



**State Representative Don Vruwink**  
*Testimony to the Assembly Colleges and Universities Committee*  
**Assembly Bill 944**  
February 10, 2022

Thank you, Chairman Murphy and Committee Members for hearing this bill today.

Assembly Bill 944 will provide more educational opportunities for our military veterans who selflessly served our country.

Wisconsin currently allows veterans to earn college degrees tuition-free.

This bill expands that benefit ever-so-slightly by allowing veterans to earn non-degree certificates without cost.

Examples of the certificates that would be allowed under this bill are the certified public manager program (which my constituent Steve Riggs will talk about), supervisory management, and cybersecurity management.

As you can see by the fiscal estimates from the Technical Colleges and UW System, costs to the state are expected to increase depending upon the number of veterans who use this new benefit.

If you are wondering how the UW System and Technical Colleges will absorb the costs, my answer is that our universities and technical colleges are *already* finding ways to accommodate these new students.

The current state appropriation to fund the GI benefits is inadequate to meet demand, and so tech colleges and universities have been using other resources to allow veterans to obtain these credits tuition-free.

The best solution would be for the Legislature to increase the money we appropriate for this GI benefit, but that is not the purpose of this bill.

To keep the fiscal impact to a minimum, I plan to offer a substitute amendment to refine the bill as follows:

- 1) Retain the limit of 128 credits that are allowed under current law but include *non-credit certifications* within that 128 credit cap.
- 2) Limit eligibility to veterans only, not their spouses and children.
- 3) Specify in the bill how the UW System and Technical Colleges will track non-credit offerings.

The impetus for this bill came from my constituent, Steve Riggs, who is a military veteran and currently a Fort Atkinson police officer.

I will turn the microphone over to him to further explain.



# JEFF SMITH

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR – 31<sup>ST</sup> DISTRICT



**TO:** The Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities  
**From:** Senator Jeff Smith  
**Date:** February 10, 2022  
**RE:** Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 944

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Chairman Murphy and members of the committee, thank you for agreeing to hear this bill and for giving me the opportunity to provide written testimony on its behalf.

Assembly Bill 944 and its Senate companion, Senate Bill 908, was introduced to provide a must deserved opportunity for certain veterans enrolled in the University of Wisconsin System schools or technical colleges to be eligible for fee remission for non-degree courses.

Currently, veterans who meet certain criteria are eligible for full remission of resident student academic fees or nonresident student tuition at UW System schools, and of fees at technical colleges, for up to eight semesters or 128 credits, whichever is longer.

“Academic fees” for the purposes of remission means the amount charged to a resident student to enroll in a degree credit course, including the University of Wisconsin-Madison Executive MBA Program. For purposes of this fee remission for technical college students, “fees” means the amount charged to a resident student to enroll in a course leading to an associate degree, collegiate transfer, or vocational diploma.

This very simple bill will expand the definition of “academic fees” for purposes of this fee remission for UW resident students to include the amount charged to a resident student to enroll in a noncredit course or certificate program, such as the University of Wisconsin-Madison Certified Public Manager Program. The bill also expands the definition of “fees” for purposes of the fee remission for technical college students to include the amount charged to a resident student to enroll in a noncredit course.

Again, I appreciate Chair Murphy’s willingness to hold a public hearing on this important legislation for our state’s veterans and I am hopeful that it will move swiftly through this Assembly committee.



# WISCONSIN

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
Assembly Committee on Colleges & Universities

2021 Assembly Bill 944

*Fee remission for certain veterans enrolled in  
University of Wisconsin System institutions or technical colleges*

February 10, 2022

Chairman Murphy and members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges & Universities:

The University of Wisconsin-Madison thanks the committee for the opportunity to provide written testimony on Assembly Bill 944, relating to fee remission for certain veterans enrolled in University of Wisconsin System institutions or technical colleges. UW-Madison is providing this testimony for information only.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison values the sacrifice of veterans and the important contributions they make to this nation. University of Wisconsin institutions have a long and storied history of educating military members through the ROTC program and are proud to be home to many servicemembers and their families. We support the general objectives and intent of the authors in Assembly Bill 944. Providing fee remission for credited programs at UW schools is currently a benefit that Wisconsin veterans receive, and is supported by UW-Madison.

This bill would provide fee exemptions for veterans for non-credited courses at UW System schools. This would generally apply to programs and courses outside of the traditional credit-bearing courses for those students who are seeking a specific degree. These types of noncredit programs exist across UW-Madison and are offered by many schools/colleges or campus units. Many of these noncredit courses are offered by the UW-Madison Division of Continuing Studies, which teaches and directs hundreds of programs and courses that address the professional development and personal enrichment needs of in-person and online learners. The division advises and admits people enrolled in certain credit or capstone programs, as well as adults pursuing undergraduate degrees.

