

Letter Report

Dental Education Contract
Marquette University School of Dentistry

September 2009



Legislative Audit Bureau

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Janice Mueller
State Auditor

September 22, 2009

Senator Kathleen Vinehout and
Representative Peter Barca, Co-chairpersons
Joint Legislative Audit Committee
State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin 53702

Dear Senator Vinehout and Representative Barca:

As required by s. 39.46, Wis. Stats., we have completed a limited-scope review of the dental education contract between the State of Wisconsin and the Marquette University School of Dentistry for fiscal year (FY) 2006-07 and FY 2007-08. During this period, the State provided tuition aid of \$8,753 each to 158 Wisconsin residents enrolled in the undergraduate dental education program in FY 2006-07, and 160 Wisconsin residents enrolled in FY 2007-08, for a total of nearly \$2.8 million during the two-year period.

Overall, we found that Marquette University was in compliance with its contract with the State and with requirements set forth in s. 39.46, Wis. Stats. During our review, we confirmed the students for whom Marquette University claimed tuition aid were certified by the Higher Educational Aids Board as Wisconsin residents and were eligible to receive this aid. In addition, Marquette University spent funds from the State only for the undergraduate dental school program, it targeted Wisconsin residents for enrollment in the program, and it promoted minority enrollment.

We appreciate the courtesy and cooperation extended to us by Marquette University staff during our review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janice Mueller".

Janice Mueller
State Auditor

JM/CS/ss

Enclosure

DENTAL EDUCATION CONTRACT

Marquette University operates the only dental school in Wisconsin. Since 1973, the State, through the Higher Educational Aids Board, has contracted with the Marquette University School of Dentistry to provide dental education services for Wisconsin residents. As authorized under s. 20.235(1)(d), Wis. Stats., and in accordance with the terms of the contract with the School of Dentistry, the State provides a statutorily established per capita aid payment for a prescribed maximum number of Wisconsin residents enrolled as full-time students in the undergraduate dental education program. Residents are eligible for the aid payment for a maximum of five years. The Higher Educational Aids Board certifies the residency status of all students claimed by the school.

As required by s. 39.46(1), Wis. Stats., the Legislative Audit Bureau reviews the Marquette University School of Dentistry's compliance with contract provisions and with various statutory requirements. For fiscal year (FY) 2006-07 and FY 2007-08, we tested the residency and the enrollment status of dental students for whom Marquette University claimed tuition assistance to ensure the students were Wisconsin residents and that they were claimed for no more than five years. In addition, we examined expenditures charged to the contract account to ensure Marquette University spent funds from the State solely for the undergraduate dental education program. Finally, we reviewed the School of Dentistry's admissions policies to ensure they were consistent with statutory guidelines, and we also ensured that minority student access was promoted by Marquette.

State Tuition Aid to Wisconsin Residents

Since 1973, the State has provided tuition aid to Wisconsin residents studying at the Marquette University School of Dentistry. Over time, the amount of assistance and the maximum number of students that can be claimed has fluctuated. Since FY 2004-05, the tuition aid payment has been \$8,753 for each eligible Wisconsin resident enrolled as a full-time undergraduate student in the study of dentistry, with a statutory maximum of 160 students. For the two-year period we reviewed, the Legislature appropriated \$2.8 million in general purpose revenue (GPR) for tuition aid.

We reviewed the residency status of students claimed for tuition aid by the School of Dentistry and evaluated the effectiveness of the system for monitoring tuition payments and the number of times students were claimed for aid. We found that both the Higher Educational Aids Board and Marquette University staff have ensured tuition aid is paid only for eligible students and that for academic years 2006-07 and 2007-08, the students for whom the School of Dentistry claimed tuition aid met the eligibility criteria. In FY 2006-07, 158 students were eligible for the tuition aid and in FY 2007-08, 160 students were eligible.

The Legislature has directed that in return for receiving aid from the State, the School of Dentistry must develop an admissions policy that gives Wisconsin residents preference in admissions. Marquette University staff noted that they actively recruit resident applicants by visiting several Wisconsin universities. Our review of admissions procedures found the School of Dentistry gave preference by enrolling a larger percentage of applicants who were Wisconsin residents compared to non-residents. For example, for the 2007-08 academic year, 22.2 percent

of the 194 Wisconsin residents who applied as first-year students were accepted into the School of Dentistry, compared to only 2.3 percent of the 2,995 nonresident applicants.

Finally, the dental education contract stipulates that tuition aid will be used to fund undergraduate dental education. We reviewed expenditures incurred by the School of Dentistry during FY 2006-07 and FY 2007-08 and determined that it had complied with the contract and had spent state funds solely on undergraduate dental education.

Minority Enrollment

The dental education contract and s. 39.46(2)(g), Wis. Stats., require the School of Dentistry to make every effort to ensure that at least 5.0 percent of total enrollment consists of minority students, but neither the contract nor statutes define who is to be considered a minority student for this purpose. To assess whether the School of Dentistry met the 5.0 percent minority enrollment goal, we referred to the definition in s. 39.44, Wis. Stats., which relates to grants to minority undergraduate students in institutions of higher education, and s. 39.40, Wis. Stats., which relates to the minority teacher loan program. Both statute sections consider minority students to be individuals who are African American; Hispanic; Native American; and former citizens of Laos, Vietnam, or Cambodia and their descendants.

The School of Dentistry does not have information available for the number of students from or having ancestors specifically from Laos, Vietnam, or Cambodia. However, as shown in Table 1, based on the number of students who identified themselves as African American, Hispanic, or Native American, minority enrollment at the School of Dentistry has exceeded the 5.0 percent goal in each of the past five years.

Table 1

Minority Enrollment (academic years)

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
African American	7	8	8	11	8
Hispanic	22	20	19	17	17
Native American	4	4	4	2	2
Laotian, Vietnamese, or Cambodian ¹	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total Minorities	33	32	31	30	27
Total Enrollment	308	311	320	318	319
Percentage of Total Enrollment	10.7%	10.3%	9.7%	9.4%	8.5%

¹ Information on this group of students was not available.

Marquette University staff indicate that the School of Dentistry continues its efforts to recruit minority students throughout Wisconsin, as well as from college campuses throughout the country. In order to enlarge the pool of qualified Wisconsin minority applicants, the School of Dentistry indicates it participates in local high school and middle school programs that focus on minorities and dental education.

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