

May 1st, 2025

Testimony on Assembly Bill 210
Assembly Committee on Education

Thank you, Chairman Kitchens and other Assembly committee members, for having a hearing today on Assembly Bill 210 relating to the changes in the academic excellence higher education scholarships.

AB 210 ensures that hardworking students in smaller high schools receive the same straightforward access to academic excellence scholarships as their peers in larger schools. Removing the nomination requirement for schools with fewer than 80 students creates a fairer and more consistent process, allowing top-performing students in all small schools to be recognized and supported based solely on their academic merit.

This change eliminates unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles and expands opportunities for students in rural and underserved areas, helping them afford higher education without the added stress of a subjective nomination process.

This bill promotes fairness, streamlines the scholarship process, and protects the program's integrity, making it a necessary and beneficial reform. This change will ensure Wisconsin students remain in-state for higher education, helping retain top academic talent and strengthen Wisconsin's future workforce.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work on this bill with my colleague from the Senate, Senator Tomczyk. Thank you for your time today and the consideration of this bill.



CORY TOMCZYK

STATE SENATOR • 29TH SENATE DISTRICT

Assembly Bill 210

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Currently, the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) here in Wisconsin operates the “Academic Excellence Program” which provides a scholarship of \$2,250 to one student in a school between 80-499 students. It increases from there. If a school has 500-999 students, two scholarships are awarded. Schools with 1,000-1,499, there are three scholarships. Schools with 1,500-1,999 receive four and finally, schools with 2,500 or more receive six. The awards are given to 12th grade students and are selected based on their GPA. Half of the \$2,250 scholarship is funded by a GPR sum sufficient appropriation and the other half is funded by the student’s respective institution.

Unfortunately, if a student attends a Wisconsin school with a total enrollment of less than 80 students, there are only 10 scholarships available total. The faculty of each of these high schools is required to name the 12th grade student or students with the highest GPAs, as normally calculated by that high school, as eligible to receive a scholarship, then the 10 students with the highest GPAs are awarded the scholarships. The HEAB Secretary is also able to award two additional scholarships – one to a senior attending the Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired and one to a senior attending the Wisconsin Educational Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

This is practice is unfair and disproportionately affects rural students. However, you will see in the attached spreadsheet, that 211 schools have under 80 students and those schools are in every corner of the State of Wisconsin. They are in large counties like Dane and Milwaukee, and in small ones like Wood, Barron, Taylor, etc.

AB 210 makes the Academic Excellence Program available to students at ALL high schools, changing the tier of schools who receive one scholarship to 1-499. AB 210 also states that home schooled students are not eligible.

Wisconsin’s students who attend smaller schools are just as important and deserve to be given the same opportunities to succeed as students attending large schools. This bill gives them that opportunity to receive a scholarship and help with college tuition. AB 210 is a small step in helping kids reach their potential and become productive, taxpaying Wisconsinites.

Please support AB 210 for the students in YOUR districts and across the state.