There are some issues with this bill relating to implementation of these exemptions that require clarification. The existing benefit that veterans receive is limited to 128 credits tracked by the campus and UW System. It is unclear how non-credit courses would count against a limit that is specifically defined as 128 credits. The bill currently stipulates that the fee exemption be extended for non-credit courses up to 128 credits or 8 semesters. Typically, non-credit courses are not tracked by credit or semester. This would make tracking the amount of non-credit courses eligible for this exemption challenging, as we do not have existing infrastructure to track non-

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credit courses for this purpose. If they were to be tracked in some way, the UW System campuses would need to implement a new way to track these students. This could be cost prohibitive relative to the fees. With the growth in online and remote offerings, veterans will likely be taking courses from UW System campuses, as well as programs from the Wisconsin Technical Colleges. We currently have no way to verify or coordinate enrollments with other institutions.

UW–Madison would also need to update non-credit registration systems to capture veteran status and how to waive the fees associated with this bill. We currently do not have a simple and easy way to do this as we generally do not collect this data through non-credit programs in the UW-Madison Division of Continuing Studies. A veteran would need to be preapproved prior to enrollment, as a learner self-selecting the veteran fee remission could be subject to accidental or fraudulent fee remission. Additionally, UW System has historically relied on the individual campuses to manage funding for veteran enrollments. Any financial impact as a result of including non-credit learning would be borne by the campuses.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the impact this legislation would have on UW-Madison. If you have any questions, please reach out to UW-Madison Director of State Relations Crystal Potts at [crystal.potts@wisc.edu](mailto:crystal.potts@wisc.edu) or (608) 265-4105.



Office of Government Relations

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DATE: February 10, 2022

TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities

FROM: Deej Lundgren, UW System Interim Associate Vice President for Government Relations

RE: Written Testimony on Assembly Bill 944

Thank you, Chair Murphy and committee members, for providing the UW System (UWS) an opportunity to submit written testimony on Assembly Bill 944 (AB 944). We thank the authors of this legislation for addressing a desire for veterans to access our noncredit offerings to expand their educational experience and professional credentials.

The UW System, with 13 universities over 26 campuses, has one of the most robust programs for veterans in the country. We strive to provide a welcoming higher educational setting for service members, veterans, and their families. Each of our universities has a veteran service department that provides comprehensive support to veterans. Dedicated campus staff assist veterans with transferring credits, navigating benefits, and connecting veterans with each other and the campus community.

As the bill recognizes, UWS already provides qualifying veterans, spouses, and their children full tuition and fee remission up to eight semesters or 128 credits. In state fiscal year 2021, UWS provided nearly \$27 million in tuition and fee remissions to veterans and their qualifying family members. This sets the record for tuition remission, which has increased every year since 2010. Since 2016, the annual remission amount for veterans is over \$11 million. Over the same period, child and spousal remissions has increased from \$10 million in 2016 to a record of \$15.2 million in 2021. While these remission amounts have been increasing each year, state support to fund these remissions have remained around \$5 million annually over the last 10 years.

We agree with the authors that access to our high-quality instruction to earn nationally recognized certification can lead to meaningful career opportunities for our veterans—and non-veterans. Beyond the UW-Madison Certified Public Manager program contained in the bill, UWS universities offer a plethora of noncredit certification, including, supervisory management, cyber security and digital risk management, and health and wellness coaching. Many of these certificates are popular with veterans, and several of our universities are partnering with military and veteran serving organizations to make these offerings more veteran friendly.

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Given our interest in improving these offerings for veterans, we are currently working with the authors to ensure there is clarification around how UWS would need to track noncredit offerings. Credits remitted under the Wisconsin GI bill are currently tracked against the 128 statutory cap. Under state law, the 128 cap includes credits earned at a UWS, WTCS, or WAICU school. Noncredit courses, however, are offered as "instructional hours". UWS would need to create a way to track these hours. Further information is needed to determine if these noncredit instructional hours would impact the 128 credit cap. The intent of this legislation is logical, and we look forward to further conversations to address these implementation concerns to improve access for our veterans.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on this legislation.



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**AB 944**  
**Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities**  
**Representative Murphy**  
**February 10, 2022**

Chairman Murphy and Members of the Committee:

Technical colleges are proud to provide an education to over 9,000 veteran students annually. Additionally, over 2,000 veterans, spouses and dependents attend a technical college under the Wisconsin GI Bill each year. WTCS supported the original Wisconsin GI Bill and subsequent changes to this program. At the same time, the WTCS has advocated for greater State contributions to this program. Historically, the appropriation for this program has funded less than 20 percent of the actual costs. Accordingly, the WTCS is requesting that the Legislature provide additional resources to support this program expansion.

Thank you for your consideration.