**Direct\_Admit\_Jay\_Rothman\_20250806.mp3**

[00:00:06] **Speaker 1** Good morning everyone. I wanna make sure that everybody is able to record. Looks like TMJ4 is still connecting. Does anybody else need permission to record?

[00:00:47] **Speaker 2** I'm good.

[00:00:49] **Speaker 3** Recording in progress

[00:00:55] **Speaker 1** I will record as well. Let's give it one more minute because there was a few folks that had asked for the invite who haven't yet joined and wanna make sure that they can get on the call. Okay, well, I'm going to go ahead and record and we can get started. Just as a reminder, we're embargoed until 11 a.m. And. President Rothman will have a few brief remarks. We might have people joining while he's speaking and then we'll go to questions. Go ahead, President Rothman.

[00:01:59] **Speaker 4** Okay, thanks Mark and good morning everyone. Thank you for joining us today. At the Universities of Wisconsin, we are proud of the impact that our Direct Admit Wisconsin program is having. This is a program where students are automatically admitted to 10 of our 13 universities based on their GPA following their junior year in high school. This is the second year of Direct Admitt Wisconsin with nearly 34,000 Wisconsin high school students this year. From 467 schools receiving admit letters. That's 155 more participating schools than we had last year. Direct Admit Wisconsin is making it easier than ever to explore an education at the universities of Wisconsin. Now is the time for those students who have received letters and who will be high school seniors to check their high school email addresses or to check the emails for their direct admit offers. Postal letters will also be arriving later this month. Students and parents should know that there is a university within the universities of Wisconsin that is right for them. And we encourage students receiving the admissions letter to fill out the direct admit form to let the UWs know that they are interested in learning more. Early indications are that the 2024 inaugural year of direct admit Wisconsin has led to more engagement for students who will be starting at our universities this fall. What we found is that more students contacted universities overall, as well as earlier in the process, oftentimes shortly after receiving their Direct Admit offers. In short, we believe Direct Admitt is simplifying access to college and helping lead increased enrollment at our public universities. Expanding educational opportunities, which we believe direct admit will do and will play a key role in doing is critical for Wisconsin's economic future. And we remind all students to visit wisconsin.edu where they can learn more about our universities, complete a direct admit interest form and explore financial aid. And with that, I'd be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

[00:04:14] **Speaker 1** Uh, Kelly, can you start us off?

[00:04:18] **Speaker 2** Sure, so I just want to be clear about what you said. Did you say the program you think is increasing enrollment? And do you have any sort of, like, numbers, you know, what you're seeing there? Yeah, we.

[00:04:29] **Speaker 4** Yeah kelly we don't have any specific specific numbers and as you know we will have preliminary numbers once school starts in september and and final 10-day numbers in october but based on what i am seeing so far anecdotally in some of the preliminary projections we think we will have a robust freshman class and in part in no small part due to direct admit wisconsin we'll we'll see it when we we have the final numbers but the we're seeing some really encouraging signs. As we look at enrollment for freshmen this year.

[00:05:04] **Speaker 5** Uh, Abigail.

[00:05:09] **Speaker 6** Um, so how many more students will be in direct admit last year than this year? Did you say that?

[00:05:16] **Speaker 4** There's about, Abigail, there's about 9,000 more students that received Direct Admit letters this year compared to last year. We were about at 24,000 last year, a little bit over that, and we're about 33,500 this year. And we increased the number of schools participating. Last year, we were at 312 schools participating in the program. We had 467 this year, so we made some. Real significant progress in getting more schools to participate in the program. With our goal, obviously, is ultimately to have all Wisconsin high school students have an opportunity to have access to direct admit Wisconsin.

[00:06:02] **Speaker 1** Sabine, would you introduce yourself and do you have a question?

[00:06:08] **Speaker 7** Yeah, hi, my name is Sabina Martin. I'm the new hired reporter for the Wisconsin State Journal. I just was wanting to ask if, you know, these new numbers, kind of if they signal, you know meeting the goal of reaching college graduation rates, increasing those by 10% by 2028, does like the results this year still feel make that on track?

[00:06:34] **Speaker 4** You know, I think we are continuing to work toward that goal. That was an extremely lofty goal when we presented it, but we have a number of enrollment initiatives that are out there. Direct Admit Wisconsin is one of them. We are expanding our dual enrollment programs to try to continue to drive interest. We are working on retention rates for students who are at our universities today. All of those things are really factoring in to ensuring that we deliver the graduates that Wisconsin needs for its economic vibrancy, but also that we offer that opportunity for any student who has the passion and the ability to be successful at one of our universities to do so. And that's one of the really exciting things for me about Direct Admit Wisconsin. I've heard a number of anecdotes where parents have told me. That their student was not really engaged and not thinking about going to college, wasn't sure whether or not they were capable of doing college-level work. They get the letter from us saying that you're accepted into these universities, and it changes their perspective. People can do amazing things when you believe in them. And when we send these direct admit letters out to students, we're telling those students that we believe they can be successful at our universities because they can't be.

