

Funding inequities within the UW System - Spring 2022

The disproportionate impact on UW-Whitewater students

A report of the Faculty External Affairs and Outreach Committee (FEAOC) to Faculty Senate
Eric Compas, Member, FEAOC, Spring 2022¹

Summary

UW-Whitewater receives substantially less funding per student from the state compared to other UW System comprehensives. This shortfall amounts to approximately \$18 million per year and \$177 million over the last ten years. Given the students we serve – the highest number of students with disabilities and the highest number of underrepresented minority students among the comprehensives – this lack of funding does not reflect the diversity and equity goals that UW System claims to represent.

Funding details

Figure 1 shows the trend in GPR funding for UW-Whitewater as compared to other comprehensives for 2011 to 2020 fiscal years. During the decade from 2011-2021, Whitewater funding per FTE ranged from a high of \$2,096 to a low of \$962. The average GPR per FTE received by all comprehensives was between \$2,630 and \$3,521. **UWW receives substantially less than the average institution – more than \$1,500 less per student per year – and consistently less than all other campuses.**

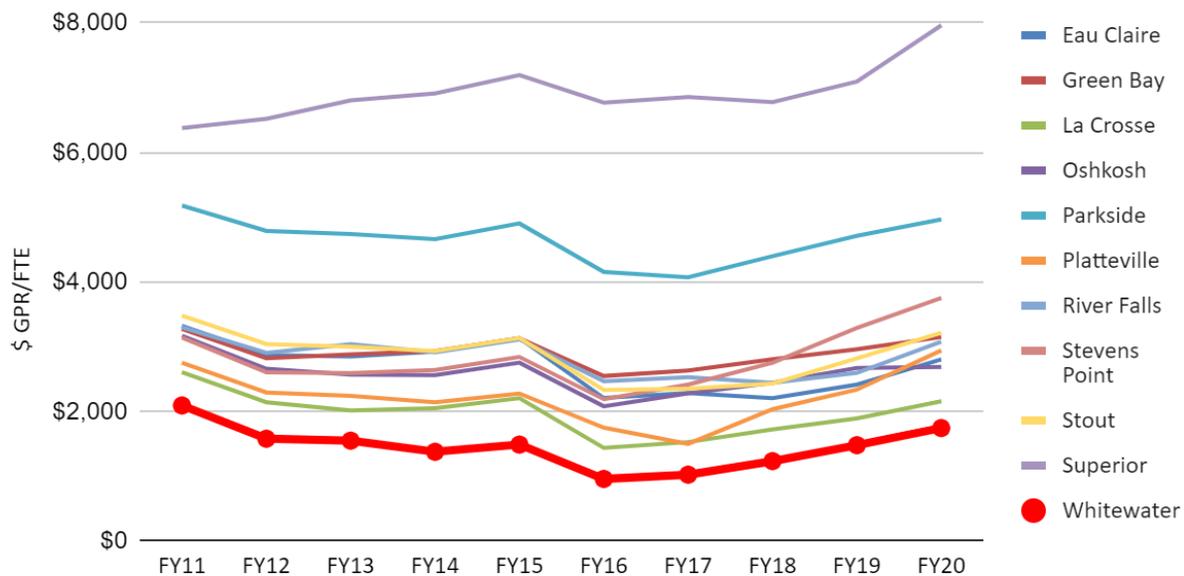


Figure 1. Trends in GPR per FTE for UW comprehensives, 2011-2014, 2020.

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Figure 2 shows the funding deficit each year that UWW experiences relative to the average GPR per FTE and compared to the next least-funded campus, UW-La Crosse. These deficits are substantial, amounting to over \$18 million per year compared to the average UW comprehensive and \$6 million per year compared to the next lowest-funded campus. **Over the ten year period, the total loss is \$177 million compared to the system average and \$57 million compared to UW-La Crosse.**

