

The La Follette School of Public Affairs Prepares for Future with Funding from Ascendium

Thanks to a grant from Ascendium Education Group, La Follette is one step closer to meeting the high demand for public policy education.

MADISON, WI, UNITED STATES, May 9, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, student interest in public policy has skyrocketed in recent years. To cater to students' desire to make the world a better place through public policy, the [La Follette School of Public Affairs](#) launched an undergraduate public policy certificate program in 2019. In the five years since then, the number of enrolled undergraduate and graduate students has increased fivefold, from 110 to 580 total. Current student demand projections suggest La Follette could serve a total of 4,000 students annually in another five years.

Capitalizing on student interest in public policy now could mean solving problems that will affect us tomorrow. However, La Follette requires additional resources to train the future public leaders of Wisconsin and beyond, expand its public outreach mission, and support research that informs evidence-based policymaking.

Thanks to a \$500,000 grant from [Ascendium Education Group](#), La Follette is one step closer to meeting the high demand for public policy education while preparing more students than ever for careers in public service.



Ascendium Education Group Logo



With support from Ascendium, the UW-Madison La Follette School of Public Affairs will prepare more students than ever for careers in public service.

Training the Next Generation of Public Policy Leaders

La Follette's academic programming gives students the knowledge, analytical skills, and fieldwork experience to advance the public good. Through its two certificate programs, undergraduate students can apply a policy perspective to their major course of study or specialize in health policy. Graduate students can also tailor their degree to their academic experience and professional goals, combining public policy with, for instance, urban planning to address housing, transportation, and environmental issues.

La Follette is well positioned to help address the need for a highly skilled and nonpartisan workforce to solve our public policy challenges. La Follette was recently ranked in the top 10% of public affairs schools in the country by U.S. News and World Report and is the highest-ranked public affairs school with fewer than 200 graduate students. Upon graduation, over half of its 2023 graduate students entered government service, with the rest either entering nonprofit work, the private sector, or an advanced degree program (source: La Follette).

To enable even more students to apply policy education to their public service interests, La Follette plans to launch UW's first undergraduate Major in Public Policy as early as fall 2025.

The school's focus on teaching thoughtful and civil dialogue around public policy issues and combating polarization will set it apart from other schools. As faculty and staff work to create the major, civility in policymaking and bridging political divides will be a key focus of the new program's curriculum.

Ascendium's grant will help La Follette develop the new major and work towards its goals to:

- Create high-impact classroom experiences.

- Scale up its course design, programming, and student support, including advising and financial aid.

- Provide financial support for undergraduate internships.

- Develop its employer pipeline for future experiential learning opportunities.

- Explore options for a new home on the University of Wisconsin-Madison's campus.

Ultimately, La Follette will expand its capacity to train the leaders of tomorrow, who can help find solutions to the public policy challenges of today.

Helping Students Reach their Academic and Career Goals

By considering how policy interventions can foster access to education and upward mobility, Ascendium and La Follette can amplify their impact together.

"Ascendium's mission is to change postsecondary education and workforce training systems for learners from low-income backgrounds," Richard D. George, Ascendium's chairman, president, and chief executive officer, said. "Well-informed public policy can play a major role in systems

change.”

As a national leader in public policy education, La Follette can produce leaders capable of improving postsecondary education at the systems level, thereby expanding opportunities for students to reach their academic and career goals.

“Our students are driven to make good public policy that can make a positive difference in people’s lives,” Greg Nemet, the La Follette School’s Interim Director, said. “This tremendously generous gift from Ascendium will help us give students the tools they need to take on the important challenges of our time.”

About the La Follette School of Public Affairs: The Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin–Madison is a leading academic institution in improving the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policy and the practice of governance. The school was built on the foundation of the UW–Madison Center for the Study of Public Policy and Administration, which was established in 1967 under the Department of Political Science. In 1983, the Wisconsin Legislature formally separated the center from the Department of Political Science. The school officially opened in 1984, now named after Robert M. La Follette, the former Wisconsin governor and U.S. senator who is regarded as one of the most celebrated figures in the state’s history. Today, the La Follette School offers domestic and international master’s degrees in public affairs as well as certificates for undergraduate students. La Follette School faculty, alumni, students, and staff extend the practice of the Wisconsin Idea across the state and around the world through research and outreach that inspires evidence-based policymaking, impacts society’s pressing problems, and advances the public good.

About Ascendium: Ascendium Education Group is committed to making education and training beyond high school a reality for more people. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we fund initiatives across the U.S. that help learners from low-income backgrounds achieve upward mobility; provide student and employee success solutions to colleges and businesses; invest in education-focused innovations to improve learner outcomes; and provide information, tools, and counseling to help millions of borrowers successfully repay their federal student loans. While we have many roles, we have one goal — elevating opportunity by creating a world where everyone can rise to their highest potential. To learn more, visit ascendiumeducation.org.

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