The Milwaukee Idea

A Powerful Force for Change

“I believe that universities are put on the face of the earth to make a social contribution. We make our contribution in terms of our teaching, the programs we offer, the lives we enable, the discovery and inquiry we conduct through our service. Our links to our community give legs to our mission because our partnerships and connections benefit the community and in turn, that benefits us.”

Nancy L. Zimpher
Chancellor
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

A single idea has the power to transform our thinking, enrich our community, and change our lives. So it is with The Milwaukee Idea, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s groundbreaking effort to bring its rich store of intellectual energy and proven expertise to partnerships with the people of greater Milwaukee and Wisconsin.

Through The Milwaukee Idea, UWM is developing new ways of learning, expanding basic and applied research and scholarship, fostering creative approaches to economic development across the state, and forming partnerships for tackling threats to the health of young and old alike.

Consider the impact of this powerful idea:

❖ Innovative UWM programs developed in partnership with the Milwaukee Public Schools are improving how teachers teach and students learn in our urban schools.

❖ Pioneering research at UWM conducted in partnership with major corporations like Rockwell Automation, Intel, and Ford holds the promise of greatly reducing industrial breakdowns.

❖ Expanded educational opportunities created in collaboration with Milwaukee’s non-profit organizations are strengthening the management and leadership capacity of non-profits and the vital services they provide.

❖ New urban housing that is energy efficient, affordable, and easily integrated into city neighborhoods is taking shape through a partnership that brings together UWM, the City of Milwaukee, Wells Fargo Bank, Wisconsin Energy Corporation, and several other public and private partners.

The Milwaukee Idea builds on UWM’s long tradition of research, teaching and service. Its spirit and philosophy grow from the Wisconsin Idea, championed by progressive state leaders at the turn of the century. In expressing the importance of the University of Wisconsin-Madison to the state’s people and commerce, they asserted, “The boundaries of the university are the boundaries of the state.”

Likewise, UWM is not bound by the geography of its campus: There is no ivory tower here. Rather, the university reaches out to metropolitan Milwaukee, the state, and beyond, playing a vital role in improving the quality of our lives. The Milwaukee Idea energizes and reaffirms UWM’s urban mission, set forth at its founding in 1956: UWM was to be “Milwaukee’s university,” a powerful partner in the life and livelihood of the community.

Today UWM is indeed that university: a premier urban research institution committed to a shared future and working as an equal partner with the community to address critical issues in education, the economy, the environment, and community health.
Take the state’s only public urban research university, well known for its scholarship, outreach and service. Mix it with an energetic new chancellor and her compelling vision for change. Leaven with extensive contributions from faculty, staff, students and the community. Let it rise to meet today’s expectations for great urban universities.

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In 1956, when J. Martin Klotsche became the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee’s first chancellor, he envisioned a future for UWM in which the university would “find strength in its urban setting” and through its scholarship and outreach give new meaning to the quality of urban life.

When Nancy L. Zimpher became UWM’s sixth chancellor, she took charge of a university poised to renew and expand the mission that Chancellor Klotsche had articulated nearly 50 years earlier. Building on its strong tradition of service, UWM would engage with the community more broadly than ever before and in doing so make an even greater contribution to the quality of urban life.

Shortly after her arrival, Chancellor Zimpher challenged faculty, staff, and students to imagine this future for UWM—a future as a new kind of university inextricably linked to its community:

“It’s not just us serving the community. It’s not just the community serving us,” she said in her first campus speech. “It’s the notion of together building a city and university that are the heart of metropolitan Milwaukee. This is the essence of The Milwaukee Idea.”

The Milwaukee Idea reframes the Wisconsin Idea for UWM, an urban university in the 21st century. It expands the boundaries of the university. It puts UWM’s research, scholarship, and teaching in service to all citizens, not just those who are its students. And it answers the call for universities, particularly urban universities, to get out there and get engaged with their communities—to experiment, to open up new avenues for discourse, to become more involved in solving the pressing social, political, and economic issues facing our world.
To take The Milwaukee Idea from vision to action, UWM mounted a planning process unprecedented in its inclusiveness and scope. All who wanted to get involved were invited to do so. Participants included UWM students, faculty and staff, union representatives, campus neighbors, corporate and social service agency leaders, clergy and elected officials.

