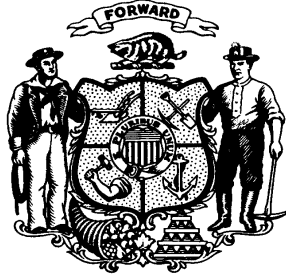


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December 13, 2010

Senator Alberta Darling  
Room 317 East  
State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53701

Representative Robin Vos  
Room 309 East  
State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53701

Dear Senator Darling and Representative Vos:

We are writing to make a recommendation regarding the funding for the Wisconsin Higher Education Grant (WHEG) program in the 2011-12 budget on behalf of the Wisconsin Legislative Council's Special Committee on Review of Higher Education Financial Aid Programs. The Special Committee is charged with reviewing current laws relating to financial aid for higher education in order to improve student access to higher education, maximize utilization of higher education resources, and retain qualified graduates in Wisconsin.

When it reports to the Joint Legislative Council, the Special Committee will recommend legislation to ensure the efficient use of the limited resources available for higher education grants in the state. To further enhance that goal, the Special Committee recommends to the Joint Committee on Finance that funding for the WHEG program be provided entirely through general purpose revenue (GPR) in the 2010-12 Biennial Budget, rather than through program revenue.

Each year, WHEG grants are awarded based on financial need to Wisconsin residents enrolled as undergraduate students at the University of Wisconsin (UW) System, Wisconsin Technical College System, and tribal institutions throughout the state. A similar grant program provides grants to students enrolled at nonprofit and independent colleges in Wisconsin. In the course of its deliberations, the Special Committee has determined that the WHEG program, together with the program for students enrolled at private institutions, is one of the state's most effective tools for increasing access to higher education in the state.

In the 2009-10 Biennial Budget Act, the WHEG program was funded through a combination of GPR and program revenue drawn from the UW System's auxiliary reserves. It is

the consensus of the Special Committee that the use of UW System auxiliary reserves for that purpose disadvantaged the UW System institutions and sent the wrong signal regarding the value of increasing access to higher education in Wisconsin. For these reasons, the Special Committee strongly encourages the Joint Committee on Finance to ensure that the WHEG program will be funded entirely through GPR in the upcoming fiscal biennium.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this issue during what is sure to be a difficult budget process.

Sincerely,

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Representative Joan Ballweg, Chair  
Special Committee on Review of Higher  
Education Financial Aid Programs

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Senator Fred A. Risser, Vice-Chair  
Special Committee on Review of Higher  
Education Financial Aid Programs

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