



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #813

UW-River Falls Farm and Industry Short Course (UW System)

[LFB 2023-25 Budget Summary: Page 667, #11]

CURRENT LAW

The UW-Madison Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC) program has offered short courses for new and beginning farmers, current farmers and landowners, and agricultural professionals since 1885. The program typically includes a 16-week residential experience on-campus for credit to obtain training in dairy operations and dairy farm management.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Beginning in Fall, 2023, the traditional 16-week on-campus, credit-bearing FISC program will be offered at UW-River Falls, rather than UW-Madison. Course programming will include courses in dairy cattle management, agronomy, farm business practices, and applied agricultural engineering. Students can participate in the program for one or two years; the first year of the program focuses on fundamental aspects of dairy farm operations, while the second year focuses on herd management and managing operations of the entire farm. Students will live in UW-River Falls residence halls, take courses taught by UW-River Falls faculty, and earn college credits. Upon completion of year one programming, students will receive a certificate of completion from UW-River Falls for "Dairy Operations - Fundamentals." Completion of year two programming would earn a second certificate "Dairy Farm Management." UW-Madison will continue to offer research-based applied education through a variety of short courses in flexible formats for FISC alumni, industry professionals, individuals interested in farming and ranching, and others.

2. Assembly Bill 43/Senate Bill 70 would provide \$402,300 GPR in 2023-24 and \$297,700 GPR in 2024-25 in one-time funds in a new, biennial appropriation, for general operations of the FISC program at UW-River Falls. According to UW System, students comprising the inaugural class will receive a 50% discount on tuition and a 50% discount on room and board. The tuition discount is

being offered as a tool to market the first FISC in the UW-River Falls location in the first year. The first cohort of students is expected to be 24 students, and the tuition discount will be offered for the first year of the program only. The room and board discount will include a 50% discount in both the first and second year. UW System indicates they anticipate only 12 of the students from the first year would be likely to return for the second year of the program.

3. According to UW System and DOA, approximately half of the proposed funds would be utilized for student stipends for tuition and room and board, and the remainder would be utilized for instructional and program costs as shown in the following table. During the winter interim term, programming is expected to include a collaboration with UW-Platteville and UW-Madison to expose participants to unique offerings at each of these campuses. For example, at UW-Platteville, FISC students would learn about large scale robotic milking systems.

UW-River Falls Farm and Industry Short Course Funding

Tuition discount	\$104,500
Room and board discount	225,000
Instructional and program costs	290,500
Interim term programming	<u>80,000</u>
Total	\$700,000

4. If funding is not provided, UW System indicates UW-River Falls is committed to covering the program costs, including the discounted tuition and room and board rates and would divert resources from other programs in order to cover these costs. UW System notes that the program is a revenue-generating program, and that once the tuition and room and board discounts are discontinued, the program would be self-sufficient. As UW System indicates these one-time funds would no longer be needed beyond the 2023-25 biennium, the Committee could consider providing the \$700,000 in one-time funds in the UW System block grant appropriation and directing the Board of Regents to utilize them for the UW-River Falls Farm and Industry Short Course program. [Alternative 2] The Committee could also consider providing \$370,500 in funding for the instructional costs and interim programming, as UW-River Falls has indicated that it will provide discounted tuition and room and board even without the funding provided in the bill. [Alternative 3]

ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide \$402,300 in 2023-24 and \$297,700 in 2024-25 in one-time funds in a new, biennial appropriation, for general operations of the FISC program at UW-River Falls.

ALT 1	Change to Base
GPR	\$700,000

2. Provide \$402,300 in 2023-24 and \$297,700 in 2024-25 in appropriation 20.285(1)(a) (UW's block grant appropriation) and require the Board of Regents to provide funding from this appropriation to UW-River Falls for general operations of the FISC program.

ALT 2	Change to Base
GPR	\$700,000

3. Provide \$370,500 annually in appropriation 20.285(1)(a) and require the Board of Regents to provide funding from this appropriation to UW-River Falls for general operations of the FISC program.

ALT 3	Change to Base
GPR	\$741,000

4. Take no action.

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