

OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE STATE OF WISCONSIN: Moving Forward Together

By Anthony Braza and Sara L. Wilkins

In 1851, the state of Wisconsin adopted the motto *Forward* to reflect its continuous drive to be a national leader. On the grounds of the Capitol building in Madison sits a replica of the 7-foot-tall allegorical statue *Forward*, created for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. And atop the Capitol's dome stands the gilded bronze statue of a woman, *Wisconsin* (although often misidentified as *Forward*), sculpted in 1913-1914 by Daniel Chester French, which, according to the Wisconsin Historical Society, was "placed on the Capitol dome as a symbol of the state's motto, *Forward*, and to represent the spirit of Wisconsin progress."

The motto of *Forward* and the spirit of Wisconsin progress are perhaps nowhere more evident than in the state's partnership with the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) to move the institution forward as a national leader in medical education, patient care and cutting-edge research.

Few, if any, health sciences universities have achieved the prominent stature of MCW after teetering on the brink of closure twice in its 130-year history. The institution surmounted financial deficits and accreditation challenges to become jewels in the crowns of Wisconsin and the nation.

MCW attributes its triumphs over adversity in part to support from dedicated elected officials and legislative bodies, citizens of the Milwaukee area and throughout the state, civic leaders, generous donors, strong academic and clinical partners, and loyal alumni, students, faculty and staff. These entities and individuals also sustained MCW during promising times when the institution had opportunities to transform medicine locally, regionally and globally. As a result, MCW has harnessed the knowledge and talents of its faculty physicians and scientists to improve the quality of health and the quality of life for the people and communities it serves.

What follows is an overview of several crucial areas of support for MCW and its predecessor institutions from the state of

Wisconsin – beginning in the late 1960s – that underscore the ongoing partnership that is moving them forward together.

1967–1975 The State Steps In

Concerns about financing were a recurring theme from the earliest days of the founding of the MCW's predecessor institutions. In late 1967, escalating debts prompted Marquette University to terminate its sponsorship of the Marquette University School of Medicine, with which it had been affiliated since 1913. A corporate reorganization then established the entity as a private freestanding institution named the Marquette School of Medicine. In 1970, it was renamed the Medical College of Wisconsin.

In the late 1960s, local business and community leaders realized that the area was in danger of losing its only medical school. Recognizing this threat, Milwaukee County and the Greater Milwaukee Committee formed the Heil Commission to explore the community's options. In January 1967, the Heil Report determined that it was vital for Milwaukee's future growth and for the health of its citizenry to develop an academic medical center –



In 1969, Wisconsin Governor Warren J. Knowles signs legislation authorizing a \$3.2 million appropriation to aid the financially troubled Marquette School of Medicine.

but the heavy financial burden this would require was beyond the capacity of the institution. The report quickly rallied public support for the medical center proposal.

In March 1967, Wisconsin Governor Warren Knowles appointed a task force to develop a comprehensive medical education framework for the state. In July 1967, he signed legislation permitting Milwaukee County to lease land on the Milwaukee County Institution Grounds to private organizations, which removed a barrier that would have prevented the Medical School, the proposed Froedtert



Hospital and Milwaukee Children's Hospital from relocating to the Grounds – which eventually became the site of the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center campus.

Later that same year, the Governor's Task Force recommended an increase in state funding to support the Medical School, and in 1969, Wisconsin Governor Knowles signed legislation in the 1969–1971 biennial budget authorizing a \$3.2 million state appropriation to aid the financially troubled Marquette School of Medicine. Also in 1969, the Wisconsin Supreme Court approved a state increase in the tax on beer that generated \$1 million for the Medical School in 1970.

In 1973, the Wisconsin Legislature authorized a commission headed by businessman David Carley, PhD, to assess the progress of the newly independent



David Carley, PhD

Medical College of Wisconsin. In January 1974, the Carley Committee recommended that MCW remain a private institution receiving state support and relocate to the Milwaukee Regional Medical

Center campus. Calling it “an important day for medical education in Wisconsin,” Governor Patrick Lucey signed a bill on August 7, 1975, authorizing \$8 million in state bonding toward the construction of MCW's \$42 million Basic Science Building. Dr. Carley subsequently served as MCW's president from 1975 to 1977.

2000–2004: Conversion of Blue Cross & Blue Shield United of Wisconsin and Creation of the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment

On March 28, 2000, the Wisconsin Commissioner of Insurance approved Blue Cross & Blue Shield United of Wisconsin's conversion from a non-profit to a for-profit entity, as well as



Jesse Ehrenfeld, MD, MPH (at center), senior associate dean at the MCW School of Medicine, professor of anesthesiology and director of the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment, meets with community partners in December 2019.

