



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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News Release

## UW System President Cross announces plans to retire

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MADISON, Wis.—University of Wisconsin System President Ray Cross announced today his intention to retire, capping off his 42-year career in higher education.

Cross, 71, will continue to serve as UW System president until his successor is found after a national search. He notified chancellors, regents, system leadership, and employees of his decision this week.

“Serving as president of the UW System has been the most rewarding work of my life,” President Cross said. “I believe there is no better investment for the state of Wisconsin than the University of Wisconsin System. From cutting-edge research on cancer, water quality, and how children learn to educating Wisconsin’s future leaders, the UW System has never been more important.”

Cross was named UW System president in January 2014, and began his appointment Feb. 15 of that year, after spending three years as chancellor of UW Colleges and UW-Extension. He managed UW System during a time of steep budget cuts and a sustained tuition freeze, yet he always maintained a focus on ensuring quality and student success. In addition, Cross has:

- Led the [2020FWD](#) strategic framework, focusing UW System’s vision on student success and outcomes, business and community engagement, and operational efficiency and transparency.
- Enhanced the UW System’s credibility and accountability among legislators and the public with new and more transparent accounting practices and the innovative [Accountability Dashboard](#).
- Built relationships with lawmakers, local and university officials, and the Wisconsin business community.
- Responded to demographic challenges by proactively guiding the ambitious UW System campus consolidation and [restructuring effort](#), the most significant organizational change since the formation of the UW System. The effort linking two-year and four-year campuses successfully and quickly secured accreditation.
- Focused on student success by emphasizing intensive advising, student behavioral health, and high-impact practices such as internships and undergraduate research.
- Oversaw a [record number of graduates](#) in 2017-18, including a record number of students of color.
- Directed [changes to hiring policies](#) to end the practice known as “pass the harasser,” making the UW System a national model.
- Created a task force that led to [required training](#) for all UW System students and employees to combat sexual violence and harassment.
- Focused on meeting Wisconsin’s needs now and in the future through such innovative collaborations as the [Dairy Innovation Hub](#) and the [Freshwater Collaborative](#).
- Highlighted successes of the UW System’s 13 institutions on the statewide [All In Wisconsin](#) tour.

“Ray has been tireless in his efforts to lead the UW System with vision and integrity. His forward-looking attitude influenced policymakers and opinion leaders to embrace and support the UW System,” said Regent President Andrew S. Petersen. “Ray stabilized the UW System at a time of legislative skepticism and financial challenges, and he restored transparency and credibility at the Capitol and among the public. He has guided the System through financial uncertainty and has positioned the System extremely well for the future. The Regents have had a terrific partner in Ray, and I look forward to celebrating his retirement and working with him in the months ahead as we chart the future course of the UW System.”

Petersen said the Regents will conduct a national search for a successor. Details will be forthcoming.

“The University of Wisconsin System is a tremendous asset for the state, for our communities, for our students, and for businesses,” Cross said. “There is no better talent generator than the UW System. It has been humbling to work on behalf of the people of Wisconsin to advance the mission of our public universities.”

Cross began work as the UW System’s seventh president in February 2014. Prior to that, starting in February 2011, he was chancellor of the University of Wisconsin Colleges and University of Wisconsin–Extension. He was president of Morrisville State College of the State University of New York from 1998 until coming to Wisconsin in 2011. He has been president of Northwest Technical College in Bemidji, Minn.; department head and professor at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Mich.; and a design engineer, small-business owner, and consultant.

From 1967-70, Cross served with the U.S. Army in Vietnam and was awarded four medals for his service.

For more information:

- Ray Cross biography: [wisconsin.edu/president/about/biography/](http://wisconsin.edu/president/about/biography/)
- Photo: [wisconsin.edu/president/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2014/05/Cross-RaymondW.jpg](http://wisconsin.edu/president/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2014/05/Cross-RaymondW.jpg)

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*The University of Wisconsin System serves approximately 170,000 students. Awarding nearly 37,000 degrees annually, the UW System is Wisconsin’s talent pipeline, putting graduates in position to increase their earning power, contribute to their communities, and make Wisconsin a better place to live. More than 80 percent of in-state UW System graduates stay in Wisconsin five years after earning a degree. The UW System provides a 23:1 return on state investment. UW System institutions also contribute to the richness of Wisconsin’s culture and economy with groundbreaking research, new companies and patents, and boundless creative intellectual energy.*

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