



**BADGER  
TALKS**



**Annual  
Report 2025**

*Every time I experience a Badger Talk, I'm so proud to be a Badger. But also, Badger Talks has taught me even more to be proud to be part of the Wisconsin Idea...to be proud of Wisconsin because we have high caliber people who build up worthy communities and their projects all over the state.*

**-HEATHER HANLON,  
SHEBOYGAN  
COUNTY MUSEUM**

## A Note from the Program Director

Every year, **Badger Talks** reminds me why this work matters.

What began as a simple idea, to connect the knowledge, creativity, and curiosity of the University of Wisconsin–Madison with communities across our state, continues to grow in ways that are both humbling and inspiring. In 2025, Badger Talks reached new communities, welcomed new partners, and connected more people than ever before with UW experts and performers from all parts of campus.

None of this happens without the trust and enthusiasm of the schools, libraries, community groups, businesses, and organizations that invite us into their spaces. We are deeply grateful to the hundreds of host groups and presenters who make each Badger Talk meaningful, welcoming, and engaging.

I am especially proud of the small team that brings this program to life every day. Their care, coordination, and creativity are at the heart of every successful event... whether it's a talk in a rural library, a conference keynote, a lively conversation at a local pub, or a musical performance that brings people together.

As you explore this report, I hope you'll see not just the impressive growth of Badger Talks, but the relationships, stories, and shared moments that make this program special. Thank you for being part of this work and for helping us bring the University of Wisconsin–Madison to communities across the state!

Fran Puleo Moyer  
Director, UW Connects





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# 2025 Year in Review: Badger Talks

2025 was another record-breaking year for Badger Talks, underscoring the University of Wisconsin–Madison’s commitment to the Wisconsin Idea, sharing knowledge, creativity, and expertise with communities across Wisconsin. Constituents from across the state continued to turn to Badger Talks as a trusted source for UW talent, with 410 program requests—the highest number in the program’s history.

These requests came from 317 unique host groups, ranging from community organizations, associations and local businesses to libraries, and schools. In total, just over 20,000 people attended Badger Talks events in 2025, engaging directly with UW faculty, staff, graduate students, and performers. Badger Talks reached 55 Wisconsin counties, expanding the program’s geographic footprint and deepening its statewide impact.





# Growth at a Glance

From 2024 to 2025, hosted Badger Talks experienced significant growth across every major metric. These gains reflect a growing demand for university expertise and a strong appetite for meaningful, community-based engagement throughout Wisconsin.



## 31% INCREASE IN ENGAGEMENTS

Number of hosted engagements went from 314 in 2024 to 410 in 2025. This was due to the growth of new curated programs, new media partnerships, and additional offerings in the Badger Talks line up.



## 20% INCREASE IN COUNTIES REACHED

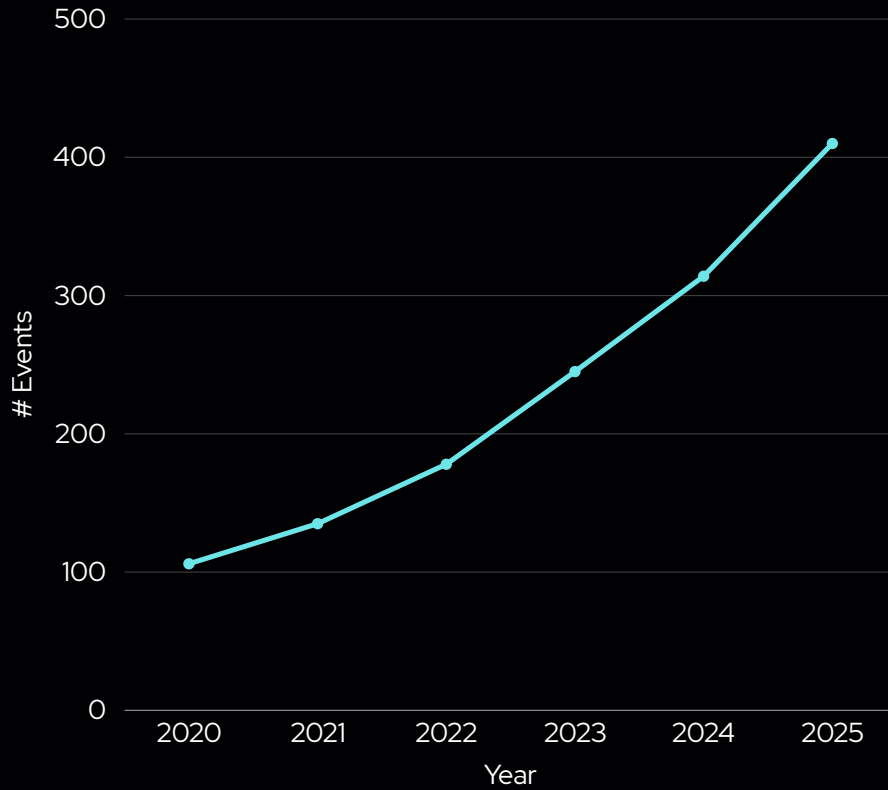
New counties served in 2025, not served in 2024, include Bayfield, Buffalo, Calumet, Crawford, Langlade, Lincoln, Marinette, Oconto, Pierce, Polk, Price, Sawyer, Vilas and Waushara! Welcome to the Badger Talks family!



