

Public Hearing Needed on GOP Plan to Merge UW Campuses and Tech Colleges

Posted on Aug 27, Posted by [Bob Kiefert, Green Bay Progressive](#) Category [Wisconsin](#)



Assembly Republicans have been meeting in secret on a plan to merge the state's 2-year UW campus system and the Technical College system. Such an important plan should not be hatched behind closed doors.

MADISON - According to recent news outlet reports, Assembly Republicans have been meeting in secret on a plan to merge the state's 2-year UW campus system and the Technical College system. The plan could have a huge impact on the students, faculty, staff and the local communities the campuses serve.

Two Democratic leaders in the State Senate's Universities and Technical Colleges Committee don't think such an important plan should be hatched behind closed doors. And they are doing something about it.



In a letter to the committee's chair, Senator Sheila Harsdorf (R-River Falls), State Senator **Dave Hansen**

(D-Green Bay) and State Senator

Janet Bewley

(D-Delta) called today for a public hearing on the impact of the plan. In the letter they said it was "disturbing to learn that meetings on the proposed merger have been held out of the public eye. Such a significant change in our system of higher education is deserving of public input early on in the process rather than waiting until a deal has been struck behind closed doors."

The senators are questioning why details of the plan, how it would work and how it would impact the campuses and the people and communities they serve have not been available to the public.



"The public hearing and committee process exists to provide people with not only an understanding of legislative undertakings but to make their voices heard during the legislative process," they say. "Certainly such a substantial and significant change to our system of higher education merits early and significant public input."

Recently Republicans tried to slip major changes weakening the state's open records laws and the board that oversees the Wisconsin Retirement into the state budget. It was only after the public became aware of those secret efforts that they were dropped from the budget. Hansen and Bewley believe given the complexity that would surround merging the two systems the public should be given a chance to weigh in before a plan is rushed through the legislature.

"We respectfully request that a public hearing be held as soon as possible so that the committee can hear firsthand from all stakeholders about the potential impacts of merging the UW 2-year Campus and Technical College systems," their letter continues. "This hearing should include testimony from administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents and community leaders."

Despite major changes made to the UW System including cutting \$250 million from UW Campuses and making major changes to tenure and shared governance, to date the Universities and Technical Colleges Committee has held only one public hearing. The hearing was held on June 4th during which the committee heard testimony on five appointments and one senate bill.

Legislative staffer Jay Wadd contributed to this article.

Tags: Untagged