



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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P. O. Box 7882 Madison, WI 53707-7882

**March 4, 2021**

## **Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities**

### **Joint Testimony on Assembly Bill (AB) 76**

**Sen. Howard Marklein and Rep. Amy Loudenberg**

Thank you Mr. Chair and committee members for hearing Assembly Bill 76 (AB 76), which requires the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents to recognize and track the time spent by state specialists teaching graduate students and Wisconsin farmers.

State integrated specialists are University of Wisconsin campus-based faculty and staff who are funded by the Division of Extension at UW-Madison. They provide expertise on a wide range of topics related to agriculture and natural resources.

In addition to conducting research projects, these researchers teach farmers at association-sponsored summer and winter meetings, hold on-farm mini clinics, field days, and workshops and provide other direct instruction to Wisconsin farmers on a daily basis. With the investment in the Dairy Innovation Hub, the time spent on farms by these state integrated specialists will only increase as they convey the results of research to farmers across the state.

Their value to the agricultural economy as teachers is well-documented, but their work teaching Wisconsin farmers does **not** count under the statutory definition of “teaching hours”, which must be reported for the purposes of reporting on the accountability dashboard. In addition, the UW-System must reward those who teach more than the standard academic load.

This situation is a result of a provision in the 2017-2019 biennial budget bill which required the UW-System Board of Regents to develop a policy to monitor and reward faculty based on “the number of hours spent teaching”. The policy, which was adopted in 2017, interpreted “teaching hours” to mean hours “teaching undergraduate students”. This policy may work for faculty and staff in other departments, but it has a very limiting effect on state specialists because of their role teaching graduate students and farmers outside of the traditional teaching of undergraduates in the classroom. In fact, on the accountability dashboard, the “teaching hours” for these specialists may read “zero”, even though they are effective and valuable members of the faculty team who spend most of their hours disseminating valuable information to Wisconsin’s farmers.

To alleviate this concern, AB 76 will require the Board of Regents to recognize and track “extension and outreach hours” on the accountability dashboard for the time spent by state integrated specialists teaching graduate students and Wisconsin farmers. This will apply to state specialists who provide extension services in the field of applied agricultural research at UW-Platteville, UW-River Falls, UW-Stevens Point or UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. Furthermore, this change will allow the UW-System to reward state specialists who teach more than the standard academic load.

We believe the hours spent by state specialists teaching our farmers and conveying the most innovative farm practices to our growers should fulfill the teaching requirement established by the Board of Regents for UW-Madison and UW-System faculty, as it is invaluable to our \$104.8 billion agricultural economy in Wisconsin.

Assembly Bill 76 is supported by numerous agriculture groups including, but not limited to, the Dairy Business Association, the Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association, the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, the Wisconsin Farmers Union, the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association and the Wisconsin Soybean Association.

Thank you for your kind attention to our testimony and we would be happy to answer questions at this time.



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# Coloma Farms Inc.

GROWERS OF FINE WISCONSIN POTATOES SINCE 1961.

**TO:** Members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities  
**FROM:** Andy Diercks, Coloma Farms  
**DATE:** March 4, 2021  
**RE:** **Support Assembly Bill 76 – UW Extension and Outreach Hours**

Chairman Murphy and Members of the Assembly Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit written comments today in **support** of AB 76, which would track the hours that UW agricultural research faculty spend teaching Wisconsin farmers.

My name is Andy Diercks. I am a fourth-generation farmer and part-owner of Coloma Farms, where we grow potatoes and vegetables on 2,700 acres in Waushara and Adams Counties in Central Wisconsin. On our farm, we are focused on incorporating sustainable farming practices and incorporating the latest University of Wisconsin research. Much of this research is conducted near our farm at the Hancock Research Station in conjunction with field trials at local farms, including our farm.

**The researchers who are most critical to the development of improved farming practices are our state specialists.** These are UW CALS tenured faculty who have joint Division of Extension appointments. Their research is highly technical and reviewed by other scientists around the world, but it is also used by farmers in Wisconsin every day. In the face of steadily declining public research dollars for agriculture and the steadily increasing pressure for improved farm economics and environmental quality, we rely on our relationships with these state specialists to improve our agricultural management systems. Wisconsin's potato and vegetable farmers have invested millions of dollars in research over the past several decades in everything from breeding and genetics to nutrient management and remote sensing.

**In addition to conducting research, our state integrated specialists TEACH our farmers.** These individuals present at our summer and winter meetings, hold on-farm mini clinics, field days, workshops and provide other direct connections on a daily basis. Their value to the agricultural economy as *teachers* is well-documented, but their work teaching farmers is not recorded under the statutory reporting obligations for UW System faculty under Wis. Stat. §§ 36.65(2)(dm) and 36.65(6)(b). We believe the hours that state specialists spend teaching our farmers and conveying the most innovative farm practices

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P.O. Box 137  
W14453 State Road 21  
Coloma, WI 54409  
715-228-3031 (Phone) 715-228-4455 (Fax)  
cffarms@uniontel.net (E-Mail)



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to our growers should be counted and reported in the metric established by the Board of Regents for UW-Madison and UW-System faculty. This work is *invaluable* to our \$100 billion agricultural economy in Wisconsin.

**AB 76 supports the extension function of our University of Wisconsin System.** Land grant universities have a threefold mission of teaching, research and extension. The extension function is embodied in the Wisconsin Idea that the boundaries of the university are the boundaries of the state, and in many cases the nation. Our state specialists spend a significant percentage of their time performing extension roles. They need to stay connected to what farmers are doing so they can continue to connect the research functions of the system with the farmers so we can all push agriculture forward in the state. To that end, any metric that is tracking hours by UW faculty "teaching" must account for this critical role. AB 76 will track and report these hours that state specialists spend teaching Wisconsin farmers.