School Name	District Name	Charter?	County	School Type	Students
Rural Virtual Academy	Ashland	Yes	Ashland	Elementary/Secondary	30
Advanced Learning Academy of Wisconsin	Barron Area	Yes	Barron	Elementary/Secondary	30
Link2Learn Virtual Charter School	Chetek-Weyerhaeuser Area	Yes	Barron	Elementary/Secondary	35
Island City Virtual Academy	Cumberland	Yes	Barron	Elementary/Secondary	47
Laker Online	Turtle Lake	Yes	Barron	Elementary/Secondary	11
Rural Virtual Academy	Denmark	Yes	Brown	Elementary/Secondary	5
Viking Academy	Denmark	Yes	Brown	Elementary/Secondary	32
Bay View	Green Bay Area Public	No	Brown	Elementary/Secondary	18
Brown County Institute of Learning	Green Bay Area Public	No	Brown	Elementary/Secondary	22
Dr Rosa Minoka-Hill School	Green Bay Area Public	No	Brown	Elementary/Secondary	67
Katherine Johnson Academy	Green Bay Area Public	No	Brown	Elementary/Secondary	52
Between the Lakes Virtual Academy	West De Pere	Yes	Brown	Elementary/Secondary	1
Rural Virtual Academy	Cochrane-Fountain City	Yes	Buffalo	Elementary/Secondary	7
Anthony Acres School	Mondovi	Yes	Buffalo	Elementary/Secondary	51
Rural Virtual Academy	Chilton	Yes	Calumet	Elementary/Secondary	9
Rural Virtual Academy	New Holstein	Yes	Calumet	Elementary/Secondary	11
Rural Virtual Academy	Bloomer	Yes	Chippewa	Elementary/Secondary	16
eSucceed Charter School	Cadott Community	Yes	Chippewa	Elementary/Secondary	4
eSucceed Charter School	Cornell	Yes	Chippewa	Elementary/Secondary	9
eSucceed Charter School	Lake Holcombe	Yes	Chippewa	Elementary/Secondary	5
eSucceed Charter School	Stanley-Boyd Area	Yes	Chippewa	Elementary/Secondary	1
Rural Virtual Academy	Abbotsford	Yes	Clark	Elementary/Secondary	8
Rural Virtual Academy	Colby	Yes	Clark	Elementary/Secondary	15
Rural Virtual Academy	Granton Area	Yes	Clark	Elementary/Secondary	5
Rural Virtual Academy	Greenwood	Yes	Clark	Elementary/Secondary	4
Rural Virtual Academy	Loyal	Yes	Clark	Elementary/Secondary	8
Rural Virtual Academy	Neillsville	Yes	Clark	Elementary/Secondary	23
Rural Virtual Academy	Owen-Withee	Yes	Clark	Elementary/Secondary	7
Rural Virtual Academy	Thorp	Yes	Clark	Elementary/Secondary	13
JEDI Virtual K-12	Columbus	Yes	Columbia	Elementary/Secondary	3
Between the Lakes Virtual Academy	Portage Community	Yes	Columbia	Elementary/Secondary	8
JEDI Virtual K-12	Poynette	Yes	Columbia	Elementary/Secondary	6
Rural Virtual Academy	North Crawford	Yes	Crawford	Elementary/Secondary	3

