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**School of Medicine
and Public Health**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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CONTACT: Susan Lampert Smith
(608) 890-5643
ssmith5@uwhealth.org

New reports show much room for improvement in Wisconsin's health

MADISON, Wis. -- A new report by researchers at the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute gives Wisconsin a grade of B- for overall health, but much worse grades for the health of its African American and Native American citizens.

Meanwhile, the latest release of *America's Health Rankings* shows that Wisconsin's overall health ranking has dropped from 16th in the nation in 2012 to 20th in 2013.

"We can do better," said Karen Timberlake, director of the UW Population Health Institute "Wisconsin needs to use these grades as guide to improvement and a reason to catalyze discussion and efforts to help all the residents of our state become healthier."

While the national group gives an overall state rank, Timberlake says it's important to look at the details, especially the underlying gaps in health for different groups of people within the state.

Beyond a grade for overall health, the 2013 *Health of Wisconsin Report Card* gives Wisconsin a barely passing grade of D for health disparities. The report card examines the health of specific populations, looking at both length and quality of life, and finds that certain groups fare much worse than the state's average.

Health disparities continue to persist by gender, socioeconomic status, geographic location, and race/ethnicity. In particular, the researchers found that Wisconsin is not doing enough to promote the health of Native Americans and African Americans or those without formal education beyond high school. The health of these groups is rated no better than D or F across every measure studied.

The 2013 *Report Card* measures the state's progress toward meeting two goals of the Healthiest Wisconsin 2020 State Health Plan: improving health for all and eliminating health disparities. Although death rates have declined for every age group in Wisconsin and health-related quality of life has improved, Wisconsin is not improving faster than other states since the first *Report Card* was released in 2007.

"We know that reaching the goal of longer, healthier lives for all require us to focus on creating opportunities for health where we live, learn, work, and play," Timberlake said. "This Report Card shows us



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that in our communities, and as a state, we need to focus on understanding what we can do to ensure better health for all people in Wisconsin.”

The UW Population Health Institute is part of the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, and the school’s Wisconsin Partnership Project funds the health report card that is published every 3 years. To read the full report and corresponding PowerPoint slides, visit the UW Population Health Institute website at <http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu/programs/match/healthiest-state/report-card/2013/index.htm>.