

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges,
Children and Families

FROM: Jordan Lamb – Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association

DATE: December 4, 2019

RE: **Support Senate Bill 497 – Recognizing Teaching Hours for Extension
Services at UW System**

Chairman Kooyenga and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on behalf of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association (WSCGA).

The WSCGA represents 160 Wisconsin cranberry growers who farm in about 16 counties. Cranberries are Wisconsin's largest fruit crop and our growers produce more 60% of the nation's crop. It is estimated by the University of Wisconsin that Wisconsin's cranberry industry provides more than 4,000 jobs for Wisconsin residents and has a \$350 million impact on the state's economy.

One of the most critical issues for Wisconsin farmers has been the steady decline of funding for applied agricultural research at UW-Madison and UW System. Since 1993, the number of CALS' state integrated specialists at UW- Madison has fallen by 45%. In just the past four years, eight CALS Extension specialist positions have been left vacant. As a result, we have fewer agricultural research projects aimed at addressing some of the most pressing questions facing Wisconsin farmers today, including water quality, pest management and farm economics.

The researchers who are most critical to the development of improved farming practices are the state integrated specialists. These are UW tenured faculty who have joint Cooperative Extension appointments. Their research is highly technical and is reviewed by peer scientists around the world and used by farmers in Wisconsin every day.

In the face of steadily declining public research dollars for agriculture and the steadily increasing pressure for improved farm economics and environmental quality, Wisconsin's cranberry farmers have personally invested in research by purchasing a 133-acre cranberry farm in Jackson County to be used as a dedicated cranberry research farm. This cranberry research station will provide a source of sound science for Wisconsin growers but we need University researchers to direct cranberry research projects and supervise graduate students in order to develop sound, credible science upon which we can improve our farming practices.

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In addition to conducting research projects, state integrated specialists TEACH our farmers at our summer and winter meetings, hold on-farm mini clinics, field days, workshops and provide other direct connections on a daily basis. Their value to the agricultural economy as *teachers* is well-documented, but their work teaching farmers unfortunately, is not recorded under the statutory reporting obligations for UW System faculty under Wis. Stat. §§ 36.65(2)(dm) and 36.65(6)(b). We believe that the hours that state specialists spend teaching our farmers and convey the most innovative farm practices to our growers should be counted and reported in the metric established by the Board of Regents for UW-Madison and UW-System faculty, as this work is *invaluable* to our \$89 billion agricultural economy in Wisconsin.

Senate Bill 497 would require state specialists' hours to be counted and reported on the UW-System "dashboard" that tracks and accounts for faculty hours.

The public policy reason that supports this initiative is that the current model neglects to support one of the core land grant functions of this university system - **extension**. Universities with the designation "land grant" have a threefold mission: (1) teach - to provide education in the key areas of agriculture, science and engineering as well as liberal arts; (2) research - provide research into the focal areas; and (3) extension - disseminate free and accessible education to the communities where the schools exist. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 created cooperative extension agencies that offer non-credit informal courses to the public. To that end, any metric that is tracking hours by UW faculty "teaching" must account for this critical role. The metric must account for the hours our faculty spend on extension education.

Accordingly, on behalf of the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association and all Wisconsin famers, I ask that you support Senate Bill 497 and support our critical agricultural faculty who serve Wisconsin farmers on a daily basis.



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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

December 4, 2019

Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children and Families Joint Testimony on Senate Bill (SB) 497

Sen. Howard Marklein and Rep. Amy Loudenbeck

Thank you Chairman Kooyenga and committee members for hearing Senate Bill 497 (SB 497), which requires the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents to recognize as “teaching hours” the time spent by state specialists teaching graduate students and Wisconsin farmers. Thank you Sen. Olsen for co-authoring this legislation.

State integrated specialists are University of Wisconsin campus-based faculty and staff who have joint Cooperative Extension appointments. They provide expertise on a wide range of topics related to agriculture and natural resources.

In addition to conducting research projects, these researchers teach farmers at association-sponsored summer and winter meetings, hold on-farm mini clinics, field days, and workshops and provide other direct instruction to Wisconsin farmers on a daily basis. With the investment in the Dairy Innovation Hub, the time spent on farms by these state integrated specialists will only increase as they convey the results of research to farmers across the state.

Their value to the agricultural economy as teachers is well-documented, but their work teaching Wisconsin farmers does **not** count under the statutory definition of “teaching hours”, which must be reported for the purposes of reporting on the accountability dashboard. In addition, the UW-System must reward those who teach more than the standard academic load.

This situation is a result of a provision in the 2017-2019 biennial budget bill which required the UW-System Board of Regents to develop a policy to monitor and reward faculty based on “the number of hours spent teaching”. The policy, which was adopted in 2017, interpreted “teaching hours” to mean hours “teaching undergraduate students”. This policy may work for faculty and staff in other departments, but it has a very limiting effect on state specialists because of their role teaching graduate students and farmers outside of the traditional teaching of undergraduates in the classroom. In fact, on the accountability dashboard, the “teaching hours” for these specialists may read “zero”, even though they are effective and valuable members of the faculty team who spend most of their hours disseminating valuable information to Wisconsin’s farmers.

To alleviate this concern, SB 497 will require the Board of Regents to recognize as “teaching hours” on the accountability dashboard the time spent by state integrated specialists teaching graduate students and Wisconsin farmers. This will apply to state specialists who provide extension services in the field of applied agricultural research at UW-Platteville, UW-River Falls, or UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. Furthermore, this change will allow the UW-System to reward state specialists who teach more than the standard academic load.

WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE



We believe the hours spent by state specialists teaching our farmers and conveying the most innovative farm practices to our growers should fulfill the teaching requirement established by the Board of Regents for UW-Madison and UW-System faculty, as it is invaluable to our \$104.8 billion agricultural economy in Wisconsin.

In addition, in consultation with the UW-System and stakeholders, we are drafting an amendment to SB 497 which will ensure that this bill will work in practice. To alleviate concerns about the current statutory limitation of the definition of “teaching hours”, the words “teaching hours” in the bill will be changed to “extension and outreach hours”. In addition, the amendment will make a technical correction to adjust where this change will be placed in statute. This amendment will not functionally change anything about the bill. The bill will continue to ensure that state specialists will be rewarded for their time teaching Wisconsin farmers as well as their undergraduate teaching time.

SB 497 is supported by numerous agriculture groups including, but not limited to, the Dairy Business Association, the Wisconsin Cattlemen’s Association, the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, the Wisconsin Farmers Union, the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association and the Wisconsin Soybean Association. Thank you for your kind attention to our testimony and we would be happy to answer questions at this time.



WISCONSIN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

**Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges,
Children and Families**

2019 Senate Bill 497

Recognizing Certain Extension Services of the University of Wisconsin System

December 4, 2019

Good morning Chairman Kooyenga and members of the Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children and Families. My name is Ben Van Pelt and I am the assistant director of state relations for the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Today I am joined by Heidi Zoerb who is the associate dean for external relations for the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at UW-Madison. Thank you for the opportunity to testify for informational purposes today on Senate Bill 497 (SB 497), which deals with the recognition of work done by “state specialists” in the field of applied agriculture.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison appreciates the authors’ intent to highlight the important work being done all across the state by “state specialists,” extension educators, and other faculty and staff. This extension and outreach service work is a core function of the university and makes a significant impact for a number of residents, stakeholders, and industries including, but not limited to agriculture.

This work manifests in many ways across the state. For instance, faculty from our Department of Horticulture have worked to coordinate the Network for Environment and Weather Applications in the state. This is a network of weather stations across Wisconsin that help cranberry growers adjust production practices based on their local weather conditions.

Similarly, Extension specialists in our Department of Soil Science dedicate their time to present on the topic of best practices in nitrogen management for corn and wheat fields. In one year, a faculty member presented to more than 1,400 people on best practices related to application rate, timing, source, and placement to reduce nitrogen loss to protect the environment and improve farm profitability.

Faculty and staff have also developed new tools and technologies in these roles. A faculty member from our Department of Plant Pathology helped create and release the “Sporecaster” application, which assists farmers in making management decisions for white mold in soybean

crops. This mobile app combines site-specific data with research-based models to predict the best timing for white mold treatment in that specific field. It has been downloaded more than 1,600 times and averages more than 250 users a day during “white mold season,” which is July and August.

Recently, we also had an Extension specialist from our Horticulture Department release a new red potato variety that better meets customer expectations for color and shape. The new variety should translate into improved marketability and economic return for farmers.

As you can see, the extension and outreach work done by faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is wide in its breadth and vital for many across the state. It is also worth noting, again, that this work is not exclusive to the field of agriculture. Faculty and staff focused on health, education, law, and the arts, to name just a few, provide important extension and outreach services to individuals, communities, and stakeholders throughout Wisconsin.

While we agree that it is valuable to recognize this work being done, we feel obligated to point out that there is apprehension over some of the terminology utilized in SB 497. With that said, however, we have been working with the bill’s authors and stakeholder groups on a substitute amendment that will alleviate our concerns while also keeping intact the foundation of their intent, which is to report the service these extension specialists and other staff provide. We really appreciate both author’s willingness to work with us on these changes and believe we are close to an agreement on this.

On behalf of the University of Wisconsin-Madison we would like to thank you for your time and for allowing us to detail how important this extension and outreach work is to our campus and across the entire state. At this time, we would be happy to try to answer any questions you may have.



DATE: December 4, 2019

TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children & Families
Senator Dale Kooyenga, Chairman

FROM: Kathi Kilgore, ASPRO Executive Director

RE: **Senate Bill 497 – Recognizing Teaching Hours for Providing Certain Extension Services of the UW System**

The Academic Staff Professionals Representation Organization (ASPRO) is a UW system-wide, non-profit, professional organization representing academic staff and their interests. ASPRO is the only professional organization that represents the academic staff -- and only the academic staff -- of the entire UW System. The Academic Staff teach, conduct research, provide student services such as advising, and manage key University programs including admissions, financial aid, and the registrar's office.

While ASPRO appreciates the recognition that much of the teaching by faculty and instructional academic staff takes place outside the classroom, ASPRO opposes SB 497 due to the narrowness of this recognition, as well as the administrative burden this would place on individuals doing this work.

The bill as written only recognizes part of the Division of Extension's mission as is related to agriculture. It does not recognize the full breadth of teaching in Extension, which also includes community and resource development, youth development, family development along with human development and relationships, and health and well-being, amongst other subject areas. In addition, it does not recognize the out-of-classroom contributions to the teaching mission by non-Extension faculty and instructional academic staff.

Lastly, the bill would place a huge administrative burden on those providing these services. Unlike for-credit courses, where data can be pulled from the timetable for individual instructors, there is no clear source for the Extension data this bill would require. The added administrative burden of tracking this data would take away valuable time and resources that should be spent in the field providing additional instruction and outreach to those they serve.

ASPRO respectfully urges your opposition to SB 497. Thank you for your consideration.