

Dane County

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UNIVERSITIES OF WISCONSIN | FALL ENROLLMENT

Freshmen behind slight rise

1st-year gains offset 8% decline in foreign students on campus

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The Universities of Wisconsin this fall saw record in-state freshman enrollment growth but reported 8% fewer international students on campus amid federal pressures, including visa crackdowns, according to data

released Wednesday. UW systemwide enrollment is 164,626 students this fall, a slight increase of 190 students, or 0.12%, from last fall. The modest increase is higher compared to student count projections reported last month. That report suggested a loss of nearly 100 students, 0.05% decrease, credited to plummeting international student enrollment.

The enrollment reported Wednesday is based on 10th day enrollment figures the UW

system provides to the federal government. The UW system last month released preliminary student counts for this fall.

UW system President Jay Rothman said in a news conference Wednesday that the 5.5% record growth in Wisconsin resident new freshman enrollment, which is more than 1,000 students, has offset the drop in the number of international students.

"I think certainly the availability and the timeliness of students

securing visas certainly had an impact on our international enrollments," Rothman said. "It's an area that we will continue to try to work on to try to be able to offer that opportunity because we think those students can enrich our universities, in terms of providing diversity, different perspectives."

A national projection showed colleges and universities across the country having a 15% decrease in international student enrollment this year.

UW-Madison international students

UW-Madison, which last fall reported its highest total enrollment, saw slightly fewer students this year — a drop Rothman attributes to a loss of international students.

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■ 2-year schools: Future of system's branch campuses to be determined. A5

DEVELOPMENT | NEAR WEST SIDE



JOHN HART, STATE JOURNAL

Luther Memorial Church senior pastor Brad Pohlman, foreground, and associate pastor John Worzala Dumke view the \$275,000 solar array installed atop the church last year. A planned 15-story development directly behind the church would significantly reduce the amount of light that reaches the solar panels, Pohlman said.

Church asks city to step in

Says planned 15-story apartment building will block its solar panels, degrade its exterior

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Luther Memorial Church on Madison's Near West Side is asking the developer of a planned 15-story student apartment building to compensate it for what it projects will be lost output from the church's new solar panels and damage to its century-old sandstone exterior by leaving the church covered in shadow for much of the day.

The apartment building would be taller than the peak of the church roof, and church officials said it would shade the church — and the church's solar panels — far more than the four-story structure the building would replace. Negotiations with the devel-

Luther Memorial Church



oper have stalled, said the Rev. Brad Pohlman, Luther Memorial's senior pastor. Now the church is asking the city to delay issuing a building permit for the project until the dispute is resolved, citing a state law that requires some property owners to pay for blocking light to nearby solar installations.

The church's 100-panel solar array was completed last No-

vember, Pohlman said. The array, which has a capacity of 30 kilowatts, was projected to lower the church's average electric bill by more than half.

The solar panels cost about \$275,000, Pohlman said, and were paid for mostly with donations from congregation members, with one-fifth of the cost covered by federal grants from the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022.

Shading from the building planned at 306 N. Brooks St., directly southeast of the church, would result in a "significant reduction" in the amount of electricity the solar panels generate, he said.

The panels face south, toward the site behind the church where LZ Ventures of Madison wants to demolish a four-story building long used by Porchlight Inc., Dane County's largest provider of housing and services for the homeless. Porchlight will soon move into an eight-story building LZ Ventures is completing for the nonprofit on East Washington Avenue.

Madison's Plan Commission

signed off in July 2024 on the demolition of the current Porchlight facility and construction of a 189-unit student apartment building in its place.

Third apartment project next to church

Luther Memorial already neighbors two other student apartment buildings by the same developer: the 14-story Grand Central, which opened to the church's south in 2009, and the eight-story X01, which opened east of the church in 2013. The church's solar panels, situated in a flat area beneath the church roof, are angled toward the gap between the nearby apartment buildings.

Lost solar generation isn't the only concern, Pohlman said. The church was built in 1923 with sandstone that came from northern Wisconsin, he said. It's listed in the state and national registers of historic places.

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STATE DEPARTMENT TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

Afghan refugees file suit over ban

Many have family stuck abroad, unable to obtain documents

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Afghan immigrants sued President Donald Trump's administration Tuesday in a challenge to the June travel ban that prevents them from reuniting with family members who have been stuck abroad for four years.

Many of their spouses and children have been approved to come to the U.S., but the Department of State has refused to issue them travel documents, citing the travel ban. The lawsuit, filed in Virginia, argues that this practice is unlawful, unconstitutional and inhumane.

"Once again, the Trump administration is failing our Afghan allies," said Pedro Sepulveda Jr., litigation fellow at the International Refugee Assistance Project. "Our clients put their lives in danger for the United States and are now being told their loved ones are banned from this country."

The International Refugee Assistance Project and other attorneys filed the lawsuit on behalf of seven Afghan immigrants and their spouses and children stuck abroad. The Afghans risked their lives as soldiers, pilots and bodyguards while fighting the Taliban alongside the U.S. They now live in Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri and Virginia.

About 16,000 Afghans are stuck abroad, unable to join their families in the U.S., according to a May 2025 State Department report obtained by nonprofit organization #AfghanEvac.

The Lee Enterprises public service journalism team previously interviewed four Afghan immigrants living in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and California who said they were confused about how to bring their families to the U.S. and said the continued separation has taken an emotional toll on them.

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