

Testimony RE: AB 1108 Equalizing the UW System GPR Funding

Thank you, Chairman Murphy and distinguished members of the Committee on Colleges and Universities.

My name is Dr. James Hartwick. I am a former Faculty Senate Chair and a full professor, who has worked at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater (UWW) for the past 20 years. I want to be clear that I do not speak as a representative for UWW and the views I share here are my own. I am concerned about the inequities created by the General Purpose Revenue (GPR) funding formula used by the Board of Regents (BoR). I am not an expert on this formula and GPR allocations, but what currently exists does not appear to be fair to my students and my campus, and to several other campuses across the state. One has to ask, if we were creating a system to provide General Purpose Revenue to the thirteen university campuses, is this what we would come up with? Who benefits and who loses?

It is my understanding that due to the inequitable GPR allocation **UWW receives substantially less than the average institution – more than \$1,500 less per student per year – and consistently less than all other campuses.** These deficits are substantial, amounting to more than \$18 million per year compared to the average UW comprehensive university and \$6 million per year compared to the next lowest-funded campus (UW-La Crosse). **Over ten years, the total loss amounts to \$177 million compared to the system average.** Consequently, UW-Whitewater students, La Crosse students, and students at other under-funded schools **pay the same for their education, but they have access to fewer resources.**

Beyond this, when contracting services from UW-System it is my understanding that UW-Whitewater pays on a per student or per person basis, but as noted above it receives the least amount of GPR resources on a per student basis. It makes me wonder why UW-Whitewater is charged full freight on a per person basis, but we are funded at a discounted rate.

If we want to make an extra investment in some students, who should we invest in? Most of my students at UWW come from modest means and most stay in state after they graduate. The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater has a mission to serve students with disabilities, and we do a great job in and out of the classroom. For example, over the years, our Wheelchair Basketball Teams have won several national championships. Serving students with disabilities costs additional money and yet we receive the least investment, in terms of GPR dollars per student. We also serve a relatively high proportion of minority students, first generation college students, and those of modest means. We are the ladder to success for these students, and we need equitable GPR funding to help these and all of our students thrive. Investment in all of our students will pay big dividends in better lives and in greater tax collections in the future. The current funding formula, with its vast per student GPR differences, is a structurally inequitable funding formula. Instead of closing the gaps, it may actually exacerbate social and economic disparities.

When we disproportionately invest in the Research Universities (R-1's), we are making choices to fund institutions that have access to other resources, to grant funding, to strong alumni association, and so forth. Full disclosure, I earned my bachelors and my PhD at UW-Madison and am grateful for the strong educational preparation I received. Still, many of the students at the RIs are from out of state, many don't stay in Wisconsin after they graduate, and relative to my campus, many come from more affluent means.

UWW is at a competitive disadvantage in attracting new students, as other institutions have funding to offer students additional support. For example, I am a faculty member in the UW-Whitewater's College of Education and Professional Studies, which has the largest Teacher Education Program in the state in terms of the number of graduates. Still, it is difficult for us to compete with UW-Madison for new students, when Madison can offer Bucky's Tuition Promise scholarships and grants to pay for tuition & segregated fees for students whose household adjusted gross income is \$60,000 or less. While I applaud Bucky's Promise, which is designed to alleviate the teacher shortage and to help students in need, UWW doesn't have the resources to support such a program. Similarly, other UW schools are able to offer scholarship incentives that we cannot afford. And, while any individual program may or may not be financed directly with GPR dollars, the GPR dollars can be used to fund other programs at their institutions, freeing up resources for programs for which UWW cannot compete.

From what I can tell, UWW has been cut to the bone. The cumulative effect of the GPR funding formula— compared to the system average, over the ten-year period the total loss to UWW is \$177 million—means that we lack resources to best serve our students. We have cut academic staff to save money. We no longer have professional development

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dollars to support faculty and staff in receiving valuable training to keep current in their fields. And, in some courses an increase in class sizes has resulted in fewer written assignments, with fewer detailed comments, as a way of managing the extra workload. These are just a few of examples, but the larger point is there appears to be no money to support even basic investments in our future and in our students. As noted above, lacking adequate finances, we are at a significant disadvantage in attracting new students, so with the loss of potential future tuition dollars, the problems and inequities are compounded.

I am not asking that funding be cut at other campuses. Rather, I'd prefer that through new funding UWW is caught up to at least the average per student GPR allocation. The years of limited state funding is likely hurting all campuses and I suspect each institution could benefit from increased funding. That said, due to the vast GPR per student differences, UWW is especially hurt by a lack of sufficient state support.

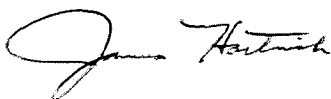
I ask you to charge the Board of Regents (BoR) and the new UW-System President to develop a more equitable GPR formula prior to the next budget cycle. This plan could be implemented in a step-wise fashion over several years and while it would result in a much more equitable GPR allocation per student, in my opinion it needn't be perfectly equal. Perhaps this new more equitable formula could set aside some funding for universities which for a variety of reasons need additional resources to educate their students. I can imagine that some schools may need additional funding due to their scale of operations or the cost of mission specific programs. Still, even if new dollars were allocated to address this inequity, it may prove difficult for some campuses and their benefactors to give up their funding formula privilege. My hope is that fairness and equity concerns along with our common mission to educate students in the state of Wisconsin will prevail. That said, the willingness of the legislature to establish the goal of greater GPR equity may play a role in motivating the reluctant few. Ultimately, I believe that the BoR is the proper authority for making these allocations. If they can make this a priority for the new UW-System President and quickly come up with a workable, more reasonable plan, then my hope is that the legislature can oversee when the BoR's new GPR allocation plan has been implemented and need not concern itself with the details of drafting a plan of its own.

If the BoR and the new UW-System President undertakes this long-overdue task, I hope that they will consider (1) what plan they would create if they were starting from scratch, and (2) if the current GPR funding formula is fair and equitable to students across the state. Thinking of UWW, I would also ask them to bear in mind that given the students UW-Whitewater serves – the highest number of students with disabilities and a relatively high proportion of underrepresented minority students – the current inequitable funding of UW-Whitewater does not reflect the diversity and equity goals that UW System claims to represent.

Finally, while I may not support all the details of Assembly Bill 1108, I wish to sincerely thank the authors and co-sponsors for attempting to address this long-standing problem of inequitable GPR allocation. Perhaps more importantly than the details of this particular bill, I am grateful that this important issue of equity for Wisconsin public college students is getting some attention. It is my hope that given this context, the BoR and the new UW-System President will publicly commit to developing a fair, more equitable, GPR funding formula so that all UW-System students can succeed and the State of Wisconsin can thrive.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or wish to discuss my testimony.

Sincerely,



James M. M. Hartwick, Ph.D.
164 N. Franklin Street
Whitewater, WI. 53190
608.206.3032
jimmccabe9@gmail.com