



College of Letters & Science
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Dean's Message

September 2020

In June, I was honored to assume the role of Dean of the College of Letters & Science, during one of the most challenging times in my 25 years at UW-Madison. As we wrestle with a global pandemic, social unrest and economic turmoil all at once, I am reminded of what makes a Letters & Science education so timelessly important. The values we teach—compassion, intellectual curiosity, tolerance and resilience—prepare our students not only to flourish in good times, but to learn, grow and change during periods of challenge and hardship.

Hard times—particularly times of protest—often bring about change. That's overdue here at UW-Madison, where many of our students of color have, for far too long, experienced a UW that feels less welcoming to them. We pride ourselves on the world-class experience offered to our students, preparing them for positions of leadership and illuminating their path forward. A key leadership priority for me is creating an inclusive environment where *all* students can feel at home and thrive.

Another priority is research. We are an "R1" (preeminent) research institution, and much of this groundbreaking work happens right here in L&S. I intend to support and elevate research opportunities for faculty, graduate students and undergraduates. The knowledge that we take for granted today is based on curiosity-driven scholarship and creativity that started decades ago. Now, more than ever, we need to feed that intellectual flame. We need those big-picture thinkers to help us solve complex problems and expand the horizons of what we know.

By the time you read this, if all goes as planned, the fall semester will be well underway, with a mix of remote learning and in-person courses, as well as comprehensive protocols for keeping everyone safe. The year ahead will not be easy, but we will not lose heart. We will dig in—because that's what Badgers do.

Thank you for all you do to support L&S. It means the world to us.

On, Wisconsin!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric Wilcots', written in a cursive style.

Eric M. Wilcots, Dean of the College of Letters & Science
Mary C. Jacoby Professor of Astronomy