Disability outreach has come a long way since the establishment of the Wisconsin Idea. At the time of the idea’s origination, disability was a more taboo topic that was oftentimes not directly addressed at the university. There were a few setbacks in the fight for disability equality and inclusion, the main one being the increased support of the eugenics movement in the early 20th century. This movement was heavily supported by UW-Madison officials and leaders, such as former university president Charles Van Hise. It was because of the eugenics movement, the laws supporting it, and the views of authoritative figures at the time that the Wisconsin Idea was limited to a smaller scope of community for extension programs for so many years.

      One of the pivotal changes for disability outreach on campus was the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990. Over time after the ADA’s passing, UW-Madison became a more inclusive, accessible campus that now uses its resources to benefit not only students with disabilities, but also the wider disability community. One of the earliest disability outreach programs established at the university was the UW Waisman Center’s Community Training, Intervention, and Evaluation Services (TIES) in 1987. Thanks to the ADA’s passing three years later, the program was able to expand even more to address therapeutic needs for children and adults in Dane County that have intellectual and developmental disabilities. The overall fight for inclusion and accessibility within the university, as well as for the general public community, has come a long way since the time of the Wisconsin Idea’s creation. Today, UW-Madison has many outreach programs, including Adapted Fitness, Gigi’s Playhouse, and Best Buddies, and even offers courses for credit that incorporate service to the community, particularly to disabled members of our community. There is also a Disability Cultural Center (DCC) that works to uplift, affirm, and celebrate disability identity and culture on campus. Although university officials, such as Van Hise, once had the most prominent roles as spokespeople, student activism has taken a greater role and continues to accomplish more with the creation of the DCC.