Blue Cross's plan to donate the proceeds from the stock sale to the state's two medical schools. Legal challenges and other obstacles ensued over the course of the next several years, and the conversion was not completed until March 2004 – at which time MCW and the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health each received \$318 million for endowments intended to improve the health of Wisconsin residents.

The Wisconsin Commissioner of Insurance's order required that the schools spend up to 65 percent of their annual expenditures on medical research and education. The schools were required to spend at least 35 percent of annual expenditures on community health projects throughout the state.

MCW created the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment with these funds, and has since invested more than \$337 million in more than 600 projects statewide to improve health and reduce disparities.

2012–2013 Creating the Foundation for Regional Medical Education

On June 25, 2012, MCW's board of trustees authorized the institution to

develop community-based medical education programs (as they were first called) in both the Green Bay and central Wisconsin areas based on a comprehensive, monthslong evaluation. The timeline for development called for matriculating the first class at the initial site in July 2015 and at the second site in July 2016.



Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker receives MCW's Hands of Humanity award on April 9, 2014, recognizing his transformative vision and leadership for healthcare.



Students from MCW-Green Bay's inaugural class celebrate the receipt of their white coats during a Welcoming Reception in July 2015, while Dr. Kerschner and Dr. Raymond look on. MCW gained significant support from elected state officials for the innovative regional medical education program.

On July 1, 2015, MCW-Green Bay's inaugural class of 26 students officially matriculated, and Governor Scott Walker declared the day to be "MCW-Green Bay Day" in the state of Wisconsin.

The estimated cost for the development and implementation of programs for the two new campuses was \$30 million.

MCW gained significant support from elected officials for this innovative program, including Governor Walker, who included a \$7.4 million request in his 2013-2014 biennial state plan to support construction and technology needs. The request was approved and signed into law in June 2013.

State-funded academic institutions in the two regions, including the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, University of Wisconsin-Marathon County, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and University of Wisconsin-Wood County, agreed to work in partnership with MCW to share their facilities in key areas such as physiology and anatomy. Several faculty members from a number of these institutions would teach at the regional campuses as well.

Now, more than a decade later, MCW's two regional campuses have graduated

195 physicians, and MCW has emerged as a national leader and role model for an immersive, community-based medical school program.

2013-Present Wisconsin Child Psychiatry Consultation Program (CPCP)

In 2013, MCW led advocacy efforts toward the creation of the Wisconsin Child Psychiatry Consultation Program (2013 Wisconsin Act 127). The program is housed under the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, and MCW was selected through a request-for-proposal process to operate the program, in partnership with Children's Hospital of Wisconsin (now known as Children's Wisconsin), beginning in 2015.

MCW's department of psychiatry and behavioral medicine created the initial concept for this critically important program, which provides consultation, education and referral support to enrolled primary care providers caring for children and adolescents with behavioral health concerns.

The Wisconsin CPCP's funding has grown dramatically since the program's initial inception as a pilot, funded at \$500,000 annually. MCW's successful advocacy efforts led to the following expansions: \$1 million of annual funding in 2017; \$1.5 million in 2019; and an additional expansion in 2021. The CPCP currently



The Wisconsin Child Psychiatry Consultation Program provides consultation, education and referral support to enrolled primary care providers caring for children and adolescents with behavioral health concerns.



is funded with \$2 million annually, covering the entire state of Wisconsin. This expanded program greatly benefits children and adolescents with mental health challenges while also educating primary care providers on how to better manage their patients' mental health needs.

2014–Present New Statewide Residency Programs *Psychiatry Residencies*

A 2012 analysis by the state Department of Health Services (DHS) found that Wisconsin needed more than 200 additional psychiatrists to address shortages, and 16 counties – all in rural areas – reported having no outpatient psychiatrists.

These difficulties were recognized by leaders at MCW. When new funding provided an opportunity to increase graduate medical education positions – particularly in mental health areas – MCW sought a partnership with the state (among others) to create a novel solution for Wisconsin.

MCW already had embarked on a regional campus medical school model that allowed students to complete their entire medical training – both medical school and residency – in regions of greatest physician need in Wisconsin. Creating a psychiatry residency program linked to these regional campuses provided an opportunity to address the psychiatry shortage highlighted in the state's 2012 report.

