



## **Certain Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Activities** *University of Wisconsin System Institutions*

University of Wisconsin (UW) System institutions conducted various diversity, equity, and inclusion activities in recent years. Neither the Board of Regents nor UW System Administration required UW institutions to define diversity, equity, and inclusion in a particular manner; develop diversity, equity, and inclusion plans; or implement specific types of activities. Instead, each UW institution decided how to implement diversity, equity, and inclusion, which resulted in differences across UW institutions.

The Joint Legislative Audit Committee requested that we conduct an audit of diversity, equity, and inclusion activities in order to determine specific activities performed in compliance with Executive Order 59 or other strategic plans; analyze amounts expended by agencies for these activities, including for staffing; and review reported outcomes resulting from these activities.

To complete this audit, we relied on information UW institutions provided us pertaining to their diversity, equity, and inclusion activities. In a separate report (report 25-05), we examined diversity, equity, and inclusion activities at other agencies.

Our audit focuses on activities that UW institutions listed in their strategic plans as well as their diversity, equity, and inclusion plans and other documents for the period from January 2020 through April 2024. Our audit does not assess all activities conducted by UW institutions because some offices and academic departments likely implemented additional activities that were not listed in the information provided to us at the UW institution level.

### **We determined the number of diversity, equity, and inclusion activities listed in information obtained from UW institutions**

UW institutions planned diversity, equity, and inclusion activities based primarily on decisions made at the UW institution level. Because UW institutions did not share a common definition of diversity, equity, and inclusion, we identified relevant activities based on how each UW institution implemented diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Information obtained from UW institutions listed a total of 1,263 diversity, equity, and inclusion activities for the period from January 2020 through April 2024. This information listed various types of activities, such as connecting faculty to diversity, equity, and inclusion

initiatives, as well as eliminating policies and practices that negatively affect the enrollment of underrepresented students. These activities are shown in Appendix 2 for each UW institution.

A total of 403 of the 1,263 activities (31.9 percent) focused on students, and 336 activities (26.6 percent) focused on faculty and staff. The remaining activities focused on either members of community organizations and the public or multiple types of individuals.

### **We assessed the outcomes of certain diversity, equity, and inclusion activities that UW institutions completed in FY 2023-24**

To assess the outcomes of diversity, equity, and inclusion activities, we interviewed UW institutions, considered select plans they provided to us, and identified the one strategic plan or the one diversity, equity, and inclusion plan that in our auditor judgment contained key activities that a given UW institution worked on in fiscal year (FY) 2023-24. These plans listed a total of 167 activities.

In FY 2023-24, UW institutions worked on 94 of the 167 activities (56.3 percent). The plans do not consistently identify key information about the 94 activities, including specific actions UW institutions need to take in order to complete the activities and the dates for completing the activities.

We assessed that the anticipated outcomes associated with 47 of the 94 activities (50.0 percent) are likely easy for UW institutions to measure, and the anticipated outcomes associated with 22 activities (23.4 percent) are likely difficult to measure. A total of 18 activities had no anticipated outcomes, and 7 activities had anticipated outcomes that restate the activities.

In FY 2023-24, UW institutions completed 12 of the 94 activities (12.8 percent) they worked on in that fiscal year. UW institutions had established outcomes for 7 of the 12 activities. The anticipated outcomes for four of the seven activities restate the activities, and UW institutions did not attempt to determine whether they had achieved all anticipated outcomes for three activities.

### **We estimated certain amounts that UW institutions spent on diversity, equity, and inclusion**

No UW institution tracked the amount it spent specifically on diversity, equity, and inclusion. We used the available information to estimate three types of costs that UW institutions incurred. Because some amounts overlap multiple types of costs, the amounts we estimated cannot be summed. We found that UW institutions in FY 2023-24 spent:

- \$40.2 million on offices with duties pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Not all amounts were related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, but the data do not indicate the amounts that were related specifically to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- An estimated \$12.5 million in salary costs for certain positions with job duties pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- An estimated \$7.9 million working on certain diversity, equity, and inclusion activities listed in selected strategic plans and equity and inclusion action plans.

To the extent that UW institutions implemented additional activities beyond activities conducted at the UW institution level, UW institutions likely incurred costs beyond those we estimated.

### **We reviewed UW's efforts to comply with a Board of Regents resolution pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion**

In December 2023, the Board of Regents approved Resolution 12129, which requires UW institutions to take several actions related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The resolution requires UW institutions not to increase through December 2026 the number of staff positions in certain specified job categories. The resolution also requires UW by December 2026 to realign at least 43.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions that were in the specified job categories and that were filled in December 2023.

The number of filled diversity, equity, and inclusion positions that are subject to the resolution decreased from 123.3 FTE in December 2023 to 110.9 FTE in May 2024.

We found that UW institutions had 56.9 FTE filled positions in May 2024 that are not subject to the resolution and that had at least some job duties pertaining to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Such positions included multicultural initiatives directors and specialists. UW-Madison had 30.0 of the 56.9 FTE positions.