page 3



Courtesy of OSA

OSA President Ben Blaser proposed changes to the name of the organization, executive board and assembly.