

Testimony from UW-River Falls presented at state budget hearing in Ellsworth

April 20, 2017--UW-River Falls Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Faye Perkins testified April 19 before the Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee at Ellsworth High School. One of six hearings around the state of Wisconsin in April, the public hearing served as an opportunity for Wisconsin state legislators to hear commentary and recommendations from residents and officials regarding the state's proposed budget. Perkins spoke on behalf of state investment in the UW System, emphasizing UW-River Falls commitment to students and the state.

Speaking to the committee, which included UW-River Falls alumni Representative Mary Felzkowski, '86, and Senator Tom Tiffany, '80, and district Senator Sheila Harsdorf, Perkins expressed appreciation for the Governor's proposed funding which includes the first new investment in the UW System by the state in over a decade. She emphasized the importance of a renewal in state funding for Wisconsin public higher education, including "long-overdue compensation adjustments" for faculty and staff. Perkins stated, "We continue to lose talented faculty and staff. We want to keep them here so we can ensure a positive experience for our students."

Perkins also shared with the committee several institutional highlights that served to underscore the need for continued support. UW-River Falls focuses on providing students with important high impact practices, including internships, undergraduate research, and international educational experiences. Out-of-the-classroom opportunities provide students with experience that is relevant to their majors and helps them grow their public engagement and innovative thinking capabilities, along with their creative problem solving skills and a respect for diversity, all highly desirable employment traits.

Perkins also emphasized the work that UW-River Falls is doing as an institution to respond to the needs of students and employers. UW-River Falls has strategically added new programs, including agricultural engineering, data science, neuroscience, and criminology.

After sharing several highlights from campus, Perkins encouraged members of the Joint Finance Committee to favorably consider the funding proposal for the UW System. The proposal will allow UW-River Falls to continue to address the needs of students and contribute to the growth of Wisconsin's economy.

In addition to Perkins' testimony, the committee also heard from Quentin Schultz, retired owner and president of Eurofins Biodiagnostics, located in River Falls. Schultz testified

on behalf of UW-River Falls, underscoring the need for state funding for the UW System. His personal testimony spoke to the significance UW-River Falls had to the growth and success of his business, which in turn impacted the greater community.

The UW System was well represented at Wednesday's hearing. UW-Eau Claire Chancellor Jim Schmidt spoke before the committee, as well as provosts from UW-Stout and UW-Platteville. State Representative Shannon Zimmerman attended the session as a local host legislator along with Representative Warren Petryk.

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