Mighty River Academy of Virtual Education	Prairie du Chien Area	Yes	Crawford	Elementary/Secondary	42
JEDI Virtual K-12	Cambridge	Yes	Dane	Elementary/Secondary	2
Metro School	Madison Metropolitan	No	Dane	Elementary/Secondary	23
JEDI Virtual K-12	Marshall	Yes	Dane	Elementary/Secondary	38
JEDI Virtual K-12	Sun Prairie Area	Yes	Dane	Elementary/Secondary	53
Rural Virtual Academy	Wisconsin Heights	Yes	Dane	Elementary/Secondary	7
JEDI Virtual K-12	Beaver Dam Unified	Yes	Dodge	Elementary/Secondary	10
Between the Lakes Virtual Academy	Hustisford	Yes	Dodge	Elementary/Secondary	1
Rural Virtual Academy	Southern Door County	Yes	Door	Elementary/Secondary	7
Eagles Academy	Solon Springs	Yes	Douglas	Elementary/Secondary	22
Eagles' Wings Virtual Charter School	Solon Springs	Yes	Douglas	Elementary/Secondary	8
Second Avenue School	Eau Claire Area	No	Eau Claire	Elementary/Secondary	18
Treffert Way for the Exceptional Mind	North Fond du Lac	Yes	Fond du Lac	Elementary/Secondary	59
JEDI Virtual K-12	Monroe	Yes	Green	Elementary/Secondary	5
JEDI Virtual K-12	Fort Atkinson	Yes	Jefferson	Elementary/Secondary	25
JEDI Virtual K-12	Jefferson	Yes	Jefferson	Elementary/Secondary	1
JEDI Virtual K-12 - Jefferson and Eastern Dane	Lake Mills Area	Yes	Jefferson	Elementary/Secondary	3
JEDI Virtual K-12	Waterloo	Yes	Jefferson	Elementary/Secondary	2
JEDI Virtual K-12	Mauston	Yes	Juneau	Elementary/Secondary	3
Lemonweir Academy	Mauston	Yes	Juneau	Elementary/Secondary	52
Wonewoc-Center Virtual Academy	Wonewoc-Union Center	Yes	Juneau	Elementary/Secondary	9
Kenosha Pike School	Kenosha	No	Kenosha	Elementary/Secondary	30
Phoenix Project	Kenosha	No	Kenosha	Elementary/Secondary	8
Rural Virtual Academy	Kewaunee	Yes	Kewaunee	Elementary/Secondary	2
JEDI Virtual K-12	Luxemburg-Casco	Yes	Kewaunee	Elementary/Secondary	3
Coulee Region Virtual Academy	La Crosse	Yes	La Crosse	Elementary/Secondary	78
Rural Virtual Academy	Elcho	Yes	Langlade	Elementary/Secondary	3
Rural Virtual Academy	White Lake	Yes	Langlade	Elementary/Secondary	7
Between the Lakes Virtual Academy	Kiel Area	Yes	Manitowoc	Elementary/Secondary	70
Between the Lakes Virtual Academy	Mishicot	Yes	Manitowoc	Elementary/Secondary	2
Rural Virtual Academy	Athens	Yes	Marathon	Elementary/Secondary	11
Rural Virtual Academy	Edgar	Yes	Marathon	Elementary/Secondary	6
Rural Virtual Academy	Mosinee	Yes	Marathon	Elementary/Secondary	42
Rural Virtual Academy	Spencer	Yes	Marathon	Elementary/Secondary	8

Rural Virtual Academy	Stratford	Yes	Marathon	Elementary/Secondary	13
Rural Virtual Academy	Peshtigo	Yes	Marinette	Elementary/Secondary	16
Montello Virtual Charter School	Montello	Yes	Marquette	Elementary/Secondary	22
Lad Lake Synergy School	Milwaukee	No	Milwaukee	Elementary/Secondary	35
Milwaukee County Youth Education Center	Milwaukee	No	Milwaukee	Elementary/Secondary	22
Robert Kupper Learning Center	Tomah Area	No	Monroe	Elementary/Secondary	37
Rural Virtual Academy	Tomah Area	Yes	Monroe	Elementary/Secondary	66
Rural Virtual Academy	Oconto Falls Public	Yes	Oconto	Elementary/Secondary	13
Northeast Wisconsin Learning Academy	Oconto Unified	No	Oconto	Elementary/Secondary	19
Rural Virtual Academy	Suring Public	Yes	Oconto	Elementary/Secondary	10
Rural Virtual Academy	Minocqua J1	Yes	Oneida	Elementary/Secondary	5
Rural Virtual Academy	Rhineland	Yes	Oneida	Elementary/Secondary	76
Rural Virtual Academy	Three Lakes	Yes	Oneida	Elementary/Secondary	5
Appleton Cooperative Educational Center	Appleton Area	No	Outagamie	Elementary/Secondary	3
Applevue	Appleton Area	No	Outagamie	Elementary/Secondary	15
Western Wisconsin Virtual Charter School	Elmwood	Yes	Pierce	Elementary/Secondary	13
Rural Virtual Academy	Rosholt	Yes	Portage	Elementary/Secondary	12
Juvenile Detention	Stevens Point Area Public	No	Portage	Elementary/Secondary	8
Rural Virtual Academy	Stevens Point Area Public	Yes	Portage	Elementary/Secondary	48
Rural Virtual Academy	Chequamegon	Yes	Price	Elementary/Secondary	14
Rural Virtual Academy	Phillips	Yes	Price	Elementary/Secondary	22
Rural Virtual Academy	Prentice	Yes	Price	Elementary/Secondary	20
Wisconsin Connect Charter School	Burlington Area	Yes	Racine	Elementary/Secondary	63
Racine County Detention Center	Racine Unified	No	Racine	Elementary/Secondary	25
Racine County Jail	Racine Unified	No	Racine	Elementary/Secondary	9
Richland Online Academy	Richland	Yes	Richland	Elementary/Secondary	18
Beloit Virtual School	Beloit	No	Rock	Elementary/Secondary	50
JEDI Virtual K-12	Beloit Turner	Yes	Rock	Elementary/Secondary	4
Rural Virtual Academy	Clinton Community	Yes	Rock	Elementary/Secondary	18
JEDI Virtual K-12	Edgerton	Yes	Rock	Elementary/Secondary	1
Youth Services Center	Janesville	No	Rock	Elementary/Secondary	10
Parkview Academy of Virtual Education	Parkview	Yes	Rock	Elementary/Secondary	22
eSucceed Charter School	Bruce	Yes	Rusk	Elementary/Secondary	4
JEDI Virtual K-12	Baraboo	Yes	Sauk	Elementary/Secondary	9

