UW Regents OK plan for more funding

Associated Press

MADISON — The UW System Board of Regents approved a budget proposal Thursday that seeks an additional $21 million in state funding.

The approved request will now go to the state Department of Administration, where it will be combined with requests from other agencies for inclusion in Gov. Scott Walker's budget proposal, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported.

Walker asked the university system last week to submit a budget that didn't include any new spending. After consulting with the governor's office and DOA, though, the Regents were told they could request the additional amount, UW System spokesman Dave Giroux said.

The only regent to vote against the proposal was John Drew. During discussion on the request he said he was concerned the new operating budget proposal didn't address a pay plan for faculty and staff.

UW System President Kevin Reilly assured him the issue would be taken up in the near future.

The $21 million will be used to drive specific efforts connected to performance measures at campuses around the state, said Michael Morgan, the system's senior vice president for administration and fiscal affairs.

The efforts include a program at UW-River Falls to improve retention, at UW-Milwaukee to increase the number of graduates and at UW-Stout in Menomonie to increase the number of businesses served by graduates.

The rest would be used to fund the system's new flexible-degree initiative, a program that would grant college credit for real-world life experience.

The Regents also approved seeking $187 million for four construction projects, in Madison, La Crosse and Stevens Point. That money would be in the form of state-supported bonds but is separate from the 2013-15 biennial budget.

The board also approved a number of smaller projects, including work on residence halls, student unions and athletic centers. The requests ultimately will go to the State Building Commission, which will make a recommendation to the full Legislature when it considers a new budget next year.