



Amy Loudenbeck

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S 31ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony before Assembly Committee on Agriculture
Assembly Bill 874 and 876
Rep. Amy Loudenbeck

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the opportunity to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 874, relating to: requiring a study by the University of Wisconsin System of agricultural programs and issues and Assembly Bill 876, relating to: requiring the University of Wisconsin-Madison to conduct a research study on developing an agricultural science and technology program.

One of the longest and deepest traditions surrounding the University of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Idea, signifies a general principle: that education should influence people's lives beyond the boundaries of the classroom. Synonymous with Wisconsin for more than a century, this "Idea" has become the guiding philosophy of university outreach efforts in Wisconsin and throughout the world.

AB 874 and AB 876 seek to fully leverage the assets of the UW-System (AB 874) and UW-Madison (AB 876) by directing these institutions to inventory, evaluate, and enhance their offerings related to farming in Wisconsin, agricultural industries, and agriculture science and technology.

Specifically, Assembly Bill 874 requires the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System to direct a study that includes examining and evaluating all of the following:

1. Funding and staffing levels for agricultural programs both on a system-wide basis and at each institution or college campus, including addressing current and historical data for total authorized faculty and research positions and, of these, the numbers of filled and vacant positions.
2. Current curriculum for agricultural programs, including certificate programs offered at institutions and college campuses, along with proposals for enhancing this curriculum.
3. The financial, technical, and other problems that Wisconsin farmers currently face, along with proposals to solve or mitigate these problems.
4. The programs, approaches, and strategies implemented by other states to better support their agricultural industries. The study under shall include an evaluation and assessment of items 1 through 3 currently support Wisconsin farmers and Wisconsin's agricultural industry, along with proposals for strengthening or enhancing this support.
5. The study shall include all data considered in this evaluation and assessment and the data relied upon to support the study's conclusion.

I know the UW-System is an asset to our farmers. However, I also know the UW-System has changed, and farming has changed. It's important to know if the programs offered at UW-System institutions are what the farmers really need, or if adjustments need to be made to better reflect the way the industry

and education have changed over the years. AB 874 will provide the most comprehensive data available to help the Legislature and UW-System work together to meet the needs of today's farming industry.

The second bill I want to talk about today is Assembly Bill 876 which requires the University of Wisconsin-Madison to conduct a research study on developing a science and technology program specific to agriculture.

I graduated from UW-Madison in 1991 and personally experienced the robust cross-discipline nature of our flagship university. A lot of institutions of higher education take great pride in their multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary program offerings. But if you want to be an expert at ONE THING, or you aren't good at navigating a spider web of coursework offerings, it might be nice to choose one program that focused on science and technology specific to agriculture.

Let me be clear. AB 846 doesn't create a new program. It directs a "research study", or if I may explain it in my own words, an "inventory, evaluation, and recommendation" exercise that takes into consideration everything ag-related that is already housed within UW-Madison (which now includes UW-Extension). Under AB 846, a final report would include findings, conclusions and recommendations, including potential curriculum that includes enhanced farm practices and coordination between the UW-Madison program and any agricultural program offered at another institution or college campus.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize all of the educational, professional development, and research offerings at UW-Madison related to agriculture – the College of Agriculture & Life Science – 22 Degree Programs including Dairy Science, Agronomy, Animal Science and Soil Science, and the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems; the Division of Extension (Discovery Farms, County educators and agents, 4-H development); Integrated Extension Faculty – integrated specialists with joint appointments from CALS and Extension; Department of Food Science – undergraduate programs focused on the physical, chemical and biological sciences related to foods; and the School of Veterinary Medicine to name of few.

One program offered at UW-Madison in particular, was the first program of its kind in the nation. Founded in 1886, The Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC) is a certificate program housed within the University of Wisconsin-Madison College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. FISC is a non-four year degree agricultural program "offering practical agricultural educational instruction and real world experience from academic and industry professionals at the University of Wisconsin." I know many FISC graduates that credit their farming success to the FISC program.

Perhaps the final report directly by AB 876 will include recommendations for another new "first in the nation" agricultural science and technology program at UW-Madison. Perhaps it will demonstrate a way to better align, share or leverage the assets we already have. I don't know the answer, but I know there will be value in this report.

If we want Wisconsin to lead the way in 21st century agriculture, let's enlist the talent within the entire UW-System to conduct a world-class analysis to help show us the way FORWARD in these difficult times.

Thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.



WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Assembly Committee on Agriculture

2019 Assembly Bill 876

UW-Madison report on agriculture science and technology

February 11, 2020

Good morning Chairman Tauchen and members of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture. My name is Ben Van Pelt and I am the Assistant Director of State Relations for the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Today I am joined by Heidi Zoerb who is the Associate Dean for External Relations for the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at UW-Madison. Thank you for the opportunity to testify for information purposed on Assembly Bill 876 (AB 876), which requires UW-Madison to conduct a research study on developing a science and technology program specific to the field of agriculture.

At the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs), science is literally in our name as we are the college of "Agricultural Science."

CALS currently has eight undergraduate majors within the college dedicated to agricultural science and technology: Agronomy, Animal Sciences, Biological Systems Engineering, Dairy Science, Entomology, Horticulture, Plant Pathology and Soil Science.

Within these majors, and across the other 13 undergraduate majors in CALs, we are training students on a variety of new technologies. In fact, technologies emerging from the college range from studying the effects mulch has at preventing the growth of certain insects that can decimate fruit crops such as the Door County cherry; to looking at improved dairy farm feeding and manure management strategies in order to increase profits while also reducing nitrogen losses to groundwater. The talented CALs faculty and staff have even developed, or are in the process of developing, multiple "apps" to assist farmers on a variety of topics related to management solutions. These examples only scratch the surface of the work being doing at the college and across the university.

In addition, our existing coursework being offered exposes undergraduates to many agricultural technologies. One of the timeliest examples of this is our current pilot course in Horticulture called, "The Science of Hemp." In this course students will obtain a basic understanding of hemp

anatomy, physiology, and genetics; and also, an understanding of best practices for growing, harvesting, and processing industrial hemp for grain, fiber, and CDB production.

Moreover, we offer coursework related to designing farm equipment in our Biological Systems Engineering major. Just this past fall semester a team of four undergraduates in this major researched and developed a device that automatically alerts agricultural vehicle operators of problems with their lighting systems. These students' new lighting system also provides assurance that lighting and markings are in compliance with federally mandated standards.

The Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC) program is our longest-running example of agricultural technology training and transfer. FISC is a 16-week, hands-on, pre-baccalaureate certificate program that was founded in 1886; making it the oldest agricultural training program at UW-Madison. FISC trains current and future farmers in courses on finances, communication, sales, human resources, plant science, soils, dairy herd health and management, and precision agricultural technologies, just to name a few. This program has provided opportunities for generations of farmers to expand their businesses and career options through hands-on training.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison appreciates the bill author recognizing the important role our institution plays in the field of agriculture and we hope our testimony provided a brief overview of some of the things our campus offers to the industry. On behalf of the UW-Madison and CALS we would like to thank you for your time and for allowing us to detail work being done and courses being offered on this important topic. At this time, we would be happy to try to answer any questions you may have.