More than 100 people spent 100 days in affinity groups discussing, debating and drawing up rough plans for what would become First Ideas – bold initiatives for community/university partnerships in education, the environment, and economic development. Then action teams stepped in. Made up of community and university members with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, the teams fine-tuned the plans and sent them on for evaluation to another group of campus and community representatives.

The initiatives that emerged build on UWM’s academic strengths and offer fertile ground for community/university collaboration. Among them are a Consortium for Economic Opportunity linking university expertise with small and minority-owned businesses, a Healthy Choices program focusing on substance use and abuse on campus and in the community, and a new set of general education courses celebrating multiculturalism and expanding opportunities for community-based learning.

All of the initiatives reflect several important principles that are at the heart of The Milwaukee Idea. They include a commitment to:

❖ Build lasting partnerships in which the university and the community come to the table as equals.
❖ Bring people together across academic disciplines and professional backgrounds to apply their collective expertise to complex issues.
❖ Create strategies that promote diversity and multicultural appreciation.

“I believe The Milwaukee Idea has made a significant difference in Milwaukee. I think there are many people like myself who have a renewed interest in the university and want to be part of this ambitious idea. This is something that will be enduring... ”

Johna Rogovin, Director, Southeastern Wisconsin Community Health Charities, and member of a Milwaukee Idea Action Team
"... I am inspired by the efforts of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee to reshape the Wisconsin Idea for its urban setting. With The Milwaukee Idea, UWM has taken seriously the challenges of community engagement, enhanced research and student learning to find a meaningful path to concrete action."

"Of all the definitions of engagement, the one I find most relevant to universities and communities underscores relationship. To be engaged is to be committed to a lifetime partnership. UWM was formed to be Milwaukee's university, and together - urban community and urban university - it will create its future."

Katharine C. Lyall, President, University of Wisconsin System

**The Milwaukee Idea**

Milwaukee Idea initiatives address our health, the education of our youth, the economic vitality of our community and state, and the quality of our environment. Here is a sampling of their work.

**Age and Community** is an important community-wide effort to expand our understanding of aging and to improve the quality of life for older adults. This Milwaukee Idea initiative brings the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee together with a wide array of community professionals to plan for a future in which the number of people over age 60 is expected to double in the next 25 years. Age and Community is:

- Working to greatly expand research and scholarship on aging.
- Developing new degree and nondegree programs in gerontology, including courses to train practitioners in the latest techniques for working with older adults.
- Creating a new Age and Community Center where the community and the university can come together to share knowledge and transform theory into practice.

Bill Mayrl, Interim Coordinator, 414-229-4217
Nikki Panico, Interim Program Manager, 414-229-2729.

**Campus Design Solutions** is improving the physical environment of UW System campuses and the neighborhoods and communities in which they are located. Housed at UW M’s highly regarded School of Architecture and Urban Planning, this initiative is involved in a variety of projects. Among them:

- Developing the Maryland Avenue Plan in concert with UWM’s neighbors to address concerns such as property values, student housing, and campus/community relations.
- Creating a “Quick Response” Team to efficiently respond to nonprofit organizations and neighborhood groups seeking help with design issues.
- Designing The Milwaukee Idea Home, a prototype for low-cost, energy-efficient urban housing which is being developed in partnership with the City of Milwaukee and local business and industry groups.
- Developing a model to help plan for and monitor a sustainable energy system for the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center’s new visitor center.


**Consortium for Economic Opportunity.**

Through the Consortium for Economic Opportunity, UWM is building on its partnerships with economic development agencies, community organizations, and small businesses to help spur economic growth throughout metropolitan Milwaukee. The consortium has a presence...
in the city with offices at the Ameritech King Commerce Center, 2745 N. Martin Luther King Drive. Among its numerous accomplishments are:

❖ Sponsoring an entrepreneurial training program designed to help both emerging and established entrepreneurs gain critical business skills, develop business plans, and attract financing.

❖ Providing technical assistance to enhance the economic development capacity of a variety of organizations, including the Wauwatosa Economic Development Corporation, Burleigh Street Community Development Initiative and Northeast Milwaukee Industrial Development Corporation.

❖ Working with the Harambee Ombudsman Project to help secure funding for a major training and education grant for at-risk youth.

❖ Assisting Work for Wisconsin, a community-based organization focusing on training and placement of disadvantaged workers, with development of a database to help match job seekers with employers.

