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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** Graduates are employed and working within six months and right here in Wisconsin. They're certainly in demand. Our latest graduate outcomes report released on Tuesday this week showed that median wages for associate degree graduates were over $60,000 so that we know that these credentials are in demand and a great value for Wisconsin residents.

[00:00:26] **Speaker 2** I will just add on to what Eric and Leila had offered. I think we have to step back and first ask the question. And the way I would answer it is that education is a public good. It's not just for the individual student. Because I think you have to ask the questions, where is the next teacher going to come from? Where is the nurse going to from? Where is next engineer going to to come? Where is a next person who's going to be coming out of the Tech College and doing work that helps support the economy? So I would start from that standpoint. At the Universities of Wisconsin, we have done survey work most recently about six months ago that indicated that we are the lowest cost public university system in the Midwest and beyond. We have done our best to try to maintain our tuition at levels that are affordable. We have tried to increase over the last decade. We have doubled the amount of institutional aid that we provide to students, so that is the tuition remission and support that we provide to them, but there's a limit to our ability to do that and still deliver the quality of education our students deserve and expect. And one of the things I will tell you is when we did that survey, the good news was we are relatively affordable. We offer, I believe, great value to our students, but that survey also showed that we are educating fewer students today on a percentage basis of lower socioeconomic means and we were 10 years ago. If this legislation stands as it is currently presented, that number is going to get worse. And I would submit to you Wisconsin doesn't have the flexibility to allow that to happen. We need people going on to higher education to fill the jobs that the great employers of this state are creating or those jobs are going to move elsewhere. We need those jobs so people can have that life-changing event, that trajectory-changing event in their lives, giving them social mobility to make sure that they may be able to better than the past generation did. That's what this is all about. That's why this is critical. And I think the suggestion that, well, we should just put it back on tuition is a short sight. This is an investment in the future of our state. It is an investment in the citizens of the state of Wisconsin.

[00:02:39] **Speaker 3** A question for all three presidents. Are your institutions taking steps to contact Congress directly to encourage them to reverse this bill? And if so, what steps are you taking to encourage them to do this?

[00:02:51] **Speaker 2** I can comment what we've been doing at the Universities of Wisconsin. I have talked to almost every member of the Wisconsin delegation on this very issue. We meet with them. We have people in Washington frequently talking to legislators about what's going on. We are working through our national organizations as well, of which we are members, to advocate for ensuring that we protect this financial aid and avoid this narrowing of resources that are going on to do that are really supporting students that really need that support. But we're also talking to the public because I think it's important. It's one of the reasons we're having the conversation today It is important that the public understand the impact because our legislators listen to their constituents And I think you know the the conversations I've had with our legislators I think they appreciate the value of higher education in the state and its importance To the state of Wisconsin and we are going to continue those advocacy efforts

[00:03:57] **Speaker 1** I was personally in Washington D.C. Less than two weeks ago meeting with policy makers to talk about these issues. We've also stayed in constant contact with their staff and with congressional, the entire congressional delegation trying to help them understand the impact to their constituents back here in Wisconsin.

[00:04:16] **Speaker 4** I also have been speaking to members of our congressional delegation, both in the House and the Senate, as have members of the WICU staff, and we've been asking our individual presidents and other leaders on our campuses to reach out to them as well. We've had many conversations, and as President Rothman mentioned, there is an understanding of the value of higher education for many members of delegation, but despite that, the bill passed this morning. Other questions?

[00:04:46] **Speaker 3** What kind of effect do you think these changes would have on enrollment at your institutions?

