



STATE OF WISCONSIN

Legislative Audit Bureau

Joe Chrisman
State Auditor

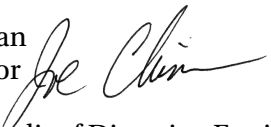
22 East Mifflin Street, Suite 500
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

Main: (608) 266-2818
Hotline: 1-877-FRAUD-17

www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lab
AskLAB@legis.wisconsin.gov

DATE: April 30, 2024

TO: Senator Eric Wimberger and
Representative Robert Wittke, Co-chairpersons
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

FROM: Joe Chrisman
State Auditor 

SUBJECT: Proposed Audit of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Activities—Background Information

At your request, we have gathered some background information that the Joint Legislative Audit Committee may find helpful in considering an audit of the diversity, equity, and inclusion activities of executive branch agencies.

According to the 2024 training provided by the Department of Administration (DOA) for executive branch employees:

- Diversity refers to the varied identities and characteristics that distinguish individuals or groups. This may include race, national origin, ethnicity, gender, abilities, sexual preferences, ages, interests, backgrounds, levels of educational achievement, and socioeconomic status.
- Equity refers to the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all. Equity also refers to fair and just practices, policies, and systems, based on a recognition of individual and group differences and barriers that disproportionately impact underserved and underrepresented individuals.
- Inclusion refers to the active and intentional cultivation of an environment in which everyone feels welcomed, respected, supported, valued, and empowered to fully engage.

In November 2019, the Governor signed Executive Order 59 related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in state government. Among other requirements, Executive Order 59 requires each state agency to create and DOA's Division of Personnel Management to support and monitor equity and inclusion plans, which must:

- identify and prioritize agency-wide goals, deliverables, and accountabilities for results;
- identify and address barriers impacting employee recruitment and retention efforts;
- establish benchmarking best practices and analyze demographic and turnover trends;
- assess internal workplace processes and policies to ensure they are equitable, culturally responsive, and promote inclusion;

- identify, design, and implement methods for collaborative idea generation, relationship building, partnership, and sharing of resources to collectively move efforts forward;
- ensure appropriate data collection; and
- expand professional development opportunities and provide resources that raise awareness, build knowledge and understanding, and encourage and promote an inclusive culture.

The 2023-2028 strategic plan of the University of Wisconsin (UW) System, which is currently rebranding itself as the Universities of Wisconsin, states: “We are committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. These principles are key to our long-term success.” Some UW institutions have developed diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plans. For example, UW-Eau Claire’s 2025 plan includes 32 goals and 126 actions to achieve these goals, and UW-Milwaukee’s 2023-2026 plan includes 10 goals and 23 strategies and actions to achieve these goals. Some UW institutions have also developed strategic plans that include diversity, equity, and inclusion provisions. For example, UW-Green Bay’s 2022-2025 Academic Affairs Strategic Plan includes a goal to advance inclusivity and 14 actions to achieve this goal.

An audit of diversity, equity, and inclusion activities could use available information to:

- determine specific activities performed in compliance with Executive Order 59 or other strategic plans;
- analyze amounts expended by agencies for these activities, including for staffing; and
- review reported outcomes resulting from these activities.

This audit effort will extend beyond cabinet-level agencies to other executive branch agencies, including, but not limited to, the Department of Justice, the Department of Public Instruction, UW System, the Wisconsin Technical College System, the State of Wisconsin Investment Board, and the Department of Employee Trust Funds.

By statute, the Bureau may not examine issues related to academic freedom within UW System; examine issues or comment upon the content of the various academic programs, including degree requirements, majors, curriculum, or courses within UW System; or examine the manner in which individual faculty members or groups of faculty members conduct their instructional, research, or public service activities. However, these exclusions do not preclude the Bureau from reviewing the procedures by which decisions are made and priorities are set in UW System or the manner in which such decisions and priorities are implemented.

I hope you find this information helpful. Please contact me with any questions.

JC/ak

cc:	Senator Jesse James	Representative John Macco
	Senator Howard Marklein	Representative Mark Born
	Senator Robert Wirsch	Representative Francesca Hong
	Senator Tim Carpenter	Representative Ryan Clancy