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## **CAMPUS NEWS**

### **‘We aren’t prepared to deal with them as people’: Faculty share concerns over student well-being at fall meeting**

*Faculty members of the University of Wisconsin–Madison University Committee met Monday to discuss challenges to student mental health and well-being while student government representatives discussed changes to student financial aid.*

By [Joseph Panzer](#)

September 11, 2025 | 2:00am CDT

Faculty on the university committee discussed challenges to student wellbeing this academic year amidst executive orders and changing student involvement in a meeting at Bascom Hall Monday.

The key issue at Monday's meeting was how to best serve students in a post-COVID landscape in both their educational and personal development. Professor Bob Mathieu described this as acknowledging students both as academics and people, a task he feels faculty is not equipped to tackle.

"We aren't prepared to deal with them as people," Mathieu said. "Students come into our offices many times not looking for that help, but needing that help."

Students in middle and high school during the pandemic saw increased prevalence of mental health disorders such as major depressive disorder and generalized anxiety disorder, which can persist for years and greatly affect how one deals with stress and frustration, according to the [National Institutes of Health](#).

During the meeting, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Lori Reesor made an appearance to discuss the efforts UW-Madison has taken to serve students' personal and professional needs through identity services.

Previously, identity-based services were handled by the Division of Diversity, Equity & Educational Achievement (DDEEA) until DDEEA was [eliminated](#) in July, causing some diversity programs focused on student well-being to be reorganized into Student Affairs. Students [reacted](#) negatively to the change through ASM's Justice, Equity & Belonging Committee releasing a [statement](#) Sept. 2 lambasting the university's decision to cut funding for diversity programs.

Reesor asserted that nothing fundamental about financial aid programs had changed after the future of former DDEEA programs was left in limbo following the division's elimination and recounted telling a student frightened over the future of diversity programs that "the goal is that your experience and program is continuing, and you are going to be served in the same ways."

During the meeting, ASM Chair Landis Varughese voiced concerns over changes to diversity policy, saying the university's assertion that financial aid changes wouldn't adversely impact students felt moot, as some noticed their funds had been revoked.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison [University Committee](#) is the executive committee of the Faculty Senate, serving as an intermediary between faculty and shared governance groups like the Associated Students of Madison (ASM). Its six elected members serve three-year terms, with two new members joining every year. Those chosen represent the four faculty divisions. The Committee often invites other university faculty and administrators to speak at meetings about issues affecting faculty operations.

The Committee itself acts as a shared governance group — representing faculty members at UW-Madison — and can make policy recommendations, offer advice to university administration on their behalf along with possessing the ability to be involved in the creation of other shared governance bodies by appointing faculty members to fill vacancies in other faculty committees when the need arises.

Varughese said multiple students he'd spoken to relying on diversity-based programs for financial aid could not access websites or physical offices to find out more about the program's future, creating confusion.

The University Committee did not respond to this as Varughese left the room shortly after making his statement.

The next University Committee meeting will take place Sept. 15, with Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin in attendance.

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