[00:04:53] **Speaker 4** Well, there's a lot of elements of the bill that will impact undergraduate students and there's significant number that will have impact graduate students. I suspect that the students with the least ability to pay, we will lose some of those students as a result of the elements of this bill. They won't be able to get enough money in Pell Grant, they won't able to obtain any loan programs that they need to obtain and they will not be able attend. And on the graduate side, I fear what this impact of the limiting of the loan programs will do for students particularly in the professional fields, doctors, lawyers, dentists. Physician assistants in other other fields. So we will have students who are unable to continue as a result of this. We're hoping of course that as the process continues as the Senate gets involved and then the House and the Senate work together to come up with a bill they can both agree on that some of these provisions will be made more helpful for our students.

[00:05:57] **Speaker 2** I mean, certainly enrollment is a piece of this, but it's about students. It's about the students standing up here today and the students that they represent. That's what this is about in my mind. And it's, about giving people the opportunity to have that higher education experience that can change their lives. And I think back to the period I mentioned in my opening comments about the GI bill and how it supported veterans coming out of world war two. I'm standing here today because of the GI Bill. My father was a recipient, allowed him to go on to higher education. He then encouraged me to go onto higher education, that's the impact that this has and it's exponential. It is exponential and it is about the students. I suspect each of our systems can manage the enrollment issue. But I think the students coming up today deserve the same opportunity that generations past have gotten. That, in my mind, is what this bill is about. And that's why we are advocating to support that our students have access to that aid, because they will pay it back multiple times in terms of what they contribute to society.

[00:07:17] **Speaker 1** I'll echo those comments while this bill would certainly reduce access and opportunity in the state of Wisconsin and across the country. We'll certainly see some students who ironically take fewer credits because they just can't afford to take more and cover their cost of living at the same time. I think Wisconsin's employers will also be hurt by this. As we see fewer students. Pursuing higher education, fewer students who are able to complete on time, Wisconsin's employers will be waiting longer for those folks to join them at the high skill, high wage jobs that we know we have all over Wisconsin right now that are unfilled.

[00:08:06] **Speaker 5** Do you speak to just more broadly, obviously you're here meeting and talking about this bill today, but we've seen a series of comments from the president, lawsuits, additional funding threats coming down the pipeline. I guess how are you guys leading these universities at a time when there's still so much uncertainty about what can come next on top of this bill?

[00:08:30] **Speaker 2** I think what we do is we remain focused on our mission and we do our best and to operate on uncertainty is never easy, it's not a whole lot of fun, but we never lose sight of the mission and at the University of Wisconsin for us it's 164,400 students that are being in our in our 13 universities. Our mission is to ensure that they are successful and we will do whatever it takes to try to position ourselves to make sure that we can continue to do that because we know how important it is for those individuals, but we also know how important that is for the state of Wisconsin.

[00:09:11] **Speaker 4** I would say specific issues that have come from the White House have impacted international students, have impacted the research that our institutions are doing, and threaten future research and future international students in particular. But as President Rothman said, our focus in WICU schools and I'm sure in the technical colleges as well is to focus on our students and our missions.

[00:09:41] **Speaker 1** Absolutely, we remain focused on our mission, serving our students every day, making ourselves as accessible and available to support those students as we can possibly be and continue to deliver for the taxpayers here in Wisconsin.

[00:10:01] **Speaker 6** Under this current proposal, Wisconsin colleges in general could risk losing access to federal aid if their students don't make a return on their investment, if they don't see financial gains from their degrees. What consequences would this have for the long term future of technical colleges?

[00:10:20] **Speaker 1** Well, everything we do here in the technical college system is driven by employers and our local economies. So I'm very confident that our credentials are in demand. We don't offer programs if our students do not get jobs at the end of them. We don't offer programs, if local employers do not sign on to that and co-sign that and say, yes, these are the skills and credentials that I am looking for in my business that's required for every program that's approved in my system. So I'm very confident that we could show a return on investment as long as the measuring stick is fair. We know what our graduates are making as soon as they graduate and we know where they're going to work and it's right here in Wisconsin. So I am very confident in the product that we're putting out.

[00:11:10] **Speaker 4** Alright, thank you. Thank you very much for being here. I appreciate it. Thank you very much.