



**UW flexible option**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

# 2021 - 2022 Annual Report

[flex.wisconsin.edu](https://flex.wisconsin.edu)



New models of higher education, like competency-based education, continue to increase access to high-quality postsecondary education. And in an uncertain economy, people need postsecondary education more than ever. Now starting its ninth year of enrolling students, the UW Flexible Option remains in the national spotlight for innovative competency-based models of teaching and learning. Well over a thousand learners have earned a valuable credential through the UW Flexible Option that they may not have otherwise been able to.

UW Flexible Option is a collaboration between the University of Wisconsin (UW) Extended Campus, UW-Milwaukee, UW-Parkside, and UW-Madison, and offers 11 unique academic programs. Competency-based education focuses on students' ability to demonstrate mastery of the knowledge and skills that employers are looking for. The programs are asynchronous and fully self-paced, making them ideal for those who are

balancing work and family. Its flexible structure is not bound by semesters, meaning those looking to upskill or re-skill can earn an accredited University of Wisconsin degree or certification more efficiently and on their own schedule.

Our 2021-2022 academic year was once again our biggest year yet for the UW Flexible Option. The portfolio has grown every year since launching in 2014, showing remarkable resilience even in the face of downward enrollment pressures across higher education. **Over 1,200 unique students enrolled in UW Flexible Option degrees or certificates this year, collectively enrolling in nearly 6,100 individual courses.**

I am proud of the excellent work that our faculty and staff do to serve these adult learners, and I look forward to the ways that the UW Flexible Option will continue to grow with new programs and campus partners in the coming years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Brower'.

Aaron Brower, Ph.D.

Executive Director | UW Extended Campus  
Senior Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs | UW System Administration

# These innovative features make the UW Flexible Option a great choice for adult learners:



## » **Start any month of the year.**

Instead of enrolling in traditional semesters, take advantage of flexible “subscription periods.” These are approximately 12 weeks long, and new subscription periods start every month. This means you can earn your degree on your own timeline, and take breaks without penalty. The sooner you start, the sooner you can finish.

## » **Study 100% online.**

Programs are fully online and asynchronous. This means there are no live class times, and you can complete your courses when you have time.

## » **Build on existing knowledge and experience.**

UW Flexible Option programs are competency-based. This means you are evaluated on your mastery of necessary knowledge and skills: not on how much time you spend in a class. If you already know the material, you can progress more quickly. If you are struggling with a concept and need more time to study before you complete an assessment, take as much time as you need.

## » **Earn a genuine University of Wisconsin credential.**

All UW Flexible Option programs are offered by regionally-accredited University of Wisconsin institutions. They were created by the same respected UW faculty, using the same rigorous UW quality standards. These are programs that employers will recognize and respect.

## » **Your tuition will not increase.**

The Flex Tuition Guarantee means your tuition will not increase as long as you are actively enrolled in the program. With our popular flat-rate tuition model, what you see is what you’ll pay from start to finish.

## » **Receive personalized support.**

In the UW Flexible Option programs, you progress through your coursework on your own independent schedule. Along the way, your dedicated mentor — called a Success Coach — and your course faculty will ensure you have the level of support you need to be successful.

## » **Valued by employers.**

Graduates of competency-based programs must demonstrate mastery of all knowledge and skills identified in a program. Employers can be confident in graduates’ skills and abilities, as each graduate has explicitly demonstrated competence in all learning outcomes.



Powered by:



# Associate of Arts & Sciences



**207** Unique Headcount in FY22



**64%** Retention



**85** Graduates



**2014** Program Launch Date



**32** Median Age



**79%** Wisconsin Residency

The Associate of Arts & Science (AAS) in Liberal Arts, is a broad-based degree that gives its graduates a strong foundation for success in both the workplace and in future academic pursuits. AAS students demonstrate essential skills in areas such as critical thinking and communication, as well as a breadth of content-specific knowledge in social sciences, humanities, natural sciences, mathematics, and fine arts.

