



WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

June 21, 2013

The Honorable Scott Walker
Governor
115 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Walker,

I am writing to request a veto of a provision included by the Legislature in Assembly Bill 40 that would prohibit the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism (WCIJ) from utilizing space on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus as well as prohibit UW employees from doing any work related to the Center as part of their official duties.

The collaboration between the WCIJ – a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization – and UW-Madison has been very important to the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Students receive paid investigative reporting internships that provide unparalleled experience in their field, and journalism students and staff benefit greatly from the close proximity of the WCIJ, sharing expertise with veteran journalists who set rigorous standards. This collaboration has resulted in statewide and national recognition, both for the center as a whole and for our students. It has also generated positive attention from potential donors, paving the way for private grants and foundation support that is increasingly important to maintaining and strengthening the university and its programs.

However, of greater concern than the impact this provision would have on the university's ability to interact with the WCIJ is the broader notion of the Legislature mandating with which organizations university faculty and staff can and cannot partner and collaborate. The best and brightest researchers – and entrepreneurs, and families, and investors in Wisconsin's economy – cannot function when a government body holds more sway over their decisions than years of careful experience. The famed "sifting and winnowing" quote, immortalized in a plaque on the front of Bascom Hall, is a thoroughly Wisconsin statement, referencing the hard work of our heritage at the same time it deftly defends the values of academic freedom:

"Whatever may be the limitations which trammel inquiry elsewhere, we believe that the great state University of Wisconsin should ever encourage that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found."

--Taken from a report of the Board of Regents in 1894

This commitment has guided the university for more than 100 years, and contributes greatly to our ability to attract and retain faculty and staff of the highest caliber who promote the application of teaching and research to issues of importance to the state, the nation, and the world. We must do everything we can to maintain this commitment, and I therefore encourage you to veto the provision related to the WCIJ from the 2013-15 budget bill.

Sincerely,

David Ward
Interim Chancellor

Office of the Chancellor