

175th anniversary

UW-Madison celebrates 175 years with the ultimate campus experience and a week-end full of free events

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Friday, April 5, 2024

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WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

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UNIVERSITIES OF WISCONSIN | BOARD OF REGENTS

Tuition hike wins approval

Paid parental leave is coming; Rothman cites need to compete

SABY FRANKEL

The Universities of Wisconsin Board of Regents on Thursday approved tuition increases that average 3.75% for the system's

15 universities, about \$387 more per year. With annual tuition and segregated fees factored in, the increase amounts to 4.4% for 2024-25, the university said.

Including room and board, the cost of student attendance will go up by an average of 3.8%.

This revenue helps to offset the expenses of certain high-cost programs, maintain high quality and expand the capacity to gradu-

ate more students, said Sean Nelson, vice president for finance and administration.

The exact increases will vary by university. At UW-Madison, tuition will increase by 3.2% over this year's rate, or \$746. The highest increase will be seen at UW-Milwaukee, where tuition is going up 4.2%, or \$875.

UW system President Jay Rothman announced the in-

creases last Thursday, saying they were in line with inflation, but the proposal needed the regents' approval.

The increase follows the 4.2% hike that was instituted this year after a tuition rate freeze that lasted 10 years.

"Very little of this accounts to help us with inflationary pressures," Nelson said. He said it instead will be going to retain-

ing campus staff and resources for the universities.

Paid parental leave

Also Thursday, the regents reviewed the university system's newly proposed paid parental leave policy, a requirement before it can take effect, but were not required to vote on it.

PLEASE SEE REGENTS, PAGE A8

FAR EAST SIDE | THE PLAYING FIELD



JOHN HART, STATE JOURNAL

Children enrolled in The Playing Field child care program dig in buckets of sand during a ceremonial "groundbreaking" Thursday at the site of the center's future location on the Far East Side of Madison. The center will provide child care to about 100 children when it opens early next year.

Child care option is growing

Former Menards will replace, expand on temporary locations

SABY FRANKEL

More of Madison's most vulnerable families will get access to one of the low-cost child care options

January, when The Playing Field child care center opens its new location on Madison's Far East Side.

The new center at 2102 East Springs Drive in a former Menards store will join another permanent The Playing Field location at 3910 Mineral Point Road, which has been open since 2015.

The new 15,000-square-foot

space will have room for 100 children in 10 classrooms, with kitchen, laundry and bathroom areas. An outdoor playground also is planned, along with sensory rooms and two indoor play spaces, Executive Director Abby Kruse said.

Staff and community partners celebrated the start of construction with a groundbreaking ceremony Thursday, led by a group of The Playing Field youngsters.

So far, The Playing Field has raised \$4 million to fund its expansion on the East Side. Donors include the Pleasant Rowland Foundation, American Family Insurance Dreams Foundation and Roots & Wings Foundation.

PLEASE SEE PLAYING FIELD, PAGE A6

ISRAEL

Biden warns US aid at risk

Future support for war-tied to actions to protect civilians

KAMER MADHANI AND ZEKI MULLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden issued a stark warning to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday that future U.S. support for Israel's Gaza war depends on the swift implementation of new steps to protect civilians and aid workers.

Biden and Netanyahu's roughly 30-minute call just days after Israeli airstrikes killed seven food aid workers in Gaza added a new layer of complication to the leaders' increasingly strained relationship. Biden's message marks a sharp change in his administration's steadfast support for Israel's war efforts.

The U.S. leader for the first time threatening to rethink his policy if Israel doesn't change its tactics and allow much more humanitarian aid into Gaza.



JOHN HART PHOTOS, STATE JOURNAL

American Family Dreams Foundation representatives Hejen Powell, left, and Jan Kruse look at architectural renderings for The Playing Field. The center will include 10 classrooms and indoor and outdoor play areas.

Playing Field

FROM A1

At the East Side location, Kruse said the goal is to cover the cost of tuition for homeless children and children from poor families with funding from the city of Madison and United Way of Dane County. The city is contributing \$200,000 annually and United Way is contributing \$150,000 a year, Kruse said.

Other families pay tuition privately and some receive scholarships.

"We were able to fund children impacted by homelessness or housing insecurity," Kruse said. "And then from there, we can build out scholarship and private pay enrollment."

Low-cost or completely free child care options are scarce in Wisconsin, tuition can eat up as much as a third of a family's income, according to a report from the Wisconsin Counties Association's nonpartisan research arm Forward Analytics.

The number of child care workers dropped nearly 30% between 2020 and 2021, and the median wage was just over \$26,000 a year in 2022. The declining number of workers has driven up the cost and limited the availability of child care in the state.

All under one roof

Providing affordable child care in Madison is just one part of the overall vision for the former



Abby Kruse, founder and executive director of The Playing Field, right, shares an embrace with Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway Thursday during a groundbreaking event for a future location.

The Playing Field

For information on tours and availability, visit: www.inside.com/childcare/wi/madison/the-playing-field-madison

Contact The Playing Field at: (608) 286-1061 info@PlayingFieldMadison.org

Temporary East Side locations will close

The Playing Field has two interim East Side centers, on Independence Lane and Lister Road, that will close when the new, larger center is finished. Those children and staff will move into the new location.

The first temporary location on the East Side opened in September 2020 and provided much-needed child care for families during the early days of the pandemic, Kruse said.

"There were, I think, 60 homeless families living in a shelter in a hotel really close by," Kruse said. "So, when we opened, we really couldn't fill

Day One. People were so desperate to be able to get back to work. I can't say we planned it; we just did this great thing during the pandemic."

More teachers, staff needed

With 10 classrooms, Kruse said the new location will need 20 lead teachers and eight assistant teachers to operate at its full capacity.

Kruse said she doesn't plan to fill all the classrooms right away but will slowly increase enrollment. She estimates eight teachers will come from the two temporary locations to the permanent building.



The Playing Field lead teacher Ally Lord escorts a student in the program into the center's future location on the Far East Side of Madison. It's expected to open in January.

to train some of the new teachers internally through The Playing Field's apprenticeship program. The child care center works with Madison Area Technical College to help bolster the number of new child care employees entering the field by providing hands-on training.

Kruse said four or five early childhood education apprentices are training through The Playing Field right now.

"We're opening this big center for 100 kids, and of course we're going to need all these teachers," Kruse said. "But if we just steal teachers from other early childhood programs, that doesn't increase the number of spots in Madison — it's just shifting to someplace else. So, we knew that having a pipeline for training new teachers was



Attendees at the groundbreaking received souvenir buckets of sand.

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