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**May 11, 2020**

**To: Chancellor Rebecca Blank; UW-Madison Leadership Team**

I want to sincerely thank your staff and yourself for the continued work to protect our badger community from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. I am immensely grateful for the work UW faculty is doing to prepare us for learning amid COVID-19.

At a time of crisis and one as consequential as this, transparency and accountability are crucial. As a student myself, I am appreciative of the continued updates from your team; however, the response by the University has proven the lack of student input on a myriad of decisions.

A primary concern of mine is the determinations regarding UW's form of instruction. The notion of in-person instruction for Fall 2020 puts our community in danger of spreading the disease and causing more fatalities; it is an extremely ill-advised decision. Equally as concerning, the idea of hybrid instruction would place an enormous risk to disabled students and instructors who must decide between their education and their safety. Ultimately, I am urging the UW-Madison leadership to cancel in-person instruction in the Fall of 2020 for the protection of the badger community. In addition to remote-instruction, a reduction in the quality of education and lack of access to campus facilities and resources must result in a decrease in collected tuition. Soliciting tuition at standard rates only stands to hurt those who are suffering the most. I understand your financial constraints; though, the safety of this community is of the utmost importance

Remote learning has its drawbacks, and we must discuss extremely valid and applicable equity concerns. I am disappointed to hear that the University has not addressed issues around access to technology and internet connection. It is even more disconcerting to see University Administrators quoted in the press, explicitly making assumptions that all students have access to at least some form of WiFi and technology. Individual departments are now requiring access to materials inaccessible to many low-income or rural students, an incredibly frustrating

decision. I urge you to address these equity issues to ensure that all University of Wisconsin-Madison students have access to remote-learning regardless of their circumstances.

Moving forward, I'd advise you to act in step with the voices of students and the needs of those hurting the most right now. This time of crisis also calls for leadership like yourselves to uplift and support unions, especially our Teaching Assistants Association (TAA). [A letter and list of demands](#) have been issued by TAA that I encourage you all to read thoroughly and incorporate into your emergency response plans. I am not content with a recent decision regarding grad workers' appointment letters this summer, which include a line stating that the letters are not employment contracts; this makes it possible to terminate employment at any time for any reason. This community needs strong leadership catering to the demographics traditionally underrepresented in these decisions.

I look forward to seeing University Administrators meet the needs of students and workers who are suffering deeply right now. The livelihood of those in this community directly depends on your ability to ascend to that crisis; I sincerely hope you stand on the right side of history by empowering those who need it most.

Sincerely,

**Ald. Max Prestigiacomo**  
District 8, City of Madison