



The University of Wisconsin – Madison
The Barbara Hochberg Center for Jewish Student Life
611 Langdon Street – Madison, WI 53703
(608)256-8361
www.UWHillel.org

Dear Chancellor Blank:

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We write to you as CEO and Board Chair of Hillel on behalf of the Board of Directors, including its faculty members, and are joined by the undersigned faculty members, staff members and Emeritus faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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We wish to express our deep concern that UW–Madison has scheduled the first day of classes for the 2021–2022 academic year on Rosh Hashanah, one of the holiest Jewish holidays, which begins this year on the evening of September 6 and ends on the evening of September 8. This conflict, while we understand is unintentional, falls short of our shared ideal in doing our best as in institution to be a “welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background” as codified in UW-Madison’s Institutional Statement on Diversity. The fall 2021 start date is problematic from a welcoming and inclusion perspective not only for students but also for faculty and staff.

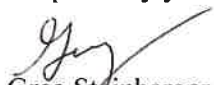
We have learned from meetings with university administrators that the perception is that there are significant challenges in moving the start date of the fall 2021 semester in part due to a financial aid deadline and perceived lack of support from faculty. The proposed solution is to keep the start date as is, and for the university to communicate with students and instructors about the conflict, move the university’s convocation, and review the academic calendar for coming years to avoid future conflicts. We welcome and appreciate these steps; however, this approach will continue to create challenges for individual students, faculty, and staff as they work to manage the conflict.

In this letter, we have two requests. First, in regards to the fall 2021 semester, we come together as a group to ask that you seek a creative solution to avoid the noted conflict by moving the start date. Second, we appreciate that there is a plan to avoid such conflicts in the future, we underscore the importance of developing an administrative process that ensures this does not happen in the future and look forward to learning more details about that plan before the end of the semester.

We would be happy to arrange a meeting with you and interested parties to offer insight into the cultural, ethnic and religious practices that create a conflict for students, faculty and staff with regard to the academic calendar.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership during this challenging period for the university.

Respectfully yours,


Greg Steinberger
CEO and President


Greg Sinaiko
Board Chair

Cc:
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