



Academic Staff Institute

Thursday, April 16, 2026
11:00am – 4:30pm
Varsity Hall, Union South

11:00 – 11:45	Registration & Lunch
11:45 – 12:00	Welcome Alissa Ewer, Chair, Academic Staff Executive Committee (ASEC) Sarah Fox, President, Madison Academic Staff Network (MASN) Jenny Dahlberg, President, Academic Staff Professionals Representation Organization (ASPRO)
12:00 – 12:45	Keynote Presentation Living with Vitality... and Resilience Bob McGrath, Distinguished Psychologist Emeritus, University Health Services
1:00 – 2:00	Breakout Session 1
2:15 – 3:15	Breakout Session 2
3:30 – 4:30	Breakout Session 3

Breakout Session 1

1:00 – 2:00

Session	Location
Meet the UWPD Mounted Unit	Industry
Stronger Together: Coaching Circles for Support and Connection	Landmark
Plain Language for Effective Communication	Northwoods

Breakout Session 2

2:15 – 3:15

Session	Location
Digital Accessibility @ UW-Madison	Industry
The Carillon Tower	Landmark
Retirement Planning: Put your UW-Madison Benefits to Work	Northwoods

Breakout Session 3

3:30 – 4:30

Session	Location
UW-Madison's New Budget Approach	Industry
ASPRO Legislative Session Wrap-Up	Landmark
Practical and safe use of UW-Madison AI tools	Northwoods

All breakout session locations are on the 3rd floor of Union South.

Breakout Session Information

ASPRO Legislative Session Wrap-Up

Kathi Kilgore, ASPRO Executive Director & Lobbyist

For nearly four decades, Academic Staff Professionals Representation Organization (ASPRO) has been a trusted voice for Academic Staff, providing steady guidance and strong advocacy. Join us for a recap of the latest legislative session from ASPRO's lobbyist and explore how the organization represents Academic Staff interests at the Capitol.

The Carillon Tower

Lyle Anderson, UW Carillonneur Emeritus

The carillon: what it is, how it works, and some historical context on how it came to be.

Digital Accessibility @ UW–Madison

Ruben Mota, Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator, Office of Compliance

Al Nemec, Digital Accessibility Program Manager, Center for User Experience

This session provides information about an expanded digital accessibility requirement under the Americans with Disabilities Act, current university-wide efforts to support the requirements, and information on how to create accessible digital content. Join in to learn the important role you have in ensuring an accessible and inclusive university digital ecosystem!

Meet the UWPD Mounted Unit

Officer Ryan Conybear, UW–Madison Police Department

Officer Jolene Eck, UW–Madison Police Department

Lieutenant Carl Siddell, UW–Madison Police Department

Come meet the UWPD Mounted Unit. Learn about our two horses, Rettke and Vetter. Learn how they are trained and deployed. Weather permitting, meet the horses outside.

Plain Language for Effective Communication

Cassandra Lima Pilarski, Workplace ESL Instructor and Trainer, Office of Human Resources

Ineffective communication causes workplace anxiety for 80% of US employees (SoftActivity, 2021). Learn how plain language can save time, increase follow-through, build trust, and reduce frustration. In this session, you will practice plain language strategies to create messages that your intended audience can understand and act on immediately.

Practical and safe use of UW-Madison AI tools

Tamara Walker, DoIT Academic Technology Director and Associate Vice Provost for Learning Technologies

This session will explore how to integrate AI tools in your daily work. You will learn simple ways to use these tools safely while following university guidance to protect university data. By the end of the talk, you'll have a clear plan for using AI as a helpful assistant to save time and get more done in the office.

Retirement Planning: Put your UW-Madison Benefits to Work

Thomasin Propson, Benefits Specialist, Office of Human Resources
Kate Richards, Benefits Specialist, Office of Human Resources

Learn how to make the most of your UW-Madison benefits as you plan for retirement (even if – perhaps especially if!) your retirement is years away. This session highlights free, easy-to-use tools from ETF, UW, the Department of Labor, and the Social Security Administration to help you understand your options and map out a confident retirement strategy.

Stronger Together: Coaching Circles for Support and Connection

Kim Grocholski, Assistant Dean for Academic Planning, College of Letters & Science
Theresa Kim, Program Manager, Learning and Talent Development, Office of Human Resources

What if you had a trusted group of 4-5 colleagues from across campus – a support network where you could bring real challenges? Imagine a space designed for deep listening, fresh perspectives, and meaningful connection. This session gives you an inside look at the power of Coaching Circles. You'll hear directly from a Coaching Circle participant and then have the chance to either observe a circle in action or take part in one yourself.

UW-Madison's New Budget Approach

Bethany Butson Crowell, Associate Vice Provost, Data, Academic Planning & Institutional Research (DAPIR)
Natalie Feggestad, Budget Director, Madison Budget Office

This session will provide an overview of the new budget approach to be implemented in FY27 including who is impacted by it, which revenue sources are included, how allocations are calculated and how it impacts budget implementation.

Special Thanks

Organizing Committee

Alissa Ewer	Brady Minter
Lesley Fisher	Mallory Musolf
Sarah Fox	Becky Ryan
Danielle Hairston-Green	

Conference Assistance

Krystal Hakes	Tammy Starr
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Speakers

Lyle Anderson	Cassandra Lima Pilarski
Bethany Butson Crowell	Robert McGrath
Ryan Conybear	Ruben Mota
Jolene Eck	Al Nemec
Natalie Feggestad	Thomasin Propson
Kim Grocholski	Kate Richards
Kathi Kilgore	Carl Siddell
Theresa Kim	Tamara Walker

Sponsors

Academic Staff Governance
Academic Staff Professionals Representation Organization (ASPRO)
Madison Academic Staff Network (MASN)
Office of Learning and Talent Development
Office of the Secretary of the Academic Staff