Major Elements of Wisconsin Act 55 (the 2015-2017 State budget law)

- The State of Wisconsin permanently reduced the UW System budget by $200 million with an additional $50 million lapse for the 2015-2017 biennium.
  - The Board of Regents distribution of this cut resulted in a permanent base budget reduction (including fringe benefit costs) of $3.31 million for UW-River Falls.
  - This budget cut represents a 12.9% reduction in state support to UW-River Falls, or a 19.4% reduction in state support when state funds that pass through the university, dedicated for debt service and utilities, are excluded.

- Changes were made in the language related to shared governance in the University of Wisconsin System, redefining the role of shared governance groups as “advisory to the chancellor.”

- Provisions for tenure were removed from state statute and the Board of Regents was authorized to assume oversight of rules related to tenure.

- Few of the UW System cost-saving “flexibilities” that had originally been sought survived the legislature and the Governor’s vetos.

- There is no state pay plan included in the budget for university employees.

- The state budget maintained the current tuition freeze for two additional years, making this a four-year tuition freeze—2013-2017.

What are the impacts at UW-River Falls?

The funds lost in the base budget reduction primarily supported people—salaries and benefits for our faculty and staff.

- About 85 positions were impacted in some way (including Instructional Academic Staff), resulting in a reduction of about 50 full-time equivalent positions.

- The reduction in workforce was addressed through a combination of: not filling positions vacated by retirement, attrition, and non-renewal; reducing some 100% FTE positions to 60%-80% contracts; and a total of 18 non-retentions and layoffs. The outcomes of this reduction in workforce have resulted in, or will result in:
  - larger class sizes,
  - greater advising and institutional service responsibilities for remaining faculty/staff,
  - restructuring of general education requirements,
  - elimination or consolidation of some low-enrollment programs,
  - reduced capacity and customer service from areas such as technology support, human resources, registrar’s office, financial aid, institutional research.

- Note that the Board of Regents approved one-time funding to be distributed to campuses, to provide a bridge for campuses while managing the base cut. The one-time fund distribution for UW-River Falls was established at $1,481,500.