



Under the influence

The year's 15 most influential people in Greater Madison

PROFILES BY JOE VANDEN PLAS

From the pages of [In Business magazine](#).

Several members of our 2016 Most Influential class prove that you don't have to be a big shot to make a difference in fields such as academia, activism, or the arts. Unlike the 2015 class, which was highlighted by people who led the community through a crisis that followed the tragic death of Tony Robinson, this year's class has largely operated without a spotlight.

Keep in mind that our definition of most influential won't always be positive in the view of every reader. Our first Most Influential list included Gov. Scott Walker, whose shepherding of Act 10 was certainly influential but not very popular in Dane County.

Readers also may wonder about the absence of several people who are in the formative stages of making significant contributions. One example is the Rev. Alex Gee, who has been instrumental in organizing a response to the racial disparities that undermine our civic process. His efforts will take more time to produce results, and a number of 2016 nominees are in the same situation.

Rest assured that we're tracking their progress for future Most Influential lists, which acknowledge influence in the past year. With those ground rules, here is our third annual look at the Most Influential people in Greater Madison.

Editor's note: Nominations for the 2017 Most Influential list should be submitted to Editorial Director Joe Vanden Plas at joe@ibmadison.com.

John Behling: Tenure Transformer



For their controversial rewrite of faculty tenure policies, this entry could go to the entire University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents, but the person who led the way is John Behling, vice president of the board, who guided the rewrite throughout the drafting process.

Needless to say, the changes haven't met with the approval of UW–Madison faculty, which passed a resolution of no confidence in the regents and UW System President Ray Cross. Some faculty have left the system, and critics say the changes make the board subservient to the GOP-dominated Wisconsin Legislature, which mandated the review.

While acknowledging that tenure is important to higher education because faculty must be free to express their views, especially controversial ones, Behling contends the previous policy lacked accountability and did not reward performance. The revised policy includes a requirement that tenured faculty be reviewed once every five years and includes a process chancellors must follow in the event a campus program has to be closed for economic reasons.

“I think once people actually read the policy and understand how it is going to be implemented,” he says, “they will agree with the Board’s decisions.”