



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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

May 15th, 2019

To the Members of the Joint Committee on Finance,

We are writing to members of the committee to ask for bipartisan support for the \$109 million enumeration for the UW-Eau Claire Science and Health Science building project in the 2019-21 Biennial State Budget. Delaying this building's construction would limit the educational experiences of thousands of students, jeopardize Mayo Clinic's substantial commitment to northwest Wisconsin and needlessly increase maintenance costs for the obsolete Phillips Hall.

Phillips Hall opened its doors to students in 1963, but after fifty-five years, the facilities available to students today are outdated, unsafe and costly to maintain. On average, 5,600 unduplicated students use Phillips' antiquated facilities each academic year. Stairwells are used for storage areas, mold and hornets affect student and faculty health, and ventilation deficiencies leave dusty and dirty conditions uncondusive to scientific research. There are numerous water leaks of unknown origin, the building has no fire sprinkler system and hallways have been converted to research spaces. These are just a few of the many problems students and researchers face while trying to remain on the cutting-edge of science and technology. Student needs are unmet for STEM, pre-medicine and nursing fields.

In 2017, Mayo Clinic and UW-Eau Claire entered into a master collaborative research agreement, making Eau Claire only one of two undergraduate institutions in the world to have access to Mayo Clinic's incredible resources. Additionally, the highest levels of Mayo Clinic's leadership approved a major fundraising goal for their northwest Wisconsin region to help expand this partnership, if the state approves funding for a Phillips Hall replacement. The \$13.7 million private commitment from Mayo Clinic to build a 10,000 square foot laboratory in the new Science and Health Sciences building would allow this partnership to flourish. This is the largest private donation to a non-Madison or Milwaukee academic building in Wisconsin history. This figure does not take into account the equipment Mayo Clinic may donate to the building, or their ongoing lease for the space. Mayo Clinic leaders believe this connection with an esteemed higher educational institution will help them recruit and retain doctors, nurses, and researchers in northwest Wisconsin. This partnership will serve as a blueprint for future public-private research efforts across the state. To keep this partnership strong and Mayo Clinic on board with their investment, we cannot afford to delay this project's completion.

Phillips Science Hall is grossly inefficient and structurally unsafe, requiring more than \$534,000 per year for maintenance and utility expenses. Phillips Hall demands the most unscheduled maintenance of all UW-Eau Claire's buildings, accounting for 34% of the all work orders on academic buildings. Additionally, it is not in the taxpayers' best interests to delay building a new UW-EC science hall. In the long run, completing the UW-Eau Claire Science and Health Sciences Building sooner than later will save money and strengthen the overall economic impact of the Chippewa Valley region.

We hope committee members can look past the politics to see the bipartisan support for this project and its potential for the region and our state as a whole. We strongly support UW-Eau Claire's Science and Health Sciences project, and we hope the Joint Finance Committee approves the project as it was requested by Governor Tony Evers.

Sincerely,

JEFF SMITH
State Senator
31st Senate District

JODI EMERSON
State Representative
91st Assembly District