The AAS degree is ideal for students who plan to pursue a bachelor's degree but need to first satisfy general education requirements: it can be applied to over 200 baccalaureate majors at all thirteen University of Wisconsin System schools. That makes this program an excellent choice for adults who are looking to go back to school and make progress toward a bachelor's degree, but maybe are not sure of which bachelor's degree they want to choose.

In 2021-2022, the AAS program continued to grow by another 7% year over year, surpassing over 200 unique students served this year, another program record. Though market demand is slowing somewhat compared to the rapid growth of the prior two years, this degree is still positively growing. The faculty built three new courses this year, CGS MAT 075x, Math Success Strategies; CGS INT 281x, Deviant Minds (a joint psychology and sociology course); and CGS ART 118x, Digital Imaging & Design. The program implemented the Applied Scholarship designation in the associate's degree which streamlines the required curriculum and provides more courses that focus on active learning.



# Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN to BSN)



The UW Flexible Option Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program is a convenient, innovative option for RN-licensed nurses to earn their bachelor's degree. Offered through the award-winning UW-Milwaukee College of Nursing—a nursing college in the top 15% of the nation—this program helps nurses build on their work experience and their associates degree to more quickly earn their BSN. Students master a range of competencies that are in demand across the healthcare industry, such as evidence-based practice, community health nursing, and chronic care management.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to wear on, the nursing industry is

seeing increased turnover. As a result, enrollment in this RN to BSN program is down again year-over-year for the third year in a row as the academic program serves as a mirror to the broader industry. A reliable retention rate in the 70th percentile though shows that for those nurses that do enroll, they are likely to persist. A key program change this year is that pre-licensure ADN's are now admissible to the program so they can get a head start on their BSN.



296 Unique Headcount in FY22



71% Retention



290 Graduates



2014 Program Launch Date



32 Median Age



86% Wisconsin Residency



# Bachelor of Science in Business Administration



**186** Unique Headcount in FY22



**67%** Retention



**16** Graduates



**2019** Program Launch Date



**34** Median Age



**75%** Wisconsin Residency

The first UW Flexible Option bachelor's degree offered in partnership with UW-Parkside, the innovative Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) degree provides students a well-rounded management education. In this program, students master 20 competency areas that are essential to successful business administration. Students experience a project-based curriculum, which is designed to mimic scenarios that students will experience in their workplace.

Offered by the College of Business, Economics, and Computing, the BSBA degree is the first and only competency-based degree offered by an AACSB-accredited business school. AACSB International is the gold standard of business education accreditors, with fewer than 5% of programs internationally meeting their high standard.

In 2021-2022, faculty redesigned 14 courses to keep the business curriculum updated with the prevailing trends in industry and to ensure program graduates have the most relevant skills. This program added a new course, BALM 100x, Introduction to Business Administration, to better onboard new students in their first subscription period. Enrollments were down slightly year-over-year for this degree program.

Students in this program may also choose to add-on the Project Management Certificate, also with UW-Parkside, to their degree plan (page 9). The faculty approved the addition of a new certificate, Business Analytics, which is currently under development and will launch in late 2022.



# Bachelor of Science in Information Science & Technology



The UW Flexible Option Bachelor of Science in Information Science & Technology (IST) program, offered by UW-Milwaukee's School of Information Studies (SOIS), prepares students to be IT leaders in this increasingly digital economy. This degree-completion program emphasizes core IT skills like front-end web design, HCI and database management, information architecture, information security and applications of the Internet. This program is specifically designed for industry professionals with at least one year of IT experience and 60 credits, and its competency-based environment is ideal for these professionals to leverage their experience to more quickly progress toward their degree.

In addition to earning a bachelor's degree, students in this program have two unique certificate options within the UW Flexible Option that they may add: the Business & Technical Communication Certificate and the Health Care Informatics Certificate.

Enrollments fell this past academic year for the IST program by 5% year-over-year. In this academic year, SOIS added a course on content management systems and is currently planning to build out courses in Information Security I and II.



