



WISCONSIN
TECHNOLOGY
COUNCIL

January 19, 2022

TO: Rep. David Murphy, chair, Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities
FROM: Tom Still, president, Wisconsin Technology Council
RE: Assembly Bill 775

Dear Chairman Murphy and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Technology Council, I want to offer our full support for AB-775, which will provide a “down payment” on planning for a much-needed Chemical and Bioengineering Instructional Laboratory on the UW-Madison College of Engineering Campus.

This facility rose to the top of the capital projects list for the UW System in the last budget cycle – and with good reason.

First, the College of Engineering needs more high-quality, multi-purpose laboratory space to meet the instructional needs of undergraduate and graduate students alike. The College of Engineering is at capacity with its current 4,500 students and could easily admit 1,000 more fully qualified undergraduates and 400 more graduates if the space was available. Let’s not tell those students, “Sorry, you should try getting into Illinois or Michigan.”

Second, more engineering graduates means a stronger workforce for Wisconsin. In the race for talent, Wisconsin should not let other states gain a competitive advantage when the opportunity to produce skilled workers at home is at our fingertips.

Third, the space envisioned for the John Kuetemeyer building would help to attract and retain faculty while responding to upcoming federal initiatives for which Wisconsin can and should compete.

You’ve heard of the Endless Frontier Act, which was co-sponsored by Rep. Mike Gallagher of Green Bay. It has gained significant traction in Congress, where it has been largely imbedded in the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act. It envisions a series of “technology hubs” across the United States, all of which involve engineering to a large extent.

Wisconsin can compete to become one of those hubs, as defined by the National Science Foundation. It cannot do so unless the state’s largest engineering school is prepared to stand toe-to-toe with schools such as Illinois and Michigan, which are investing in their own infrastructure and attracting private partners along the way.

This investment in planning sends a reassuring message to others that Wisconsin can step up and compete for a federal hub. The UW-Madison obviously cannot do so alone, but I know that other major engineering research schools in Wisconsin are ready and willing to work together.

Also represented on the Tech Council board of directors are the UW-Milwaukee, Marquette University, the Milwaukee School of Engineering and the WiSys Technology Foundation. Collectively, they represent a powerful consortium of engineering talent.

Here are areas where the UW-Madison and/or other state engineering schools excel:

- Advanced manufacturing and robotics
- Advance wireless research
- Clean energy technology, such as hydrogen research
- Nuclear fusion and next-generation fission
- Microelectronics
- AI and quantum information science
- Bioengineering and medical devices
- Engine technology
- Advanced materials
- Protecting the warfighter

Let's make the most of that expertise by sending a strong message that the Legislature is prepared to invest \$150 million over time to build a facility that will keep our talent at home while delivering solutions for the nation and the world.

Thank you for your time today and I welcome any questions.

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