March 15, 2018

To: Dean Van Galen, Chancellor  
116 North Hall  
University of Wisconsin-River Falls

From: Mialisa Moline, Chair  
Faculty Senate  
University of Wisconsin-River Falls

Re: UWRF Faculty Senate Resolution 2017-18/6

The following resolution, was approved with 13 in favor, 0 opposed, and 1 abstention, by the Faculty Senate on February 7, 2018:

Resolution in response to the legislative requirement for UW System faculty to report teaching credit hours on a website to allegedly improve faculty involvement in undergraduate instruction

Whereas the University of Wisconsin-River Falls Faculty and Staff demonstrate deep care about providing a high quality, state-of-the-art, education that can furnish our students with the necessary skills and knowledge, not simply to fill current corporate short term needs, but more importantly to support them throughout their careers, affording them the competitive advantages for succeeding in 2020 conditions and far into the future;

Whereas the faculty and staff commitment to providing our students with a first-rate education can be seen through the implementation of ongoing Program Assessment appraisals and reviews, regular faculty and staff evaluations, and periodic comparison with peer institutions, not to mention student evaluations, peer observations, post-graduate surveys and accreditation reviews as well as recognition by sources that consider UWRF a “best of the midwest” college;

Whereas this commitment is further reflected in the development of our programs, serving not only our students, but also communities around us and citizens far and wide, with training and information about the newest technologies and techniques for improving productivity on farms and in businesses, computer skills to support a wide variety of endeavors, and advanced pedagogical techniques for preparing our future teachers;

Whereas this commitment is further evidenced by our students winning state and national recognition in numerous fields, including business, the sciences, agriculture, education, and the humanities;
Whereas the above facts would make a reasonable person conclude that the University of Wisconsin-River Falls faculty and staff have been doing a superior job in the face of budget cuts and attacks on higher education from state leaders that have created a hostile environment for faculty and given the general public a dishonest impression about the nature of academic work, impugning the reputation of the UWRF faculty and staff;

Whereas Wisconsin state leaders have legislated that the University of Wisconsin faculty should report teaching credit hours in a misguided attempt to micromanage the university and allegedly improve faculty involvement in undergraduate instruction, with no evidence that collecting and publishing this information will have any positive impact on education, the student experience, or the degree of involvement of faculty in undergraduate instruction;

Whereas the collection and publication of this data has cost, and will continue to cost time, money, and energy and take away from ongoing efforts to improve undergraduate instruction;

Whereas the goal of improving faculty involvement in undergraduate instruction is of great importance to faculty and staff, and for which a proven strategy would be to assign fewer teaching hours and smaller class sizes, giving faculty more time to dedicate to preparing for classes and providing students with plentiful feedback and being available to mentor and advise students and participate at student events and exhibitions;

And whereas individual teachers’ numbers of hours posted at the teaching workload website mean nothing regarding whether students have larger or smaller class sizes, more or less interaction with faculty, enthusiastic or deeply exhausted instructors, or a state-of-the-art or an outdated education;

Therefore be it resolved that The Faculty Senate of the University of Wisconsin--River Falls opposes this legislative policy aimed at achieving a polemic goal that wastes taxpayer- and student-tuition-supported resources;

We further invite the legislature to visit the university campus and find out about the complex and active accountability and improvement projects already in place;

And we ask our UW System leaders and Board of Regents to not only acknowledge the lack of validity of these metrics, but also to communicate to the general public and the legislature the value of a public higher education system in the State of Wisconsin.