**186** Unique Headcount in FY22



**69%** Retention



**158** Graduates



**2014** Program Launch Date



**36** Median Age



**72%** Wisconsin Residency

# Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences: Diagnostic Imaging



**82** Unique Headcount in FY22



**85%** Retention



**79** Graduates



**2014** Program Launch Date



**36** Median Age



**35%** Wisconsin Residency

The Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences: Diagnostic Imaging, offered by UW-Milwaukee College of Health Sciences, is a degree completion program for medical imaging professionals. Building off of an active registry in the field, this degree prepares sonographers, radiologists, MRI technicians, and other imaging professionals to take their career to the next level. In the curriculum, students study a range of skills—such as healthcare leadership, client diversity, and human pathophysiology—which ensures students are staying on top of the in-demand skills that employers are looking for.

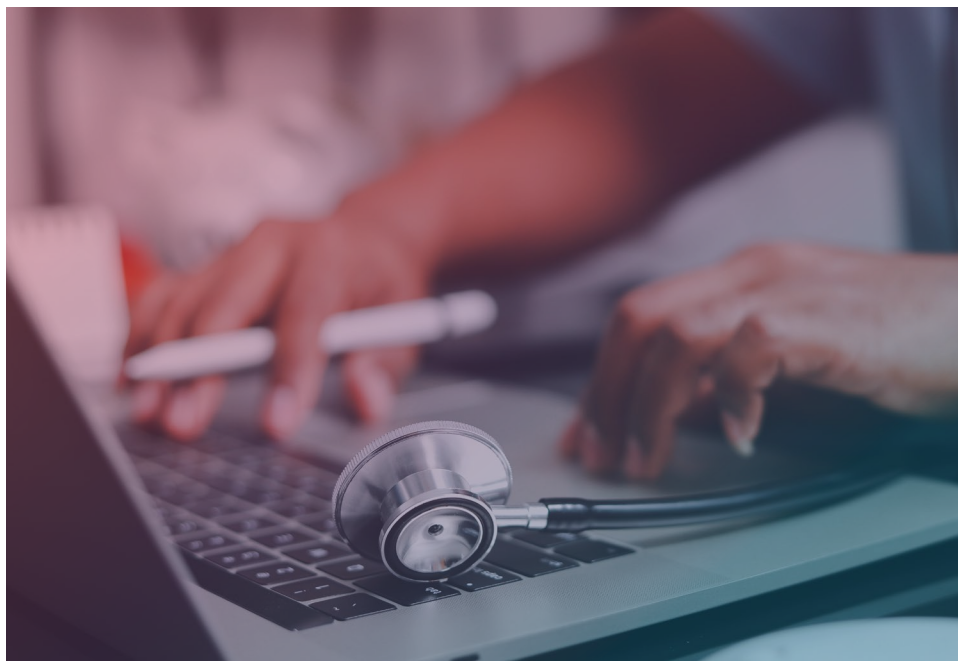
The Diagnostic Imaging bachelor's degree is a stable and successful

program, showing steady year-over-year enrollment patterns and a strong retention rate. This program is unique among the UW Flexible Option portfolio in its national reach—65% of its students are from outside the state of Wisconsin. This feature shows that this program maintains a distinct national competitive advantage, as there are very few bachelor's completion programs that are online (and competency-based) for diagnostic imaging professionals to enroll in.





# Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences: Health Sciences



The UW-Milwaukee College of Health Sciences offers a second degree completion program in the UW Flexible Option, a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences: Health Sciences. This program is for students who currently have 60 transferable credits, or an associate degree, and are looking to finish their bachelor's degree. This broad-based degree is ideal for students to advance their career in a diverse array of healthcare settings, such as hospitals, general care facilities, public and private agencies, nonprofits, and other health-related organizations. This degree can also be the foundation for students interested in advanced healthcare graduate degree programs.