I urge you to support Wisconsin farmers and pass AB 76. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Andy Diercks  
President, Coloma Farms Inc

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W14453 State Road 21  
Coloma, WI 54409  
715-228-3031 (Phone) 715-228-4455 (Fax)  
cffarms@uniontel.net (E-Mail)

**TO:** Members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities  
**FROM:** Karl Pippenger – Phillips, Wisconsin  
**DATE:** March 4, 2021  
**RE:** **Support Assembly Bill 76: Extension and Outreach Hours – UW System**

Chairman Murphy and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today by providing written comments. My name is Karl Pippenger. I am a cranberry grower from Phillips, Wisconsin. On behalf of Wisconsin cranberry growers, I write to urge the Wisconsin Legislature to pass Assembly Bill 76 and support critical agricultural research specialists.

One of the most critical issues for Wisconsin farmers has been the steady decline of funding for applied agricultural research at UW-Madison and UW System. As a result, we have fewer agricultural research projects focused on some of the most pressing questions facing Wisconsin farmers today, including water quality, pest management and farm economics.

Among the researchers who are most critical to the development of improved farming practices are the state specialists. These are UW system faculty who have joint Division of Extension appointments. Their research is highly technical and is reviewed by peer scientists around the world and used by farmers in Wisconsin every day.

But these individuals not only conduct research projects, they also bring the latest research and farming practices to the farmers. They present at our clinics, conduct on-farm training and hold workshops. They are also available via phone or in-person to assist farmers with pest management, plant pathology questions and other on-farm issues. These faculty are vital to the health of not only Wisconsin cranberries, but they are also a critical link that supports all of Wisconsin's farm economy.

**I urge you to pass AB 76, which would account for and track the hours that these researchers spend teaching Wisconsin farmers.**

Thank you for your consideration.



March 4, 2021

To: Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities

From: Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association, Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association, Wisconsin Pork Association, Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association, Wisconsin Soybean Association, Wisconsin Association of Professional Agricultural Consultants

Re: **Support 2021 AB 76, Extension and Outreach Hours of UW System Faculty**

These comments are submitted jointly on behalf of the groups listed above to express our strong support for AB 76, which would provide recognition and a metric to account for time spent by faculty known as "state specialists," who are faculty or academic staff at UW-Platteville, UW-River Falls, UW-Stevens Point, or UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences with appointments partially or fully funded through the Division of Extension at UW-Madison in the field of applied agricultural research. These faculty engage in extension activities with the public and, importantly, Wisconsin farmers.

When the Legislature required the Board of regents to develop a process to document the time that UW-System faculty spends teaching, it did not account for these specialized agricultural faculty who have roles in conducting research and extension programs. These State Specialists are vital to the health of all of Wisconsin farming. As technology and growing practices change, we need the latest scientifically sound information for our farmers to maintain their commitment to sustainable farming. These faculty develop and transfer that knowledge from the university to Wisconsin farmers.

Faculty who spend their time conducting applied research and teaching farmers are implementing the Wisconsin Idea. We believe that these hours should be tracked and credited just like other teaching hours. These researchers are providing critical support and education in the field with our farmers. Examples of these outreach activities include: the annual Wisconsin Cranberry School; UW-Madison Division of Extension and WPVGA's annual Grower Education Conference; the annual Corn / Soy / Pork Expo; and countless on-farm meetings and field days.

We understand the importance of undergraduate education in the UW System. We also ask the legislature to recognize that research institutions have roles in addition to undergraduate education. Faculty at UW-Madison and UW-System schools conduct world class research, train graduate students and provide extension programming for the citizens of the state. These activities spur millions, if not billions, of dollars in economic benefits to the citizens of the state. To evaluate faculty performance based solely on time spent in classrooms fails to recognize the important activities and mission of research institutions. Accordingly, we would ask you support AB 76 and support Wisconsin agricultural research faculty.

Jordan Lamb – (608) 576-5447 – [jkl@dewittllp.com](mailto:jkl@dewittllp.com)



March 4, 2021

## **Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities**

### **Written testimony in favor of Assembly Bill 76 – State Integrated Specialists, Extension and Outreach Hours**

Hello, my name is Chad Zuleger and I am the associate director of government affairs for the Dairy Business Association. Thank you, Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Hesselbein and committee members for the opportunity to write in support of Assembly Bill 76. We appreciate Rep. Loudbeck and Sen. Marklein for their leadership in authoring the bill and, also those who have cosponsored.

DBA represents all aspects of the dairy community. Our membership includes dairy farmers, dairy processors, and a variety of other businesses that help to make farmers and processors successful in our state. We support AB 76 because it records and accounts for the time state integrated specialists engage on-site with instruction/education for farmers.

State integrated specialists help drive innovation to farms and fields across the state. They are partners in the nearly \$45 billion/yr dairy economy in Wisconsin. Yet the vision of their role within both the UW System and the ag community has yet to be fully implemented. This legislation is a great step to that end. It accounts for hours performed conducting applied agricultural research, engaging in collaborative efforts with farmers, conducting educational field clinics and workshops and, working to improve water quality. The work done by these specialists *is* teaching and it is proper to account for those hours as such. Changes made in AB 76 will foster continued and greater collaboration. Those changes will also continue to benefit UW research, Wisconsin's farmers and farm communities.

Additionally, the newly established Dairy Innovation Hub on three UW ag campuses attracts post-doctoral students and ag researchers that might provide a natural synergy between the two entities. The ag community always welcomes energized and passionate people on the farm who can share knowledge and help get things done.

Thank you for taking time to read my remarks in support of Assembly Bill 76. I urge you to move it forward for consideration by the full Assembly.

Sincerely,

Chad Zuleger  
Associate director of government affairs