



**Speaker's Task Force on Urban Education
Remarks of UW System President Ray Cross
Sept. 29, 2015**

Thank you for inviting me to participate today.

I am joined by Dr. Hope Longwell-Grice, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs: Teaching & Learning in UW-Milwaukee's School of Education.

I'd like to share just a few examples of our UW System commitment to urban education in Wisconsin. This is a priority for the UW System because we know the challenges that urban schools face are significant and that underrepresented and minority student gaps are simply too large. **We can help.**

More specifically, preparing teachers to work and succeed in urban districts is, and must continue to be, a top priority for us.

Training teachers has always been an important part of the mission of University of Wisconsin institutions. As you may know, many of our four-year institutions were originally teachers' colleges.

UW System institutions produced 2,165 graduates with bachelor's degrees in Education in 2013-14. These graduates now play an important role as teachers within our Wisconsin school districts.

UW-Milwaukee produced 354 of those graduates. In addition, non-Education majors may also pursue "teacher certification" at UW System institutions. It's another way we supply the teaching-talent our school districts need.

We know quite well the challenges of urban education, as well as its important role. Last year, for example, the Milwaukee Public School District educated almost 77,400 students districtwide, with 86 percent of them students of color, 83 percent from low-income families, and 20 percent students with disabilities.

Milwaukee Public Schools sends more than 750 freshman students annually to our UW System institutions. Frankly, that is not enough. It is a base we must help build upon and grow.

As a state and as a nation, we have much work to do to improve the success of those students and all others in urban schools. We recognize that. And we're working on it.

We have a number of examples demonstrating the seriousness of our commitment. I'll outline a few, starting with The UW System's Institute for Urban Education.

The Institute was developed through a partnership between UW-Milwaukee and UW System Administration. Based at UW-Milwaukee, it has Systemwide goals to do the following:

- Improve the depth and quality of the applicant pool for Wisconsin Public schools.
- Increase professional development opportunities for Wisconsin teachers who are currently working in urban settings or want to work in urban settings.
- Create a program that facilitates the integration of science and practice in the areas of urban education.
- And increase and improve the collaborative teaching and research efforts of UW System schools and programs of education.

The UW System also works closely with the Department of Public Instruction on preparing teachers on meeting school districts' changing needs. For example, the UW System and DPI worked closely on developing a standardized method of assessing a candidate's readiness to teach. In addition, we partner in DPI initiatives to improve recruitment and retention of our teaching force and in the recruitment of students from diverse backgrounds into education.

As you know, the 2015-17 Biennial Budget required the Board of Regents to create the Office of Educational Opportunity within the UW System. This office will act as a new authorizer of independent charter schools.

We are very confident that we can structure and help manage this office to establish new, innovative charter schools that will address our urban education challenges.

We are studying models for similar offices across the country to insure that ours will build upon best practices while it is also set up to address challenges and opportunities unique to the Wisconsin education ecosystem.

Meanwhile, we have been meeting with many stakeholders who are providing valuable counsel as we establish the new office.

Let me now turn to Dr. Longwell-Grice, to share more on UW-Milwaukee's work on urban education, including the M-CUBED initiative which leverages the assets of some critical partners to address educational challenges in southeast Wisconsin.

DR. LONGWELL-GRICE: PROVIDES TESTIMONY

PRESIDENT CROSS:

Thank you, Dr. Longwell-Grice.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate the UW System's commitment to urban education throughout the state. Our institutions are collaborating with K-12 partners around Wisconsin and, as you heard today, particularly in southeast Wisconsin and Milwaukee. We know that region's success is critical.

We're taking on the challenges we, together, face. We're working toward solutions. And we are eager to work with this Task Force as we move forward.

Thank you.