Marc Levine, Director, 414-229-5881  
Lucy Holifield, Associate Director, 414-227-3242, www.uwm.edu/MilwaukeeIdea/CEO.

Cultures and Communities is a new set of foundation courses for undergraduates – one of just a few of its kind in the country – emphasizing cross-cultural literacy, interdisciplinary study, and community-based learning. It aims to prepare students to successfully take their places in an increasingly complex and diverse workforce and world. Its accomplishments include:

❖ Bringing together educators and members of the community to explore how cultural diversity can be integrated into coursework and research, and how students can contribute to their communities while earning their degrees.

❖ Developing a rich array of new courses in disciplines ranging from anthropology and visual art to sociology and dance.

❖ Making grants to more than 20 faculty members and community partners to develop courses or projects for the Cultures and Communities curriculum. Among them is an oral history project that pairs UWM with the Walnut Way Conservation Corporation to give students a chance to learn about Milwaukee’s oldest African American neighborhood.

❖ Partnering with Milwaukee’s Riverside University High School to help students acquire essential computer skills while they learn about and create virtual museums.

Gregory Jay, Director; Sandra Jones, Assistant Director 414-229-5960, www.cc.uwm.edu.

Freshwater Initiative. This new initiative focuses on the preservation and sustainability of local and global freshwater resources. UWM, located on the world’s largest system of freshwater lakes and rivers, is strategically positioned to become an international leader in creating knowledge and disseminating learning about the full array of freshwater issues. Early accomplishments include:

❖ Receipt of a $2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Defense for research at UWM’s Great Lakes WATER Institute. The grant will support extensive study on safeguarding the nation’s drinking-water supply systems.

❖ Mounting a major community forum to explore and improve understanding of water quality issues in metropolitan Milwaukee.

Val Klump, Director, Great Lakes WATER Institute, 414-382-1700.
Global Passport Project seeks to equip students with the knowledge and skills to succeed in this era of globalization. The project is expanding study-abroad programs, increasing the number of international students and faculty on campus, and offering programs on international issues to the community. Its efforts include:

❖ Developing a new degree in global studies – unique in the state – designed to give students the academic foundation and practical training to understand, predict, and respond to global change.

❖ Partnering with the Milwaukee Public Schools to bring UWM’s international students into elementary and middle school classrooms to promote intercultural understanding and awareness.

❖ Bringing elementary and high school teachers together with postsecondary scholars to develop strategies for integrating international content into teaching.

❖ Increasing student participation in overseas study through more than 30 UWM-sponsored programs that give students a chance to gain intercultural skills and experience life in more than 20 countries.

Patrice Petro, Senior Director, Center for International Education, 414-229-3757; Sara Tully, Director of Program Planning and Development, Center for International Education, 414-229-3767, www.uwm.edu/Dept/CIE.

Healthy Choices is addressing the personal and public health consequences of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use and abuse with a variety of strategies, including community education, research, and evaluation of treatment services. Housed at UWM’s nationally recognized Center for Addiction and Behavioral Health Research, the Healthy Choices initiative is:

❖ Evaluating drug abuse and violence prevention efforts at several middle schools in the Milwaukee Public Schools system.

❖ Mounting a major effort to research drinking on campus and educate students and the community about its effects.

❖ Assessing alcohol and other drug abuse treatment services provided to women and children who receive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

❖ Publishing and distributing the bilingual alcohol and drug prevention “Self-Help Guide” to Milwaukee-area residents.

Lynda Braatz, Program Manager, 414-229-4766; Ron Cisler, Director of Research and Evaluation, 414-229-5425; www.uwm.edu/Dept/CABHR.

Knowledgefest offers the community a lively opportunity to learn about the full breadth of research at UWM (the state’s only urban research university), and the variety of ways it is working to improve the quality of our lives. Knowledgefest activities include:

❖ The Chancellor’s Research Forum, an annual symposium that brings together guests from the community and UWM scholars for a look at noteworthy research and community/university partnership opportunities.

❖ “Knowledgefest on the Air,” a program highlighting university research achievements broadcast on WUWM-FM, Milwaukee’s National Public Radio affiliate.

❖ Showcasing research and community/university partnerships at local festivals and fairs.

Joan Prince, Assistant Chancellor for Partnerships and Innovation, 414-229-3101; www.uwm.edu/Dept/partnerships.