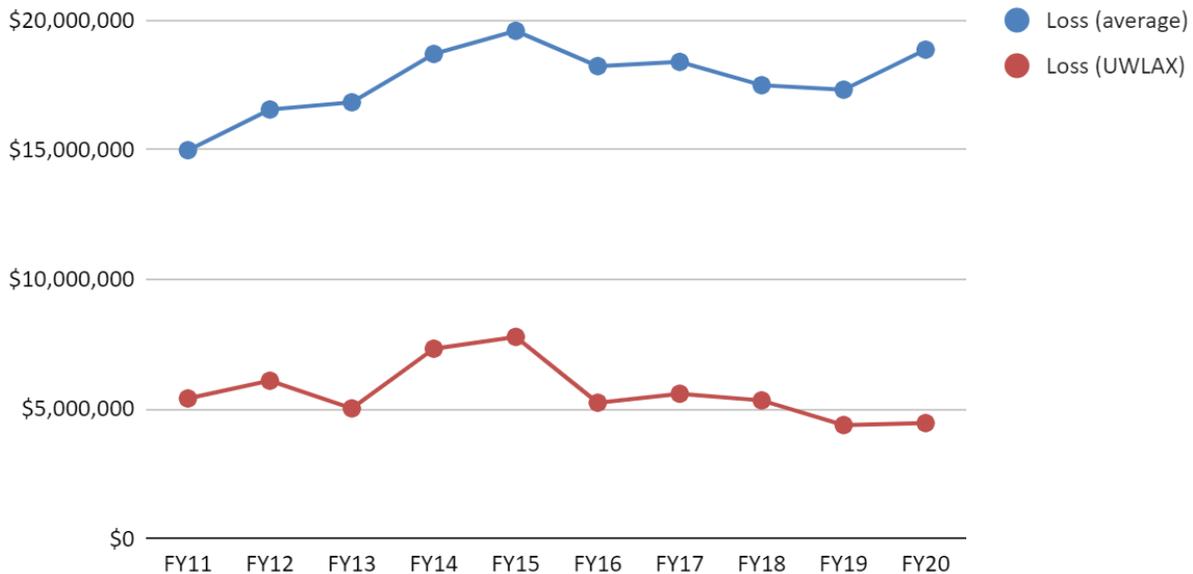


Figure 2. Whitwaters’s “lost” GPR per year compared to system averages and UW-La Crosse (UWLAX), 2011-2020 FY

Students we serve

While the historic reasons for these inequities are unclear – the current Board of Regents Policy 21-8² on GPR funding provides no insights – they have significant ramifications for students that currently attend UW-Whitewater. Given the significant number of underrepresented minority (URM) students, students with disabilities, and socio-economically disadvantaged students that we serve, this situation increases the potential for social and structural inequities by putting students who are already disadvantaged at even more of a disadvantage. Figure 3 shows the number of URM students (FTE) that we serve compared to other UW comprehensives along with the GPR per FTE that each receives.

²<https://www.wisconsin.edu/regents/policies/policy-on-the-annual-distribution-of-tuition-and-fee-revenue-and-state-general-purpose-revenue/>

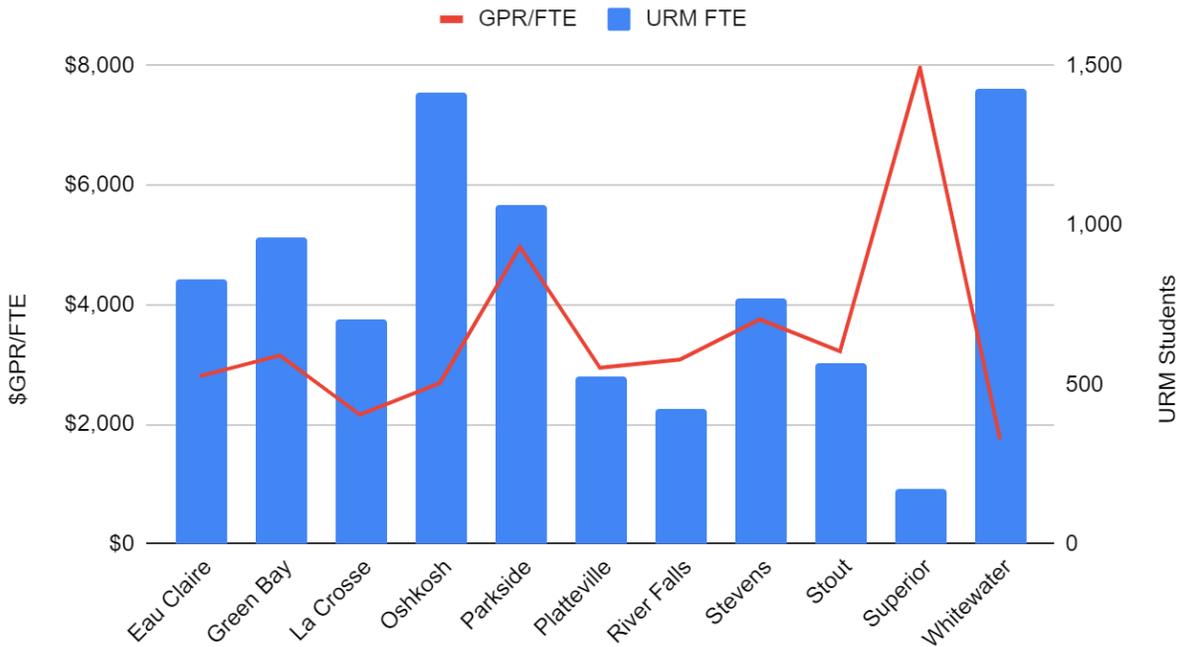


Figure 3. Comparison of URM students (FTE, 2020) and GPR per FTE (2020). Source: UW System [Accountability Dashboard](#)

