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Statement of Representative Jerry O'Connor on UW System Guaranteed Admissions Bill Signed into Law

MADISON – Representative Jerry O'Connor (R- Fond du Lac) released the following statement after Governor Evers signed his Guaranteed Admissions Bill into law.

“I am pleased that Gov. Evers signed SB 367, my bill to guarantee admission to UW System institutions and technical colleges for Wisconsin’s “best and brightest High School graduates.

A number of our students, families, High School Principals, and School Administrators have shared disappointing reports of how a number of our top-performing High School graduates – those who would rank at the top of their classes – could not gain admission to one of our UW System schools.

This rejection was the result of the undisclosed UW System formula that can leave Wisconsin’s best and brightest out of our schools. The bottom line is that we are losing too many of our “best and brightest” High School graduates to neighboring colleges and universities. Our UW campuses are rightfully proud of the post-graduate retention rate for out-of-state college graduates who choose to remain in Wisconsin after graduation.

This is also true of those Wisconsin students who end up in an out-of-state college. Once that student leaves Wisconsin for another state, there is an increased likelihood that when they graduate from college, they will not return to Wisconsin, where they would become long-term contributing members of our communities. In effect, this was an institutional brain drain.

SB 367 provides a pathway for guaranteed admission for the “Top Five Percent” of our high school scholastic performers to UW-Madison and “Top Ten Percent” to all other UW System schools. The highlights include:

- Under this bill, Boards for public schools, choice schools, private schools, homeschoolers, and tribal schools will establish a method for ranking pupils based on academic achievement ONLY. Considerations will include the pupil's Grade Point Average, SAT or ACT exam scores, course work, and other measures of academic achievement or scholastic merit to determine who qualifies for the Top 5% and Top 10% of graduates. There will be no further qualifiers allowed in this scholastic determination.
- For UW System institutions, the program admission benefit applies only to applicants as first-year undergraduate students. The UW System schools will be required to grant admission to these students.

I thank Speaker Vos, Sen. Rachael Cabral-Guevara, and SB 367’s co-sponsors for their efforts to craft a bill that will help keep Wisconsin moving forward. I also thank Gov. Evers for signing SB 367 into law.

Our goal is to increase our capture rate of Wisconsin’s “best and brightest” for our colleges and universities that later make Wisconsin their long-term home after receiving their degree from one of our UW or Tech Schools. When that happens all of Wisconsin wins.”

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