JEDI Virtual K-12	Reedsburg	Yes	Sauk	Elementary/Secondary	1
Rural Virtual Academy	River Valley	Yes	Sauk	Elementary/Secondary	14
Between the Lakes Virtual Academy	Weston	Yes	Sauk	Elementary/Secondary	1
Rural Virtual Academy	Wisconsin Dells	Yes	Sauk	Elementary/Secondary	15
Northern Waters Environmental School	Hayward Community	Yes	Sawyer	Elementary/Secondary	42
WOLI/Akii'gikinoo'amaading Environmental School	Waadookodaading Ojibwe	Yes	Sawyer	Elementary/Secondary	21
Rural Virtual Academy	Bonduel	Yes	Shawano	Elementary/Secondary	8
Rural Virtual Academy	Bowler	Yes	Shawano	Elementary/Secondary	8
Rural Virtual Academy	Gresham	Yes	Shawano	Elementary/Secondary	1
Rural Virtual Academy	Wittenberg-Birnamwood	Yes	Shawano	Elementary/Secondary	29
eSucceed Charter School	Gilman	Yes	Taylor	Elementary/Secondary	55
Rural Virtual Academy	Rib Lake	Yes	Taylor	Elementary/Secondary	36
De Soto Virtual School	De Soto Area	Yes	Vernon	Elementary/Secondary	8
Rural Virtual Academy	Westby Area	Yes	Vernon	Elementary/Secondary	10
Rural Virtual Academy	East Troy Community	Yes	Walworth	Elementary/Secondary	3
Bobcat Virtual Academy	Birchwood	Yes	Washburn	Elementary/Secondary	11
NorthStar Community Charter School	Northwood	Yes	Washburn	Elementary/Secondary	30
Northwood Virtual Charter School	Northwood	Yes	Washburn	Elementary/Secondary	3
Washington Street School	West Bend	No	Washington	Elementary/Secondary	12
Fairview South	Elmbrook	No	Waukesha	Elementary/Secondary	6
KM Connect Virtual Academy	Kettle Moraine	Yes	Waukesha	Elementary/Secondary	26
Norris Academy	Norris	No	Waukesha	Elementary/Secondary	13
Norris Academy Virtual School	Norris	Yes	Waukesha	Elementary/Secondary	24
UpGrade Media Arts Schools	UpGrade Media Arts Schools Inc	Yes	Waukesha	Elementary/Secondary	10
Riverview School	Waukesha	No	Waukesha	Elementary/Secondary	5
Rural Virtual Academy	Clintonville	Yes	Waupaca	Elementary/Secondary	10
Rural Virtual Academy	Iola-Scandinavia	Yes	Waupaca	Elementary/Secondary	2
Rural Virtual Academy	Marion	Yes	Waupaca	Elementary/Secondary	10
Rural Virtual Academy	New London	Yes	Waupaca	Elementary/Secondary	20
Rural Virtual Academy	Waupaca	Yes	Waupaca	Elementary/Secondary	22
Rural Virtual Academy	Weyauwega-Fremont	Yes	Waupaca	Elementary/Secondary	9
Fox Valley Virtual School	Menasha Joint	Yes	Winnebago	Elementary/Secondary	79
Accelerated Advanced Learning Program	Oshkosh Area	Yes	Winnebago	Elementary/Secondary	59
Rural Virtual Academy	Auburndale	Yes	Wood	Elementary/Secondary	22