Millennium Information Technology Education and Careers (MITEC) is a new initiative that provides comprehensive computer skills training and career development for low- to moderate-income high school students. Students learn academic, social, and personal applications of technology and how it influences their quality of life. Partners include the Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee Area Technical College, Private Industry Council of Milwaukee County, Manpower International, and a number of community-based organizations.

Milwaukee Industrial Innovation Center. This initiative draws on the substantial research capability of UWM to foster technology innovation and help generate new businesses and new jobs in the city and the state. The consortia is:

- Providing technical training and intellectual-property support services, and is playing an important role in commercializing innovations in bioengineering, software development, and information technology.
- Expanding opportunities for technology transfer by connecting university expertise with the technology needs of Wisconsin companies.
- Supporting the research of UWM’s Center for Intelligent Maintenance Systems. The center is developing technology that allows machines to monitor their own performance and predict breakdowns before they occur.
- Facilitating both intra-industry and multi-industry research consortia.


Nonprofit Management Education. This initiative to strengthen Milwaukee’s nonprofit organizations has been recognized with a total of nearly $2 million in grants from the Helen Bader, Faye McBeath, and Greater Milwaukee Foundations and the United Way of Greater Milwaukee. Through the Helen Bader Institute for Nonprofit Management Education at UWM, the initiative is:

- Developing a variety of educational offerings, including degree, nondegree, and continuing education programs, to enhance leadership and management of nonprofit organizations.
- Offering technical assistance to nonprofits in areas including fund development and planning, marketing, financial management, and technology assessment.


Partnerships for Environmental Health is a new initiative that addresses major threats to environmental health – such as air and water pollution and occupational exposure to toxins – with expanded research, education, and community/university partnerships. Areas of concentration will include lead poisoning in children, ergonomic injuries in the workplace, brownfield remediation, and consumption of mercury-contaminated fish.

David H. Petering, Director, 414-229-5853
Jeanne B. Hewitt, Associate Director, 414-229-5463.

Partnerships in Education, supported by more than $26 million in federal grants, is an exciting, community-wide effort to revitalize our urban schools. UWM, the Milwaukee Public Schools, and other educational institutions throughout...
Southeastern Wisconsin are joining forces to prepare more students for college (particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse families), create a strong and energetic teacher work force prepared to meet the challenges of urban schools, and integrate information technology into teacher education programs. Among its notable activities are:

❖ Bringing a select group of experienced Milwaukee Public School teachers to UWM for nine-month residencies. They join UWM faculty in the classroom to help write new courses and mentor beginning teachers, adding a new dimension to schooling tomorrow’s educators.

❖ Partnering with the Milwaukee Public Schools to support the work of technology consultants at several elementary schools in the city. The consultants are working with classroom and student teachers on the uses of educational software to enhance the curriculum.

❖ Unitizing members of the community and faculty to explore how to strengthen the quality of care and education for children from birth to age four.

❖ Taking a lead role in the Milwaukee Partnership Academy, a community-wide effort to prepare teachers for high-need urban schools and to recruit and retain top-quality teachers. In addition to UWM, partners include the Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee Board of School Directors, Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, Milwaukee Area Technical College, Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, Private Industry Council, and other important school community representatives.

Corliss D. Wood, Program Manager, 414-229-2667.

Urban Health Partnerships enhances the health and quality of life for urban communities through partnerships among UWM, health and human services providers, community residents, and policymakers. The initiative draws on the resources of several UWM schools and colleges, including the School of Nursing, Helen Bader School of Social Welfare, and the College of Health Sciences. It builds on a variety of successful collaborative efforts, including UWM’s community-based nursing centers, a training program for day-care providers caring for sick children, and adolescent pregnancy prevention programs.

Randall S. Lambrecht, Dean, College of Health Sciences, 414-229-4712; Sally Lundeen, Dean, School of Nursing, 414-229-4189.

Women’s Health Research is a new initiative that aims to substantially advance research on women’s health, provide a vehicle for increasing community/university partnerships, and expand educational opportunities for women of color, of varied ethnic backgrounds and disadvantaged women. It will build on research now being done at UWM in areas such as the impact of welfare reform on the lives and health of low-income women, personal and workplace factors that affect the choice and ability to breastfeed, women and cardiovascular disease, and adolescent pregnancy prevention.