In May 2014 (as part of the 2013–2015 biennial budget), the DHS awarded MCW two grants of more than \$370,000 each to support the development of psychiatry residency programs in central and northeastern Wisconsin.

Additionally, more than \$3.3 million was awarded to six Wisconsin healthcare organizations by the Wisconsin Legislature to help them establish the new residency training programs in their communities.

Subsequently, in May 2016, initial accreditation was received from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medicine Education (ACGME) for two new four-year psychiatry residency programs attached to the institution's medical school campuses in central and northeastern Wisconsin.



Alexandra Reischman, MD, is a first-year resident in the Central Wisconsin Psychiatry Residency Program.

These new mental health training programs, which were launched in July 2017, are training three residents per year in central Wisconsin and four residents per year in north-eastern Wisconsin.

Family and Community Medicine Residencies

In late 2016, ACGME initial accreditation was received for a new residency program in family medicine at Froedtert Menomonee Falls Hospital, which is beginning to alleviate the current deficit of nearly 200 family medicine/primary care physicians in Wisconsin as well as a projected deficit by 2035 of nearly 750.

This new program, which began on July 1, 2017, is training six residents per year over a three-year period – for a total of 18 new residents now that the program is at full strength. Among the residents are graduates of MCW's regional campuses.

Also in July 2017, MCW partnered with Prevea Health, HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital and the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health to transition the Eau Claire Family Residency Program to a community-based program.

Additionally, MCW recently created a new family residency program in Green Bay in conjunction with Prevea Health and Hospital Sisters Health System. The inaugural class of residents began on July 1, 2021; when fully running, the three-year program will train four new residents each year.

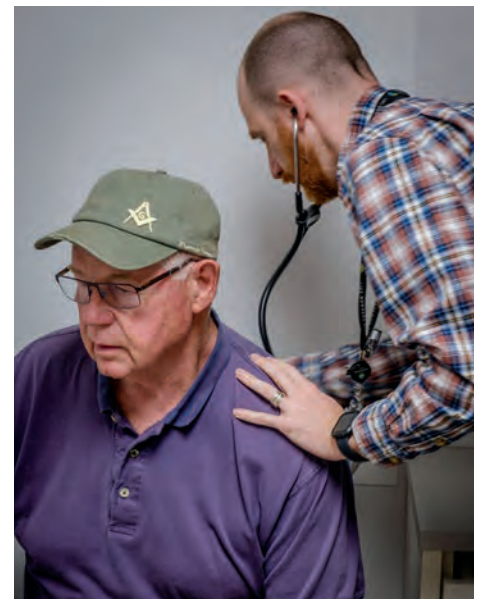
Office of Government and Community Relations

MCW's Office of Government and Community Relations has played a major role in helping build and maintain its relationships with government employees and elected officials at the local, state and federal level.

The office develops and implements all aspects of MCW's external advocacy strategies. These efforts have led to tens of millions of dollars in funding for MCW and public policy accomplishments that have benefited patients throughout Wisconsin.

Kathryn Kuhn, vice president of government and community relations from 1999–2023, retired on March 1.

(See page 21 for more information on Kuhn's retirement.)



Matthew Wheeler, MD '18, GME '21, a graduate of MCW-Green Bay, completed his residency in the Fox Valley Family Medicine Residency Program in Appleton, Wis., and now practices at Essentia Health in Hayward, Wis.

The state of Wisconsin has partnered with MCW to provide \$5.6 million annually to support family and community medicine residency programs in southeast Wisconsin, Green Bay, Appleton and Eau Claire.

MCW's success in growing both its undergraduate and graduate medical education programs and in placing its medical students in Wisconsin-based GME programs is providing an answer for the state's physician shortage.

MCW's regional campus model, which strongly emphasizes Wisconsin residents with roots in the state, will continue to have an even greater impact on the institution's efforts to alleviate Wisconsin's physician shortage. These campus expansions, together with state investment in medical residencies, is projected to create more than 450 new physicians in the next 15 years.

2019 Funding for the Cancer Center Research Building

In 2019, MCW received a \$10 million Wisconsin State Building Commission grant for a new Cancer Center Research Building. Construction on the 150,000-square-foot facility broke ground in September 2022; when completed in late 2024, it will be the only cancer-dedicated research facility in Milwaukee and eastern Wisconsin.



An architectural rendering of MCW's new Cancer Center Research Building.

The building will centralize many of MCW's cancer research programs, which comprise nearly 700 researchers in 135 labs campus-wide. It also will play a significant role in mitigating the cancer burden in Milwaukee-area communities and reducing cancer disparities among under-represented groups.