The Health Sciences program saw remarkable 54% growth year over year in unique students (87 in FY21 to 134 in FY22), and its pace of growth since launching continues to show strong interest and market demand. Coupled with an excellent retention rate, this program is continuing to see positive student learning outcomes and results. Given the structure of this program's requirement of having transferable credit on admission, it is helping students with prior credit but no degree ultimately cross the finish line to advance their career in healthcare.



**134** Unique Headcount in FY22



**78%** Retention



**25** Graduates



**2018** Program Launch Date



**30** Median Age



**56%** Wisconsin Residency

# Project Management

## Certificate

Credit | Non-Credit

Project management skills are essential in nearly every industry, and they increase the value of employees regardless of their formal title. As a result, today's employers are looking for employees who can independently manage complex projects both large and small. This certificate is focused on the knowledge and skills necessary to competently manage projects from start to finish. The curriculum covers both the technical and interpersonal skills managing projects and project teams. This certificate can be earned

as a stand-alone credential, or students enrolled in UW-Parkside's Bachelor of Science in Business Administration—also offered in the UW Flexible Option—can earn this certificate alongside their bachelor's degree.

New in academic year 2021-2022 is a non-credit version of this certificate, which is a modality of learning for those who are looking for professional development rather than academic credit.

# Business & Technical Communications

## Certificate

In today's economy, it is more important than ever for workers to have a diverse array of skills and be flexible in their professional areas. The Business and Technical Communications Certificate takes an innovative approach with helping students develop practical skills in writing, research, communication, and technologies that will enable students to improve their skills for working.

Over six courses (18 credits), students master skills in strategic writing, technical communications, project management, and information design. This certificate can either be taken as a stand-alone credential, to supplement a different bachelor's degree, or to satisfy elective requirements in other UW Flexible Option programs.

# Substance Use Disorders Counseling

## Certificate



In partnership with UW-Madison's Division of Continuing Studies, this noncredit certificate is specifically designed for clinicians in Wisconsin looking to become certified as a Substance Abuse Counselor (SAC). Drug overdoses and cases of substance abuse and addiction continue to increase, impacting hundreds of thousands of Wisconsinites and their families. Every community in the state — and especially rural ones — have an increasing need for Substance Abuse Counselors to help close the treatment gap.

This highly successful program has over 500 graduates so far, with several dozen more actively enrolled. It is designed for human service professionals with

a bachelor's degree in a behavioral health related field, who can use this certification to build off their existing counseling training to more efficiently help address substance use disorders. It satisfies the 360 hour specialized educational requirement by the state of Wisconsin to become a SAC. New this academic year is an optional module on substance abuse counseling for clergy. The new module will provide ancillary information for the course target audience of professionals. The new module will also appeal to faith leaders, by providing evidence-based content and considerations/reflections for addressing SUDS issues within religious and spiritual communities.

# Health Care Informatics

## Certificate



This 18 credit certificate offered by UW-Milwaukee combines competencies in health care leadership and information technology. A collaborative effort amongst three different colleges at UW-Milwaukee, students can either enroll in this certificate as a stand-alone offering or earn it along the way to their bachelor's degree. Now more than ever, the healthcare industry needs professionals who are skilled

in managing IT and well-versed in the unique needs of the healthcare systems. This certificate is a great fit for current IT professionals seeking to change industries into healthcare; or for existing healthcare practitioners interested in expanding their role into IT. Students learn skills in health informatics, data analysis, healthcare technology, and healthcare ethics.

# Ready to Learn More?

Here's how you get in touch.

Interested in pursuing a program?

Call **608-262-2011** or email  
**[flex@uwex.wisconsin.edu](mailto:flex@uwex.wisconsin.edu)**  
to speak to an adviser.

Interested in partnering with us?

Email **[flex@uwex.wisconsin.edu](mailto:flex@uwex.wisconsin.edu)**



[flex.wisconsin.edu](https://flex.wisconsin.edu)

University of Wisconsin Extended Campus  
780 Regent Street  
Suite 130  
Madison, WI 53715

Powered by:

