June 4, 2010

Senator Charles E. Schumer
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Lindsey Graham
290 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Richard J. Durbin
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Richard G. Lugar
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Schumer, Graham, Durbin and Lugar:

Recently you received a letter signed by a broad coalition of university and college presidents from across the country in support of The DREAM Act of 2009. To that end, we are writing to join the coalition in support of passage of The DREAM Act, either as stand-alone legislation or as part of comprehensive immigration reform.

We recognize that this is part of a larger set of complex policy matters, but believe this is a step we must take to create the educated workforce America needs to compete in a global economy.

According to the National Immigration Law Center, approximately 65,000 U.S. high school graduates face significant barriers to college each year because of their immigration status. They are denied federal financial aid, and state aid in some cases, and also may be forced to pay non-resident tuition rates in states where they have resided for years. That’s 65,000 people who might otherwise use their college education to contribute to our nation’s economic resurgence. By allowing these roadblocks to remain, we are ignoring an untapped source of talent.

The DREAM Act would let students apply for legal status and provide a path to citizenship if they graduate from U.S. high schools after living in the country for a time. The legislation would also allow equal access to our universities. This is consistent with a recently enacted Wisconsin law that lets non-U.S. citizens, who have lived in Wisconsin, attend public universities and
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Colleges at resident rates. To qualify, students must live in Wisconsin for at least three consecutive years, graduate from a Wisconsin high school, and promise to pursue legal residency or citizenship.

The DREAM Act is also consistent with UW System’s Growth Agenda for Wisconsin, a strategic effort to develop the state’s human potential, create new Wisconsin jobs, and strengthen local communities. Furthermore, the legislation fits well with our commitment to inclusive excellence, and the belief that all people deserve an opportunity to benefit from a college education.

We are pleased that The DREAM Act has the strong backing of both Wisconsin Sen. Herb Kohl and Sen. Russ Feingold. We hope that you will join them and other legislators in supporting families that are pursuing educational opportunities as a pathway toward their own American dream.

Sincerely,

Kevin P. Reilly  
President, UW System

Michael J. Spector  
Vice President, UW Board of Regents

Brent Smith  
Member, UW Board of Regents

Jeffrey B. Bartell  
Member, UW Board of Regents

John Drew  
Member, UW Board of Regents

Mark J. Bradley  
Member, UW Board of Regents

Charles R. Pruitt  
President, UW Board of Regents

José F. Vásquez  
Member, UW Board of Regents

Danae D. Davis  
Member, UW Board of Regents

Judith V. Crain  
Member, UW Board of Regents

Thomas Loftus  
Member, UW Board of Regents

Jessica Schwalenberg  
Member, UW Board of Regents
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David G. Walsh
Member, UW Board of Regents

Tony Evers
Member, UW Board of Regents

Edmund Manydeeds
Member, UW Board of Regents

cc: U.S. Senator Herb Kohl
    U.S. Senator Russ Feingold
    UW System Chancellors
    UW System President’s Cabinet