[00:08:03] **Speaker 1** Mackenzie at WMTV NBC 15. Do you have a question?

[00:08:09] **Speaker 3** Yeah, hi, thank you. So President Rothman was just wondering, how do you hope adding these new schools will help continue to keep these students at Wisconsin high schools right here in the state as they're continuing their education? You know, Going to other states.

[00:08:25] **Speaker 4** Yeah, I mean, I think that that's one of the key things for Wisconsin is to keep its talent here. And this is yet another opportunity for us to show Wisconsin high schoolers that they have opportunities and they have terrific opportunities at the universities of Wisconsin. And what is important to us is that in-state residents who graduate from our universities, nearly 90 percent of them are still in the state five years after their graduation. So, we've got a real potential of keeping talent in the state and we believe that is crucial to the long-term economic vibrancy of Wisconsin.

[00:09:06] **Speaker 1** TMJ4 is on the line. Do you have a question? And how about PBS Wisconsin? Kelly, back to you. Do you have another question?

[00:09:26] **Speaker 2** Yeah, thanks. I'm wondering, this program's great at reaching students. And I think the research that's been done in other states has shown it doesn't address the financial affordability part of going to college. So there are students who maybe they get this letter and think, maybe I can do this. And then they look into the financials and say, actually, I can't. What are you guys doing to address financial affordabilty since you got an increase in the state budget? Are you talking about? Doing the Tuition Promise Program again, or what would you be doing there?

[00:10:00] **Speaker 4** We had specifically asked for the tuition promise program to be funded, Kelly, and it was not by the legislature in this go-round. I continue to believe that is an important component. But we do have a modified tuition promise for incoming students in the fall of 2025. That program is supported in part by Ascendium Education Group. We were grateful for the grant that we got from Ascendiam, which allows us to do this. And I think we're going to continue to be looking at what we can do in terms of institutional aid, aid provided by the universities themselves. That aid has doubled over the last 10 years, so we are trying to address that issue. But I think what we're also finding, Kelly, is that when we have the opportunity to talk to the students about what financial aid might be available, what might not seem affordable at first blush, our financial aid folks work really hard to find pathways for students. So that they can afford to go to school. And we are gonna continue to look at those avenues. So part of it is just having the conversation to start and talking about completing FAFSA and what that means and then what flows from that. Prior to direct admit Wisconsin, students might have just said it's too expensive, I can't go. We now have the opportunity to connect with them and show them what is available. They all ultimately have to make their own decision. But I think it gives us the real opportunity to engage in that conversation and share with them the financial aid that is available. And I think oftentimes they are surprised at how affordable it can be. And again, we are working hard to maintain our affordability. We continue to be the most affordable public university in the Midwest and beyond. And that is a goal of ours to try to do our level best to ensure that we are affordable while at the same time. Ensuring that we have the excellence that the universities of Wisconsin are known for. Abigail.

[00:12:02] **Speaker 6** Uh, so what I'm wondering is how, how is this impacting overall enrollment numbers? And are you having to reject more students who are applying without direct admit? Do you have data on that?

[00:12:13] **Speaker 4** I think most of our universities, they have the capacity so that we don't have a huge issue in terms of rejections. So, the 10 of the 13. We have had a couple of our universities this fall that are going to be tight in terms of dorm space, but those are good problems for us to have. I think, you know, as we look moving forward in the state, we want to continue to increase the participation rate, the percentage of high school students going on to higher education. This is a means of trying to do that, not for the universities of Wisconsin, but more importantly, so that we fulfill our mission to the state of Wisconsin. Of producing the nurses and the teachers and the data scientists and the engineers and the business people and so on and so that are going to be necessary for our state to thrive in the future.

[00:13:13] **Speaker 7** Yeah, I'm curious if you could share which schools in the system are seeing the most new students through this program.

[00:13:21] **Speaker 4** I'm not sure I followed that question, Sabine, could you repeat it for me, please?

[00:13:26] **Speaker 7** Yeah, which schools in the system are seeing the most new students through this program?

[00:13:32] **Speaker 4** You know, it's really not clear yet. We will have a better sense of that after we have our final enrollment numbers this fall. Because as you may know, we started this program a year ago. So the first class is starting this fall that was under directed at Wisconsin. We know the engagement levels are up based on some preliminary analysis that we have done. We believe that I'm bullish about what our incoming freshman class will look like. How that will split, how that will break down among the universities I think is yet to be seen. So we look forward to getting a little bit more of that data and making some judgments about where this is. Than not as it relates to our universities.

[00:14:19] **Speaker 1** And a final question from Mackenzie, if you have one.

[00:14:26] **Speaker 3** That answers all my questions. Thanks, Mark.

[00:14:30] **Speaker 1** Well, thanks everybody for joining us and thanks for your interest in Direct Admit Wisconsin. Have a great day. Follow up with any questions if you have any.

[00:14:41] **Speaker 5** Thanks very much.