While construction is expected to cost \$153 million, Joseph Kerschner, MD '90, FEL '98, provost, executive vice president and The Julia A. Uihlein, MA, Dean of the School of Medicine, has referred to the funding from the state of Wisconsin as "a springboard" for the project. "The \$10 million grant from the state of Wisconsin is

critical in allowing us to have some early funding as we pushed this concept forward with our trustees, partners, faculty and staff, and provides some much-needed momentum in the early stages," says Dr. Kerschner.

2020 Extending Pharmacy Professionals' Ability to Provide Vaccinations

MCW, with the assistance of the MCW School of Pharmacy and in collaboration with other Wisconsin pharmacy schools and the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin, advocated for passage of legislation that expands pharmacy professionals' ability to provide vaccinations.

Members of the pharmacy school faculty testified to the Wisconsin Legislature in support of the expansion to back vaccination efforts. In February 2021, *Wisconsin Act 3* was signed into law. The legislation allows first- and second-year student pharmacists to administer vaccinations recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and allows other healthcare providers the ability to supervise student pharmacists during vaccinations. In response to the passage of this legislation, MCW's School of Pharmacy now is able to provide immunization training earlier in the Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) program. ■



MCW School of Pharmacy faculty and students assist in providing more than 19,000 COVID-19 vaccines to healthcare personnel and other eligible populations in 2020-2021.



Kathryn Kuhn Retires as MCW's Vice President of Government and Community Relations

Kathryn Kuhn retired as MCW's vice president of government and community relations on March 1, 2023, following 22 years of valuable service. Her leadership directly resulted in tens of millions of dollars in funding to support MCW's missions.

Kuhn contributed significantly to the creation of MCW's regional campuses as a signature strategy for addressing the projected physician shortage. In 2013, her advocacy efforts with state legislators led to a \$7.4 million State Building Commission grant for the development of MCW-Green Bay and MCW-Central Wisconsin.

Kuhn also helped generate crucial support for graduate medical education expansion efforts that are important for improving patients' access to care. This included helping secure multiple increases for MCW's family and community medicine residency appropriations.

Kuhn's legacy at MCW extends into the research mission, where she helped provide critical infrastructure and laboratory space for MCW scientists pursuing new discoveries. In 2019, her team obtained \$10 million in the state budget to support construction of a new Cancer Research Building, which broke ground in September 2022.



MCW faculty and staff join Governor Evers and others for the signing of 2019 Wisconsin Act 150, which allows for the reimbursement of travel and other costs related to participating in cancer clinical trials.

She also worked to enhance access to specialty care throughout Wisconsin. This includes overseeing efforts since 2013 to support the creation of the Wisconsin Child Psychiatry Consultation Program.

In total, Kuhn worked with five different governors' administrations and was recognized for her bipartisanship and for building relationships on both sides of the political aisle.

Since Kuhn's retirement, Nathan Berken has served as interim vice president of government and community relations. He joined MCW in 2013 and has more than 18 years of government, public policy, healthcare, large employer, nonprofit and higher education experience.

Kuhn will remain with MCW in an advisory role. ■



Nathan Berken currently serves as MCW's interim vice president of government and community relations.



Kathryn Kuhn with former Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, ca. 2018.

Notable Benefits of the MCW/Wisconsin Partnership

State Building Commission Grants:

- 1997: \$2 million for the construction of MCW's new Health Research Center.
- 2001: \$25 million for the construction of MCW's Translational and Biomedical Research Center.
- 2007: \$10 million for the purchase of a 7-Tesla Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Scanner.

Tax Check-Off Program: In 2003, the state established a State Income Tax Check-Off Program for cancer research that has provided an annual stream of research funding to MCW. Proceeds from the program, which are donated by tax filers, are split between the MCW Cancer Center and the University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center.

CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund Grant: In 2020, the state provided a \$4 million CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund grant, which, along with similar funds from the federal government, served as a critical support to MCW during the most financially uncertain months of the pandemic.

Medical School Tuition Assistance: Each year, the state provides tuition assistance to MCW medical school students who are residents of Wisconsin. For the 2022-2023 academic year, the amount of assistance per student was \$3,580. The total amount of tuition assistance each year is then paid to MCW by the state.

Ongoing Advisory Roles: Over the years, MCW faculty and staff have generously shared their expertise in volunteer advisory roles to numerous state committees and programs focused on health-related topics such as veteran care, opioids, emergency response and preparedness, and suicide prevention.