Health care costs, uninsured patients, and lack of access, determining the cost-effectiveness of medical care, chronic illness and obesity, health disparities, and many related areas are at the forefront of public concern and policy focus. University of Wisconsin (UW)-Madison faculty and students engage in cutting-edge health economics research, learning, and policy evaluation on these and other important issues in health and health care. UW-Madison has been a leader in scholarly work and graduate training in health economics for years, and Population Health Sciences is currently the center of such activities on the UW-Madison campus.

Faculty Scholarship in Health Economics
The health economics scholarship conducted by UW-Madison faculty is broad and influential. Currently, the research of Barbara Wolfe, PhD, focuses on the link between income and health, and analysis of publicly provided programs both for medical insurance and broader support for persons with disabilities. She has also recently written a survey article on health economics. John Mullahy has studied the economic aspects of substance abuse and empirical methodologies for the analysis of health data. Thomas DeLeire's main interests are in disability and health-labor market relationships, and the well-being of poor families. The research and teaching of David Vanness, PhD, focused on medical technology assessment and the applications of Bayesian methodologies to health care problems. Korinna Hansen directs the popular 548 course on health economics in the Department of Economics.

Other economists on the UW-Madison faculty (eg, economists specializing in labor economics, public economics, and econometrics), as well as other faculty with backgrounds in fields outside economics (eg, public policy, statistics, health services research, industrial engineering), have longstanding interests in health economics topics.

Graduate Training in Health Economics
The most important thread running through the many years of scholarly work in health economics at UW-Madison is the training program in health and mental health economics supported by the National Institutes of Mental Health. This program has supported UW-Madison doctoral students studying health economics continuously for 30 years. Led initially by W. Lee Hansen, PhD, and then by Burton Weisbrod, MA, directorship of the program was taken over by Dr Wolfe in 1990; the program is now co-directed by Drs Wolfe and Mullahy in Population Health Sciences, although the majority of trainees still come from the doctorate program in economics. The training involves ongoing doctoral seminars in health economics, advanced survey courses, and doctoral dissertation research mentoring. Trainees have gone on to occupy important positions in academics, public policy, and the private sector.

Population Health Sciences also administers 2 other training programs related to health economics: an AHRQ pre- and post-doctoral training program directed by Maureen Smith, MD, MPH, PhD (previously directed by Dennis Fryback, PhD) and a Merck Company Foundation pre-doctoral training program directed by Dr Mullahy.

The Future of Health Economics at UW-Madison
Given the pressing health and health care problems observed daily on national and international scales, the demand for quality research and training in health economics is certain to expand. Professional associations such as the International Health Economics Association (IHEA) and the American Society of Health Economists (ASHE) have grown impressively over the past decade with Barbara Wolfe and John Mullahy serving in various capacities on the boards of both organizations. In part due to the recogni-
tion of its longstanding leadership in health economics, UW-Madison was chosen to host the inaugural ASHE conference in 2006.

Innovative faculty recruiting, research collaborations, teaching, and mentoring will assure that UW-Madison stays poised as a national and international leader in this field. The Department of Population Health Sciences will play a central role in leading these activities, complemented productively by interactions with our colleagues from across the campus.

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