Rural Virtual Academy	Marshfield Unified	Yes	Wood	Elementary/Secondary	80
Rural Virtual Academy	Pittsville	Yes	Wood	Elementary/Secondary	11
Promethean Charter School	Butternut	Yes	Ashland	High School	1
North Star Academy	Barron Area	Yes	Barron	High School	13
North Star Academy	Cameron	Yes	Barron	High School	12
North Star Academy	Chetek-Weyerhaeuser Area	Yes	Barron	High School	7
North Star Academy	Prairie Farm Public	Yes	Barron	High School	2
North Star Academy	Turtle Lake	Yes	Barron	High School	5
Kiel eSchool	West De Pere	Yes	Brown	High School	3
Phantom Knight School of Opportunity	West De Pere	Yes	Brown	High School	23
Alma High	Alma	No	Buffalo	High School	69
Gilmanton High	Gilmanton	No	Buffalo	High School	41
Stockbridge High	Stockbridge	No	Calumet	High School	56
Kiel eSchool	Portage Community	Yes	Columbia	High School	17
Portage Academy of Achievement	Portage Community	No	Columbia	High School	20
Wauzeka High	Wauzeka-Steuben	No	Crawford	High School	72
Koshkonong Trails School	Cambridge	Yes	Dane	High School	28
One City Preparatory Academy	One City Schools Inc	Yes	Dane	High School	53
Kiel eSchool	Hustisford	Yes	Dodge	High School	2
Washington Island High	Washington Island	No	Door	High School	19
Wildlands Charter School	Augusta	Yes	Eau Claire	High School	71
Exploration Charter High School	North Fond du Lac	Yes	Fond du Lac	High School	15
Riverdale Academy	Riverdale	No	Grant	High School	12
Endeavor Charter School	Watertown Unified	Yes	Jefferson	High School	52
N-Gage Academy	Necedah Area	Yes	Juneau	High School	32
Kenosha High School of Technology	Kenosha Schools of Technology	Yes	Kenosha	High School	61
Algoma Venture Academy	Algoma	Yes	Kewaunee	High School	41
Argyle High	Argyle	No	Lafayette	High School	77
Benton High	Benton	No	Lafayette	High School	59
Elcho High	Elcho	No	Langlade	High School	70
White Lake High	White Lake	No	Langlade	High School	48
Merrill Adult Diploma Academy	Merrill Area	Yes	Lincoln	High School	25
Kiel eSchool	Kiel Area	Yes	Manitowoc	High School	26
D C Everest Idea School	D C Everest Area	Yes	Marathon	High School	66

