Resolution of No Confidence in UW System President and Board of Regents

WHEREAS faculty are responsible for ensuring a quality education for students, serving the state of Wisconsin, and contributing to knowledge through research;

WHEREAS fulfillment of these responsibilities has long been guided and enabled by the University’s traditions of the Wisconsin Idea, robust tenure policies, and shared governance;

WHEREAS these practices have enabled a state of average size and wealth to enjoy a university system of worldwide renown at unparalleled cost effectiveness;

WHEREAS UW System President Ray Cross and the Board of Regents by their actions have overseen a weakening of these traditions and engaged in practices that fall far short of principles of responsible governance in their stewardship of the University;

WHEREAS in January 2016 the UW System Tenure Policy Task Force issued a final report without the endorsement of its membership and without adequate time for consideration by faculty and other stakeholders;

WHEREAS in March 2016 the Board of Regents adopted new UW System tenure and layoff policies based on the aforementioned report without adopting any of the modifications requested by UW System faculty, thereby weakening professional standards of academic due process beyond what 2015 Act 55 required;

WHEREAS in April 2016 the Board of Regents approved new campus-specific faculty layoff and termination policies for UW-Madison that had been materially weakened through unilateral modification by UW System legal counsel subsequent to their approval by the UW-Madison Faculty Senate in November 2015, rendering them inconsistent with the high standards set by the American Association of University Professors in its Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure;

WHEREAS the unilaterally modified policies were made public without adequate time for consideration by faculty or administrators, and were adopted by the Board of Regents without any opportunity for reconsideration by the UW-Madison Faculty Senate, in direct contravention of the Senate’s stated wishes;

WHEREAS the unilateral modification of the UW-Madison policies relating to faculty layoff and termination by the UW System general counsel, and the swift adoption of the unilaterally modified policies by the Board of Regents, have set an unacceptable precedent for both the content of other UW campuses’ policies and the process by which those policies will be adopted;

WHEREAS in February 2016 UW-Milwaukee was classified as a Research 1 institution in the Carnegie Classifications for the first time in its history, an achievement dependent
on academic freedom, shared governance, and state fiscal support for the dual campus missions of Access and Research;

WHEREAS this distinction added to the previous classification, in January 2015, of UWM as a top university for community engagement by the Carnegie Foundation;

WHEREAS program changes based on non-educational considerations, the erosion of academic due process, and the circumventing of shared governance jeopardize the quality of students’ education and imperil the dual mission of UW-Milwaukee and its R1 and community engagement status;

WHEREAS affordable tuition, adequate budget, strong tenure, and shared governance are essential to the quality of a university’s educational, scholarly, and outreach missions;

WHEREAS the erosion of active shared governance in conjunction with budget cuts diminishes access, affordability, and educational resources for our students, as well as support for scholarship and its associated economic benefits, as well as civic engagement, as well as outreach and services to the citizens of the State of Wisconsin, and thereby harms the quality of our university;

WHEREAS the erosion of tenure and shared governance in conjunction with budget cuts is likely to have a disproportionately negative impact on faculty and students who are already most marginalized and/or engaged in politically controversial research;

WHEREAS the UW-Milwaukee Faculty Senate previously resolved to “engage in all appropriate collective action” to “uphold and defend” the principles regarding tenure that the Faculty Senate endorsed on November 19, 2015 (Faculty Document 3041);

WHEREAS on May 2, 2016, the UW-Madison Faculty Senate endorsed a resolution of no confidence in UW System President Ray Cross and the Board of Regents’ commitment to defending the Wisconsin Idea, extending the benefit of the University to every citizen in the state;

It is hereby RESOLVED that the UW-Milwaukee Faculty have no confidence in President Ray Cross and the Board of Regents’ commitment to defending the Wisconsin Idea, extending the benefits of the University to every citizen in the state;

It is further RESOLVED that the UW-Milwaukee Faculty call on System President Ray Cross and the Board of Regents to recommit themselves to the Wisconsin Idea by carrying out their responsibilities and working with us to strengthen the quality of our state universities, in particular by working with the state legislature to make a positive case for improved access, affordability, and educational resources for our students; for additional support for scholarship and its associated economic benefits; for greater resources for outreach and services to citizens of the State; and by truly respecting, advancing, and participating in shared governance in the UW System.