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## **Digman at UW-River Falls awarded one of first Alfalfa Research Initiative Grants**

Matthew Digman, assistant professor of agricultural engineering at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, is one of only nine researchers from across the country to receive funds from the U.S. Alfalfa Farmer Research Initiative (USAFRI) also known as the Alfalfa Checkoff Program. Digman's research will investigate the impact of tedding on the economic production of alfalfa silage. Using computer modeling, field trials, and time and motion analysis, Digman will determine the field operating costs and efficiencies of modern tedding and create a spreadsheet-based decision tool for producers considering tedding.

UW-River Falls promotes a culture of student-faculty collaborative research and this project is no exception. Undergraduate students will have key roles and gain hands-on experience in modeling, analyzing and conducting fieldwork in forage production systems. They will also play an important role.

"I'm excited to share my enthusiasm for forage research with my students and am pleased that the National Alfalfa and Forage Alliance (NAFA) has made this investment at UW-River Falls," said Digman.

Digman joined the faculty at UW-River Falls in 2016 bringing his experience in agricultural equipment design and testing from time spent with the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center and Kuhn North America. In fall 2016, UW-River Falls welcomed the first cohort of students into the new agricultural engineering program. The new program complements the university's long-time successful program in agricultural engineering technology. In support of both programs, the university has undertaken a significant renovation of facilities. Phase 1, the renovation of two laboratories and affiliated spaces, will be fully complete this fall, just as Phase 2, an extensive renovation of a third laboratory space, kicks off.

This is the first year of the U.S. Alfalfa Farmer Research Initiative that was created by the NAFA to help drive innovation and profitability in the alfalfa industry. Until now, alfalfa was the only major crop without a farmer-funded check-off program. In this first year, 34

research proposals were submitted with over \$300,000 awarded to nine different researchers in seven states.

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**Photo:** UW-River Falls Assistant Professor Matthew Digman teaches an Introduction to Agricultural Engineering course.