



April 24, 2023

Members of the Building Commission and Joint Committee on Finance,

On behalf of Bellin and Gundersen Health System, I am writing to express support for the UW-La Crosse Prairie Springs Science Center Completion and Cowley Hall Demolition Project. Prairie Springs would complete the university's new home for Biology, Chemistry, Geography, Mathematics, and Physics. For your reference, Bellin and Gundersen includes more than 14,000 dedicated care providers at 11 hospitals and more than 100 clinic locations serving patients, their families and communities in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Upper Michigan.

As a leading local and regional healthcare provider, we recognize the value of partnerships with organizations like UW-La Crosse to achieve better health and well-being for everyone. Educating and empowering the healthcare workforce of the future and strengthening the workforce pipeline are key focus areas for our organization. The strong Physician Assistant program at UW-L and medical research happening at the nationally recognized Health Science Consortium on the UW-L campus are two examples of our collaborative, long-term commitment to these efforts. A completed Prairie Springs Science Center with modern research equipment and supplies benefit UW-L, Bellin and Gundersen, and the community through future research agreements and partnerships.

Bellin and Gundersen is fortunate to have one of its headquarters in La Crosse (the other in Green Bay), providing opportunities to recruit graduates from UW-L, Viterbo, and Western Technical College to join our talented workforce. Recruiting students to UW-L is a critical first step to eventually recruiting them to provide care at Bellin and Gundersen. Approximately 40% of UW-L students in the College of Science and Health pursue professional medical degree programs or graduate science programs after graduation. A modern science building will attract students to UW-L who are interested in the science and medical fields, and it will ensure the strong position of the university in an increasingly important healthcare workforce pipeline in our region.

I urge you to support the Prairie Springs Science Center Completion and Cowley Hall Demolition Project, and I thank you for your consideration of this project.

Heather Schimmers, MBA, RN
Gundersen Region President
Bellin and Gundersen Health System