

Academic Staff Council Resolution
on a Proposed Constitutional Amendment
Regarding Revenue Limits
on State and Local Governments

UW-RIVER FALLS ACADEMIC STAFF

Resolution:

WHEREAS, An assessment by Professor Andy Reschovsky indicates that the UW System budget could potentially be reduced by 20 percent in the two decades following implementation of the Taxpayer Protection Amendment (TPA). This assumes that cuts to the System are imposed equally as with other state agencies. Recent history has demonstrated our campuses take disproportionate cuts.

WHEREAS, A cut of \$200 million GPR (as referenced above) to the UW System represents more than the combined budget allocations in 2005-06 to UW-River Falls (\$26.3), UW-Stout (\$34.6), UW-Eau Claire (\$42.7), UW-Superior (\$16.3), UW-La Crosse (\$34.9), and UW-Platteville (\$27.7). This would likely require a tuition increase of more than 30 percent to offset budget losses.

WHEREAS, Cuts of this magnitude would create such economic inefficiencies that it could force the closing of one or more campuses.

WHEREAS, If the GPR cuts are distributed by current UW System Administration formulas, it would represent a reduction of \$5.5 million to UW-River Falls, or 21%.

WHEREAS, Cutting 21% of the UW-River Falls budget would force the elimination of positions and cause UW-River Falls to retrench to its primary mission of undergraduate education. In turn, this will require dramatic curtailment of our assistance to business, industry, local government, K-12 education, non-profit organizations, and cultural activities in the St. Croix Valley.

WHEREAS, A reduction in faculty and staff would force larger classes. That will force the need for state bonding to remodel UW-RF's academic buildings, which were originally built to support smaller classrooms. Funds would be needed to create large lecture rooms and to expand the size of typical class rooms to accommodate more students.

WHEREAS, TPA would severely restrict bonding authority. If TPA is passed on its current time frame it would take effect in the 2009-11 fiscal year. That is the funding cycle for our much needed Health & Human Performance Building to replace Karges Center, which was built in 1959 to serve a campus size of 1500 students. At a cost of

\$38.9 million, this building would never come to fruition under the TPA. Approximately 8,000 people use the Knowles Center each year. Without the new building, UW-River Falls would fail to sufficiently serve the academic and recreational needs of our students, faculty, and staff. Further, the community would also lose an important recreational center.

WHEREAS, From 2010-2014, UW-RF seeks an additional \$38 million in funding to remodel Rodli Commons for Biology and Physics programs and make improvements to the laboratories located in Centennial Science Hall and the Agricultural Science Building for our Chemistry and Biotechnology programs. These renovations are crucial if we are to support these high-demand career areas and act as an economic driver for the state of Wisconsin. These monies would also fund an addition to South Fork Suites to meet the rising demand for on-campus housing. All of these projects will be in jeopardy with TPA.

WHEREAS, Deferred maintenance bonding would also be restricted under TPA. Currently, UW-RF has over 1,200 projects that are unfunded. Conservatively, the cost is \$50 million. Routine cyclical maintenance requires another \$7.5 million a year in funding. With an aging campus and the need to retool laboratories and classrooms to accommodate changes in business and industry workforce demands, UW-River Falls would require about \$8 million per year for the next two decades to achieve that objective. The inability to currently perform maintenance because of inadequate funding is forcing us to permanently close down rooms in North Hall, Karges, and May Hall. Some areas, such as the basement of Kleinpell Fine Arts, have had to be closed down for months while waiting for maintenance funding. A capping of bonding would force UW-River Falls to permanently close down some buildings as they become uninhabitable under state building codes. The current cumulative shortfall of deferred and cyclical maintenance and capital budget needs over the next 25 years is optimistically estimated at \$320 million.

WHEREAS, TPA proposes restricting budget increases to the Consumer Price Index, which is a market basket in Milwaukee and Racine of household items. However, UW-RF's most critical expenses are issues of health care and energy, which outstrip inflation in the high-cost St. Croix Valley.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the academic staff at UW-River Falls does hereby oppose the Taxpayer Protection Amendment for the following reasons:

1. There is already a minimal investment in our state's public higher education system. Passing this amendment would further shift Wisconsin from being a state-supported higher education system to a privatized system in which student access is directly dependent on one's ability to pay.
2. Our ability to serve the residents of our state and provide access to a quality education would be severely jeopardized by TPA, making it even more difficult to recruit and retain

talented faculty and staff and to provide the caliber of education expected by residents of the state of Wisconsin.

3. The Taxpayer Protection Amendment does not philosophically conform to the purpose of a Constitution, which is to provide the framework for how political decisions should be made, and not to predetermine what those decisions ought to be. Constitutions have and should continue to exist to establish the basic structure of government, to identify the powers of various governmental institutions and to clarify the boundaries of legitimate governmental authority.

4. It is a bad idea to encode policy decisions in Constitutions. Unforeseen events might make a particular policy seem like a good idea in 2006, but be a very bad idea in 2010. Statutes can be changed by the Legislature in a timely manner. Constitutional changes are difficult and more time consuming. The proposed amendment is a policy decision that could be enacted without an amendment.