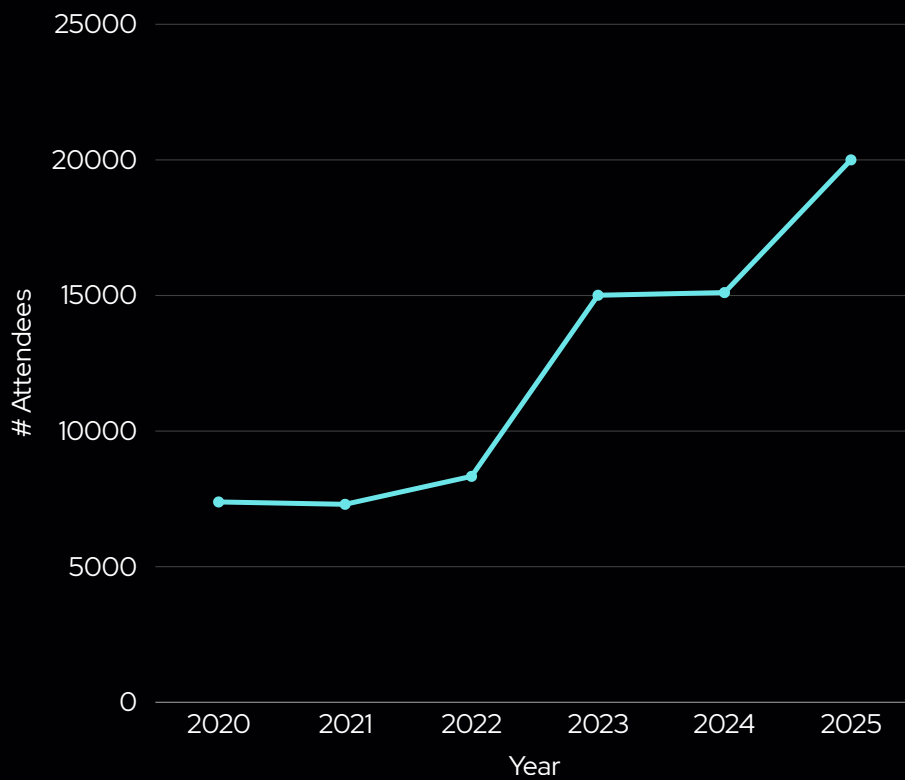
## 32% INCREASE IN TOTAL ATTENDANCE

Annual attendance at hosted events went from 15,107 to 20,001. Badger Talks promotes public events that feature a BT speaker, but much of the good marketing work also goes to statewide host groups – thank you!

### Badger Talks # Hosted Talk Engagements



### Badger Talks Attendance at Hosted Engagements



# Digital and Online Spaces

In 2025, Badger Talks continued to expand its reach well beyond in-person events through digital and online programs, connecting communities across Wisconsin and beyond with UW–Madison expertise. The Badger Talks Podcast and Quick Pick recordings provided accessible, on-demand learning experiences, while our social media channels delivered engaging content and event updates to thousands of followers. Through these platforms, we featured 33 faculty from diverse units across campus in our “Badger Talks Presents” series, sharing insights, stories, and research in a format that could reach any Wisconsin resident.

Badger Talks programs generated over **2 million impressions** on Facebook and over **239K video views**. These digital initiatives complement our in-person programs, making UW–Madison expertise more accessible and helping Badger Talks connect with new audiences, deepen community engagement, and extend the Wisconsin Idea through virtual spaces.