This comparison shows that **UWW serves the highest number of underrepresented minorities but receives the least funding.** The lack of current and historic funding for URM students at Whitewater means fewer resources and the potential for a lower-quality education than what they could receive at peer institutions. ***Whitewater students pay the same but receive less.***

Lastly, UW-Whitewater has a long, 50-year history of prioritizing³ students with disabilities on our campus. This commitment is reflected in the numbers of students that we serve (see Figure 4), which at 1,201 students in 2019 is again the **highest among the comprehensives** and more than twice the average of the other comprehensives (532 students). Students with disabilities require additional staff support, faculty/staff training, and assistive technologies. ***Again, these students pay the same but have access to fewer resources.***

³ <https://www.uww.edu/csd/prospective-students/a-priority-mission>

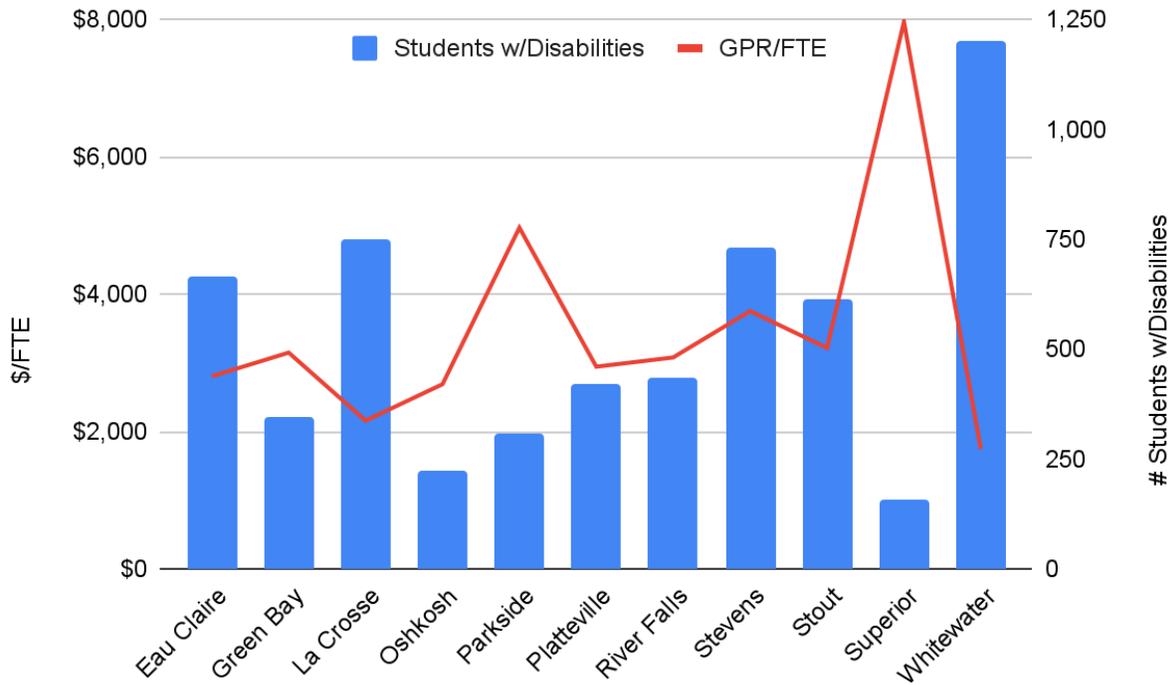


Figure 4. Comparison of students with disabilities (2019) and GPR per FTE (2020). *Source: UW System Services for Students with Disabilities Annual Report*

Conclusions

This analysis shows that UW-Whitewater receives significantly less funding than its peer institutions throughout the UW System and that this reduced funding has a disproportionate impact on the large number of underrepresented minority students and students with disabilities who attend Whitewater. Given the significant effort UW System has put into increasing student access and equity – a key goal of the 2017 system restructuring – this inequity needs to be further acknowledged and addressed.