

# [***University Of Wisconsin Agrees To Freeze DEI Expansion In Deal With State Republicans Who Stalled Raises***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:69TX-Y1M1-JBCM-F530-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 871 words

**Byline:** James Farrell, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:** The University of Wisconsin has agreed to freeze hiring new positions related to diversity, equity and inclusion in a deal with the state s Republican-led legislature, which had blocked pay raises for faculty.

**Body**

**Topline**

After a standoff with Wisconsin s Republican-led legislature over funding for pay raises and a new engineering building, the University of Wisconsin has agreed to freeze all new hires related to diversity, equity and inclusion and make other changes to its diversity initiatives the latest example of how national culture wars are driving decisions regarding American educational institutions.

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FILE - The commencement address is given during graduation at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wis., on May 12, 2018. The Universities of Wisconsin and Assembly Republican Speaker Robin Vos have reached a sweeping deal released Friday, Dec. 8, 2023, that would freeze hiring for diversity positions across the system in exchange for lawmakers approving employee pay raises and funding for a new engineering building at the flagship campus. Vos blocked pay raises and Republicans refused to release money for the engineering building earlier this year. (AP Photo/Jon Elswick, File)

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**Key Facts**

Through 2026, the university system will not increase the number of positions that serve diversity, equity and inclusion functions, and over the course of two years will realign at least 33% of its diversity staff to focus on academic and student success, according toa university resolutionunveiled Friday.

Under the agreement, the University of Wisconsin-Madison will additionally commit to seeking philanthropic support to create a new position focused on conservative political thought, classical economic theory or classical liberalism.

The university also agreed to support legislation granting Wisconsin high school students automatic admission to the University of Wisconsin-Madison if they are in the top 5% of academic performers in the state, or to any other school in the system if they are in the top 10% of their class.

The university system would also remove diversity statements from student admissions applications.

In exchange, the legislature is expected to approve roughly $800 million in funding for the university system for stalled employee pay raises and the construction of a new engineering building, which had been blocked by theRepublican-led state legislature for months.

In a statement, Republican Assembly Speaker Robin Vos celebrated the announcement, noting that our caucus objective has always been aimed at dismantling the bureaucracy and division related to DEI and reprioritizing our universities towards an emphasis on what matters student success and achievement.

**Crucial Quote**

I assure you that we remain fully committed to diversity, inclusion and belonging, said university chancellor Jennifer Mnookin in amessage to the universityFriday. This agreement, should it move forward, does not lessen or retreat from that commitment.

**Key Background**

The debate plays out as educational institutions and mostly Republican politicians across the country wage battles over diversity initiatives, educational content in classrooms and other national hot-button political issues. Earlier this year, Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis criticized the College Board s proposed AP African American Studies course for its inclusion of lesson plans on Black Lives Matter and other subject matter often opposed by Republicans. The organization then faced pushback from Black scholars when it revised the framework, but denied that ***politics*** played a role in its decision. Florida also passed a Stop WOKE Act that aimed to regulate how topics like race, diversity and racism can be taught in schools and workplaces. That law is currently the subject ofa legal battle.The Associated Press reportedthat by April, Republican lawmakers across the country had already proposed more than 30 bills this year targeting diversity, equity and inclusion efforts in higher education. Colleges have also been forced to reevaluate their diversity programs and admissions since the Supreme Court ruledin June that race-conscious admissions were unconstitutional, challenging long-standing affirmative action protocols across the country. The saga in Wisconsin began in June when state Republicans first held off on approving funding for the university, and Vos floated the idea of cutting roughly $32 million in university fundingfor diversity initiatives.

**What To Watch For**

The final agreement still needs to be approved by the board of regents for the University of Wisconsin system and the Republican-led legislature, but would also come before Democratic Gov. Tony Evers, who could sign or veto it. In an interview with local network WISN-TV, Evers said he thought that withholding pay of University of Wisconsin faculty was B.S. and really obnoxious. The regents are scheduled to vote Saturday.

**Chief Critic**

Before the deal was even announced, the state legislature s Legislative Black Caucus releaseda statementsaying it was appalled and ashamed at the negotiations. We ask the question, who was at the table making negotiations on behalf of our Black and brown students on campus? Who decided to undervalue our students and staff of color by setting a price tag on their inclusion on our campuses?

**Further Reading**

**Load-Date:** December 9, 2023

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