What is HR Design?
The State Legislature has provided UW-Madison with the unprecedented opportunity to create a new personnel (human resources) system tailored to the specific needs of our campus. This includes the statutory authority to develop university-specific policies for classified employees, as we now do for our unclassified employees. To create this new HR system, which must be in place by July 1, 2013, the campus has been working with governance and stakeholder groups for nearly a year to develop a strategic plan that provides the general framework for the new personnel structure. This framework includes the following key components:

- A compensation structure that provides the flexibility to set and adjust compensation based on several factors -- market conditions, internal equity, performance (not currently allowed by statute for faculty and academic staff) and cost-of-living.
- Recruitment and selection policies and procedures that will enable us to make timely and effective hiring decisions that meet our needs as a higher education institution.
- A new “university staff” employment category for hourly classified positions that provides these employees with formal governance rights (that will mirror academic staff governance) through Regent policy.
- A strategic diversity plan for hiring and employment activities.
- A balance between management flexibility and employee security/expectations.
- Enhanced systems for employee development, performance evaluation and expectation-setting.

Why do we want to embrace this opportunity?
The current campus personnel system actually consists of two systems (classified and unclassified) that are often quite different in concept and mechanics. This creates inequities and confusion. The unclassified system was tailored to our UW-Madison institutional needs while the classified structure was created for state government agencies (e.g., departments of transportation, corrections). Although we have worked hard to fit the classified structure to our higher education environment, we have never been able to completely tailor the classified provisions to meet the needs of a world-class teaching and research institution. With our new authority, we will be able to design an integrated HR system that meets our specific needs. The current classified system fails to do this in several areas. For example:

- The state government recruitment and selection process requires us to use standard state civil service exams and hiring lists for many of UW-Madison’s classified vacancies. These mechanisms don’t allow us to create applicant pools that are highly-qualified and diverse.
- The current state compensation structures don’t provide the flexibility the university must have to recruit, retain, and reward our staff. For example, in many of our classified jobs we can’t hire candidates above the minimums of the pay range. As a result, we struggle to attract candidates with the experience we need.
What this initiative is not
Over the past several months, many misconceptions about the HR Design efforts have emerged. The Project Team has tried to dispel these myths and emphasize this unique opportunity to create our own HR system. Key misconceptions:

- **The HR Design Project is the extension of Act 10 (legislation that drastically reduced the collective bargaining rights of Wisconsin’s public sector workforce).** This is untrue. In fact, the university has been trying to obtain the authority to create our own personnel system for many years. Further, the HR Design Strategic Plan preserves the current collective bargaining provisions for UW employees.

- **The HR Design framework will result in UW employees no longer being state employees and therefore unable to participate in the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS).** Untrue. UW employees will still be state employees and continue to participate in WRS (including the sick leave conversion programs).

- **The HR Design provisions will diminish governance rights.** Untrue. There will be no change in faculty and academic staff governance. In addition, governance rights will be extended to classified staff.

- **Just-cause standards and due process will be eliminated in the new system.** Untrue. UW employee categories that currently have just-cause and due-process rights will continue to have these protections. While the law does not require the university to extend these protections to employees hired on or after July 1, 2013, the HR design plan calls for these protections to apply to employees groups that have them now, including employees hired on or after July 1, 2013.

Next steps
The Faculty Senate approved a resolution to accept the HR Design Strategic Plan framework on December 3. The Faculty Senate approval follows positive votes by Academic Staff Assembly, the Council for Non-Represented Classified Staff and Associated Students of Madison. The UW Board of Regents accepted the plan along with the new UW System HR policies on December 7.

In the coming months, the campus will continue to develop the policies and procedures to operationalize the UW-Madison framework. This phase will include involvement of governance and other stakeholder groups. More information (including the full HR Design Strategic Plan) is at www.hrdesign.wisc.edu.