Enrich Excel Achieve Learning Academy	Wausau	Yes	Marathon	High School	33
Goodman High	Goodman-Armstrong Creek	No	Marinette	High School	35
High Marq Environmental Charter School	Montello	Yes	Marquette	High School	32
Milwaukee County Community Reintegration	Franklin Public	No	Milwaukee	High School	15
Banner Preparatory School of Milwaukee	Milwaukee	No	Milwaukee	High School	44
Project STAY-Supporting Teachers and Youth	Milwaukee	No	Milwaukee	High School	78
South Accelerated Academy	Milwaukee	No	Milwaukee	High School	48
Vincent Accelerated Academy	Milwaukee	No	Milwaukee	High School	49
New Horizons for Learning	Shorewood	Yes	Milwaukee	High School	24
Shared Journeys	West Allis-West Milwaukee	Yes	Milwaukee	High School	4
Sparta Alternative Independent Learning School	Sparta Area	Yes	Monroe	High School	63
Lakeland STAR Academy--	Lakeland UHS	Yes	Oneida	High School	21
Appleton eSchool	Appleton Area	Yes	Outagamie	High School	37
Appleton Technical Academy	Appleton Area	Yes	Outagamie	High School	76
Fox Cities Leadership Academy	Appleton Area	Yes	Outagamie	High School	49
Valley New School	Appleton Area	Yes	Outagamie	High School	66
Renaissance Charter Academy	River Falls	Yes	Pierce	High School	41
Central Sands Community High School	Central Sands Community HS Inc	Yes	Portage	High School	30
Charles F Fernandez Center Alt Learning	Stevens Point Area Public	No	Portage	High School	69
PARTNER Charter School	Richland	Yes	Richland	High School	14
Hudson Virtual Charter School	Hudson	Yes	Saint Croix	High School	6
Weston Sr High School	Weston	No	Sauk	High School	69
Winter High	Winter	No	Sawyer	High School	78
Rocket Academy	Cedar Grove-Belgium Area	Yes	Sheboygan	High School	7
Vernon County Area Better Futures High	Kickapoo Area	Yes	Vernon	High School	1
La Farge High	La Farge	No	Vernon	High School	68
Vernon County Area Better Futures High	La Farge	Yes	Vernon	High School	1
Laurel High	Viroqua Area	Yes	Vernon	High School	45
Vernon County Area Better Futures High	Viroqua Area	Yes	Vernon	High School	7
Vernon County Area Better Futures High	Westby Area	Yes	Vernon	High School	4
School of Options and Applied Research High	Northland Pines	Yes	Vilas	High School	73
Phelps High	Phelps	No	Vilas	High School	25
Delavan Darien Technical School Inc	Delavan-Darien	Yes	Walworth	High School	66
New Visions Charter School	Lake Geneva-Genoa City UHS	Yes	Walworth	High School	35

Career and College Academy	Williams Bay	Yes	Walworth	High School	8
Birchwood High	Birchwood	No	Washburn	High School	66
Kettle Moraine Global School	Kettle Moraine	Yes	Waukesha	High School	72
Waukesha East Alternative School	Waukesha	No	Waukesha	High School	74
Waukesha Transition Academy	Waukesha	No	Waukesha	High School	32
Catalyst Academy	New London	Yes	Waupaca	High School	24
Nekoosa Academy	Nekoosa	No	Wood	High School	29
River Cities High	Wisconsin Rapids	No	Wood	High School	76



Office of Government Relations

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DATE: May 1, 2025

TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Education

FROM: Office of Government Relations, Universities of Wisconsin

RE: Testimony in Favor of Assembly Bill 210

Thank you, Chair Kitchens, Vice-Chair Goeben, and committee members for providing the Universities of Wisconsin (UWs) an opportunity to submit testimony in favor of Assembly Bill 210 (AB 210).

As a student-focused organization, the Universities of Wisconsin's core mission is centered around the success of our over 164,400 students. The regional and economic impact of our 13 universities is felt in all corners of our state. As Wisconsin's largest talent generator and talent magnet, retaining and attracting current and prospective students is critical to the vibrancy of our communities and growth of our state's economy. Currently, the UWs provide a 23:1 return on state investment and deliver tens of thousands of graduates each year. Nearly 90 percent of our Wisconsin resident graduates remain in the state 5 years after graduation, and first- and second-year retention rates have also improved in the last two academic years.

In 2023-24, more than 2,300 academic excellence scholarships were awarded across the Universities of Wisconsin. These scholarships are given to Wisconsin high school seniors who have the highest-grade point average in their respective school, dependent on the number of students enrolled in the school. Through these scholarships, eligible individuals can receive an award amount of up to \$2,250 per year for tuition, where half is funded by the state and half is matched by the university.