## 2025 DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS:

Key Indicator	Programs	Result
Unique Listeners	Badger Talks Podcast	1,620
Downloads	Badger Talks Podcast	2,611
Facebook Impressions	All Programs	2,161,927
Video Plays (min 25% played)	Badger Talks Quick Picks	37,174
Facebook Event Responses	Hosted Badger Talks	18,904



# Fun Facts



The Badger Talks roster boasts **600** UW-Madison experts in **33** categories and hundreds of sub-categories

New offerings in **Artificial Intelligence, Quantum Computing, Music Ensembles** and much more!



Speaker who gave the most talks: (20) **Jonathan Rebersky, Astronomy**

Speaker who drove the farthest: (660 Miles RT) **Steve Ackerman** to Duluth, MN

Most popular topics this year included **AI, Dementia Research, Edmund Fitzgerald, WI German Culture, Indigenous Ways, and Horticulture**







# New Programs and Partnerships

Badger Talks expanded beyond traditional presentations in 2025 with the introduction of traveling musical ensembles, developed in partnership with the **Mead Witter School of Music**. These performances bring live music to communities across Wisconsin, showcasing the artistic talent of UW students while expanding the definition of what a Badger Talk can be.

Programming included the first full year of **Badgers on Tap** events, which brings UW expertise into informal, accessible settings. The program quickly grew to include more than 30 host partnerships with pubs and breweries across the state, creating new spaces for learning, dialogue, and connection. Nineteen Badgers on Tap events were hosted in 2025.

The **Universe in the Park** program has seen exponential growth due to increased engagement with new state parks, enhanced partnership with the Department of Natural Resources and increased graduate student interest. The program grew from 23 engagements in 2024 to 37 in 2025 with 24 counties reached!

New media partnerships were developed in 2025, including **PBS Wisconsin** recordings of Badger Talks around Wisconsin for the *University Place* series. **Discover Mediaworks** produced their award-winning documentary on the Edmund Fitzgerald featuring key UW faculty resulting in strong media attention for Badger Talks. We are deeply grateful for all of our partners whose trusted collaboration amplifies our work, extends our reach and helps connect our programs with communities across the state.

# Stories, Voices and Impact

Beyond the numbers, Badger Talks is defined by the relationships it builds and the experiences it creates. Glowing testimonials from host partners across the state speak to the program's value... highlighting inspiring presentations, meaningful conversations, and the powerful impact of connecting communities with the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

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***I appreciated how (the) session was so relatable and useful. Thank you!***

Victoria Solomon,  
Green County Leaders

***Maya was prompt with confirming our speaker. Instructions were clear and host resources online were helpful.***

Ben Peters, United Way Manitowoc County

***Badger Talks is a brilliant program and I hope to engage with the speakers more. I love the Wisconsin Idea and seeing more opportunity for outreach outside of Ag Extension is fantastic***

Bartlett Durand, Central States Water Environment Association

***Thank you, we love Badger Talks! Such a great resource.***

Darlene Brodbeck, Blackhawk Country Club

***Thank you so much for sending speakers to our extremely rural and low income area!***

Deb Biechler, Friends of Necedah National Wildlife Refuge





# A Small But Mighty Team

Badger Talks operates on a strong program foundation designed to support statewide engagement and long-term growth. Building on this structure, a small staff team manages the extensive day-to-day work required to deliver hundreds of programs each year.



Maya Reinfeldt is at the heart of Badger Talks, making sure every connection between UW–Madison presenters and host groups across Wisconsin runs smoothly. She manages hundreds of requests, supports hosts and presenters from start to finish, and keeps everything organized behind the scenes. Maya receives consistent praise from speakers and host groups for her responsiveness, friendly demeanor, and high level of customer service. Over the past year, Maya played a key role in developing Badgers on Tap, bringing UW expertise to new community spaces, and continues to lead Universe in the Park, connecting faculty and students from the astronomy department with Wisconsin families through presentations and star parties at Wisconsin State Parks.



Maggie Obst, a sophomore in the Microbiology program, brings Badger Talks to life online, making sure communities know about events and programming. She creates fun, engaging posts on social media, creates lively program promo emails, and helps thousands of people across Wisconsin discover and enjoy hundreds of Badger Talks events every year.



## State Relations

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



## UW Connects

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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