Current law states that for high schools with enrollment of less than 80 pupils, only 10 individuals statewide can be nominated for this scholarship. AB 210 would allow the school board or governing body of a high school with an enrollment of at least one pupil but less than 500 pupils to designate one senior to receive an Academic Excellence Higher Education Scholarship with no nomination process or designation from the Wisconsin Higher Educational Aids Board.

This legislation could help encourage more Wisconsin students who attend small or rural schools to pursue higher education in Wisconsin, and it would also complement and work alongside our other admissions-related programs that we offer like Dual Enrollment, the Wisconsin Tuition Promise, and Direct Admit Wisconsin.

AB 210 would increase learning and educational opportunities for more Wisconsin students to grow and thrive, giving our state another tool in the toolbox to keep our best and brightest students here.

Thank you for giving the Universities of Wisconsin the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of AB 210.



May 1st, 2025

Representative Kitchens, Chair
Representative Goeben, Vice-chair
Members of the Assembly Committee on Education

Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 210

Relating to: changes to amount of, and criteria for designating recipients of, academic excellence higher education scholarships.

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of Assembly Bill 210.

Firstly, I want to thank the bill authors for their communication and collaboration on this bill. They reached out to UW-Madison early in the process to gather feedback, and they have been very receptive to our input at the various stages of drafting this proposal.

As the state's public flagship institution, the University of Wisconsin – Madison strives to provide a world-class education that betters the lives of all citizens across the state. The institution has a strong commitment to educating the next generation of Wisconsinites, with recognition to those in underserved and underrepresented communities, like the students from rural areas that this bill is seeking to support.

In 2023, UW-Madison joined the Small Town and Rural Students (STARS) College Network to create new pathways for students who might not otherwise recognize the full range of education options available to them. This initiative led to the creation of College for Rural Wisconsin on campus, which works to increase college access for rural, farm, and small-town students.

UW-Madison is also working to reduce financial barriers for prospective students. The university was able to increase the percentage of students graduating without debt from 47.6% to 65.5% between 2014 and 2023 through programs like Bucky's Tuition Promise, Bucky's Pell Pathway, and the Badger Promise. These efforts resulted in UW-Madison being named a "Best Value College" last year by the Princeton Review. However, the institution recognizes that affordability is still a major issue facing many students across the state.

The Academic Excellence Scholarship Program and UW-Madison share the goal of increasing access to education. The program provides \$2,250 per year for four years to students with the highest grade point average in each public and private high school throughout the state who

agree to stay in-state for college. Funding for the scholarship is 50/50 through the state and matched by the institution. During the 2023-2024 academic year, there were 811 freshman scholarships available and 730 were claimed. UW-Madison had 348 freshman scholars as students and a total of 1,417 students claiming the scholarship over four years. Madison spent approximately \$1.4 million on these scholarships.

High schools are separated into categories based on their size, and some schools are permitted to nominate more than one student for the scholarship. For example, schools with more than 80 but less than 500 pupils can only nominate one student, and schools with at least 500 but less than 1,000 pupils can nominate two students. However, schools with less than 80 students can nominate one student, but all those students from all those schools are pooled together into one group from which 10 are selected for the scholarship. Plainly stated, while all other nominees are guaranteed a scholarship, those students from the smallest schools in the state are not.

Assembly Bill 210 allows all qualifying students from high schools with less than 80 pupils to receive a scholarship under the program. According to a fiscal estimate, the Higher Educational Aids Board is estimating an increase of 52 students claiming the scholarship each year, totaling 208 additional students after the adjustment is fully implemented. This would add an additional cost of \$234,000 to institutions. UW-Madison expects to bear most of the financial burden of this change in eligibility for the program given that all scholarship recipients are now guaranteed admissions to the university under 2023 Wisconsin Act 95.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback on Assembly Bill 210. If you have questions, please reach out to Crystal Potts or Mitch Goettl (crystal.potts@wisc.edu; goettl@wisc.edu).